

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COMMON – THE CEMETARIES – ENDICOTT PARK – CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING – HOLIDAY HOUSE AND RESTCROFT – THE TORNADO OF 1899 – SOUHEGAN BANK – COLLEGE GRADUATES

MILFORD COMMON

As has been stated heretofore in this history, the public square or common was the gift of William Crosby, the son of Capt. Josiah Crosby, the first settler of that name in town. It was originally bounded – “beginning at the southwest corner of Shepard’s bridge, thence running southerly on the west side of the road until it comes to the main road that leads to Wilton, thence westerly on the north side of said road about eight rods, thence northerly to a bound on the Souhegan river, thence by said river to the place of beginning, being the land the meeting-house stands on.”

This gift was made to the Southwest Parish in 1788, before the town was incorporated. The town subsequently sold that part of the original gift bordering on the Souhegan river, which is now covered by buildings, and bought two small pieces of land on the west and northwest to complete the public square as it now stands; but the amount received for the land disposed of was much larger than the amount paid for the land purchased, so that the common or public square, in its present form, may properly be considered as a gift from William Crosby, and the further fact may be recorded that the town has something of a fund in the treasury as the result of this transaction.

In 1846 the old meeting-house was moved about four rods in a northeasterly direction from its original location, turned half round so that the end of the building which originally faced the west was made to face the south. This increased the available area of the common.

At the annual town-meeting, in 1849, permission was given individuals to set out trees on the common, and provision was made for inclosing a portion of the space with a suitable fence. Soon after a number of elm trees were planted by well-known citizens. At a later day the area of the inclosure was enlarged and the number of trees increased.

Previous to the building of the new town house, which was dedicated April 27, 1870, the old house was moved to the factory lot, so called, to the east of the common where it is now known as Eagle hall.

At the annual town-meeting in 1872, E. C. Batchelder, Timothy Kaley, and Abram Fifield were appointed a committee to enclose the common or square, as it was left after the removal of the old town house. Under these instructions the committee proceeded to build a fence and to make other improvements, at a cost of \$1,075.45. In 1891, the fence having become defaced and unsightly, an article was inserted in the warrant, for the annual town-meeting, “to see if the town will authorize the selectmen to remove the fence from around the common, provided the Improvement society will set a substantial granite curbstone in its place, and concrete the walks.”

During the year 1892 the fence was removed by the selectmen, and at the annual meeting, March 14, 1893, an appropriation was made to grade the common.

During that year the setting of the stone and grading was done and the selectmen in their annual report refer to the work as follow:

” During the past summer the Milford Improvement society has erected around the common a substantial curb of Milford granite at an expense of \$1,010. For this enduring piece of work we feel they should have this public expression of appreciation. The grading of the same and the streets only was at the expense of the town.”

CEMETERIES

The custom which prevailed very generally in the eastern part of the state, notably in Rockingham and Strafford counties, of burying the dead in family yards on private estates, never obtained in the southern part of Hillsborough county to any considerable extent. Public burying grounds were laid out at an early day in Amherst, and afterwards in the South West Parish, and in the town after it was incorporated. The burying ground on the north side of the

river is an ancient land, in use before the town was incorporated. In it repose the remains of many of the early inhabitants and it is still used.

Before the town was incorporated, and while a large part of the territory which now makes up the town was known as the South West Parish of Amherst, in 1788, William Crosby, son of Capt. Josiah Crosby, gave the town about an acre of land for a burying ground. This yard has been known for two generations at least as the old graveyard and is situated on the southeast bank of the Souhegan river, near the stone blacksmith shop. It was fully occupied many years ago.

The old yard served the inhabitants of the town upon the south side until the year 1839, when the town purchased land upon Union street and laid out a cemetery, selling the lots at public auction.

This yard in time becoming fully tenanted, the town purchased a tract of land of Humphrey Moore, a part of his original farm, in 1851, and made it a public cemetery.

