



THE HERRICK Homestead adjacent to the former General Store in Westford Center.



HOMESTEAD of the William Parker Family and former barn of the Amos Heywood Home.



ABBOT'S FOLLY or the Hall House on Main Street

Westford Recollections

Mrs. Charles S. Kennedy
Reminiscences of
Kate S. Hamlin
1847-1937
Part V

and in that hall was the first dancing school I attended.

This house was owned and occupied by David C. Butterfield. The family consisted of father, mother, two daughters and a son. The older daughter's name was Mary, that of the younger, Lydia Anna, called, by all of us, Liddyanna; the son was Eleazer. Mary had one of the first pianos in the village.

My memory may be at fault, but I think there was a country store in the orchard, a few rods west of the house, or, it may have been in the house itself. I remember distinctly -- or think I do -- being in the store, standing on a bench along the counter, when a dog, that to me seemed as big as a lion, (I confess I had never seen a lion) came toward me in a most friendly manner, but I, not recognizing his friendliness, was terribly frightened and screamed for help. How I came to the store I have no idea, and but for the fright caused by the dog there would be no impression of the incident left in my mind.

Beyond the orchard stood a



EVERETT MILLER Home, part of which was the old Byam dwelling once located at the fork where Main Street and Graniteville Rd. merge.

store kept by Samuel Fletcher, father of Mrs. Sherman D. Fletcher. Next to the store, and very near it, was a small yellow house where lived the Herrick family. Some years later, one of the few tragedies of the town occurred. One morning,

everyone was shocked to hear that Mrs. Herrick, an old lady, had risen in the night and had fallen into the well. In front of the Abiel Abbot home, and standing close to the road, was a large, old-fashioned house owned and occupied by the



OLD DAY Homestead, now the location of Chamber's Real Estate

Groce family. The family consisted of Preceptor, and Mrs. Groce and one daughter, who later married Artemus Cummings. This house stood just where the road branches off toward Graniteville. Then generally called the "Stone Quarry" -- (This house no longer exists). A few rods along this road brought one to the house of John Osgood. -- (This house was torn down). And a stone's throw farther down the hill was the Amos Heywood home. -- (The barn of which has been converted into a home, present occupants being the William Parker Family).

Here were two daughters besides the father and mother, and this was one of the most highly cultured families in the village. The elder daughter, Anna, married a Mr. Richmond of Lowell. Mrs. Richmond was interested in art and, especially in literature and authors.

On a visit of Edgar Allen Poe to Lowell, as a lecturer, or public reader, Mrs. Richmond met him and they became lifelong friends. Anyone, who has read a recently published life of Poe, will see the name of Anna many times throughout the volume, and this Anna was the daughter of Amos Heywood. In reading the book, one will also see mentioned in Poe's letters the name of the sister, Sarah, who, for many years was well known in Westford.

Beyond the Heywood house toward Graniteville was a long stretch of road bare of houses, so I return to the Groce house. Opposite this, where now stands the house built some fifty, or more, years ago by Henry Reed, was a building very old, as I remember it. (The site of these two dwellings is the point at which Main Street and Graniteville merge.) I think the roof half way down had a break -- what shall I call it? -- it continued as a roof but also a wall through which were the windows of the second story. The age of this house I do not know, but from the style of architecture it must have been one of the oldest in the town. It was occupied by a family named Byam, whether consisting of one member or six I cannot say. I remember seeing

only one, and that a man or perhaps middle age, and it seems to me he lived the life of a recluse. -- (One room of this house housed the social library of the town at that time. In 1875 part of this old homestead was moved down Main Street and is presently a section of the Everett Miller home. The corner beams are of gunstock styling, that is, they are larger at the top than at the bottom -- patterned after the shipping vessels. One closet door in the house is made from one wide board. HL or Holy Lord hinges and an old latch may also be found).

Part of the original section that had been moved to this site was again utilized by being made into a barn which was located in the back yard of the Miller home. When this building became tumbled by the name of Sherman bought the lumber and turned it into a cider mill on Cold Spring Road. Consequently the original old Byam homestead may presently be found in part, at least, in a mill and in a dwelling.)

The front entrance was at the end of house instead of at the side, and faced the Groce house. The feature of the place most prominent in my mind, is the row of poplar trees casting their shadows, as did those which Longfellow mentions in "The Old Clock on the Stairs":

"Across its antique portico
Tall poplar trees their shadows throw"

And, by the way, the poplar tree seems to have been a favorite in Westford, for I remember several groups of them.

The road from the Graniteville branch continued toward Forge Village. Beyond the Byam house stood a large three-story building. -- (This home is the one with the brick ends known as Abbot's Folly or the Hall House). Was this not in

early days the home of students of the Academy who came from other places? I think it was. But my earliest remembrances of it was as the home of the Southwick family. Mr. Southwick was a graduate physician. Educated at Harvard, and at one time an instructor there, he was a friend of the two professors, who, one night, had a violent quarrel which ended in murder. Mr. Southwick had been in their company shortly before the quarrel. This murder trial was one of the great sensational trials of the age, and for many years after, there was frequent mention of it. I knew nothing of it at the time as it was before my day, but it is occasionally referred to even now. The family of the murderer left the country and went to the Azores; and years ago, when I was living in Troy, I was well acquainted with a lady who lived in the family as governess, and every year, while in Troy, she received from members of the family, most exquisitely embroidered linens which she sold for them.

For years, it was reported that the murderer was taken down from the gallows before death and was secretly taken out of the country, but the story was never proved. In visiting at the Southwick home in Boston years later, I saw a table which had been in the room the night of the murder, and the bloodstains were still on it. All this is another digression.

Mr. Southwick, in riding through the country came through Westford and seeing the large house, was charmed with it, as he also was with the village surrounding country. He bought the house and placed his wife and family of seven children there. A great interest to the children of the village -- a ghostly interest -- was the boxes of human bones Mr. Southwick had brought and placed in the orchard back of the house. These he had kept from his medical days. What became of them eventually, I do not know; they were doubtless buried somewhere. Were some to be found in after years an interesting murder story might be invented.

As we all know, one of these seven children became the wife of John W. Abbot, and for many years was a loved resident of the town.

Next to the Southwick house was the home of Mrs. Isaac Day. -- (presently the building that houses Chamber's Real Estate) and what a hostess Mrs. Day was! At her company dinners, which she gave once a year to her friends, her table was loaded with every available luxury and, if one did not partake of each and every article, from turkey to cake and jelly, the grief of the hostess was evident. For years, she prepared and served the annual dinner for the trustees of the Academy, who came full force every June for the yearly examination of the students -- and for Mrs. Day's dinner. To be an invited guest at that dinner was the greatest honor Westford could offer.

To be continued.

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