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Wilmington, Massachusetts
Its
Growth and Progress

1730 to 1930



PREPARED BY A SUB-COMMITTEE
OF THE
200TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

HARRY R. DEMING
General Chairman

Photographs Made by
MISS MILDRED HOLT
of Boston



Aerial Photograph of Wilmington Railroad Station. By courtesy of 26th Division Aviation Department
Post 136 American Legion. Note the marker on the train-shed (7 -- 0 -- 7 -- 3)

Historical

Sketch

Growth

and

Progress

of

Wilmington,

Massachusetts

1730

to

1930

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BEGINNINGS OF WILMINGTON

Our Wilmington, generally spoken of as having been formed out of portions of two towns, Woburn and Reading, really was formed from segments of three, and, it might perhaps be said, of four. It was in 1730 that the Great and General Court passed an act setting off a portion of what was then Woburn and a smaller portion of what was Reading, as a separate town, which was incorporated under the name of Wilmington. Each of these sections was a rough sort of triangle, and to the union there were added the farms of seven men from Billerica. Oddly enough, there was another triangle, which lay outside the jurisdiction of any of these three towns, the status of which remained something of a riddle until it was incorporated in Wilmington. The town was created in response to a demand for a separate civil organization as the basis for support of "Public Worship," a very real necessity according to Puritan ideas.

Charlestown received a liberal grant of land in 1640, which became Charlestown Village, two years later incorporated as the Town of Woburn. To Woburn, in turn, in 1664, were added 2,000 acres which included the "Land of Goshen," the Biblical name the Fathers gave to what is now the Centre and the West District of our town. In 1644 part of the outlying domain of Lynn, known as "Lynn Fields" or "Wood End" was incorporated as the Town of Reading. In this were included the present town of North Reading, the Town of Wakefield, then South Reading, and much of the East District and some of the North District of Wilmington.

The dividing line between the Reading and Woburn contributions to Wilmington began at the point where these three towns meet today, near the Loring place on West Street, ran northwestward, and terminated at a big pine, called "Brock's Tree," that stood about where the Salem Street Crossing of the Boston & Maine Railroad (formerly known as the Widow Blanchard or the Lizzie Blanchard Crossing) now is. This tree also marked the southwestern boundary of the Land of Nod, the portion of Wilmington that belonged to neither Woburn, Reading or Billerica. This Land of Nod, another Biblical designation, lay north of the north line of Reading, which is almost exactly followed today by the line of Salem Street. Nod included all the land between that line and Andover. The line ran from the western boundary of what is now North Reading to Brock's Tree. This territory, which was a triangle, belonged to "The Proprietors of Nod" and consisted of about 3,000 acres. There is much about it in the diary of Judge Samuel Sewall, one of the three judges who tried the Salem Witches.

The Town of Charlestown claimed it, but the "Proprietors"

sustained their claim before the Great and General Court and the territory never was within the jurisdiction of any town until it was joined to Wilmington. A man named Nathan (?) Willoughby got title to 800 acres of it, which he sold to one Moore, the father-in-law of Judge Sewall and the latter acquired title to it through his wife's inheritance. It was set off to him in particular lots. Today Lot 1 is the property of John W. Hathaway, a portion of it being the land which the town has acquired for its water supply. Lot 2 is the property of Caleb S. Harriman.

Both Nod and Goshen kept their distinctive characters until well within the recollection of many of the present generation, and often have a place in colloquial conversation today, but their lines have become more or less dim and blurred. Nod was erroneously supposed to be a quaint way of saying North. The North School was quite frequently called "Nod School," while High Street ("New City" or "Hardscrabble" of other days), was spoken of as "up Nod." Other names came into usage to designate particular parts of the town. The lower "East Part" from the East School to Perry's Corner and south to Sawpit Woods, long held forth as "The City."

The tract from the Centre west to Goshen and north to Nod line was called Lebanon, because of the cedars that grew in great numbers in the swamp back of the old Cemetery and stretching northwestward to what is now Wilmington Junction. Lebanon and Goshen were back ends of Woburn.

FIRST WHITE SETTLERS

When anyone attempts to say who was the first white man to settle in what is now Wilmington he gets into hot water. The evidence in favor of any claimant is always met with a strong counter claim. Abraham Jaquith (known by the military title of Sergeant Abraham Jaquith) settled close by what is now Aldrich Road, perhaps as early as 1660. Going a very short distance beyond the old Aldrich House one finds a cellar hole to the right of the road, which is believed to be where his house stood, and there is an old well near it said to have been dug in that year. Sergt. Jaquith was one of the seven men of Billerica whose farms were included in the formation of Wilmington. About 1658 the Boutwell House was built, past which Boutwell Street now runs. Somewhere between 1675 and 1685 the Tweed-Manning House, on Ballardvale Road, was built. It was an old house when James Tweed bought it just after the Revolutionary War and settled there. It is easily the oldest house that is or was in the Nod part of the town.

Richard Harnden, the first of his name who is known to have come to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, settled in the part of Lynn

that became Reading and is now part of Wilmington. He came from England. He had a grant of land from the Ipswich River at Jenkins Bridge, and running north along Lubber's Brook and what is now Woburn Street, as far as Nod. The first Harnden House was on the brow of the hill where High Street curves down to Woburn Street, about the site where Augustus T. Norton's new house now stands. The old cellar hole was a landmark there until the Osborne House was built that was moved farther up High Street. There is much interesting lore about the old Harnden place.

The latest claimant to the honor of being the first settler of Wilmington is William Buck, and a genealogy of the Buck family, recently published, states that he arrived on the ship Increase and that he settled in Wilmington in 1635 and built the original part of the house now owned and occupied by John Henry Buck, a descendant, between Wildwood and Woburn Streets, close by Buck's Corner.

Whatever the historical truth about the priority of settlement, certain it is that by 1700 the total number of settlers was but few, and also that by 1720 a sufficient number had arrived to make the question of church-going a serious one.

John Harnden and Samuel Eames headed a petition Sept. 5, 1729, that the region be made a separate precinct. This was denied and the petitioners were joined in a similar appeal Nov. 26 the same year by Daniel Pierce, Benjamin Harnden and Samuel Walker; this also was denied, but a subsequent petition for separate township was received with favor and on September 25, 1730, an act of the General Court incorporating the new town as Wilmington was passed. The condition was imposed that "the inhabitants" be "required" to provide themselves with a minister "within the space of three years," which was done.

Wilmington took 43 tax-payers from Woburn; from Reading it is uncertain how many. The farms of seven residents of Billerica were detached from that town and joined to Wilmington, these men and their families becoming part of the population of the latter. They were Abraham Jaquith, John Beard, Ebenezer Beard, Jacob Beard, Jonathan Baldwin, Peter Cornell and Richard Hopkins.

A good idea of the families then living in the town is gained from the list of the founders of the church, which as required by the act incorporating the town, was set up in 1733. These were headed by the minister first "settled" here, the Rev. James Varney. The others were James Thompson, Abraham Jaquith, Kendal Peirson, Daniel Eames, Thomas Rich, Jr., Stephen Wesson, Cadwalader Ford, Joseph Killam, Stephen Wright, Isaac Buck, Samuel Leman, John Cram, James Townsend, Ephraim Buck, Jr., Zacheus Hebbard and John How.

To these were added the following members of the church in the same year: John Harnden and Mrs. John Harnden, Sarah Harn-

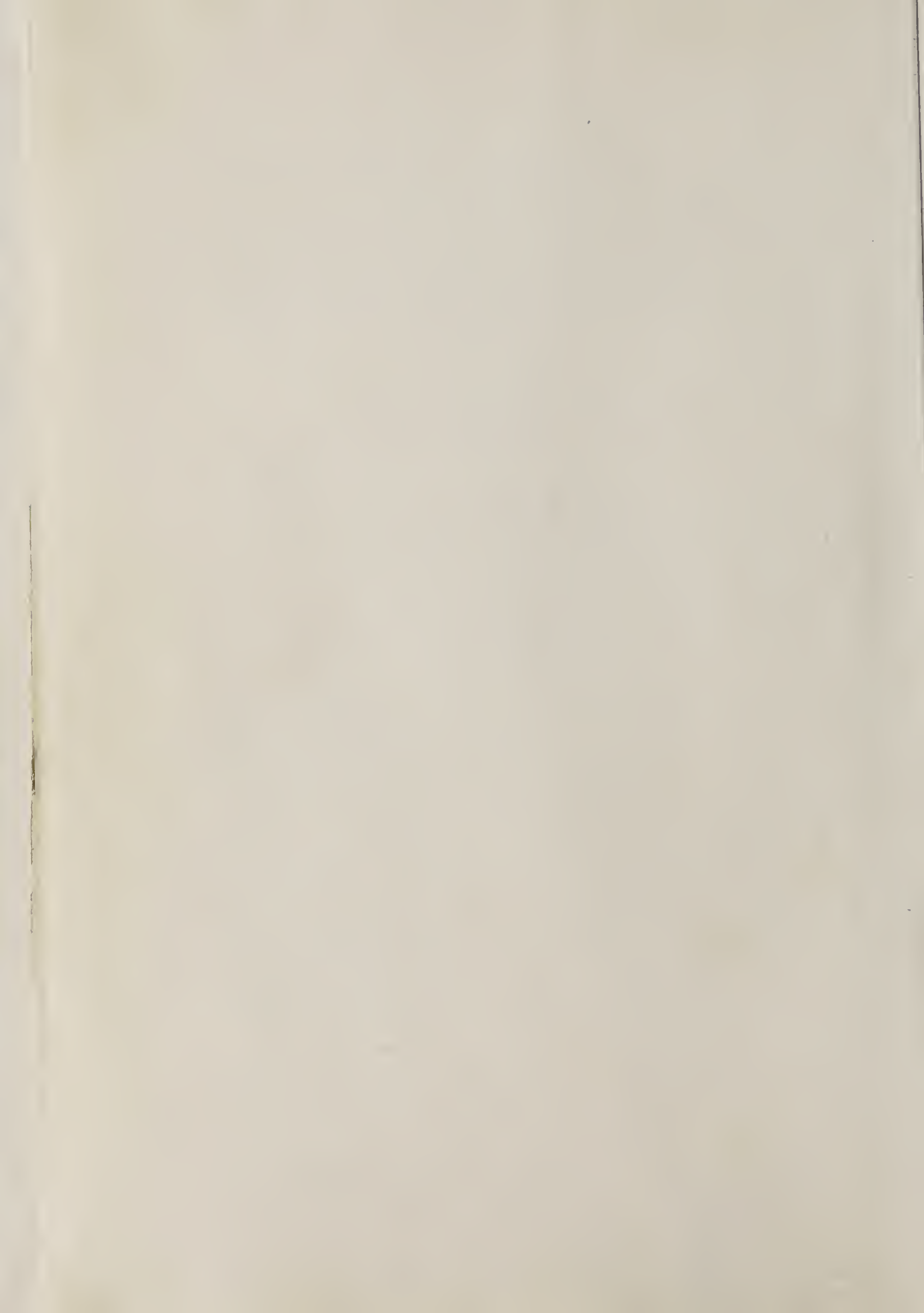
den, John Jaquith and Mrs. John Jaquith, Mrs. James Thompson, Mrs. Abraham Jaquith, Mrs. Kendal Peirson, Mrs. Stephen Wesson, Mrs. John Cram, Mrs. James Townsend, Mrs. Samuel Leman, Mrs. Daniel Eames, Mrs. Ephraim Buck, Jr., Mrs. Stephen Wright, Mrs. Isaac Buck, Mrs. Ephraim Buck, Sr., Mrs. Lydia Roberts, Mrs. Mary Rich, Mrs. William Tucker, Rachel Buck and Mrs. Hannah Wood. The names and descendants of not a few of these still linger in the town.