In 1890 the cemetery at East Milford was established and it is the principal place where interments are now made. Its location includes the spot where "some ancient graves" remain, made presumably by the first settlers.

ENDICOTT PARK – CENTENNIAL HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

Endicott Park and the land upon which the high school building, which was completed upon the centennial year of the incorporation of the town, stands, was originally a part of the William Crosby farm.

Oct. 6, 1794, Mr. Crosby conveyed all that part of his farm west of the brook, containing a little more than ten acres, to Benjamin French. This estate, with the exception of three or four house lots, sold upon Elm street, remained in possession of the French family for three generations. A small curtailment of the estate occurred when Col. Wm. B. Rotch purchased a small portion of the French property for the location of his printing house. The last owner was Mrs. Wm. P. Endicott, a daughter of Josiah French, granddaughter of Benjamin French, and sister of Francis J. French. Benjamin French erected a tannery upon this estate early in the century, which was owned and operated after his decease by his son Josiah, and grandson Francis J. With one or two intermediate conveyances, the title of Mrs. Endicott passed to the town, which is the owner of this beautifully located tract of land. In honor of the accomplished woman, who was the last representative of the French family upon this estate, the land outside of the location of the high school building has been called Endicott Park.

The high school edifice is one of the finest in the state. It cost, with the land upon which it stands, nearly fifty thousand dollars, and accommodates not only the attendants of the high school, but other grades, and will long remain a monument to the enterprise of the citizens of the town who were instrumental in its erection.

HOLIDAY HOUSE AND RESTCROFT

Holiday House and Restcroft are located on the height of land on Federal Hill.

In 1896, the Rev. C. H. Hutchins of Concord, Massachusetts, presented to the "Girls' Friendly Society" of Massachusetts, some twenty-five acres of land with the buildings thereon, from his Broadview farm on Federal hill. By the liberal contributions of other Episcopal friends a large and attractive boarding house was fitted up, containing thirty-three rooms and a chapel. Accommodating more than fifty girls from the Friendly Society at a time, by making changes once in two weeks, two hundred and seventy-seven were registered in 1898.

In 1899, the Rev. Dr. Hutchins presented to the same society another plot of land and a small house, which has been enlarged and fitted up for a convalescent hospital for invalid girls of the same Friendly Society. "Restcroft" is arranged with modern improvements and will accommodate sixteen invalids.

Both houses are for a summer vacation retreat for members of the society only, where good board, healthy air, and amusements are furnished at a moderate cost.

The view from this friendly retreat is unsurpassed, "beautiful for situation."

THE TORNADO OF JULY 8, 1899.

The following is taken from the *Farmer's Cabinet* of July 13, 1899:

Not within the memory of the oldest inhabitant does it appear that this town was stricken by anything to be compared to the intense power of destruction as was demonstrated by the tornado that came almost with the suddenness of a flash of lightning on the day above mentioned. The hand of Nature has been heavily laid upon us with terrific winds, floods, cloud bursts, lightning, all of which have left their traces behind them, and all have shown the possibilities of destructive force, but at last the tornado has been added to the list, and with reluctance does it become our opportunity to record briefly some of the consequences, and the most and best that can be said of it is that no person was physically injured and that no more property was destroyed or inconvenience sustained.

About an hour before noontime a good, smart shower had been prevailing, and about one o'clock or a little after, a sudden change was noted in the village, when suddenly the wind whisked about, causing the trees to sway one way and another, blinds and doors of the houses slammed, the rain poured in torrents, when as suddenly it was observed that the air was filled with green leaves, branches, and flying shingles, accompanied with fog. The cloud formation was peculiar, resembled a whirling mass of black smoke, twisting and turning and moving at a rapid rate.

