



Westford Academy tuition was but \$6 per term when Leonard Wheeler attended in the late 1870's. Evidently there was a division between the girls' and boys' seats.



In Leonard Wheeler's early days the Post Office was kept at the J.M. Fletcher Store during the Democratic Administration. Red and White operated the Store in the 1930's. Gas, lunch and groceries were on sale here. (Photo Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Austin Fletcher).

Westford Recollections

by June W. Kennedy
 REMINISCENCES OF
 LEONARD WHEELER 1937
 Part II.

"In due time I went from the district school to the Academy. This was presided over through my attendance by W. E. Frost and Miss Adelaide Baker of Lowell who later went to the Lowell High School where she taught many years. Academy tuition was then \$6 per term and buy your own books and pencils. Mr. Frost's predecessor was Charles O. Whitman who later did such work that a tablet is placed to his memory in the Marine Laboratory at Woods Hole.

Mr. Frost was Civil War veteran of say 165 lbs. standing about 5 ft. 8 in. with a symmetrical frame of full size for his weight. He wore a chin beard and mustache nearly black. This beard was frequently stroked. His Latin pupils like others, marched Caesar through Gaul up to 29,000 miles per day. Zenoplion was an equal pedestrian to the Greek class. One poor fellow one day in the Physiology class gave the length of his Aesophagus as 25 feet! Mr. Frost slowly stroked his beard and said he had sometimes wished his was that long. Mr. Frost's ability at sarcastic and didactic private lectures were so efficient for discipline that I never knew him to lay hands on a boy in my time though I was told it happened later. One afternoon when the grammar class was downstairs in Miss Baker's room one of the girls caught my eye and pointed to a mouse under a desk in front of the girls' row. Before I got any general attention of the boys the mouse was travelling along the front side of the room under the edge of Miss Baker's platform out of her sight. Unrestrained hilarity broke forth which paid no attention to Miss Baker's rapping till the mouse turned the corner and came into her view. She had to join the laughter. The mouse kept on toward the girls' seats. They began to get nervous and started climbing the seats. One of the boys threw a book to hasten the mouse and killed it. He, when order to remove it, marched the longest way round holding it at arm's length by the tail. One of the girls was later much excited over finding it in the pocket of her coat. Not long after entering the Academy I had the luck at a periodical written examination to rank 99.6. The faculty gave me 100 on the posted sheet of rankings. That rank was then undreamed of. Later Emma and Nettie Stevens repeatedly got such rank by strenuous study. Nettie later took Miss Baker's place. Afterward she graduated from Bryn Mawr and taught there and did some excellent work in morphology.

Early in my 16th year I joined the Union Cong. Church. Less than two months later my father died of T.B. Mother, a

widow, unexperienced in business and no farmer, looked to her farm for support. Valuable counsel was given her by Alvan Fisher though he was not the only one appealed to. There was a kindness and helpfulness of great value to my mother.

Rufus Patten was a regular church goer. So one Sunday morning after the Church bell was heard to ring, being a little slow, when he went for his horse the brute was missing. In time they found the horse had heard the bell and after waiting due time, he went to Church alone and went into his accustomed horse shed behind the Orthodox church as it was commonly called then. Those sheds witnessed many a session of the Horse Shed Sunday School Class. Sometimes the sermon was digested most remarkably. Sometimes other topics came up.

Sometimes the class met in "John B's" store close by. (The home and business right next door presently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Austin Fletcher.) Here John B. Fletcher and later his son John M. kept the Post Office in Democratic times. Peanuts were prominent in the sales. John M. had a habit of whistling a few strident notes when called upon for peanuts. It was dubbed "John's peanut whistle". Did you ever see a collapsible "tall hat?" John M. had not when Henry Hamlin came in one night with one collapsed. He asked John a price for filling it with peanuts. John gave a price which was accepted and turned around after the peanuts. When he turned back the hat was several times more capacious than he had seen. He filled it.

In Republican times the Post Office went to Wright & Fletcher Store. (Presently Stony Brook Realty.) S. D. Fletcher had previously kept this store. The last old-fashioned "raising" in town and the only one I ever saw was when his barn was "raised". He was a typical Yankee store keeper. Samuel Wiley kept a third store near the north end of the Common (torn down). In time he was succeeded by John and George Cummings.

In my earliest Town Meetings the three selectmen sat on the platform in the front of the room and ballots were stuffed into a box on the table in front of them. I never heard that too many were stuffed. I have seen a voter captured by one side rushed up to the box amid cheers. -"

(to be continued)



THIS 1870 PHOTO OF THE Union Congregational Church on Lincoln Street features the blacksmith and harness shops to the right and the horsesheds on the left. Those sheds witnessed many a session of the Horse Shed Sunday School. (Photo Courtesy of First Parish Church of Westford)



William E. Frost was the preceptor of Westford Academy from 1872 until the early 1900's. He is credited for introducing written examinations into the local school system. Frost elementary School which opened in 1909 was named after him.

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