

Kennedy sharing love of history through "Recollections"

Diaries bring history to life, 'hayday' and all

BY JUNE W. KENNEDY
CORRESPONDENT

In the mid-1970s while interviewing W. Otis Day (1891-1994), grandson of Emma and John Warren Day, he graciously loaned me their original diaries from which I copied excerpts because they made me feel I had stepped back into 19th century Westford.

How proud the late W. Otis and Alice Day would be of daughter-in-law Marilyn Day for the masterful job she did in producing "Westford Days," complete with the diaries and extensive research into "The Families" whose lives their paths crossed.

If you want to feel rooted in this town, start here. The Day diaries reflect tenderness, sorrow, joy, hard work and humor. Treat yourself or make a gift to a friend this holiday season. The book is available at the Westford Town Museum of which Marilyn is the new director.

On April 7, 1859, Emma M. Sprague became the 17-year-old bride of John Warren Day. She came to live at his family homestead located at the junction of Cold Spring and Graniteville roads. Faithfully this couple penned in their diaries the day-to-day events which typified rural Westford life in the 1860s and 1870s. The running account gleaned from J. Warrens Day's Diary of 1869 is evidence that the average man of that period was, of necessity, a jack-of-all-trades. In her book, "New England Girlhood," Lucy Larcom states: "A young woman would have been considered a very inefficient being who could not make and mend and wash and iron her own clothing, and get three regular meals and clear them away everyday, besides keeping the house tidy and doing any other needed neighborly service." Emma Day's Diary tells us that she was anything but an "inefficient being." I think you'll agree. It should be stated that the names Ada and Quincy refer to Emma and Warren's children.

Now, let's meet the Days.

Diary of J. Warren Day (1837-1900)

1869 excerpts — Carried 1 bu. Rye to mill. Breaking roads in forenoon 11 hours \$2.20. Loaded Hoopoles. Went to Meeting. Hauled 8 load of wood. Built stairs in back entry. Father and I went to town... I bought me a pair of thick Boots at J.M. Fletcher's for \$5.00. Went to Prayer Meeting in Meeting House. Got shoes fixed. Cut wood. Hauled logs to the mill: Brought home a load of shavings. Went to funeral. Sawing & splitting wood. Been to Meeting all day. A.M. went down to Chamberlain's and got Horse -hod. Hauled boards out of mill. Worked for G. Howarth plowing, harrowing, Furrowing and hauling out manure. Topped up wall. Plowed and sowed oats for Curly O'Brien with Oxen & horse. Mended old fence round pasture.

Planted corn, potatoes, Beans, Cucumbers, Squash, Beets — set out tomatoes. Finished planting — June 5. Worked for J.E. Wright shingleing on Mrs. Joseph Hildreth's barn. Oiled harness. Shelled Corn and took Oxen to Town and had shoes taken off. Cultivated. Hoed Corn, Beans and Beets, Popcorn and Potatoes.

Got in Hay back of house. Mowed brush round cornfield. Cleaned mowing machine, repaired B. wagon. Mowed grass for Mrs. Whitney. Finished

Love of community, photos and diaries fuels weekly series

BY JUNE KENNEDY
CORRESPONDENT

The millennium is upon us. Two hundred and seventy years have passed since the west precinct of Chelmsford separated to become "Wesford" (soon to be changed to Westford) in 1729.

Edwin R. Hodgman's "History of Westford 1659-1883" chronicled the early events of this town, its history from that time forward bears sharing with those who call Westford home in the year 2000.

An innate love of history and feeling for this town sparked the first "Westford Recollections" series that appeared regularly for several year in

the Westford Eagle. Several individuals made outright gifts to me of old Westford photos. Others granted me permission to reproduce their photos and documents for the series.

Acquaintance with these old photographs and documents, plus access to early diaries, were the dividends of my early 1970s writing venture. The benefits continued during the pleasant experience of personally interviewing and taping numbers of lifelong and key townspeople.



June Kennedy

The oral history made me realize that the human experience paints the real portrait of the town. My purpose in assembling this collection to make the reader knowledgeable and proud of Westford.

My goal with this "millennium series" is capturing the overall lifestyle and flavor of Westford as experienced by those who were born near the turn of the last century. Many of those interviewed lived the better part of this 20th century — and their memories were keen. A few still live.

Generally, I've sought to convey everyday living at the crossroads. As nearly as was possible, material in each section appears in chrono-

logical order. A few installments will tap early town history. While general historical background is given on schools, stores and transportation, in many instances I've drawn largely on diaries and live conversation. For who better that the teamster or storekeeper can tell the real story of those days? I should state too, that this series is meant to be folksy and entertaining. I hope that many of you will clip and save the articles.

As you browse through this collection throughout the coming year, detect the strong throbbing pulse that animated and shaped the character of Westford. May it beat in you also!

**Westford
Recollections**
MILLENNIUM SERIES
1729-
2000

raking and tumbling out hay. I cradled Rye just a little at night. Pained buggy wagon.

Mother & I went to Lowell. Brought 2 English ladies home that missed the cars. Sarah & I went to Nashua and spent the day at Mr. Rands...carried out wool. Went to town and got Irons fixed for back to B. wagon seat. Finished striping Buggy Wagon. Went to Cambridge Cattle by Fitchburg R. Road. Threshed Rye. Hauled dirt into Barn Cellar. First rate hayday.

...And such were the everyday affairs of plain country living that J. Warren Day found worthy of recording here in Westford, back in 1869.

