

Westford Recollections

Mrs Charles S. Kennedy
The Town Farm

One associates the name Town Farm today in Westford with the office of the School Administration. When in use as the Town Farm it was, of course, the Poor House or Almshouse where lived some of the needy and where many others benefitted from its many services. It was an important institution in the early days. Boston in 1789 established house and farm for the poor under Overseers of the Poor. Westford's Town Farm existed before 1840 when the present brick building was built. In 1858 a new barn was built at a total cost of \$1060.83. A.A. Davis built the barn at a labor cost of \$340.59 while Cyrus Hamlin was paid \$6.00 for moving the old barn. Just this October the barn was knocked down and burned on Halloween. That barn had been built in 1893 as indicated on the picture. Both buildings appeared to be in good condition then.

Master of the Town Farm in the early days received \$250 a year plus house and board. There were three overseers. A section of the Report of the Overseers of the Poor submitted for the year ending February 12, 1881 makes us realize what a self sustaining Farm it was, as well as to add color to its existence.

Receipts

Income from the Farm as by H.D. Pierce's Books Received for milk, eggs, soap grease, onions, turkeys, cider, cranberries, apples, cabbage, chickens, popcorn, pigs, horse, drawing stone, harslet, mowing machine, use of bull, cheese, keeping peddler, use of cart, one pair of spectacles, beef, pickles, keeping one man one night, boarding Mrs Leland, calves, butter, potatoes, peas, one stove, ashes, work on roads, corn, beets, tomatoes, turnips, straw for beds, cow, pork, indigent soldiers, and sundries. The total of \$1942.84.

The Payments, in part, were for grain, blacksmith's work, grinding corn, repairing pump, matches, one axe, repairing harness, curtains, bolts for sled, mending boots, mending stove, wheelwright work, one sled, etc totaling \$2,852.65. Taking into consideration the expense of keeping 184 tramps, the gain on personal property, etc, the actual cost of supporting the poor inside the Almshouse in 1881 was \$25.24. The cost of supporting the poor outside of

the Almshouse with such services as medicine, wood, for time spent in purchasing horses for the Almshouse, payment to the Lunatic Asylum and services as Overseer totaled \$733.16. Therefore the actual cost of supporting the poor, exclusive of interest on the Farm was \$952.18. The number receiving two meals and lodging was 184. The number receiving aid outside the Almshouse was 20. The number receiving support in the Almshouse was 9. By comparison the cost of supporting the poor in 1877 was \$2,113.61 the number receiving two meals and lodging was 451 and the number aided outside of the Almshouse was 48 while these receiving and inside was 11.

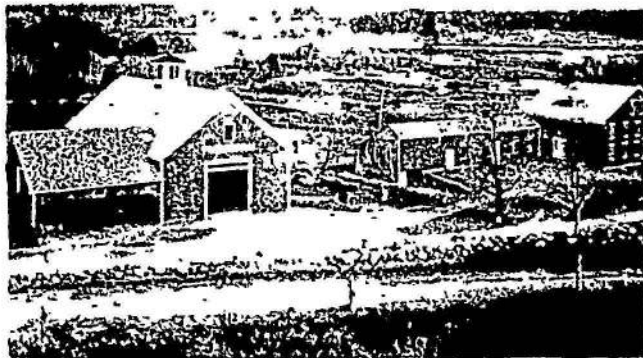
After reading the appraisal of personal property at the Almshouse in Westford in the year 1881, in addition to the farm equipment and livestock, the everyday simple wares would today, if sold at auction, bring a small fortune. If you've been to an auction recently I'll bet you'll agree. Listed are such items as apple papers - \$1.50, one butter worker - \$1.00, one churn - \$2.50, candle moulds - \$1.50, two cranberry rakes - \$3.00, one chopping knife and tray - \$.75, one cradle - \$1.00, five shawls - \$5.00, one Franklin stove - \$1.00, seven flat irons - \$2.50, shovel and tongs - \$1.00, boxes and spices - \$.75.

Presently the Town Farm located on Town Farm Road houses the Westford School Administrative Office. The Superintendent, Mr Lloyd Blanchard and his Assistant, Mr John Hathaway, are located on the second floor. The first floor accommodates four secretaries, a Director of Special Services, a dark room is available for the Police Department. An apartment is also occupied.

One picture features the Farm while the other features the O'Toole House in "Texas" - Texas Road - Parker Village. The O'Tooles were interesting characters of the early days who spent their last years at the Poorhouse.



O'Toole's house in Texas, Westford, Mass



Town Farm, Circa 1900