Upon investigation, it is learned that this disturbance was noticed to have started in the vicinity of the Nathaniel Hutchinson place in the southwest part of the town and gathered in full force about one thousand feet southwest of the farm of John P. Melendy. He observed the gathering of the cloud and witnessed the tearing to pieces of a large chestnut tree not far from where he first observed the cloud. The appearance was such that gave him concern, but it advanced so rapidly that he had hardly entered the house when it had gained the premises, and on its way had tipped over several large trees. It struck the house, driving in the gable windows and removing about twenty or thirty feet of the roof on the southeast corner. Crossing the road it lifted a shop 30x20, inside of which was an old-fashioned brick chimney, weighing no doubt, several tons. It lifted it several feet from the ground, moving it ten or twelve feet, chimney and all. The building is crushed in two and almost a complete wreck. Mr. Melendy had about fourteen large chicken coops which were all moved and most all broken to pieces, some of them landing down upon the Fitchburg railroad. He had some 800 chickens, a good number of which have been destroyed. He says he picked up several bushels of them, scattered all about and in the adjacent fields. The dooryard is filled with upturned trees in every direction. The destruction at this place is so general the proprietor hardly knew where to commence to reinstate his former possessions. It is probable that three hundred dollars will not replace the damage done. While going out to look after his houses, Mr. Melendy was taken by the current and rolled over and over for more than a hundred feet when he found himself down near the shop above referred to. Fortunately he was not materially injured. He says it was all over in a short time, only a minute or two in duration. As soon as the rain ceased Mr. Melendy, with the aid of other parties, succeeded in placing boards over the hole made in the roof of the house, thereby keeping out the rain that fell afterwards, otherwise the building would have been flooded with water.

At the Kidder place, just over the railroad bridge, east of the Melendy premises, this tornado next sought to levy its power by tearing in pieces a building formerly occupied by Italian laborers; one of the large elm trees was split apart; one portion containing six branches, each a foot in diameter, fell just grazing the easterly corner of the house; any one of the branches separately, would have crushed in the building. The whole fell between the house and the shed, and no experienced woodman could have felled this part of the elm, tons in weight, without demolishing both buildings. The barn on these premises was demolished; the shed, however, escaped without much injury. This place was purchased not long since of M. F. Crosby, by a Mrs. McCoda, and is being repaired generally. The roadway between the Melendy place and the one last referred to was blocked with fallen trees, requiring the services of road agent and gang of men to clear the road.

From this point traces are seen of the wind storm across the fields and woods to the Wetherbee place, where trees are blown down. It proceeded on its way until it reached the premises of N. H. Brown.

On it came over the hills and down the valley, tipping over trees and tearing them to pieces, when at the premises of N. H. Brown on South street, the tornado struck with full force. His barn was moved two and one-half inches from its foundation; a large elm tree, seventy feet in height, was blown over. It measured six feet in circumference, two in diameter, took up solid soil, with the roots ten feet in diameter and three feet in thickness, and snapped off the roots

like pipestems. Four large hen houses were tipped over and more or less destroyed, while one was blown to splinters and scattered all over the meadow. These houses were new not long since, and cost him fifty dollars apiece. His larger fowls did not suffer much, but about a hundred chickens and the houses that contained them were among things missing. Mr. Brown's loss is quite severe.

The adjoining place of Mr. Cutts came next in the path of destruction. In the orchard adjoining Mr. Brown's almost every apple tree was uprooted, while those near the road were blown into the road, filling it up and preventing public travel. His loss is probably twenty-five apple trees.

At the pumping station the force was sufficient to turn up the metal saddle boards in the building and nearly wrenched the weather vane from its place. The frame covering to the small well was caught up and reduced to kindling wood; the cupola, however, landed a good distance in the brook. The meadow for a long way was covered with pieces of boards, while the shingles floated in the air all over town.

At Fay's cottage, opposite the pumping station, the chimney to the L was blown down. The shed in the rear of the house was taken and torn to pieces and scattered over the lot on the north side of the house. Some of the planks were driven two feet into the ground. Directly opposite the station a large hemlock tree, a foot or more in diameter, was snapped off three feet from the ground.

