

Westford Recollections



LOCATION OF THE OLD Deacon Rugg Shop and home. The Robert Knowles are present owners.

by Mrs. Charles S. Kennedy
Reminiscences of Miss Kate S. Hamlin 1847-1937 (Part VIII)

"In the early history of Westford only one church stood in the village, not dignified, however, by the name 'Church'; for that would have been too suggestive of the religious tyranny of England, from which the Puritans had fled. Instead, it was called the 'Meeting House', and was used not only for religious services but for secular meetings. Under Channing and other liberal and advanced thinkers, a split oc-

curred among the members of the congregation. The 'Meeting House' remained with the advanced, or liberal, members, and the conservative, left and built the Orthodox Church, now standing on its original site, at the southeast angle of the Common. --(Now the education building of First Parish Church United). The date of the building must have been in the eighteen twenties. --(The actual date is 1828). Later, the term 'Orthodox' was gradually dropped and replaced by 'Congregational'.



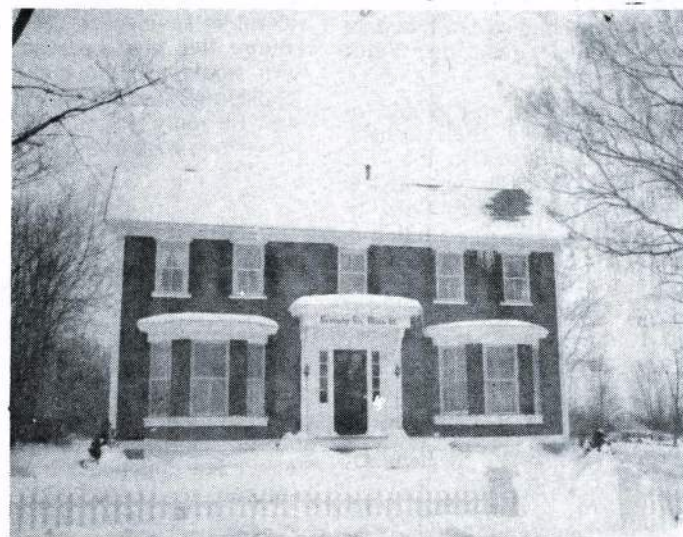
THE HARDE HOME on Lincoln Street, was in the 1850's, the John B. Fletcher residence.

In the front of the auditorium, and almost touching the ceiling, was a gallery where the choir sat. This gallery faced the pulpit, and during the singing of the last hymn at the close of the afternoon session, the weary audience rose and turning their backs on the minister, faced the singers.

A special feature of the service always interested me. If a member of a family of church members had died, on the Sunday following the funeral, the family was publicly prayed for. The custom was old, and, for aught I know, is still continued. Whittier, in his poem, 'Mary Garvin', referring to

resident of the town is still continued in Westford?

Beyond the church was the house of John B. Fletcher, -- (the present home of Mr. and Mrs. Dudley M. Harde) and a few rods away was the large colonial house of Dr. Benjamin Osgood. What a dear old doctor he was! In his earlier practice he had made his rounds on horseback, carrying his medicines in his saddle-bags. -- (The home to which I am referring is more recently remembered as the Sullivan property, the house and barn of which was recently razed in 1971. Originally it was a classic example of colonial simplicity



HOME OF MISS AMANDA HALE, the only magazine contributor of the village. The Fraizer family recently purchased the property.

the custom, says;

"Uprising, the aged couple stood,
And the fair Canadian also, in her modest maidenhood," while the pastor earnestly prayed for them.