Diary of Emma M. Day (1842-1920)

Sun., Nov. 12, 1871: Fair. We all went to church. Ada staid to sabbath school. We went in the sleigh P.M. It went very nice. We came home at night by Mr. Cooledge. Had a nice ride. W. went down to Mr. Sherman's to offer to carry him out to ride but he was not able so he took wife. He went round and through town and home by here.

Mon. Nov. 13, 1871: Fair. My birthday. We did not get up quite as early but had to eat by lamp light. I had hash and made rye fritters. Got my carrots washed and grated and churned little scum milk, made two loaves of bread (rye), took out the butter, weighed the salt and W. worked it in for me. W. and the children went up town. I had dinner all ready for them when they got home. Had liver. After we got the dishes done, W. and I worked and did up 10 lb. And 3/4 of butter, W. patted 7 of them first rate. Mrs. Cummings called. I went to Mrs. S.

Tues. Nov. 14, 1872: Cloudy and cold. I got my breakfast, scum milk and Warren carried most 14 qts. Over to Graniteville. I washed. Warren helped me some after he got home. I did not get cleaned up before noon but swept all through and washed round stove and swill barrel blacked my stove little, made white bread—. Had biscuits for dinner. Uncle Amos and Lizzie called. Knot little and mended Warren's Kentucky Jane pants lots.

Wed. Nov. 15, 1871: Very rainy indeed. I had beans and has for breakfast, scum my milk, washed pans and large dishes and Ada did the rest. I did my ironing, got done before noon. I finished a pair of drawers for W. and mended a pair for Q. Made bread again today and knit little. Warren went up in town, carried some milk. Ada has sewed lots today.

Thurs. Nov. 16, 1871: Dull—. I made Ada's trimming skirt longer and tucked it and stitched on Quincy's waist. I trimmed the sleeves to my best black dress. I did the work all of it, made a cracker pudding for dinner. Warren said it was



A DAY FAMILY PHOTO

The old Day farmhouse at the junction of Cold Spring and Graniteville roads as it appeared just before the turn-of-the-century. It was here that Emma and Warren Day shared their lives and recorded their thoughts — a treasure trove for Westford as we approach the 21st Century.

nice. It was kind in him and it did me good.

Fri. Nov. 17, 1871: Fair. I did up my work, brushed all the shelves in buttery and put all things back. Put up W's milk for to peddle over to Graniteville and when he got back I thought we all might go to Lowell so I fixed up and got down there just before noon. Nancy had her dinner most ready. We stopped then took Quincy and went down, then went to Dr. T. for his eye. Got Mother's picture \$4.00 and my hair, \$2.25. We did not get home till dark. W. got his new harness.

Sat. Nov. 18, 1871: Beautiful. I feel very tired. W. churned after we got home from Lowell and cut up pumpkin and stewed and had to churn twice and did not get to bed till half past eleven

did my head ache and I felt so bad to my stomach. W. worked in the salt this morn and washed the churn — scum milk, made two loaves of brown bread, got beans ready to bake, made 8 pies, swept, filled lamps, done up my hair and put on my curls. W. went to an auction. W. killed a rooster and I dressed it.

February 1872 Excerpts — Feb. 1, 1872: I made my hair Oil of Castor Oil & Marrow put a little Citronella in Mother had half.

Feb. 7, 1872: Beautiful. Warren & Mother & I got up about four Mother got breakfast. I washed me & changed my cloths combed my hair and we rode down to Depot with Warren on Logs took the first train got there all right & found Mr. Witherell & picked out our

stove. I took the Horse Cars and went down Central — when I came back I see Uncle Charles he went part way with me at noon. I called on Lizzie Heywood and Mr. Luke F. she is sick.

Feb. 13, 1872: Pleasant. Warren did not wake up till most six & we got up pretty quick I tell — got breakfast — put up his dinner Mother built the fire & put the washing water on. I helped W. start — fed hens & sows fixed hogs swill & carried one pail & got a pail of water. I put my cloths to soak made beds wiped dishes then went to washing had a large one I watered the cows & fed them. Emptied tubs. Sarah brushed my curls over then I laid down few minutes. Braided little — Mr. Sherman came here M. went to town & got some oranges.

Feb. 17, 1872: Pleasant Mother got breakfast — I got up about seven. Helped do the dishes. Mrs. Sherman called I made pies six pumpkin & four mince ones. I sifted 25 lbs. Of flour four times, put in (hasfords) powder made Doughnuts & fried them. Sarah & the children went down to Mrs. Sherman to slide down hill. I helped do up the work & finished putting round one braid & hunted up more to braid. I tore up two kinds ready to braid. My head & eyes ache real bad to night.

Feb. 21, 1872: Beautiful. I got breakfast. Mother and I colered yellow with Onion skins & Hemlock bark and I colered Ada's stockings & mittens with Cud-bar. I ironed all my pieces and brought up turnips & Potatoes to boil for Hogs. O want I tired it did not seem as though I could stand. Uncle Eldridge came after the milk. I braided five Yards & 1/4 tonight.

As we close the Day Diaries we can be grateful for the glimpse into the lifestyle of the common folk in our own town as it was over a hundred years ago.

— Part 3 of a series

'Mother & I went to Lowell. Brought 2 English ladies home that missed the cars. Sarah & I went to Nashua and spent the day at Mr. Rands...carried out wool. Went to town and got Irons fixed for back to B. wagon seat. Finished striping Buggy Wagon. Went to Cambridge Cattle by Fitchburg R. Road. Threshed Rye. Hauled dirt into Barn Cellar. First rate hayday.'

EXCERPTS FROM 1869 FROM THE DIARY OF J. WARREN DAY, SHOWN, AT LEFT, WITH HIS WIFE EMMA

