

Photos courtesy of June Kennedy

The impressive brick Abbot Worsted Mill in Forge Village (1879-1956) is captured in this photo of unknown date, when the road passing by still was unpaved. Today, the mill building houses the Murray Printing Company. Below, the man who is seen as a benefactor for all of Forge Village, John C. Abbot.

Forge Village once seen as 'Utopia' due to generosity of John C. Abbot

By June W. Kennedy

Even today, the Forge Village section of Westford stands as a monument to the late John C. Abbot, who built nearly 500 homes, gave employment to scores of workers and encouraged sports of all kinds. His Abbot Worsted Mill provided income for locals, many of whom were recent immigrants to this country.

On Nov. 10, 1934, the *Lowell Evening Leader* newspaper published a firsthand account by William H. Sullivan Jr., following his visits to Forge Village, which he described as a "real community for home lovers and sport fans":

"Throughout the ages 'Utopia', that is an ideal place in which to live, has been the theme of thousands of writers and poets who have tried to weave into their prose and verse the picture of a dream city. These men have completed their work with varying degrees of success, but it seems to me that if any or all of these men had climbed into their cars in Lowell and driven 12 miles in a northeasterly direction until they came to the nearby town of Forge Village, there indeed they would have found

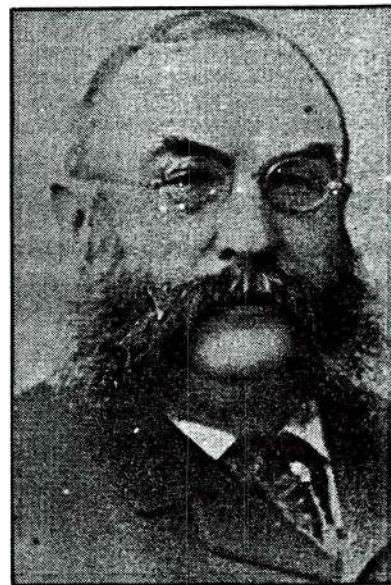
an Utopia which was not a dream, but a living reality.

"During the past summer I happened to have the good fortune to visit Forge Village on an average of three times a week to 'cover' the baseball activities of the Greater Lowell Twilight League. At first I went to the games simply as I would go to any other games, for the purpose of scoring and writing a story of the game. But soon the tri-weekly visits to Forge Village took on a much deeper significance, for I realized I was visiting a town which was far and away above any place, city or town which I had ever visited before. The genial home-loving atmosphere seemed to permeate the whole village, even on the ball field.

"The town of Forge Village is a loving tribute to the ability of the late John C. Abbot to 'know' men. The late Mr. Abbot, beloved by all the citizens of the town, owned practically all the 500 houses in town.

"John C. Abbot was owner of the Abbot Worsted Company. The mill sites were located in Graniteville Forge Village and Brookside or Nabnasset, all separate villages within the Town of Westford.

"The Forge Village clubhouse



is just another link in the Utopian chain which surrounds the dream town of Forge Village. This beautiful clubhouse is another building which owes its existence to the late Mr. Abbot.

"In the ground floor of the club there are four beautiful bowling alleys, six pool tables and two dressing rooms. Upstairs there is an assembly hall as well as several reception rooms.