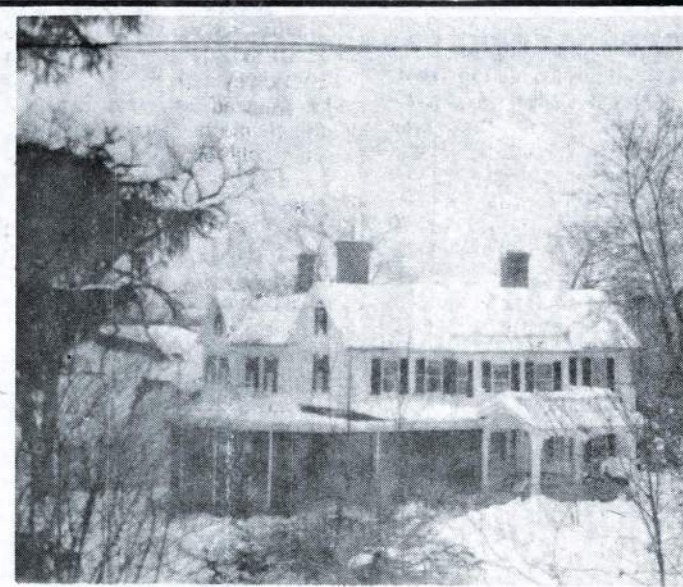
One instance stands out in my memory: a young boy had died, the only son in a family where there were three daughters. On the following Sunday, before the sermon, the pastor announced, "Mr. and Mrs. -- with their daughters, desire the prayers of this congregation, that the death of their son and brother may be sanctified to them for their spiritual good." The family then stood while the pastor gave voice to a long and earnest prayer. I have a suspicion that some went to church that morning chiefly to witness the ceremony, and to see how the family would "take it".

I wonder if the custom of tolling the bell on the death of a

and charm). When he became too old for that method of travel, he used a two-wheeled gig; this consisted of an arm chair set on an axle with springs. He continued to carry his remedies in the saddle bags. (I think the saddle bags are now in the Library Museum). I remember standing at his knee while he measured out his powders on the end of his pocket knife, and carefully wrapped them in papers. In my presence, also, he rolled his pills, and I wondered what they were made of. Pinkroot and senna seemed to be his universal remedies, for, no matter what the ailment, those words were always in the directions to my mother.

Dr. Osgood stood high among the physicians of those days. But what changes in medicine and surgery have taken place since then! Before the days of the discovery of ether, a brother of my grandfather, living in Maine, had an infected leg. To save his life amputation became necessary. And the question was a most serious one.

When the physicians were ready, the man, who was not a drinking man, was plied with liquor until he became unconscious and "dead drunk". The case was considered so serious that prayer meetings were held in his, and the neighboring, villages during the operation. A case of this kind makes us realize the wonderful blessing that ether and other anaesthetics have brought to



THE BERT HARLESS FAMILY live in the old Leland home built in 1805. No doubt Leland Road was named after this family.

thousands of sufferers.

I hope all have seen the beautiful monument on Boston Common, or on the public gardens, which commemorates the discovery of ether. Of Dr. Osgood's family, during my last years in Westford, there remained only the widow, one son and a daughter. The principal features of the interior of the house were the wide beams protruding from the ceiling mid-way of the rooms, and the posts in the corners. The most interesting piece of furniture was a cabinet standing in the parlor filled with a complete set of Lowestoft china--a rare possession. The house was

sitting room, 4 fireplaces, 2 up and 2 down, wide pine flooring and wooden pegs and an oven in the cellar.

As one continued on his way and followed the road to the right, he would see no house on the same side until he came to that now occupied by Oscar Spalding--(present home of the Pelouin family). When I was a child the family of David Whitney lived there. The sons had left home and had gone into business, but two daughters remained.

Neighbors and life-long friends of the Whitneys were the Lelands, who lived but a stone's throw away. Over the Leland



DOWN BEYOND THE Frost School which in the 1850's was pastureland was the Oscar Spalding or David Whitney homestead. Dr. and Mrs. Pelouin currently reside here.