Between the station and Jason Coffin's place, several large trees were blown over. One wild cherry tree, six inches in diameter, half way between the station and the above place, was wrenched off at the butt and landed in Coffin's dooryard. At the last named place a chimney was blown down, the bricks penetrating the roof. The apple trees all around the house were laid over and broken off. Windows were smashed, wire fences torn to pieces.

At the Rodney Hutchinson place wild havoc might have been seen in all directions. Large branches of chestnut trees from the hill above were scattered all round, some of them coming three hundred feet. Here as elsewhere, the apple trees are blown over, fifteen in all.

Gilson hill did not entirely escape the fury of the tornado. Eleven thrifty apple trees on the Cheney lot were thrown over and will require the services of the wood chopper.

In the Gilson orchard four apple trees are torn up by the roots, only one of which was of much account as a fruit grower.

At the residence of Mr. Titus on Prospect avenue, two of his hen houses were overturned, one being torn to pieces. He lost quite a number of nice hens.

A stick of timber, about sixteen feet in length, one foot in width and three inches in thickness, supposed to have been a portion of the well house at the station, was dropped near the house of Everett Coffin, penetrating the ground to a depth of two feet or more. Had it come down upon the roof of the house it would have gone from roof to cellar. So far as has been learned no person has been injured, notwithstanding the fact; that so much material and tree branches were flying in the air, also that the tempest did not strike nearer the village.

Leroy Talbot on Clinton street, had a portion of his barn carried away, while his garden is a complete wreck. This point seems to have been the ending of the tornado campaign.

As soon as the rain ceased, Road Agent Taylor, with his gang of men, proceeded up South street and commenced to cut out and clear the road so that teams could pass, and they were kept busy all the afternoon.

THE SOUHEGAN BANK.

This institution as a state bank was organized in 1855, and continued to do business under its state charter until 1865 with capital of \$100,000. After an existence under its charter of ten years, it was reorganized under the name of the Souhegan National Bank.

Its presidents have been, Thomas Chase from 1855 to 1861; Hiram A. Daniels from 1861 to 1872; William B. Towne from 1872 to 1876; Robert R. Howison from 1876 to 1883; Clinton S. Averill from 1883 to 1892; John McLane from 1892 to .

Its cashiers have been, Hiram A. Daniels from 1855 to 1859; Gilbert Wadleigh from 1859 to 1864; Charles A. Daniels from 1864 to 1869; Frederick T. Sawyer from 1869 to 1898; Frederick W. Sawyer from 1898 to .

The bank has served the people of the town and vicinity nearly forty-five years; has been well managed and paid reasonable dividends, meeting with no unusual losses, except in the robbery, which occurred Oct. 19, 1874. Allusion is made to this robbery on page 239 of this volume.

It is worthy of note that Frederick T. Sawyer, a most highly esteemed citizen, was the efficient and conscientious cashier of this institution for almost thirty years.

THE SAVINGS BANK.

The Milford Five Cents Savings Institution was incorporated June 27, 1859. In 1887 the name was changed to Milford Savings Bank.

The bank commenced business soon after it was incorporated. Daniel Russell was president, Calvin Averill and William Ramsdell, vice-presidents, William R. Wallace, secretary, and Hiram A. Daniels, treasurer; Bainbridge Wadleigh, S. Smith Stickney, Benjamin I. Conant, Clinton S. Averill, Martin Hall, George H. Gillis, William Lane, Abel Chase, George W. Burns, Ebenezer C. Batchelder, Francis J. French, Hezekiah Eldridge, and Frederick Crosby, trustees.

Presidents from time of organization, Daniel Russell from 1859 to August, 1866; William Ramsdell from August, 1866, to August, 1872; William B. Towne from August, 1872 to 1876; Dexter S. Burnham from August, 1876, to his death in 1892; Robert M. Wallace from August, 1892, to August, 1893; William H. W. Hinds from August, 1893, to 1897, Carl E. Knight from August, 1897 to .