■ ABBOT-PAGE 7

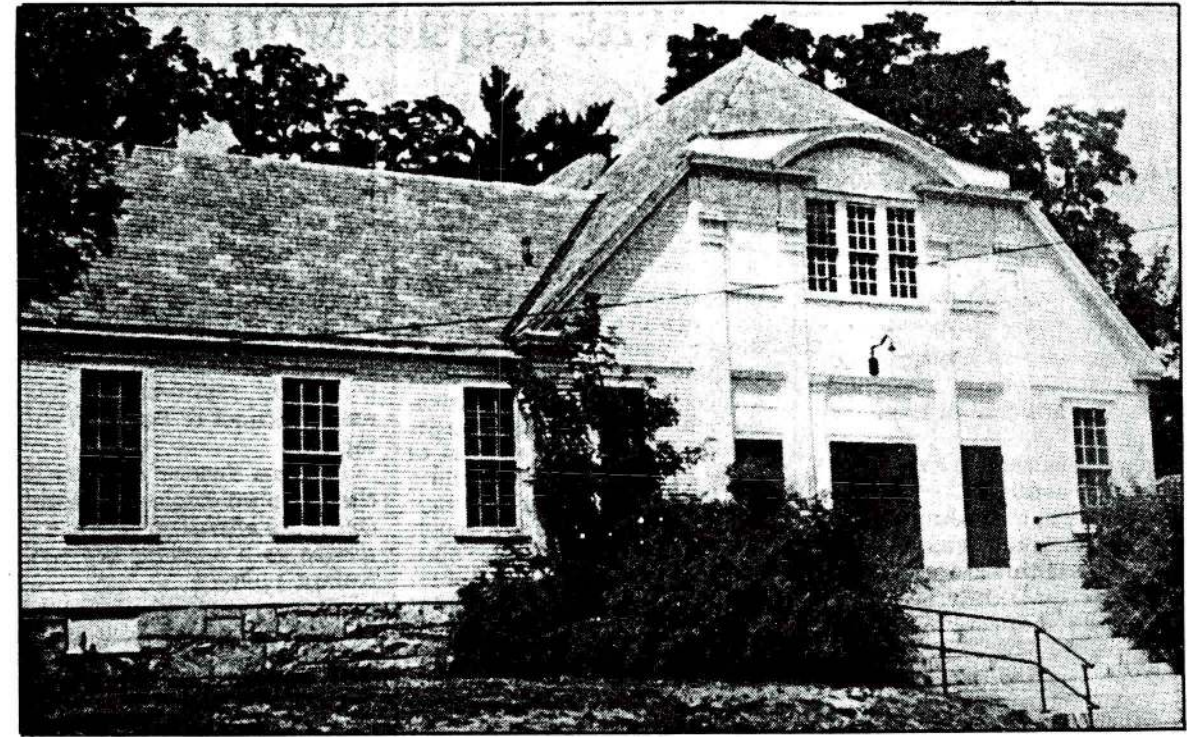


Photo courtesy of Westford Recollections

Abbot Hall was erected in Forge Village by John C. Abbot, not as a money-making proposition, but strictly as a recreational facility for the townspeople. The building — which once housed four bowling alleys, pool tables, a cafeteria and dressing rooms — was razed in 1980.

Abbot creates Forge Village Utopia

ABBOT-FROM PAGE 7

"This club is not a money-making proposition since it is maintained entirely for the recreation of the townspeople. A feature of the club is that the only fee for the use of the bowling alleys is the four-cent pinboy's stipend.

"Near the club there is a large skating rink on which the winter edition of the Forge Village Arrows, the hockey team, demonstrates its wares for the benefit of the eager townspeople.

"Just as the ball field is

crowded during the summer, so also the hockey team has met and defeated some of the best hockey outfits in this section. The hockey club is managed by Joe McTeague and includes the following Forge Village athletes: Lennie Blott, Tony Milot, Vic Delsevich, Mike Hunt, Al Sullivan, Don Gower and Don Bellemore.

"The Abbot Worsted ball park is admittedly one of the best in all New England. Mr. Abbot also built a park of similar size in Graniteville and it is doubtful that any towns so closely allied can boast two parks

of such beauty.

"At the final game of the recent Greater Lowell Twilight League series, two buglers of the Abbot Worsted band, another one of Mr. Abbot's organizations, played taps for their beloved friend and many a tear trickled down the faces of the audience, for Mr. Abbot was never considered as a boss, but rather he was regarded as almost a father by most of his employees."

June W. Kennedy is a Westford resident and author of "Westford Recollections", a series of historical vignettes.