

## First Part: Past and Present of West Cambridge

To the members of the Historical Society att. 909.40.29A

I propose to give you a bit of local history – consequently I will take you back to the “Early Forties” and personally conduct you through the Town of West Cambridge, taking the easterly side of the road for this day’s walk. Commencing at the “Big Trees” naming the Houses and Estates as located at that time. We shall make a few stop-overs to talk about those who have walked before us.

First, Eliakim Nason House and Butterfield House. “Aunt Debbie” Butterfield lived in this House – a worthy old Lady, one of the Bachelor persuasion – she was full of information. But she had a kind word for everybody – when asked about her religious tenants, she would reply – Why “I pluck a feather from every bird’s wing.”

Next . . . Old House unoccupied, and Crane House now standing with improvements – Large tract of land used for Training Field now laid out in streets – Cleveland, Marathon, and Trinity Baptist Church. Belknap House owned by Dea Henry Mott, Mrs. Eden Brooks House, Josiah Whittemore’s House, Ephraim Tufts King House, Alms House, once the Black Horse Tavern kept by Wetherby in Revolutionary days. Two old houses, one formerly a (shop-rohn?) by a worthy woman used to (whiten?), sew and press our straw bonnets. The old Wyman House, once the residence of Lydia (Maria?) Child, Moses Proctor House, Josiah Russell House and Philip Whittemore House once a Tavern, and now owned by the heirs of R. G. Shattuck, Centre District School House, a two room building of modest dimensions. The popular Teacher Daniel L. Brown taught for many years in the building, and the best boys and girls in the District were among his pupils. Thomas B. Thorpe’s House. Next a long building where Mssrs Lane F. Croome made furniture – Blown down in the Tornado of 1851 of the same estate. The Henry Whittemore House – this house once occupied by Solomon Bowman has a Revolutionary record. When altering the House several bullets were found in the woodwork. Next the Amos Whittemore House and John Goroles house and Stores, now the Site of the Soldiers Monument. Here we must linger a-while to talk about this famous establishment. Here was located the first “Department Store” in this section of the State.

Mr. Gorole kept large wares and small wares. You would not find such goods as (Drap DeEte, Peu de Loie, Velour, Surakson, Albatross, Chiffon, Landsdowne nor Germantown nor much Hamburg nor Battenburg Lurakson), but you would find assortments of (Mouslin De Lains, Alpaceas Calicos?) Flannels red, yellow and green – Blue yarns, Silk and thread by the skein, hank and spool – also Men's (Findings – Durant and Beckram. In the other department – the "Crockery Store" as we used to call it – you would find China Tea Sets, glass ware, Rockingham ware, Wall Paper, Boots, Shoes and Gum Rubbers--the latter would have to be thawed out in cold weather, old style covelets, carpeting – in fact every reasonable want in that line could be supplied. A red gravel walk fronted the stores, shaded with a green painted awning. Several good hitching posts also painted green. Vehicles would sometimes stand for hours as the store was often thronged. No cash girls or bundle boys – we paid for our goods if we could and carried them home ourselves.

Next road to Charlestown – now Broadway. Whittemore Hotel, now Arlington House or Cooper Tavern. The ell part happened to be the Cooper Tavern when two men were killed in the nineteenth of April 1775. The Hotel building contained a somewhat spacious hall for dancing parties and other uses. Next the road to Medford. Large building Moses Proctor's Store and tenements – The first Post Office was in this building. Next the Whitney House long occupied by Benjamin Poland. The buildings were all destroyed by fire. Next Hon. James Russell's House and Office. Here we tarry for a while, for Esquire Russell was a benefactor to this Town. He was graduated from Harvard College in 1811. Studied law and settled in West Cambridge. He prospered in his profession and became identified with the best interests of the Town. He was much interested in the Public Schools. When ill health obliged him to retire from the board, his place was filled by the then new lawyer William E. Parmenter. Esquire Parmenter was a gentleman of the old school, in politics a Democrat, so much so that in the Lincoln campaign in Slavery Days, he displayed a flag for Breckinridge and Lane. He gave land for Russell School Building and willed to the Town what is now "Russell Park". Road to Woburn – now Mystic Street. Deacon Adams House and Center Railway Station. Thomas Ramsdell's Shoe Store. George G. Russell's House, This house formerly a store was moved to the present location by twenty yoke of oxen.

