

Westford Recollections Forge Village Number 3

by Mrs Charles S Kennedy

District No 3 red brick school, known as the old Forge Village School, is located on the corner of Pleasant and Pine Streets. For the past several years the Rogers family have lived here and have been remodeling it. The main part is, of course, old brick. In the kitchen, on the side of the school facing the church, under all the layers of paper they found the old blackboards - which weren't really slate, but rather pressed wood with a black paper covering it. Town records in some districts mention repairing slate boards, while others mention painting the blackboards - so evidently both types of boards were used.

When stripping the walls and sills the Rogers went through about seven layers of paint so thick that it made a thud when they removed it with a bernz-o-matic torch, thus exposing old shades of blues and greens.

The floors are weak, having both side and narrow pine boards covered with several layers of paint.

The windows in the house are not original, now 2 over 2 rather than small panes. It is quite noticeable that 6 rows of brick have been inserted, making the whole window space smaller. The foundation is granite and there is a partial cellar. Small rocks seem to serve as a retaining wall. In amongst these rocks the present owners found an old peach stone that had been carved into a basket. I wonder just how old that peach stone could be! The stairs leading to the cellar are very narrow.

It is not known whether this red brick structure was a one-room or two-room schoolhouse, but at present it is a two-story building. When remodeling, the Rogers found a very narrow stairway that ran up in back of the fireplace - with a lavatory so small that only a child could have used it. Upstairs there are large 8 x 8 x 8 oak beams held together with wooden pegs 6 - 8 inches long. If anyone knows the year in which this school was built, I would be happy to hear from him. Certainly it predates the wooden schoolhouses built in the 1870 era.

THE CAMERON SCHOOL FORGE VILLAGE

In 1871 the town built a new school in Forge Village to replace the red brick one. It is situated diagonally across the street from it and we know it as the Cameron School. Originally it had only two rooms. The Town Report for the spring of 1872 gives the amount of \$4,060 72 as having been appropriated to cover the cost of this new school.

Records show that in 1890 A R Choate of the Westford School Committee received a letter stating that on the 18th day of February, 1890, John T White, Inspector of Factories and Buildings, inspected the District No 3 Forge Village School in Westford which resulted in the following report.

'You are hereby notified that there should be better means of ventilation in said building. Properly arranged ducts or flues should be applied of suitable size to carry off the foul air, and heat or mechanical power should be applied to secure a sufficient and uniform draught in said flues. Changes should also be made in the method of heating by which the rooms would be supplied with pure, warm air, not overheated.'

The town then spent \$564 to have a system of heating put in and ventilation installed by the Middlesex Machine Co., of Lowell and both rooms were heated. The system was being introduced into Lowell schools at this time.

Some of the citizens felt that a modification of the law would be more just to the smaller towns with their inadequate budgets. The Town Report states that 'nobody seems to know just what to do to remedy the defects' and as long as the

Doctors disagree the public cannot be expected to become very excited. Consequently no further changes were made. But Westford did look ahead - next week recollections from Nashoba School No 4.