

Life more simple in the first decade

By June W. Kennedy
Eagle correspondent

Earlier in this century — about 80 years ago — Westford had a weekly newspaper entitled *Westford Wardman*. The following excerpts from this paper capture the true flavor of this country town before the advent of modern society:

Sept. 25, 1909, "Caned"

"That gold-headed cane that the *Boston Post* has been encouraging the old age within Yankee New England has found an abiding place in Westford. Oscar R. Spalding presented the cane to Theodore Horace Hamblett of the Brookside [later Nabnasset] precinct. Although in the nineties, he retains that quick, sharp, 'hail, how-do-you-do type of life,' as well as a vigorous hail to health. The vexed question of whether women folks are citizens and eligible to gold-headed canes is easily answered, as long as any class of people with chain and ball are handcuffed to the ancient law that physical might makes moral right, as long as our civilization is swayed by this law, women are not citizens and need not apply for gold-headed canes. We are only half-civilized and are afraid to risk the other half."

Oct. 8, 1910, "Accident"

"Notwithstanding the caution and efforts of the selectmen to regulate the speed of automobiles to the safety of the public as well as of the inhabitants of the automobiles, the headlong destructive speed still fills the air with swift blinding dust. Even this did not prevent a smashup accident early Monday morning on Depot Street at the Cold Spring Farm. An auto driven by William Merrill of Concord crashed into a two-horse team owned by J. Henry Fletcher of Belmont and driven by Joseph F. Richardson who was thrown out and badly bruised.

"Dr. Wells was summoned and soothed conditions. A rear hind leg of one horse was broken. With all his legs he was valued at \$325. The wagon and auto got badly tangled up in this sudden come together and received many compound joint fractures. The accident occurred on a sharp curve or rather the high rate of speed of the auto made it a sharp curve."

Oct. 9, 1909, "Barn Dance"

"The Westford Athletic Association gave its annual cheery barn dance last week Friday evening. The hall was crowded with a good-natured, fun-loving company. Everybody was self-controllable, so it was

wholesome enjoyment to the brim all the while.

"Certainly something good made everyone look a smile. Even unbelievers in this kind of face would have found it good medicine to shorten up the face. Hibbard's Orchestra of Lowell, always grandly lively in tempting the feet to move, on this occasion, with their new captivating song dance melodies rather led all previous records.

"The hall was trimmed for a farm scene with pumpkins, donkeys, corn and other things green. This was the work of taste, skilled by the plain nativeness of young ladies. Not a hint by a man. There was just enough of the farmer costume sprinkled around individually in the



Photo courtesy June W. Kennedy

Dr. Orion Vassar Wells suffered an untimely death at 38 after contracting pneumonia while attending influenza patients in 1918.

density of the company to give healthy variety.

"The prizes offered for the best costume was awarded to Miss May Balch for ladies and to S.L. Taylor for the other side of the firmament. This last was a speechless surprise, if smiles and bows were not quite enough, add now a large quantity of unanimous appreciation. Many towns and some cities were represented in the social education in the varied aspects of the evening. Pleasing as the affair was, as fun goes, add seventy dollars for finances as more fun."

Oct. 30, 1909

"The Edward M. Abbot Hose Co. has voted to purchase red shirts

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caps and belts. Several of the citizens of the town have subscribed liberally toward the expense.

"People in this village were obliged to do without the town water supply Thursday from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon. This was necessary on account of relocating the hydrant at the west end of the common, which was too near the triangle where the new soldiers' monument is to stand."

Nov. 20, 1909, "Forge Village"

"A large number from here attended the husking bee which Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Blodgett gave at their home in Westford. All report an excellent time with red ears in abundance. [Husking a red ear of corn meant one could kiss a laddie or lass of one's choosing.]

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