INDIAN MASSACRE

Although the town, because of its late founding, escaped the Witchcraft delusion and certain other horrors, it had one grim episode in the Harnden Massacre. John Harnden, who had been one of the earliest movers for the setting off of Wilmington from its parent towns, was the oldest son of the settler Richard Harnden and was born in Reading in 1668. He was chosen as one of the deacons of the very first church and also acted as "cash keeper" for the town. One night in 1706, while he was away from home, five Indians, of a war-party that had been attacking Dunstable, came down to his house while he was away, made an entrance through the roof and killed Mrs. Harnden and three of the children. The others hid behind a great rock, henceforth known as Indian Rock, but were discovered and carried off, though they were rescued later by infuriated pursuers. One of the girls was struck by an arrow and was thought dead and her body was thrown by the marauders into a small pond close by, but the water revived her and she was rescued after the savages had gone and lived to grow to womanhood.

The Indians were prompted to this deed by a desire for revenge for the death of a drunken squaw of their tribe who was run over and killed by a Harnden near a small pond on the way to Woburn. This pond, now obliterated by a recent relocation of the highway, is a short way south of the old Isaac Damon place, which stands where Eames Street joins Main Street.

One legend has it that the squaw was run over by an ox-cart, and another that Harnden was riding a horse and that the animal galloped over the prostrate woman, one of its hoofs striking her head. The Indians, however, took their revenge on the wrong family, as the one who ran over the squaw lived in a house at the foot of the hill. The house of the massacre stood almost directly back of the Rev. Joshua Buffum's home of later years, in High Street, and the site today can plainly be distinguished by the cellar-hole and well. The pond, on which children of the neighborhood long used to slide in winter, is back of what used to be known as the John Morris house.



WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930



Middlesex Canal House
 Corner Shawsheen Avenue
 Prior to 1802

Oldest and Largest
 Hemlock in New
 England

Perrys Corner and Asa G.
 Sheldon's Blacksmith Shop
 About 1825

Middlesex Canal Acqueduct
 1802

Baldwin Apple
 Monument
 1802

Squire Eames' Place and
 Whitfield Elm
 North Wilmington

Old Swimming Hole in
 Shawsheen River

Town Pound and First
 Town Hall

CAPT. KIDD LEGEND

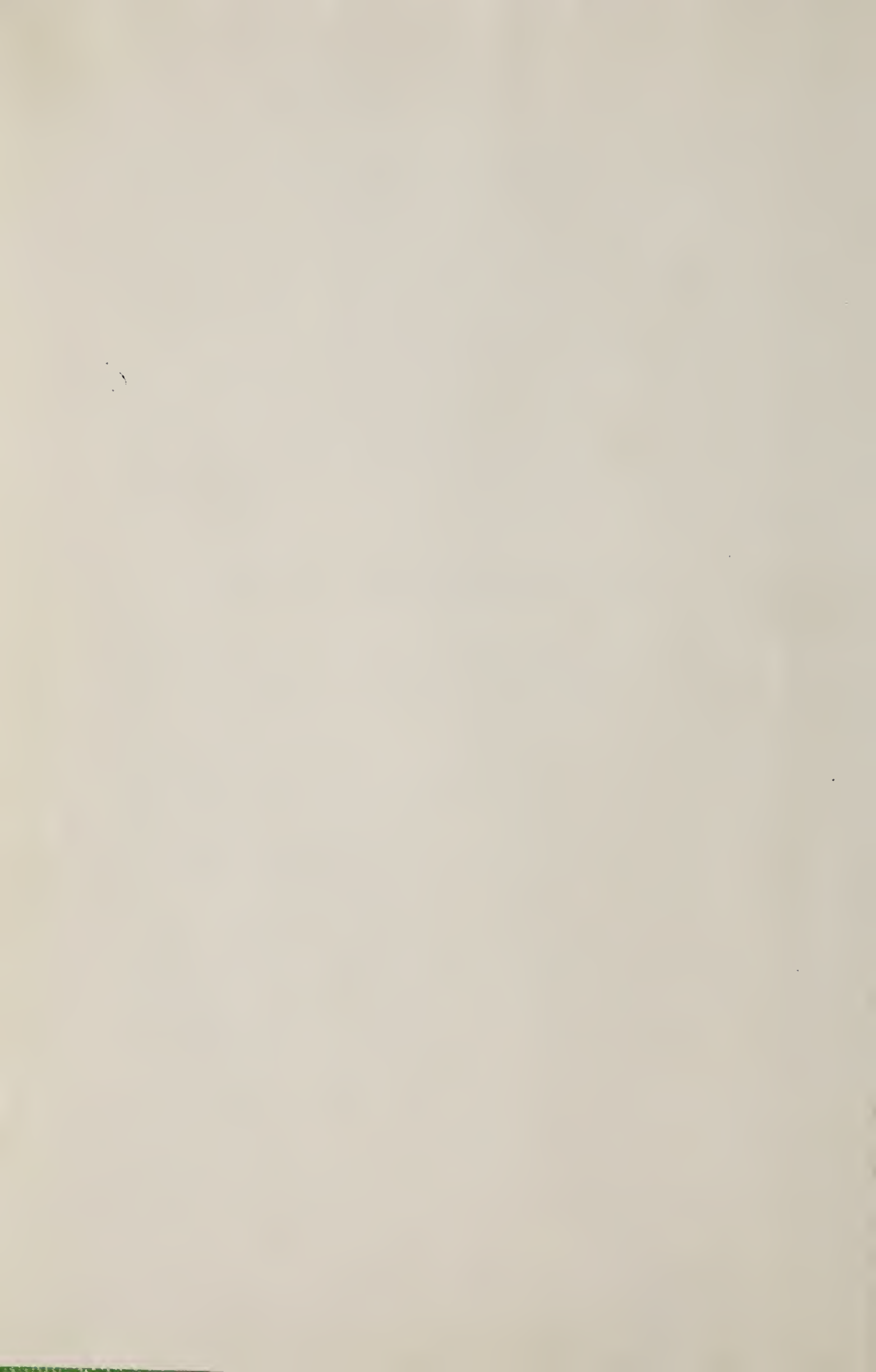
There is another, and an eerie tale, about the original Harnden house. The family one morning saw a wagon with four horses going north along the road (now Woburn Street) apparently loaded heavily. A negro was on the seat beside the driver. Later in the day the team returned, running empty, but the driver was alone. This gave rise to the story that the wagon was laden with Capt. Kidd's treasure; that it was taken up into the Nod district and buried somewhere there, doubtless in the land in front of the Devil's Den Rock, now near Brown's Crossing; that the negro was slain and buried above the loot in true piratical fashion, to guard it. Long afterward it was said that when anyone sought to unearth the treasure the negro's ghost arose and dragged it out into the field where the pumping station now stands and secreted it again until the searchers had given up their quest, and then dragged it back. A pretty faithful old slave, thus to serve the cutthroats who had murdered him!

REVOLUTIONARY WAR

A book might be written about the old houses, landmarks of the town, of which fortunately quite a number still are in use today; or of the part that grand trees have played in the local history; but the achievements of strong pillar men who once lived here claim the precedence.

The year 1773 opened with the mutterings of the approaching Revolution. A town meeting pledged the town to join with Boston, "yea, with the whole continent," for the security of the civil rights and the recovery of those that had been taken from the colony by force. A year later the town began to take action about building up its stock of powder and ball—which were stored in the attic of the meeting-house. In that meeting-house, Sept. 7, 1774, the town voted to accept the declaration of the Middlesex County convention of Aug. 30 and 31, at Concord, calling in ringing words for resistance unto death in defense of freedom. On March 6, 1775, but little more than a month before Concord and Lexington, Wilmington voted to call on every able-bodied man from 16 to 60 to report the following Wednesday with arms and ammunition, and three days later voted to enlist 24 "good able-bodied minute men."