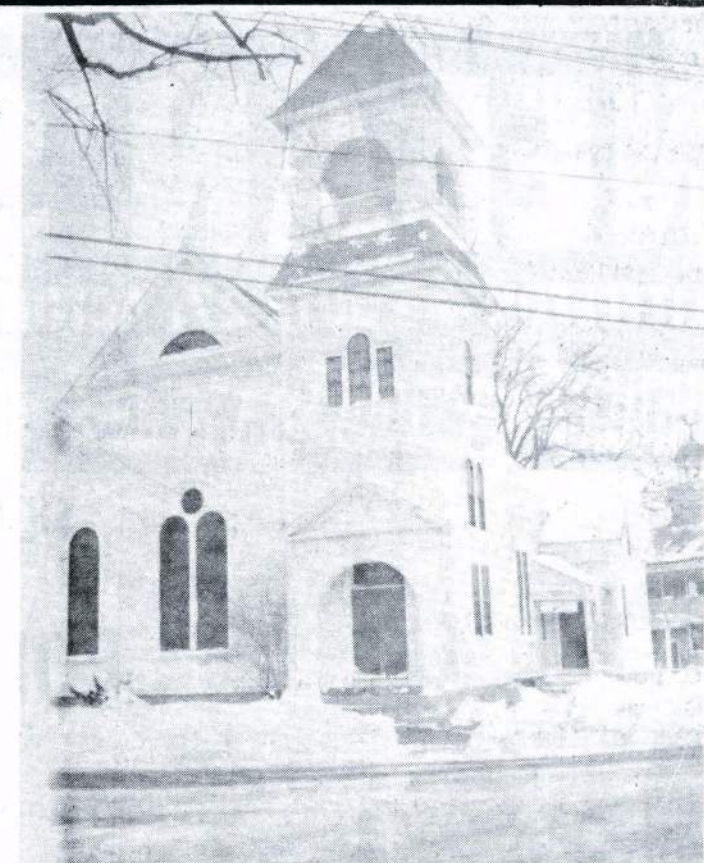
probably the only one in the village which had an ancient knocker on its front door instead of the modern bell.

Next to the Osgood house was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Proctor--(Present home of Mr. and Mrs. Everett Miller). Recall that the Town Hall was not built in the 1850's). Their front yard was always most attractive in summer, because of its tulips and pansies.

This home still retains many of its original features including wainscoting in the original

lawn roamed the one peacock of the town, and a multitude of guinea hens, and the air was kept alive with their cries. Elizabeth Leland married Hiram Whitney. To Mrs. Whitney the young people should be eternally grateful because of the playground she willed them. --(The Bert Harless Family now resides in this house).

If we had crossed the lawn from the Leland home we would have come to the old Lowell Road --(which we now call Main



THE ORTHODOX OR CONGREGATIONAL Church on Lincoln Street, now the Educational Building for the First Parish Church United.

Street), and would have gone down the hill to the "Snow Burying Ground," now "Fairview Cemetery." From that point we would turn, cross the road and soon come to a collection of cottages often called "New Jerusalem," because most of the dwellers belonged to the sect of Millerites. They believed that the end of the world was at hand, and Christ would once again appear on the earth.

Near the top of the hill was the house and shop of Deacon Rugg. --(This is the present Robert Knowles home). This shop was a most interesting place to children. The Deacon, as he was called, was a jack-of-all trades and could make, or mend, almost anything under the sun. His wife was equally ingenious in her way.

The only magazine contributor of the village was Miss Amanda Hale. Her stories were mostly published in the

"Waverly Magazine". She lived in rather a large house with her mother, --(The home recently purchased by the George A. Fraizer family) and it is possible their income was mostly from the daughter's writings. As Mrs. Hale was a recluse who apparently never went out, and was seen only occasionally in her garden, children did not think very highly of her and thought she must be rather disagreeable. I was told, however, that she was far from that; a woman of some cultivation who suggested many of the plots which her daughter made use of. The Hale house was but a short distance from the angle where the Depot Road and the Lowell Road --(Main Street) met. On this corner was the house occupied by the Goodhue family. East of the house was a blacksmith's shop. --() indicate insertions by the columnist.

to be continued



THE OLD PROCTOR HOMESTEAD which still retains many of its original features. Mr. and Mrs. Everett E. Miller are owners.