Treasurers, Hiram A. Daniels from 1859 to August, 1863; William R. Wallace from August, 1863, till his death in July, 1871; Gilbert Wadleigh from August, 1871 to 1875; Clinton S. Averill from August, 1875 to December, 1891; William M. Knowlton from January, 1892 to .

In 1892 the assets of the bank exceeded one million and a half. The panic of 1893 which swept over the entire country affected savings banks of New Hampshire more than any other institutions. With what was thought to be ordinary prudence the savings banks of the East had made large investments in Western mortgages and other securities. With the breaking out of the panic the Eastern money centers of the country refused all accommodations to the West and a general collapse in that section of the country ensued. Many depositors in New Hampshire banks knowing of the stringency in the money market withdrew their deposits to be prepared for any emergency which might happen. Others who had no immediate or prospective need of money were moved, in fear of what might happen, to join the number withdrawing. It is the opinion of the historian that if the withdrawals since 1893 had been no larger in volume than the average of previous years, and the depositors had been content with the rate of interest which our best banks are now paying, and the state had taxed savings banks as it is now taxing them, the Milford Savings bank would be now doing business as before the panic of '93. The deposits having been reduced about one third by withdrawals, at the request of the trustees, June 12, 1893, the bank was enjoined by the court and since that time has been in liquidation.

The following persons were the trustees at the time the bank went into liquidation: John E. Bruce, William M. Knowlton, John Hadlock, George E. Clarke, William H. W. Hinds, John McLane, Carl E. Knight, James E. Webster, Frank Hartshorn, Frank W. Richardson, Oliver H. Foster, William F. French, Henry H. Barber.

COLLEGE GRADUATES.

The following is a list of college graduates, either natives of the town, or long-time residents, so far as known to the historian:

Humphrey Moore, clergyman, Harvard, 1799.
Solomon K. Livermore, lawyer, Harvard, 1802.
Stephen Peabody, lawyer, Harvard, 1803.
Elisha F. Wallace, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1811.
Leonard J. Livermore, clergyman, Harvard, 1842.
Rodney M. Stimson, journalist, Marietta, Ohio, 1847.
Clinton S. Averill, lawyer, Norwich University, 1849.
John P. Towne, lawyer, Norwich University, 1852.
Josiah W. Pillsbury, teacher, Dartmouth, 1840.
Gilbert Wadleigh, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1847.
Francis B. Peabody, lawyer, Trinity College, 1848.
David A. Secombe, lawyer (3 years), Dartmouth, 1851.
Edward B. Knight, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1861.
Jonas Hutchinson, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1863.
Robert M. Wallace, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1867.
Charles F. Ober, physician, Dartmouth, 1873.
Carl E. Knight, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1873.
Herbert F. Hutchinson, medicine, Dartmouth, 1875.
Fred W. Farnsworth, teacher, Dartmouth, 1877.
Ira W. Holt, teacher, Dartmouth, 1881.
Albert E. Hadlock, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1887.
J. Odlin Tilton, medicine, Colby University, 1875.
A. B. Tilton, clergyman, Brown University, 1865.
Percy Barker, N. H. Agricultural College, 1892.
John C. Hadlock, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1896.
John V. Gunnison, business, Dartmouth, 1895.
Wm. T. Gunnison, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1892.
Chas. A. Hatch, medicine, Dartmouth, 1875.
Geo. W. Hatch, medicine, Dartmouth, 1878.
Maurice Mather, teacher, Harvard, 1890.
Morton C. Tuttle, business, Dartmouth, 1897.
Harry Richardson, N. H. Agricultural College, 1898.
Henry Hale Dearborn, medicine, Dartmouth, 1899.
Charles H. Donahue, lawyer, Dartmouth, 1899.