Diligent searchers of the archives have long since established that from the beginning men of Wilmington have given a good account of themselves in the armed conflicts that have "made and preserved us a nation." In the French and Indian Wars they fought as subjects of the Crown, in the Provincial forces. The character of that



fighting may be judged from the fact that 14 of our Wilmington citizens, with their gallant Captain, Ebenezer Jones (who built the original house on the Stanley Farm) were buried in one grave following the battle of "Half-way Brook," in 1768. The Rev. Isaac Morrill, for more than half a century the minister of the Wilmington congregation, took the field with his neighbors, and as a "fighting parson" gave evidence of the sturdy qualities that caused him long to be regarded as the outstanding national figure in the history of our town. Again, like a true soldier of the Lord, he drew his sword in the Revolution. His is the chimney-like tomb in the southwestern angle of the New Cemetery, close by the Town Hall, and on the slate slab on top, among his and other names, is cut that of "Capt. Cadwalla(n)der Ford." The Fords and the Morrills were related through marriage.

On the fated morning of April 19, 1775, two companies of Minute Men started out on the road to Lexington very early in response to the "alarum," one of them commanded by Captain Cadwallader Ford, the other by Capt. Timothy Walker. Later another went out, commanded by Capt. John Harnden. They fought at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill. The number of Wilmington men who fought in the Revolutionary War was 260, including 24 captains, several of whom rose to higher command. This indicates that nearly all the able-bodied men of Wilmington were engaged in the struggle for liberty.

Records of the Gowing Family, proudly cherished by the Gowing Family Association, which meets yearly in Wilmington to keep alive the traditions of the line, bear out the above story of the march to Lexington. Daniel Gowing, the original member of the family to settle here, lived on the old Gowing place situated on what is now Park street, not far from the North Reading line. He was a member of the Wilmington Train Band and in response to the "alarum" he hastened to report at Wilmington—doubtless at the meeting-house—the morning of the 19th, to Captain Cadwallader Ford. He rode his horse to the rendezvous, and, thinking there was need for haste he reached for a switch, seizing a sapling that grew beside the road. We can see him bending from the saddle, grasping it with the grip of a sturdy farmer, and aided by the motion of his horse tugging it loose, roots and all. It may be that he left his horse at the Centre when he set out in the ranks of Captain Ford's company. When he returned home after the epic events of the day he found the sapling still on his saddle. It proved to be an elm seedling and he planted it in front of his house. As if marked by destiny to serve as a monument, it took root and grew and was long known as the Lexington Elm. It was cut down about the time of the World War, but its huge stump bears testimony to its nearly a century and a half of age.

Besides Cadwallader Ford, who rose to the rank of "Leftenant-



WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930

Colonel" as it was styled, after the British fashion, Wilmington boasted two full colonels, Colonel Joshua Harnden and Colonel William Blanchard, besides Major John Jaquith and Captain John Gowing and a number of other commissioned officers whose graves are marked by the Sons of the American Revolution as those of men who fought in the War of Independence.

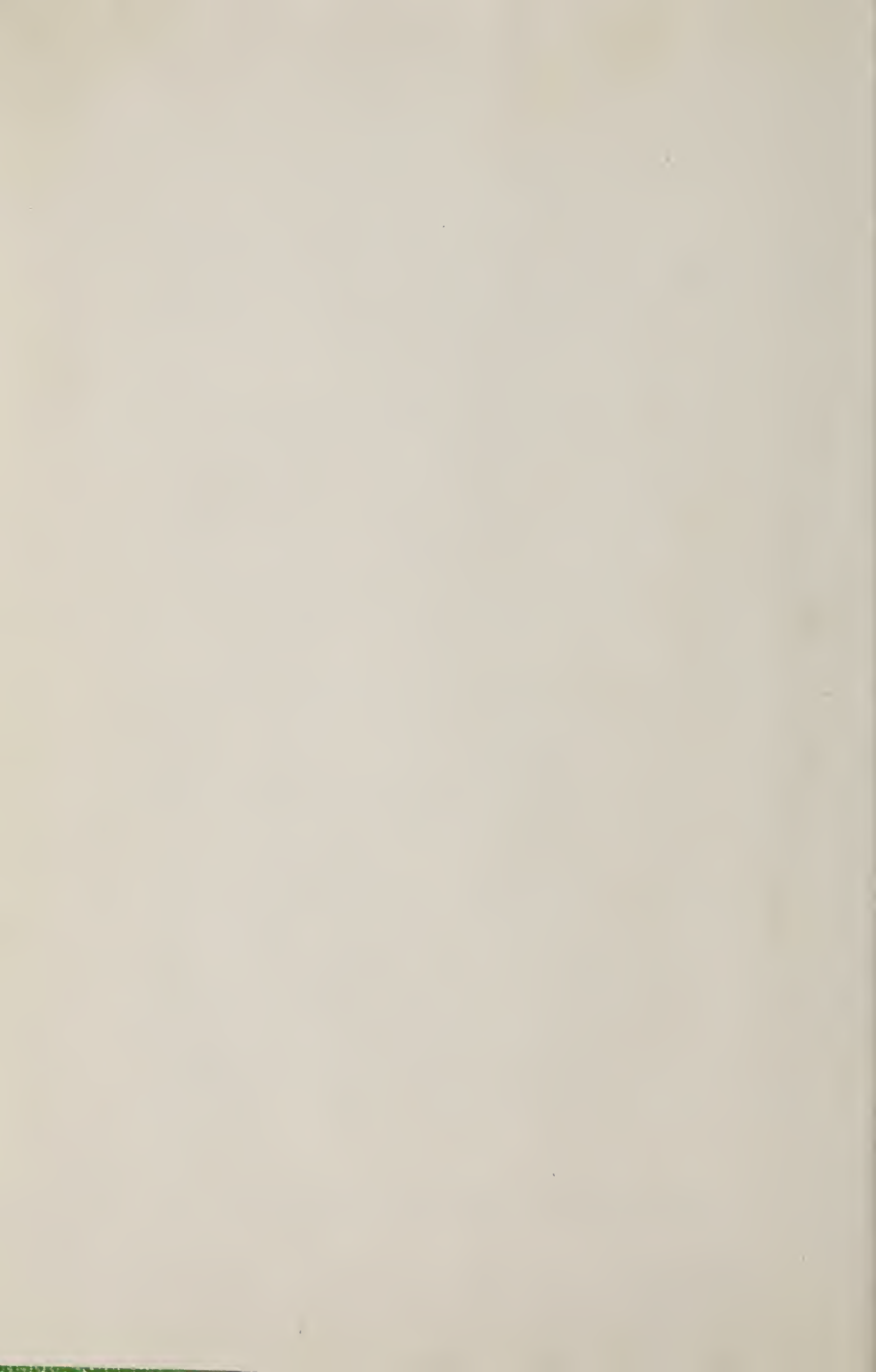
The valor and the service of Wilmington men in the Civil War were of a quality to mark them as the peers of their forefathers of the Revolution. Ninety-six men formed the Wilmington quota. Of these 14 lost their lives and 11 were discharged for disability. A Wilmington youth, full of martial spirit even as a boy, became General William Henry Harnden of that great struggle. He was a colonel when, as it chanced, commanding a Wisconsin regiment his men captured Jefferson Davis, near Macon, Georgia. He left a written account of this affair. He was a brother of Everel Harnden, long a citizen and farmer of Wilmington, whose children and children's children look back to the town as their old home.

The War with Spain, though not the great national crisis that either the Revolution or the Civil War was, met with response from young men of Wilmington, two of whom enlisted with the Wakefield Company of the 6th Massachusetts Regiment and saw service in Porto Rico. Since those days other men who saw service in that war, or in its correlated campaigns in the Philippines and China have come to make their homes in Wilmington, adding the color of their experiences to the military traditions of the town.

With these examples to emulate, is it a wonder that the men of Wilmington responded in a manner worthy of their patriot forebears to the challenge of the World War? Their records are written in the annals of many far-stretched fronts and widely scattered services. The Wilmington service flag, among its 137 stars, numbers three of gold—those of John Regan, Harold Rogers and Martin Nee, youth of the present generation, playmates and schoolmates of those now active in town affairs, to whose honor the town has made suitable memorials. A few have died since the war, and a vigorous American Legion post keeps alive their memories and the ideals for which they offered their lives. Four young women went out as nurses.

WILMINGTON INDUSTRIES

The first half of the 19th Century was the period of the greatest agricultural, industrial and commercial activity for Wilmington, and was noted for several outstanding personalities. From 1806 to 1837 was the "*hop era*". The light lands of the uplands proved suitable to the growth of this crop and during this period some 76,806



bags of hops were raised, about 16,500,000 pounds. Their total value was \$2,169,430, probably the greatest value of any one product of the town in its history. William Blanchard, Jr., known in his day as Squire Blanchard, son of Col. William Blanchard of Revolutionary War fame, was State Inspector of Hops, a position of some dignity and importance inasmuch as his salary, \$2,000, was equal to that of the Governor, and with the exception of that was the highest of any official in the state. The hops were sent to Albany and there manufactured into beer. The highest price received was 34 cents a pound, in 1817 and the lowest five cents a pound in 1819.

Diversified farming furnished the livelihood for most of the inhabitants during the early days, and in 1874, when there were 866 inhabitants, domiciled in 179 homes, there were 100 farms. By 1890 the number of farms had been doubled. The area of the town was but 5,845 acres, 4,901 of which were covered with forest growth at the outset and much land had to be cleared. There were great stretches of meadow land along the Shawsheen River, which watered the territory on the West, and more bordering the Ipswich on the East, with its many branches one of which seems to take its origin in Sandy Pond, of recent years called Silver Lake. It is plain that not many of the farms were on a large scale. Hence the people turned to specialties. The *cranberry* thrives—still thrives—in the fresh water meadows; but the total crop in 1885, when the late Mrs. Hiller's artificial bog was in operation, was worth but \$5,537.

The *meat* business probably did more to build up the general prosperity of the people of Wilmington than anything else. Over "Buck's Hill," now Wildwood Street, from the Centre and West District three or four mornings of the week, used to wind a string of white-covered butcher-wagons, heavily laden with excellent beef, to be retailed in Lynn and the "lower towns." A similar caravan, from Nod and the East Part, joined it at the City or wended down the Deacon's Road, now West Street.