Col. Thomas Russells residence. The old dwelling house (Col. Russell's birthplace) and the Store adjoining. We must stop here to do honor to this man for he was one of the substantial men of Menotomy and West Cambridge. He was Town Clerk for many succession years, also represented the town in the General Court. Settled estates. Many resorted to him for advice which he gave with kindness and veracity. The "Old Store" has a remarkable history. In Revolutionary days it was taken for a hospital; being a variety store the thirsty travelers often called here to quench their thirst, and hear the news. The recent fish market being the Tap Room Hall over the Store, was the Armory for the West Cambridge Light Infantry – also dance hall and used for the social functions of the day. A popular school kept here by William W. Wellington. In fact the store seems to have had a continuous performance. Until recently the doors were not closed for more than a hundred years. Now the ancient building has Changed Hands – how much those two words imply for an estate which was in one family for four generations descending in a direct line from Father to Son. It will soon be in the By Gones, for Utility in Progress; and we must submit. In a sentimental point of view, how contented the Old Building looks – built in Colonial days, pointing East and West – its sills resting on the ground, its picturesque lean-to and ample chimneys – many times I have counted the eleven windows in the front. We can only say it has outlived its usefulness. A new structure will be for new people who "Knew not Joseph" (The Russell Buildings were taken down in October 1905).

Next Mill Lane and Ephraim Cutter homestead, now more than 100 years old. The Gannett Institute was commenced in this House. John Gammells Fur Shop, and a house since removed to Mystic Street. John Frosts Cottage and Blacksmith's Shop and land belonging to the Pattee Estate. Universalist Church Stephen Cutter House now owned by James M. Chase. I have been told that this land was once surveyed to locate the Middlesex Turnpike. Mrs. Cutter was so indignant that she went out and threw (snuff?) at the surveyors. Road to Cutter's Mill, Mrs. Avery's Cottage, now moved to Mill Street. Thomas Ramsdell's Baptist Church. Miss Clarissa Chadwick's House and the Estates of Thomas and Isaac Hall House partly of brick called the "Beickum Ends."

We are now at the beginning of Schouler Court. Robert Scouler House and James A. E. Bailey's House. Edward Russell House called the Woodbine Cottage.

Two houses adjoining now standing Large House and road to Saw Factory – The finest saws in the States are made here by Welch and Griffiths. Cutter-Tufts Tavern and store. Tradition says a Public House has been kept here since 1734. It is related that on the eighteenth off April 1775 in the stillness of the night, the British Troops halted here. Not being molested they marched on to Lexington. In Mr. Mr. Tufts day the old Hostelry was a popular resort for the pleasure of the public. They would call him for a mug of “Flip,” then ride on to Munroe’s in Lexington for the “mulled wine”. Next Schouler Residence and Print Works – established by James Schouler in 1832. The mills were equipped with machinery for cloth printing. His sons grew up with the business and settled around him. They were all genial and pleasant men full of amusing stories, song and wit. They did a thriving business employing many hands. Large House called “House of Nations” was formerly the Second Baptist-Meeting House. Beattle Lane. Matthew and Wakter Fletchers Houses. Nathan Robbins house and buildings. Widow Rebecca Fessenden’s House and Neil Jefferson Cutter House. Paul Dodge’s house and Mill. The Eldridge Farmer House on the corner of the Back Road, now Forest Street. Abel Locke House and William Locke John A. P. (Pinces?) House, which was formerly the store kept by Charles Muzzy Perry’s Mill.

We are now at the junction of the Lexington Road and the Middlesex Turnpike – at the “parting of the ways”. Now shall we go home? Too late for the Omnibus. The whistle of the steam is too far away to be heard. The whining of the Electric is still further. We will say Good Night and God keep us till we meet again. Written by Almenia L. Whittemore Read before the Society April 1906.

End of first part.

