



The original Central School No. 1 was located on the side yard of the Fletcher Tavern, directly across the street from the present location of the Town Museum. This school was used until 1874, when Tadmuck School No. 1 opened. Boston Road was then called School Street.

(Photos courtesy June Kennedy)

# Recollections of 19th century student life at Center School

By June W. Kennedy

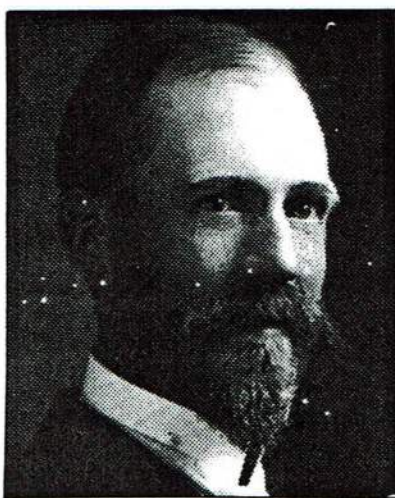
*This is the first of a five-part series on old Westford schools.*

**T**he original Center School was located directly across the street from the Westford Town Museum. Boston Road was called School Street then. Leonard Wheeler gives a glimpse into schooling there in the late 1860s and early 70s:

"Here Miss Rebecca Luce, daughter of Rev. Luce, first pastor of the Union Congregational Church, was teacher. I remember at least one holiday that we had because Town Meeting was in session in the upper story of the building. A new Town House soon effaced that kind of holiday.

A later teacher was a girl from Lowell whose education in rural matters proved incomplete when horse chestnuts, mostly from the four trees in front of my home, fell out of over-filled pockets and shirt fronts of the boys. She confiscated all she could empty out and put them into the old fashioned box stove. The resulting racket repaid the boys for the loss of the chestnuts. A crack in the stove was attributed to the explosions.

"The desks of the old school house were of two wide pine planks. They were wide enough



Grange founder and town tax collector, Leonard Wheeler, as a youngster contributed horse chestnuts to the old stove explosion in the Center School.

for two children each, who were expected not to whisper to each other. At either end of the room was a row of single desks."

Earlier still, Kate Hamlin, who lived in the Fletcher Tavern right beside the school, says that in the 1850s the students could choose whether to have Christmas or New Year's Day for a holiday. They usually chose Christmas because that



Miss Rebecca Luce, daughter of Rev. Luce of the Union Congregational Church, at one time served as a teacher in the original Center School No. 1.

came first. (Christmas was not celebrated as it is today.)

The coat hooks on which the children hung their cloaks at this early school may be seen at the Westford Town Museum.

The fall term of 1874 opened in the new Tadmuck School No. 1.

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