The beeves, and likewise many head of sheep for the mutton trade, were driven over the road from Brighton stockyards. At one time it was said in jest, that "every other farm in Wilmington had its slaughter-house." Speaking for the entire 19th Century the jest came closer to the truth than many realized. But as the meat dressing industry centered in the great packing-houses of the West, the business of driving meat declined. Today a few drive out from Wilmington, but they are becoming motorized rapidly, and the day of long processions of prairie-schooner like wagons is past.

In the early part of the century, even past the Civil War, many of the farms had each its *shoemaker's* shop where the menfolks of the family made shoes in the winter to increase their earnings. Some-



WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930



Morrill House, Middlesex Ave.
Harnden Tavern
Late Maria Hathaway House
Prior to 1730

Harriman Residence
(formerly) Cadwalader Ford
House, prior to 1730

Norton House
High St., 1930

Joseph McMahon
Residence
1930

Walker House
Now Alden Eames' Residence

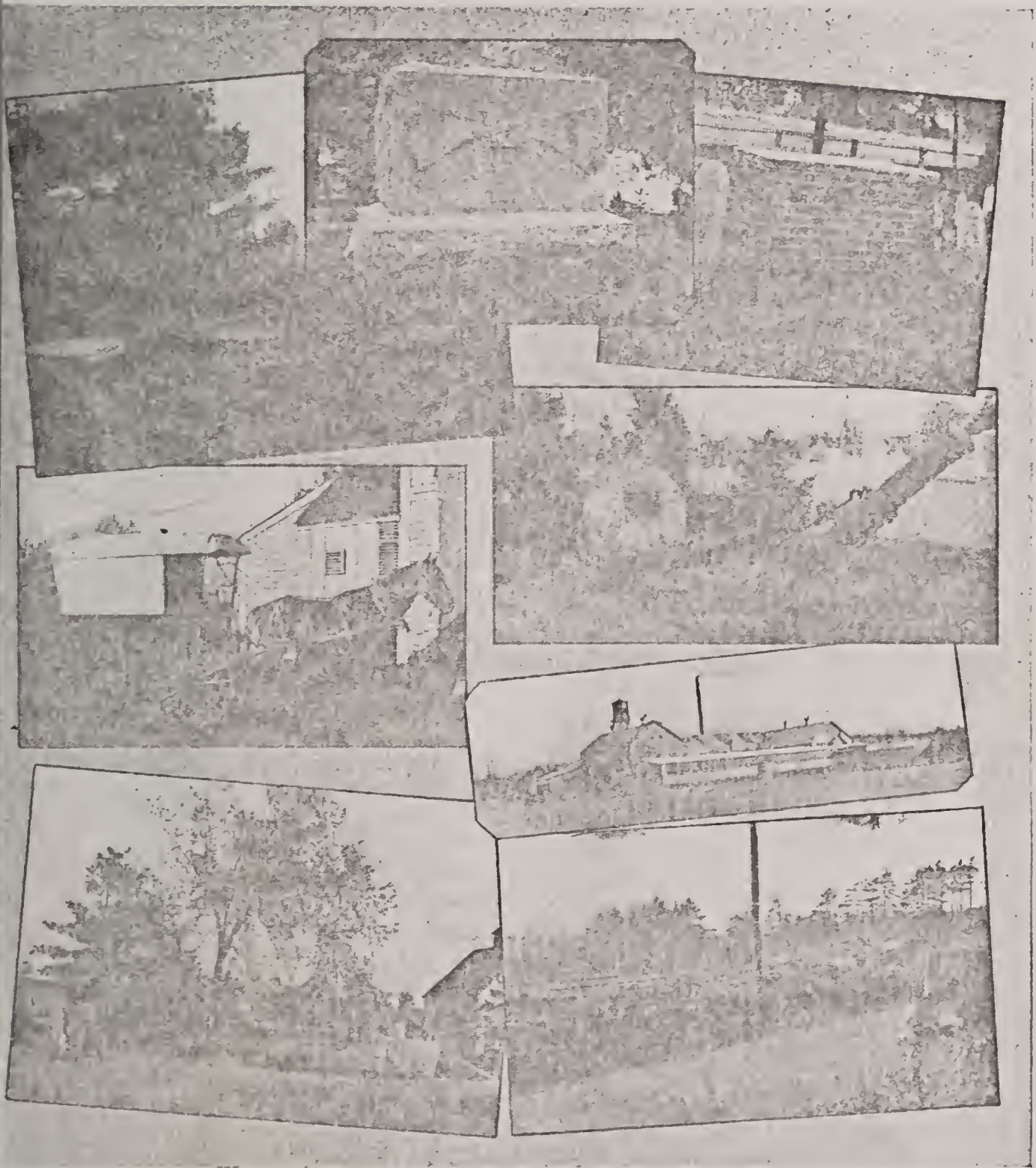
Asa G. Sheldon Residence
Now the Mitchell Farm

Edward N. Eames House

Edward M. Neilson House



WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930



Vista in New Park

Old Meat Wagon
Built by Milt Holt

Model of Canal Boat
1802-1837

Civil War
Monument

Isaac Morrill Monument

Monument to Veterans of
All Wars

Harriman Tannery

Lumber Yard

times the farm women bound shoes. Today, many an old "cobbler-shop" has been incorporated in the modern home group, as a shed, an ell or garage, while lap-stones, awls, waxed ends, clasps and benches are preserved as family antiques.

The largest single industry of the town, in the past or present, is the *Tannery*, where as many as 75 Wilmington men have been employed at one time and where not a few have learned this valuable trade.

Lumbering, with its by-product, *firewood*, has been an important business. There have been several permanent sawmills in town, not to mention many of the portable type, two shingle mills and at least three grist-mills.

A *bakery* put out \$220,000 worth of bread in one year (1857) and about that time long *wooden pumps* were manufactured. The value of *English hay* in that year was \$10,000 and the output of *firewood* was worth \$13,533.

"*Elmwood Spring*" in the north part of the town was famous for its pure water, and in the 90's there was talk of building a summer hotel near it. It is possible that our fine town water is drawn from the same vein. A few names stand out during the early times; between 1800 and 1857 several men of distinction were born in Wilmington.

Joseph Reynolds, M. D., was a well known physician and the writer of several books, including "Peter Gott, Cape Ann Fisherman" a vivid picture of sea-faring life of that day.

Timothy Walker, LL.D., was a noted jurist, who later settled at Cincinnati, Ohio, and his brother, *Sears Cook Walker*, was equally well known as a mathematician and astronomer. Their half-brother, Prof. *E. Otis Kendall*, was dean of the University of Pennsylvania.

Perhaps the best known name of that period was that of *Asa G. Sheldon*, Wilmington farmer, who became a contractor and builder of renown. "Sheldon's Bridge," across the Boston & Maine tracks, on Lowell Street, just across the Reading town line, was a piece of his handiwork originally, as likewise were a number of highway bridges across the Boston & Maine. Among his other feats were the cutting down of Pemberton Hill, Boston, and the filling in of Dock Square with the soil, and transplanting one of the great elms on Boston Common. Tradition has him striding into the icy water of the Ipswich River to lay one of the great stones in the piers of Jenkins' Bridge, in Woburn Street. He was almost crippled with rheumatism, but the rheumatism left him.

The *Middlesex Canal*, opened in 1803 for traffic, was one of the

WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930

history-making undertakings of our whole countryside. It is credited with having been the first artificial waterway for commercial purposes in the New World. Wilmington folk also may proudly remember that the *first steam train* in this part of the country was operated in 1835 over the Boston & Lowell Railroad. History, romance, pathos, humor and local color cluster around both of these institutions and might be expanded into a separate volume.

That the *Baldwin Apple* originated within the territory now Wilmington also is a source of jealous pride, for other towns have had the temerity to claim to be the home of the Baldwin Apple.

In 1886 there were only a few subscribers who were connected on the same wire and received their telephone service from the Woburn *Telephone Exchange*. As the number of telephone subscribers grew the first office in Wilmington was located at the corner of Main and Church Streets in what was known then as Hudson's store. The Wilmington operator of that period was a clerk in the store and divided his time between giving telephone service and selling merchandise in the store.

In 1900, when the number of subscribers had increased to 100, it was necessary to move the exchange to larger quarters. Service was then furnished by the Buck Brothers of North Wilmington, from 1900 to 1915 when it was again necessary to transfer the exchange to still larger quarters.