One year ago we halted at the “parting of the ways” which is the Middlesex Turnpike and the road to Lexington. This day we resume our walk, cross over and take the other side, noticing the Estates and Homes as located in the “Early Forties” with fore gleams of the Present. The land on our right is well wooded so we skip along, seeing through the trees the William Locke House and the Capt Benjamin Locke House with the date of the building on the chimney 1750, pass the road to Birch Hill where the Peirce family resides. They trace their ancestry to Solomon Peirce, a soldier of the Revolution born in 1743. Now Appleton Street on Arlington Heights, next the Gidley Starkweather House now owned by Mr. Bryant. We pass the Sullivan Russell House, Mrs. Peter Locke House and the Brick School House on the hill. The old schoolhouse is not there now. Perhaps a description of the interior would be interesting. The building was entered over a huge rock for a stepping stone. In the entry room strong wooden pegs for the hanging of Caps, Mufflers, Hoods, Shawls, Sun Bonnets etc. No Buttericks patterns in those days. Also sufficient room was reserved for the Wood Bin, Water pail and tin dipper. The school room contained wooden benches and desks made of soft wood unpainted which yielded readily to the jack knife especially on the boys side. The front row of desks, with a narrow board attached, made seats for the younger pupils. The teacher’s desk at the end was a half circular affair made of the same pliable wood with ample space underneath for the teacher’s hat and the rod if one was used – also served as a place to put unruly children so they could be more closely watched – one day a roguish young little girl was punished in that way – she eluded the teacher’s eye and filled his hat with waste paper. For heating a large oval-shaped stove with the oven doors removed, so we could stand on both sides and roast apples, delighted to see them dance with the heat. A long (funnel?) crossed the room, affording a degree of comfort which would not be appreciated at the present day. Baring the rude surroundings the youthful Websters would stand up and declaim. Banished from Rome? Whats banished; but set free from daily contact of the things I loathe? Until the bare walls and even the rocks and hills, seemed to echo with their eloquence. The big girls held their own in recitation and dialogue, while the smaller children sewed patchwork. One of those “big girls” Maria Farmer Robbins was the Donor of the beautiful Library.

However we will not say much about those days, for many bright men and women have received their first lessons in the "Little Red School House."

Gershom Cutter House at the foot of the hill. Ichabod and Philip B. Fessenden's Houses – the latter is moved away and Fessenden Road opens the land. Farther on Bowen Russell House and the North East District School House. Abijah Frost House, then a fine tract of land shaded with noble elms and owned by Walter Fletcher. In the springtime the boys used to have rare sport on this springy land – killing snakes. It is now the fine road to the Robbins Spring Hotel. Next the Eureka Engine House. The musical bell, some parts of the old Engine, and the Fireman's spirit of rivalry with other Tubs are with us now. Henry Wellington House and Grocery Store kept for a time by Ralph W. Newton. A House in which Michael Kenney resided. Mr. Kenney, an early immigrant from Ireland was a man of much intelligence. He was book keeper at the Schouler Print Works for many years, and reared a large family – one of his sons was killed in the Civil War (his name is on the Soldiers monument). Another Thomas (Groom?) made a home for himself in a southern city, and within a few years, sent to the Library two books of Poems written by himself – he has since died). Michael Kenney at his death was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery beside his four sons. Next Schouler residence. Charles Swans houses. Two houses owned by Daniel and David Clark. The David Hill house and Mrs. Rebekah Russells House. We are now at the corner of Mount Vernon Street which goes up on to the hill. Eldridge Locke House stands away from the road. Prentice Estate adjoining Elijah Cutter's House and shops. William Dickson's house and shops. Converse House and William Richardson's House. It was in this neighborhood that the little girl Nabby Blackington was watching her mother's cow while she fed by the roadside on the nineteenth of April 1775 about the middle of the day a detachment of British troops was marching through Menotomy. The cow took her way directly through the passing column and Nabby followed unharmed. See Cutter's history. Passing what is now Highland Avenue, and come to the William Schouler residence. This was his first home after his marriage. The house and land was a wedding gift from his Father James Schouler. He lived here a number of years, working in the mills then, moved to Lowell and bought the Lowell Courier which became a leading Whig paper. As Adjutant General during the Civil War his record is too well known to repeat.

