

HOW IT ALL STARTED

It was on Tuesday evening, October 7, 1930 that a group of 23 Chelmsford citizens gathered in the George Memorial Hall of the Adams Library to form an organization to preserve for future generations the history of their beloved town. Although many families had collected local memorabilia, there had been no formal society to bring these collections together and to encourage others to dig out local historical artifacts.

The meeting opened with Mr. Charles E. Bartlett acting as temporary chairman and Mrs. Lester W. Ball secretary pro-tem. It was voted "to form an organization to be known as The Chelmsford Historical Society."

A nominating committee, consisting of Rev. Wilson Waters, D.D., Dr. Arthur G. Scoboria and Mrs. Karl M. Perham, met and offered the following slate of officers:

President: Charles E. Bartlett

Vice President: Joseph E. Warren

Secretary: Mrs. G. Thomas Parkhurst

Treasurer: Mrs. Lester W. Ball

Executive Committee: The officers plus Rev. Wilson Waters, D.D. as chairman.

The nominees were voted into office.

Dr. Waters had prepared a tentative set of By-Laws which, with a few minor changes, were accepted. Those present, plus others who had planned to attend but were unable to do so, were recorded as charter members.

Although the Society was off to a flying start, the next meeting was not convened until the Annual Meeting on May 5, 1931 with Mr. A. L. Cutler of Groton speaking on the *Middlesex Canal*.

By that time, the Society had received several items of local historical interest, either as gifts or on loan. Those at the meeting were given the opportunity to examine them in the display cases in the room above the George Memorial Hall.

The third semi-annual meeting of the Society was held on October 6, 1931 at the George Memorial Hall with Rev. Wilson Waters as speaker. Interest and membership was gradually increasing.

At the Annual Meeting on May 3, 1932, the current officers were re-elected. Mr. Frederick A. P. Fiske [Eustace Fiske's father] delivered a paper he had written on *Facts on Old Chelmsford*, a copy of which he gave to the Society. [I assume we have this paper in the archives.]

In celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, the Society held a Colonial Party on July 19, 1932. It was reported that "George Memorial Hall was decorated with flags and flowers, and many of the members responded to the invitation to appear in Colonial costume."

The program began with "a most entertaining and instructive address on George Washington" by Prof. Albert Bushnell Hart. This was followed by a colonial sketch, with music, presented by the young people of All Saints' Parish, under the direction of Miss Ruby Emery.

An account of our celebration was sent to the U. S. George Washington Bicentennial Commission and a nice acknowledgement was received.

By the time of the October, 1932 meeting, membership in the Society had increased to 67 and a goal of 100 members was projected.

It is interesting to note that the speaker at that meeting was Mr. Clyde A. Turner who discussed his favorite topic: *Old Chelmsford Glass*. (It was from Mr. Turner's collection we later acquired the glass artifacts on display in our Museum.)

The same officers were again re-elected at the May, 1933 Annual Meeting, except that the vacancy caused by the death of Vice-President Joseph E.

Warren was filled by the election of Miss Gertrude A. Roberts.

A committee consisting of Miss Susan S. McFarlin, Mr. A. H. Davis and Mr. F. A. P. Fiske was appointed to prepare an appropriately worded page to be set aside in the Society's records in memory of Mr. J. E. Warren. (This thoughtful way of memorializing a member who has faithfully served the Society was followed for several years but has somehow been forgotten in the recent past.)

It wasn't until 1935 that the Society chose its second president, Mr. William B. Northrup. The Society was now five years old and had become well established although it would be another 35 years before we would have our own beautiful "home" and museum at 40 Byam Road.

Thus did the Chelmsford Historical Society begin its role as an important part of our community!

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Charles E. Bartlett
First President of the Chelmsford
Historical Society