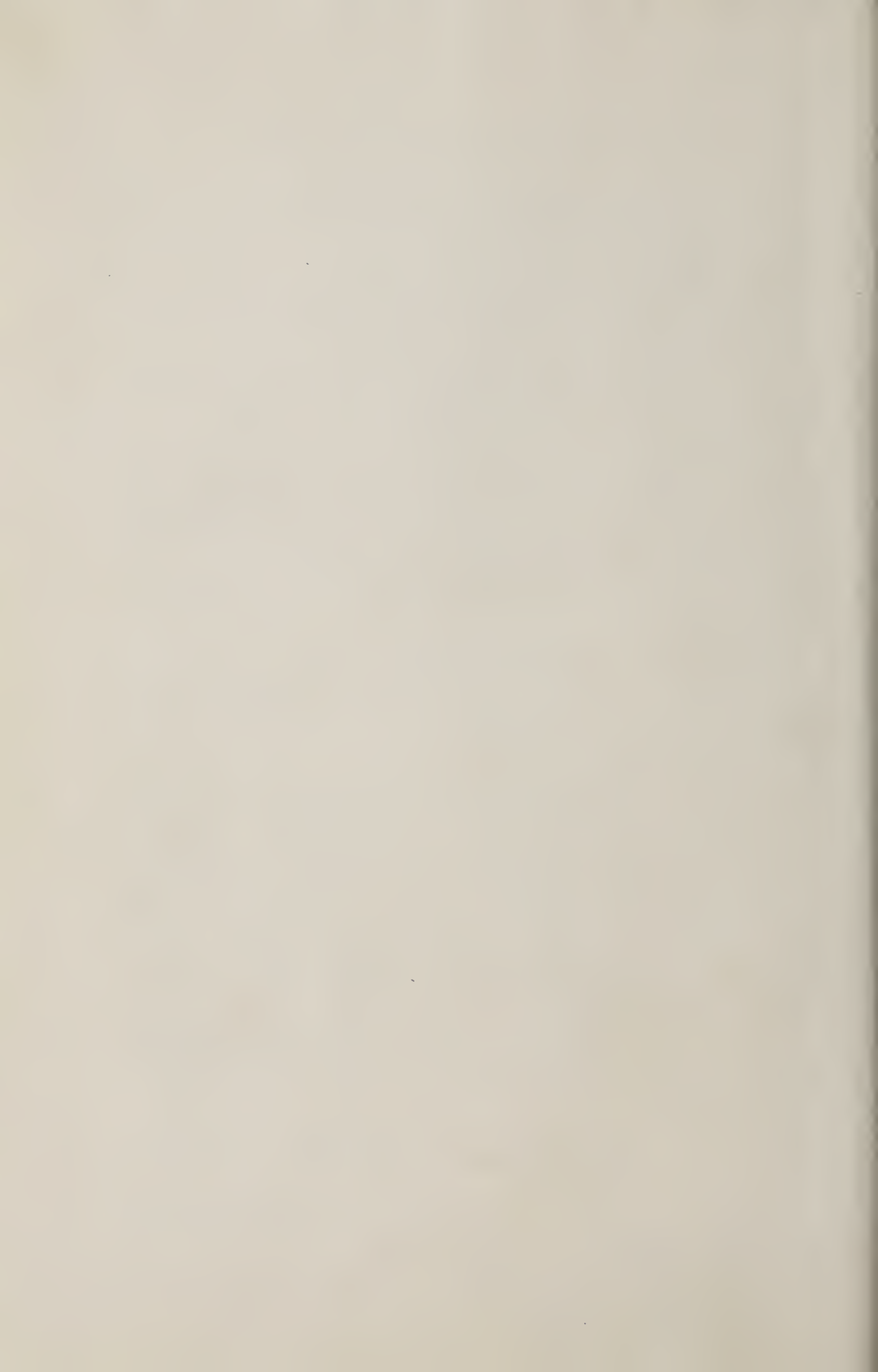
In 1915 the exchange was transferred to its present location on Church Street, at which time it required the combined efforts of two day operators and one night operator. As the number of subscribers continually increased it was found necessary in 1929 to add an ell to the present office, in which the picture is taken. The Wilmington exchange has four operating positions of the self-restoring jack type. It requires six operators to handle the daily traffic of about 4000 calls per day from more than 650 subscribers. There are also more than 19 outgoing trunk lines to various exchanges such as; Boston, Lowell, Reading, Woburn and Crystal.

Mr. Eli T. Kinsman, the present Agent, now has a very modern telephone exchange and a group of operators who take pride in giving very satisfactory service and in transacting other telephone business efficiently.

PEARSON TAVERN

Typical of Colonial farmhouse construction, this dwelling, the home of six generations of the family through the distaff side, was built early in the eighteenth century.

For many years previous to 1850 it was maintained as a tavern by Aaron Pearson, Jr., the son of Major Aaron Pearson who com-



WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930



Jewish Synagogue
1917

North Wilmington

Catholic Church
1888

Boutwell House
1725

Congregational
Church
Organized 1733

Methodist Church
1883

Community Church
1929

Silver Lake

manded Massachusetts troops during the 1812 War with England.

Located on the highway between Salem and Lowell and called Salem Street for that reason, many travelers found it a convenient overnight resting place.

It is an interesting fact that the front of the house on the second floor now comprising three rooms was formerly but one. This room was heated by two fireplaces whose flues extend into the old-time chimneys. What was formerly the kitchen with its huge fireplace and brick oven is the present dining room, the old well house now being the kitchen. Great timbers hollowed to receive hogsheads of ale formerly extended along one side of the cellar.

The eight by eight timbers of its frame and its eighteen inch floor boards, though worn by the tread of many feet still serve the passing years, and it is to be hoped will serve many more.

THE BALDWIN APPLE

One noteworthy and beneficent contribution made by Wilmington to the country is the Baldwin apple.

The original tree was on the farm of William Butters in the south part of the town. Tradition has it that it was first discovered by Mr. Butters, who was attracted to it by the sound of woodpeckers hammering upon it, thus being known at first as the Pecker apple, and later as the Butters apple.

In 1793, Samuel Thompson of Woburn while surveying on the farm for the Middlesex Canal, sampled the apples and later took home scions, giving some to his brother Abijah and to Col. Baldwin, a neighbor.

Because of Col. Baldwin's extensive culture of the apple and his generosity in sharing scions and fruit with his friends, it came to be known by his name. In 1895 the Rumford Historical Association of Woburn, erected a monument in its honor, near the site of the old tree on the Butters Farm.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

A church must be organized before a town could be "set off." (In the early days of Massachusetts.) In Wilmington at least, the desire for a separate town sprang from the desire for suitable and adequate provision for public worship. The first words preserved in the earliest records of our town are these: "The Word of God among us, and it passed in the affirmative." The first religious service within our town was held in a schoolhouse, and the first town meeting as well. Religion, Education and Civic responsibilities were all held to be solemn obligations for every man to undertake. So it is that the same men who headed the petition for a separate town were

deacons of the church, Samuel Eames and John Harnden. The first public building to be erected in the town was the church, 1732. It was erected a few rods farther north than the present structure, was two stories, 20 feet high, 36 feet wide, and 46 feet long, and built of oak, "the plank to be full inch and a half thick." There was no paint on that first structure. The church was organized with 17 male members Oct. 24, 1733 and later that same year 22 women members were added.

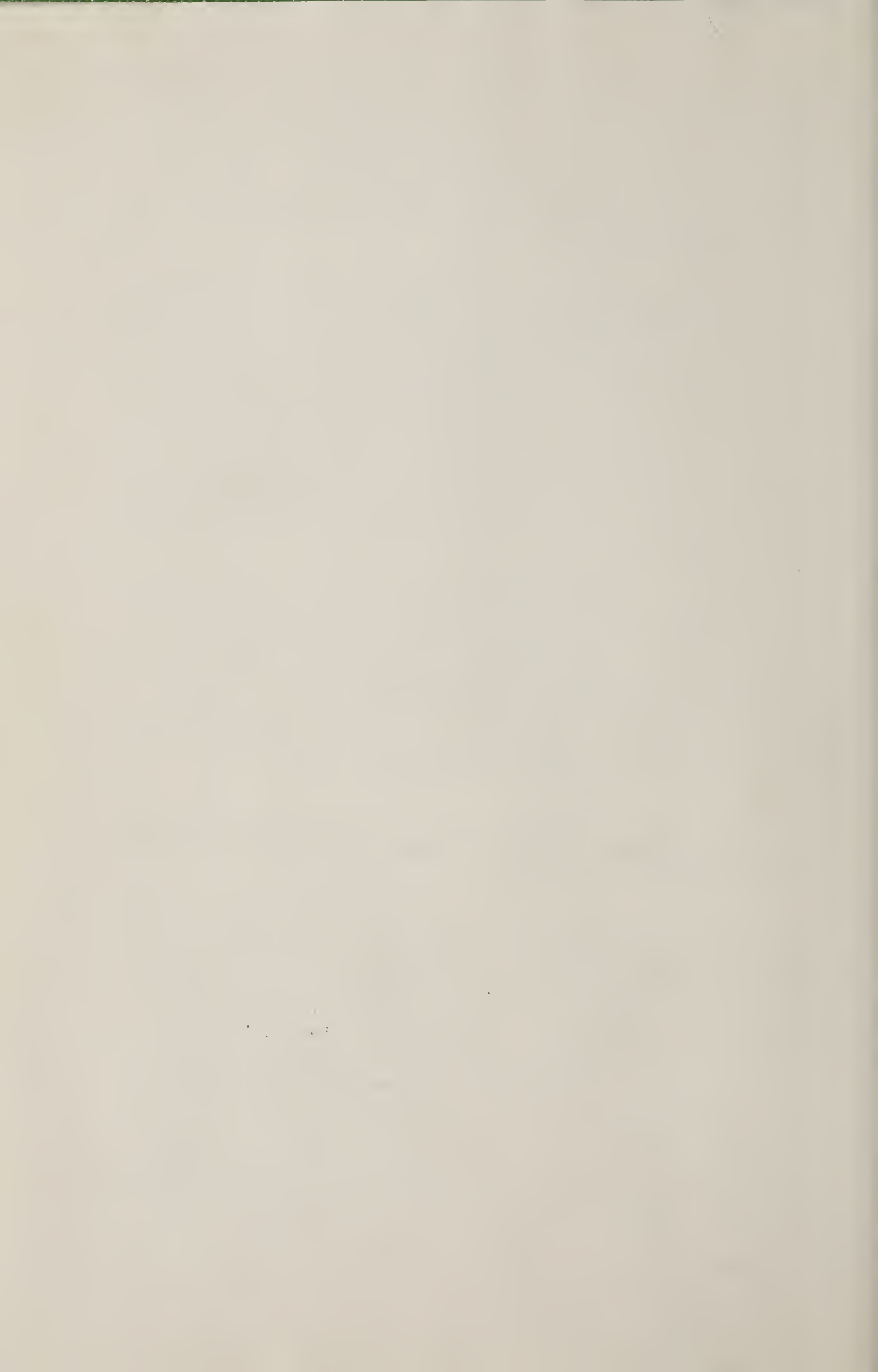
Rev. James Varney was the first minister and was chosen after a day of solemn fasting and prayer, which day was set apart by order of the town in the following vote: "Voted that the Reverend Mr. Browne of Reading and the Reverend Mr. Phillips of Andover, be treated with and entreated by the Committee in the Town's behalf, to carry on the solemn exercises of a Fast in this town for the Divine favor to this people in the great, mighty and important affair of the choice and settlement of a Gospel minister." The day of prayer was to be held in behalf of the town's choice of a man who should give instruction in the Christian religion to old and young, lead in the services of public prayer and praise, visit the sick and the afflicted, and bury the dead.

