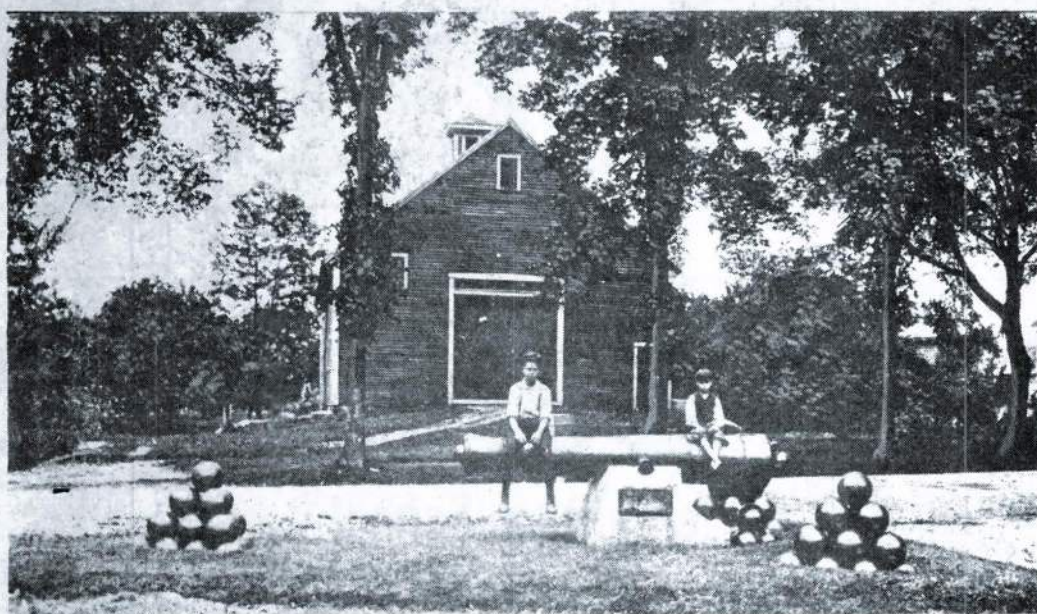


## Westford Recollections

The Cannon on the Common- Trophy of the Spanish- American War



The cannon on the Westford Common, a Trophy of the Spanish American War, came from the castle which guarded the entrance to Santiago Harbor, Cuba.

In the spring of 1899 the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, while visiting the U.S. Navy Yard at Washington, D.C., discovered that the Government had in its possessions a few trophies of the Spanish war, in the shape of cannons that had been used to fortify the harbors of the ports of Cuba. An application was made to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, Hon. John D. Long, for the loan or gift of a cannon for the town of Westford for ornamental purposes, as well as an object lesson to the rising generation of the valor of the American soldiers and sailors.

Secretary Long very generously complied with the request and the following letter was received:

DEPARTMENT OF THE  
NAVY  
BUREAU OF ORDNANCE,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
JUNE 8, 1899

Sir --

1. The Bureau has this day directed the Commandant of the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. to turn over to your order one 5 3-8 inch cast iron, muzzle-loading, smooth bore gun to be loaned the Town of Westford, Mass., that municipality to make all arrangements for transportation and pay all freight and handling charges.

2. This gun is one of those taken from Morro Castle, at the entrance of Santiago Harbor. As it is loaned for ornamental purposes only, the Bureau desires to disclaim any responsibility should it be fired.

Respectfully,  
Charles O'Neil,

Chief of Bureau of Ordnance  
Mr. S.H. Fletcher, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Westford, Mass.

Arrangements were made with the Pennsylvania Railroad for transportation, and the cannon arrived here in June, the day of the graduating exercises in the academy. Our town was honored that day by the presence of Secretary Long, who was much interested in this ancient piece of ordnance. It was cast in 1809 and weighs 4800 pounds and is of English manufacture. A letter was written to the Consul at London, England, inquiring as to its origin and history. The following was received:

AMERICAN EMBASSY,



The Sullivan Homestead, Westford Center, as it appeared in the early 1900's.

(photo curtesy Allister MacDougall)

LONDON  
OFFICE OF MILITARY ATTACHE,  
123 VICTORIA STREET  
Aug. 31, 1899

Mr. S. H. Fletcher:

Dear Sir -- In reply to your letter of Aug. 3rd to U.S. Consul, and referred to me, I beg to say that I have received the following in reply to enquiries:

El Morro Castle was ceded by the British to Spain in 1802, at the peace of Amiens, and in 1809 Britain entered into an alliance with Spain against France. In the same year the Carron Co. began to cast guns for the British government for the first time, and it is probable that the gun in question was presented by the British government to Spain a token of good will, and perhaps as a specimen of the latest thing out in heavy ordnance.

I am, sir, very respectfully,  
your obedient servant,

SAML. S. SUMNER,  
Col. 6th Cavalry,  
Military Attache

The gun was mounted upon a granite base, on a triangular piece of ground at the east side of the Common. The Navy Department also donated 100 11-

in. shells of the Civil War, which originally were piled loosely in pyramids (now more wisely soldered together) around the Cannon. A suitable inscription in bronze was placed upon the base which reads:  
Trophy From Morro Castle  
At The Entrance Of Santiago Harbor, Cuba.  
Taken July 17, 1898.

How fitting that every year at the Memorial Day Parade the procession pauses by the cannon to read the roll call.

The picture featured of the Cannon was taken years ago - early 1900's - and goes to prove that it has always been a favorite haunt for youth. Note Sullivan barn in background. This particular photo is a copy of a postcard which sold at the Wright & Fletcher Store, more recently the General Store of Westford Center. The following expense occurred to the town concerning the Cannon:  
H.V. Hildreth, granite base for cannon - \$21.25; Bronze tablets for base and expense of putting on - \$12.81; Freight and expense on R.R. - \$20.99; R.C. Whidden, teaming - \$3.50; G. F. Mills, labor - \$1.50.