Leaving this house we pass upland and lowland until we come to the Artemas Locke estate with the barn on the roadside. The ell part of this house has a revolutionary record; the British troupes on their return from Lexington, plundered the house of some silver communion waare, which was afterward found in a pawn shop and returned. Next the Baptist Parsonage and the Avery houses. Msr. L. P. Bartletts new house, now the fine residence of G. Newton Blake. The Teel cottage, now altered, removed and owned by P. J. Foster – next the Jason Russell house, with the long walk up to the door. It is interesting to know that the emigrant “William Russell” willed to his wife Martha one half of the “well”. Perhaps some of you have drank from the “Old Oaken Bucket which hung in that well. Leaving the well, and a tracet of undulating land we come to Jesse P. Patter’s well appointed house with massive iron fences and artistic Gateway (which now adorns the Maple Street entrance (Lox?) ordered walk on the Robbins Estate). Bakery with house adjoining built in 1820. The Cotting House. When the nunnery was burned in 1834, Miss Sophia Reed an escaped nun was sheltered here by Mrs. Cotting, then an old fashioned house which was burned. The William Whittemore house and Card Factory. Of this house much might be related. Mr. Whittemore built the house in 1807-8 residing in the Cutter homestead while he was building. I have been told that Cotton and Wool Cards were manufactured in the third story until he built the Factory. He was an energetic and public spirited man actively engaged in every good work pertaining to the Town with his acquired wealth. His fair daughter and sons made his beautiful home the centre of social festivities. The Card business at that time was the leading manufacturing business of the Town and employed many hands in the interest of trade. Mr. Whitteman took a long journey to Kentucky, travelling mostly overland, a hazardous undertaking for seventy or eighty years ago. When peace was declared in 1815, he brilliantly illuminated his house. After a while by circumstances beyond his control, he became the sole occupant of this abode, cared for by a house keeper, his lonely meals accompanied by a pet cat who sat on the corner of the table.

After his death a boarding school for girls was kept here by Miss L. M. Barker of Clinton New York. In the foregleams we see the mansion removed to “Sweet fields beyond”, a costly edifice built on the site, and the Town of Arlington possessor of an Institution or the Advancement to

Knowledge Education and an enduring Monument to the memory of Eli and Maria Robbins. The Village Commons and the First Parish Church with its long row of sheds next to Burial Ground road to the South part of town – locally called “Flob End” now Pleasant Street (name suggested by Col. Thomas Russell). Here we stop to listen to the “Babbling Brook” Nature’s own rivelet coursing its way through “Field and Fallow”. It has been our compassion all the way. Now we hear it running through the old Cemetery along the Jarvis land to the pond. Samuel Lavani store on the corner for the sale of Papers, Pies, Peanuts, Poppuns, and plenty of other things. We pass numerous shops, and the first Drugstore kept by King and Thaxter. Then the three story dwelling house, known as the Dexter house where the Library was commenced. We cross the track, pass the Henry Swan house, Joshua Robbins house, John P. Daniels Blacksmith shop, G. and H. Whittemore’s Card Factory, Gershon Whittemore’s house was once called the Tory House on account of its white chimneys. Now the Henry Swan Estate and Whittemore Street. William Clarke house and harness shop. Large stable and land owned by Philip L. Whittemore. This was the home for the Omnibus teams driven by Cummings Lovejoy. Boy on the steps Henry De Blois. Aside from the stage coach passing through, this was the first Public Conveyance between Cambridge and Boston. It was surely a great conveyance for with comfortable speed and safety, we could reach the City in one hour and thirty minutes – Fare 25 cents. Next Pond Lane. A. P. Wyman Black Smith shop. Blake house. James Russell house. He was called Farmer James to designate him from Lawyer James Patten. Russell house School house and Pound. This locality is now Linwood Street – Captain George Peirce’s house; the Barnes house and the Abner Peirce estate hedged with Lilac Bushes to the Gates house on the corner of Wier Lane, now Lake Street. Samuel Butterfields house and well kept grounds. Passing under the Big Trees (Van Crest?) we come to the Jonathan Whittemore house, substantial old mansion and the last to be observed.

Before disbanding we must turn our faces to the sunset resting on the hills beyond. Spy Pond in the valley, Little Spy connecting which is the source of Alewife Brook or Menotomy river – for some distance the river flows sluggishly along through marshy land under the bridge across Broadway



(Charlestown Street now) and finally mingles with the Mystic. This river is the dividing line between Arlington and Cambridge and the southerly boundary of our Pleasant Town.

Alemia T. Whittemore.

We have now completed the Round Trip. End of the second part Copied May 7<sup>th</sup> 1907, typed December 2016/