The second minister of this church, Rev. Isaac Morrill, was ordained and "settled over" the church at the age of 23 in 1789. He continued for 52 years till his death. He was Chaplain in the French and Indian Wars and in the Revolutionary War, and was greatly loved and honored by all who knew him.

These two splendid men were the first of the line of seventeen ministers who have served this church in nearly 200 years. It has had a long history of faithful and honorable service.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH 1880

The M. E. Church began in an humble way exactly 50 years ago when a few faithful souls met in their several homes for worship. Soon services were held in the hall, in the Ames block situated in what is now the business centre of the town, Rev. E. H. McKenney being the first minister. This was in 1881, but the church was not incorporated until January 29th, 1883, and a chapel was built on the corner lot of Church Street and Thurston Avenue during the pastorate of Rev. Putnam Webber 1883-6. This chapel now forms the auditorium in the present group of buildings. Rev. L. W. Adams was minister 1886-8 and the horse sheds were built behind the church at this time. Rev. W. A. Thurston followed and remained till 1891. He was responsible for the building of a parsonage on Thurston Avenue, and Camp Meetings were held close by. Rev. Adolphus



WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930

Linfield, now a professor of evangelism in Boston University, added a small school room to the original chapel and much public notice was given to this, the photograph of Mr. Linfield being shown in the daily papers as he was working as a carpenter in the alterations. It was during the ministry of Howard G. Hageman that extensive additions were made, Mr. Fred. H. Roberts generously bearing the cost amounting to \$16,000. Mr. Roberts also gave the organ, still in use, in memory of his first wife (Althera A., 1908). During the present ministry, repairs and alterations and renovations have been done to the amount of \$6,000.

The old parsonage was sold some years ago, and the present parsonage is the property of Mrs. Alice Roberts who permits its use as a parsonage; the church is much indebted to Mrs. Roberts in many ways. There have been several thriving societies among the young people, the first one was organized during the ministry of Rev. W. A. Thurston and during the ministries of both Mr. Hageman and Rev. George H. Phillips the young people were very active and most prominent in the district. The present young people's society is keeping up the good work and were fortunate enough to win the banner of merit at the last meeting of the East Middlesex Circuit. During the ministry of the Rev. Howard G. Hageman and Rev. George H. Phillips, the banner was won quite often by the Wilmington young people.

The present church membership is 217, and the Sunday school has an enrollment of 382 in all departments with 22 officers and teachers. The first Sunday School Superintendent was Mr. Richard L. Folkins, who faithfully carried on for many years. Mr. Frank Kidder was also Superintendent for some three years. Mr. Walter G. Frazee was for 27 years Superintendent and also held several other important offices during this time. The church had grown considerably and Mr. Frazee saw the church and school on a firm basis. Mrs. Arthur Hamilton also filled the office of Superintendent and is now superintendent of the Home Department, a department equal to any in the conference and a monument to the earnest labor of Mrs. Hamilton. The present Superintendent is Mr. W. Henderson who has held the office for several years and has given exceptionally faithful service to his work. These people, and others deserve the highest praise for their labors.

No doubt it will be of interest to close with a few names of those who were connected with the early beginning of Methodism in town. Mr. and Mrs. Irving Morse, Mr. and Mrs. George T. Eames, Mr. Wentworth, Mrs. Henry Buck, Miss Addie F. Carter, Mr. Wallace Carter, Mr. Frank Perkins.

HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WILMINGTON

The Catholics who settled in the early days in Wilmington were obliged to go to Lawrence, Wakefield, or Woburn, to attend church. Later a Catholic Church was built in Andover and in the late 70's a church was built in Ballardvale, and the Wilmington people attended this church for a number of years.

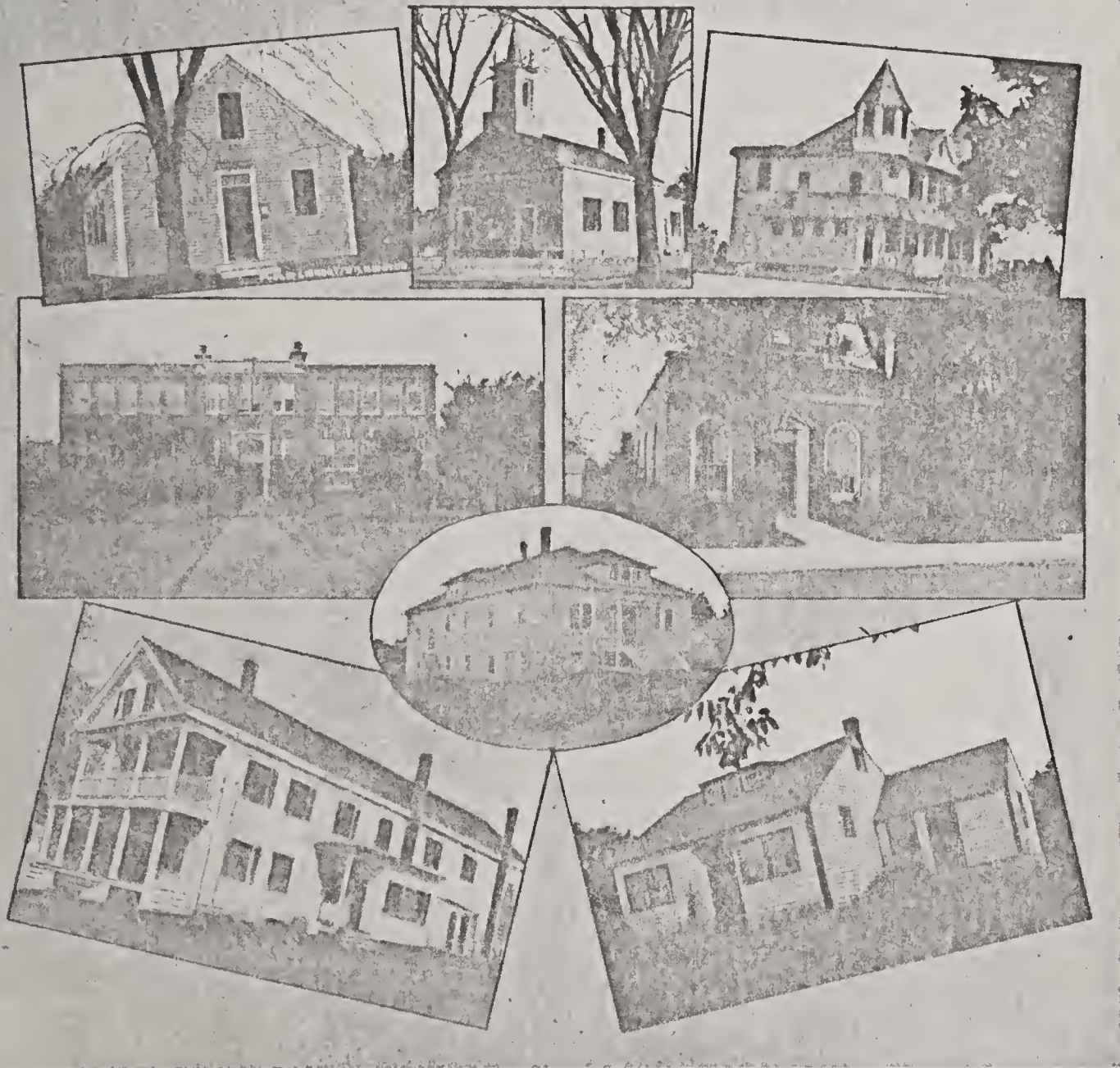
About the year 1880, a Sunday School was organized at the house of Bernard McEnroe who was then living on the Squire Eames place near the North Wilmington depot, as there were a great many children who could not attend the church at Ballardvale, and were consequently deprived of the teachings of their religion. This was continued for nearly four years, or until Thomas McMahan having purchased the residence, formerly owned and occupied by Joseph Bond, of Deacon James Skilton, to which he moved on September 8, 1884. The school was then transferred to his house. The pastor, Rev. Maurice J. Murphy, O. S. A. of Andover, visited the school, and as the numbers had increased very much, decided to have Mass on Thursday morning of each week for the children and aged persons. Mr. McMahan generously offered accommodations for that purpose and a small room over the entrance to the front hall was selected by Fr. Murphy as a chapel in which an altar was built, and on October 10, 1884 the first Mass was celebrated.

This was continued, until the Church was built, with three additional Masses in the Town Hall on September 18, December 25, 1887, and on Easter Sunday 1888. The first Mass in the Hall was offered by Rev. J. J. Ryan, O. S. A. who had succeeded Fr. Murphy as Pastor. The large number who attended on that occasion was a great surprise to Fr. Ryan and a committee in speaking with him in regard to having Mass regularly, were requested to take a census of the Catholic population, with which request they complied; the report being considered favorable, and a desirable lot for the purpose having been tendered free of expense by Michael Carlin, one of the early Catholics in town, Fr. Ryan decided to begin the erection of a church and the ground was broken to lay the foundation in the month of October 1887.

The church was completed and on Sunday, October 28, 1888, it was dedicated to the worship of God by the most Reverend Archbishop Williams of Boston, assisted by Rev. P. A. Stanton, D. D. O. S. A. of Philadelphia.

From 1888 until 1919 the church was a mission of the Augustinian Priests in Andover. In 1919, His Eminence Wm. Cardinal O'Connell made Wilmington a separate parish and appointed our first resident pastor, Rev. Richard A. Boland. A short while later, North

WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930



Public Library
Once the Centre School
1800

High School 1916

Town Hall
Once a Baptist
Church, 1850-1865,
then a High School

Grange Hall

Masonic Apartments
Once a Cranberry House

Branch of
Reading Co-operative Bank
1928

An Ancient Hop-House
Opposite Alden Eames'

Catholic Club
Once the Adam's Pump Factory

Woburn was added to the parish and an additional priest was required to assist in the duties of the parish.

In 1919 Masses were provided at Silver Lake for the summer residents and has been continued up to this time. At the present time in addition to Fr. Boland, there are two curates, Rev. Wm. Farrell and the Rev. Wm. O'Brien.

Since Fr. Boland took charge of the parish, it has greatly increased in numbers and he found it necessary to make a large addition to the church which was completed in 1925.

Fr. Boland, shortly after locating in Wilmington, purchased the old Thomas Bond Estate located on Middlesex Avenue as the parochial residence for the future use of the parish.

Masses are offered each Sunday at 8:00 and 10:30 A. M. and Sunday School is held after the 8:30 Mass.

CONGREGATION AHAVAS ACHIM DEAHRON

Built August 15, 1917.

It was in the year 1917, a few months before the Jewish New Year, when Messrs. Harry Modelevsky, Jacob Cheifitz, Josuah Cohen, Harry Solow, Morris Modelevsky, Joseph Minsky, Hyman Minsky and Jacob Winer met on a field to decide what should be done about a place of worship.

A motion was made and carried that the above members should pay five dollars each. This was done, and forty dollars were now in their possession. A chairman, Mr. Josuah Cohen, a vice-chairman, Mr. Harry Modelevsky, and later a secretary, Mr. Cheifitz and a treasurer, Mr. Minsky were chosen.

They now needed land for building. The two chairmen went to Mr. Adeleman, who was the owner of a tract of land, and secured a suitable plot. Besides donating this Mr. Adeleman gave a hundred dollars. Then, with a hundred and forty dollars lumber was bought and they started on a very hard task, building a synagogue. How hard they struggled, for carpenters, masons and what-not, all had to be chosen from this little group of men.

Finally four walls and a roof were built. The New Year came, and the people came to the synagogue. How it rained that day! The roof, not having been laid by experts, leaked, and the rain came down in torrents, but they stayed and worshipped.

A Torah was needed, and with the help of a club organized by the women and children, a Torah was bought for a hundred and fifty dollars.

This is how these faithful and hard-working members struggled.

WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930

Now they are the proud possessors of two Torahs and many Bibles.

The membership is now sixteen and all are striving for the success of the synagogue.

SCHOOLS

One can hardly do justice to such a large and interesting subject as our public schools in the short space allotted to it. The schools of Wilmington seem to be older than the town itself. When the town was incorporated, Samuel Dummer, the sheriff of Middlesex County and a resident of Wilmington, was authorized by the General Court to call the first town meeting in "the schoolhouse" on October 20, 1730. The Rev. Daniel P. Noyes, in his historical address, says, "The site of 'the schoolhouse' I have endeavored to discover, but have got not further than this, that it was probably in the western or southwestern part of the town. The oldest site that I hear of is the northwest corner which the road that passes Mr. Lorenzo Butters' House makes with the road parallel with the Lowell Railroad."

The first mention of schools in the town records is dated May 1, 1815, when the town "voted to accept the report of the committee in regard to the South Schoolhouse, viz: that the Schoolhouse to accommodate the district, ought to stand between the Widow Nutt Butters and the canal on the south side of the road about twenty rods from the bridge."

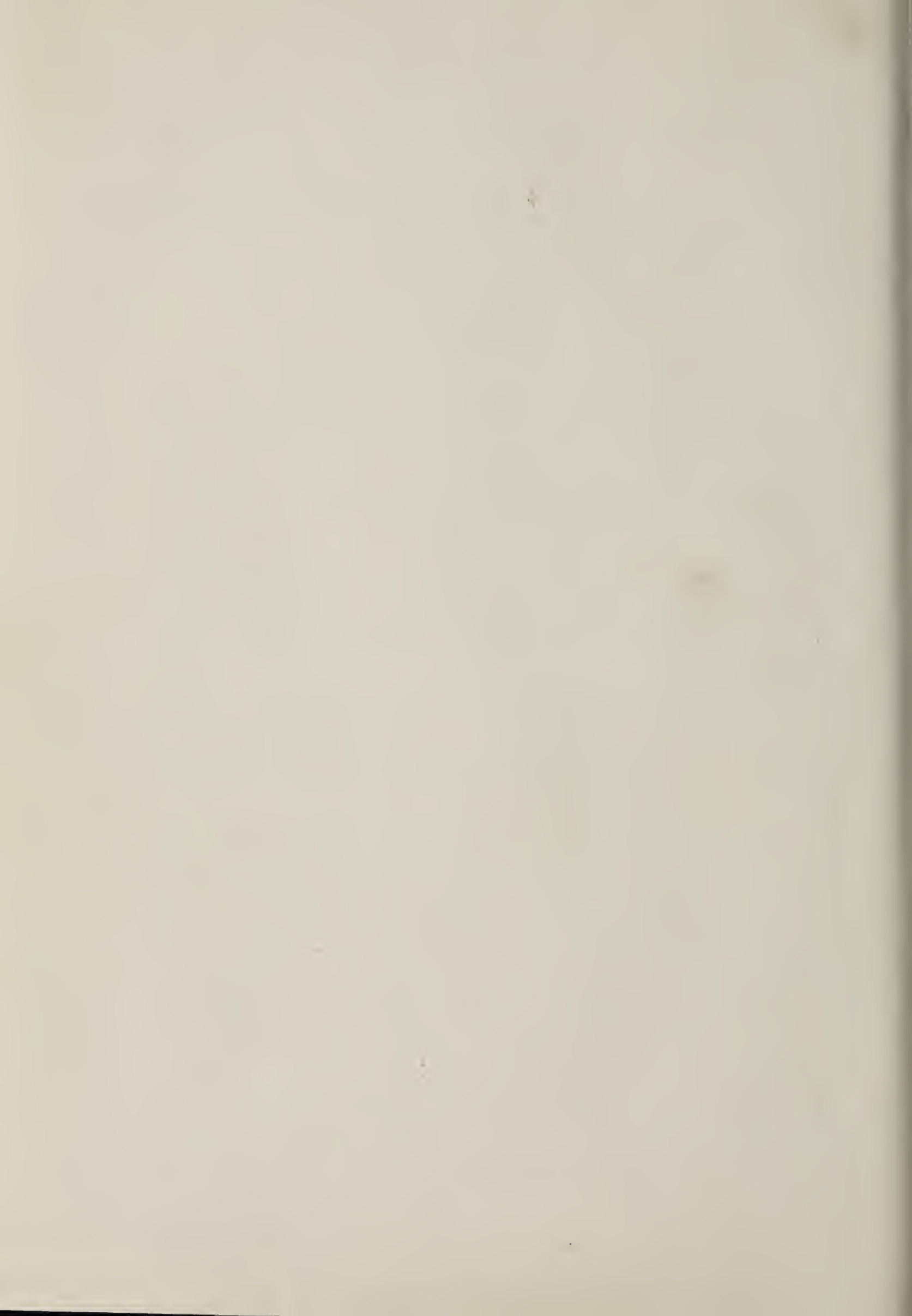
There have been at least four schools in the south part of the town. One was built in 1874 and was destroyed by fire in 1894, when the present one was built.

The first school in the north end of the town stood at Brown's Crossing. A later school stood near the site of the present one, but faced the east. This was sold and moved away. In 1868, the present North School was built.

There were four school districts in Wilmington in colonial days—one in each of the four quarters of the town. The present east school is very old. One building served the west part for over a hundred years and was replaced by the existing school in 1875.

There was no school in Wilmington centre until after 1800. Then the building now used by the library was built. What is now called the Center School was built in 1888. At first it contained every grade, including the High School. The present High School was built in 1914.

Of the other existing schoolhouses of the town, in addition to those already spoken of, the Whitefield School was built in 1906, the Walker School was built in 1896, the present South School was built in 1899, and the West School was built in 1875.



In colonial times, each school had a separate committee and was supported by the taxes or subscriptions of the residents of the district.

Early in the 1800's, the school superintendency committee was established in the town and the town each year made an appropriation of money which was divided among the districts. One committee-man in each district was personally responsible for the school. He was called the "prudential committee."

The control of the town over the schools increased until in 1869 the school districts were abolished by state law.

Wilmington has never given up the policy of small, local schools and at the present time the public school pupils, numbering over 1050, are scattered in ten different buildings. At various times in the past, the old district schools have been closed for lack of pupils, but the increase in school population has brought them back into use again. Of recent years, this increase of school population has been at the rate of 10% per year, and the ratio of pupils to the population of the town is as large as any place in Massachusetts.

THE WILMINGTON POLICE DEPT.

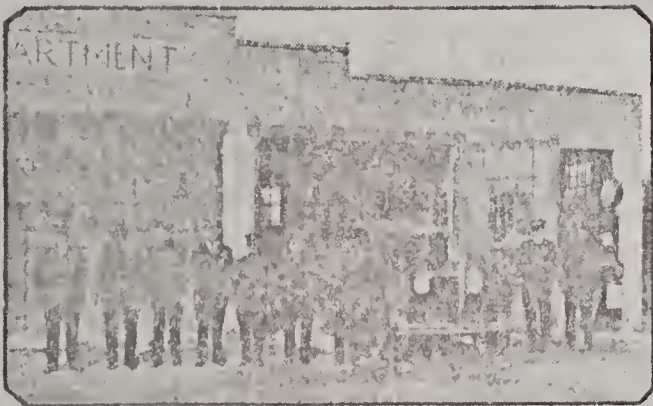
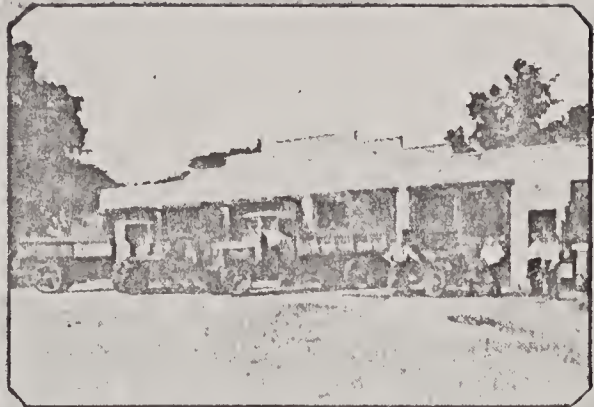
In the early days of the town the duties of our guardians of the law must have been simple as compared with the complex problems presented today. The town constable, an office as old as town government itself, saw to it that the laws were obeyed. Back in 1829 the town "paid to John Gowing for his services as Constable \$3.50." With growth the more arduous duties justified a greater income and in 1872 Mr. Samuel B. Nichols received \$20 as his recompense for serving in this office. Furthermore, in the same year Wilmington had its first police officer, Mr. A. Porter Pearson, who was to assist the constable.

In 1881 and for several years thereafter, Mr. Edward M. Nichols served as constable, as had his father before him. Mr. Nichols is now our oldest citizen who has served in that office. Mr. John H. Simpson, who served in 1878, is our oldest former special police officer.

The oldest member of our present police department in years of service is Mr. Christian Neilson, who has been a special police officer since 1908. He was followed in 1909 by Mr. Albert D. Butters. In 1912 our present chief of the department, Mr. Walter A. Hill succeeded Mr. William E. Swain after his years of faithful service.

Many disagreeable, difficult and hazardous tasks have confronted our police during the last fifteen years. During this period our town has grown very rapidly. It has often been the resort of an undesirable element who felt that here they could do as they chose. Our

WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930



Water Department
Power House

Steam Roller

Police Department

Reservoir

Highway Department

Telephone Exchange
with its four boards

Fire Department

police have gradually brought about a great improvement. Their work is now made more efficient with police headquarters, a police car, traffic lights, civil service regulations and three men on full time duty.

The roster of the department is as follows:

Chief—Walter A. Hill.

Regular Officers—Albert D. Butters, Harry Lock.

Special Officers—Alexander Brabant, Elmer W. Eaton, Walter F. Ellsworth, Frederick A. Field, Donald W. Foster, Burton Froton, Albert A. Hayward, Francis S. Hoban, Frederick Johnson, Edward S. Lewis, Lloyd S. Lewis, Vinal E. Lewis, George H. Lord, Christian Neilson, George F. Newcomb, John Palace, Harry G. Pierson, Albert C. Winbled.

THE WILMINGTON FIRE DEPT.

As the result of a very bad fire that occurred in the Spring of 1903 in what is now known as Wilmington Square, the Citizens of the Town of Wilmington held what may be described as an indignation meeting because of the lack of a fire department in the community. Subsequently the inhabitants were notified of a Town Meeting to be held July 13, 1903. At this meeting the Town voted with 40 on the affirmative and 1 negative: "That the Town purchase two Howe Combination Engines 'No. 38;' sixteen hundred feet of 2-inch rubber-lined hose; two combination hose and ladder wagons; hand chemicals and necessary appliances, and erect buildings for housing the same." A later motion appropriated the sum of \$2,500 for the purchase of the aforementioned articles.

Thus commenced the Wilmington Fire Department.

Engine and Hose No. 1; also Engine House No. 1, are shown in the accompanying photograph.

The first officers were Charles B. Osborn, Chief Engineer, and Caleb S. Harriman, Assistant Chief Engineer, who later was Chief Engineer for a number of years.

The history of the department is rather amusing when compared with present day fire-fighting engineering; nevertheless those who in the past have served the Town as its fire fighters deserve considerable credit for the excellent results obtained and the service rendered to the taxpayers.

The number of fires has increased each year. The number of fires this year (1930) has already exceeded the number of fires in any previous year. Approximately twenty-five has been the minimum number while the number during 1930 may aggregate two hundred or over.

WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930

Once during the quarter century of its organization, on Sunday morning, September 11, 1927, the Citizens of the Town awoke and were informed that two of their best firemen and fellow citizens were killed while fighting a fire—

Russell G. Pratt
Wilber A. Sheldon

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

The present department under the able and efficient direction of Chief E. L. Day, who has held this position for the past twelve years, is considered by underwriters bureaus as one of the best equipped and organized departments for a town of its size. Accompanying photographs, showing the present fire house, equipment and personnel, best display the progress since the organization of the department.

The members meet monthly for business and social purposes, and organized drills and lectures are held. The present members are holders of the American Red Cross First Aid Certificates. Each member is equipped with regulation boots, coats, and hats which are kept in assigned places on the apparatus.

The present equipment is entirely motorized and consists of:

1—Reo Combination—carrying hose, chemicals, ladders and brush fire equipment.

1—American-La France—500 G. P. M. Pump Combination.

1—Ford Model T—Howe 150 G. P. M. Pump Combination.

1—Ford Model A—Barton 150 G. P. M. Portable Pump and 1,500 1½" Hose Body.

The present quarters, although not entirely satisfactory for the housing of the apparatus and permanent men, must suffice until the financial standing of the Town will permit its citizens to provide suitable quarters.

The personnel consists of two permanent firemen who are on duty at all hours, and 17 volunteers who receive no pay other than that paid for time actually spent fighting fires.

ROLL OF THE WILMINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

E. L. Day—Chief of Department.

W. W. Rice—Assistant Chief of Department.

C. T. Horton—Captain.

C. H. Black—Clerk

L. Carter

E. Downing

F. Field

J. Gracie

F. Muse

R. Porter

K. Schlittler

J. Cotton

V. Darling

E. Eaton

B. Frotton

W. Hale, Jr.

N. Perry

N. Rice

R. Woods

LIST OF NAMED PLACES

List of places marked for this celebration. The places where italics appear have all been photographed and copies can be obtained at nominal cost.

1. Site of *First Meeting House*, 1732, Middlesex Avenue.
2. Site of *Bond Bakery*, 1798-1864, Middlesex Avenue.
2. Bond House prior to 1759.
3. *Old Pound and First Town Hall*, Glen Road.
- 4.—Old Powder House Hill, 1814, Glen Road.
4. Old Powder House Site.
5. *Pump Factory* on Adams Street, now the Catholic Club, Middlesex Avenue.
- 6.—*Morrill House*, early in 1700, home of Cadwalader Morrill, Middlesex Avenue.
- 7.—Site of old Mill, 1702, Grist mill on West Side and saw mill on east side, Middlesex Avenue.
8. Levi Reynolds House, 1716, owned at one time by actress—Annie Carter, Middlesex Avenue.
9. *Middlesex Canal House*, 1803-1835, Shawsheen Avenue.
10. *Walker House*, 1785, home of Timothy and Joseph Cooke Walker, Shawsheen Avenue.
11. *Old Hop House*, near Wild Pigeon Hill, Shawsheen Avenue.
12. *Big Hemlock*, Aldrich Road.
- 13.—Site of *Jaquith Garrison House*, before 1730, corner of Aldrich Road and Forrest Street.
14. *Boutwell House*, 1725 (original, now shed) 1675; main part 1725; ancestors of Governor Boutwell lived here; Boutwell Street.
- 15.—Site of First South School, probably also first preaching and first town meeting, Butters Row.
16. John Perry House, probably built before 1700 by John Tidd.
16. *Perry's Blacksmith Shop*, at Perry's Corner, Woburn Street; was Asa Sheldon's, then John Perry's.

WILMINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 1730 TO 1930

17. Gowing-Swain House, 1750 (or earlier), early used as cobbler's shop, Lowell Street.
18. *Asa G. Sheldon House*, Woburn Street.
19. Lemuel Eames House, prior to 1724, Woburn Street.
- 20.—Site of East School, Colonel J. Parker Gould taught in the present building.
- 21.—Jenkins Bridge, built by Asa Sheldon, Woburn Street.
22. *Gowing House*, 1720, home of Daniel Gowing during Revolutionary War, Park Street.
23. *Harnden Tavern*, 1770, also residence of Samuel Dummer, Woburn Street.
24. Old Pearson Tavern, 1730, Salem Street.
25. *Tweed-Manning House*, early 1700, Ballardvale Street.
26. *Ford-Blanchard House*, 1720, residence of Cadwalader Ford, Salem Street.
27. *Squire Samuel Eames House*, 1730, Middlesex Avenue.
- 28.—*Bear Oak Stump*, where last bear seen in Wilmington was shot, Wildwood Street.
29. *Buck House*, claimed built in 1635 by William Buck who came over on the ship "Increase." Wildwood Street.
- 30.—*Memorial Park*, dedicated 1930, Main Street.
31. Rich Carter House, 1720, Main Street.
- 32.—*Harnden Massacre*, Mrs. Harnden and three children killed by Indians in 1707, Woburn Street.

22 places where *italics* have been used have been photographed.

Photographs are available through Miss Mildred Holt.

—indicates markers with post. No. 6 has one also.

SALUTATION

Wilmington today is a good town in which to live. We have a heritage, a community with which we need not look with envy on any other locality. We also have tangible benefits; the best town water in the State; a climate that offers cool, refreshing nights even during summer's most severe heat; good roads and bridle-trails; a diversity of scenery that it is a wonder to find within so short a distance of a great metropolitan area; schools that are a watchword with the state educational authorities; four railroad stations on main lines affording frequent service to the great cities on the North and South. We have a citizenry that holds fast to the great deeds and principles of the founders, without backwardness or indifference about the advantages of modern progress. Four churches of widely different denominations offer all men the great privilege for which the Forefathers prayed, but which they could not always boast—"freedom to worship God." Our Public Library is a monument to the spirit of liberal education that has always prevailed in the town. We govern ourselves by the old-fashioned town meeting system. Yet we have a budget commission, whose advice the voters generally heed, and we keep step with modern welfare requirements.

True, in recent years we have made an effort to be "genteel" by sacrificing some of the delightfully quaint old names, such as "Neck Road, New Road, Sandy Pond, the Lowell Depot," and affecting the style of naming in use in the large cities. Why should we ape their mistakes instead of profiting by them? Likewise we have consented to the marring of a priceless old-time village centre by ruthless scraping of real landmarks and the building of garish additions to pure colonial types. We invite the stranger to come and settle in our midst and share our heritage. Should we not keep the outward symbols of that heritage from being despoiled?



Cast of 200th Anniversary Play entitled,—“What Ann Brought Home.” 1930.

For Reference

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Not to be taken from this room

8481 1

WILMINGTON MEMORIAL LIBRARY



3 2136 00090 8719

For Reference

Not to be taken from this room

