

# Tracing Emersons through the years

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The name Emerson has been a prominent one in Chelmsford for about three centuries, dating back to the arrival of Edward Emerson who came here from Concord in the late 1600's. However, the family traces its ancestry much further back than that to Johannes Emerson, who lived in the County of Durham, England before 1300.

A Joseph Emerson migrated to this country and settled in Concord, Mass. where he died in 1680. He was ancestor of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the poet and essayist, who, incidentally, taught at the Chelmsford Classical School on Academy Street on the site of the present Central Baptist Church parsonage.

The desire of the people for better educational advantages for those wishing to pursue the more advanced studies led to the establishment of this school in 1825. Emerson, then a divinity student, began his teaching in September of that year and was a very popular and effective instructor. However, he resigned December 30, 1825, having been "bought off by some gentlemen in Roxbury, who encouraged him to expect a profit of two thousand dollars per annum."

When an association was organized to erect the Revolutionary War Monument on the Center Common in 1859, Ralph Waldo Emerson was named as one of the vice presidents.

The several Emerson families of Chelms-

## The way It was

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ford in the latter part of the 19th century were also descended from Edward but through a different line.

Probably the most famous of the Chelmsford Emersons was Charles Franklin Emerson, who was dean, and later dean emeritus, of Dartmouth College.

He was born in the Butterfield homestead on North Road in 1843, son of Owen and Louisa (Butterfield) Emerson. After receiving his elementary education in the Chelmsford school, he prepared for college at Westford Academy and at Appleton Academy in New Ipswich, N.H. before entering Dartmouth.

Professor Emerson was an excellent public speaker and returned to his native town on several occasions as distinguished guest speaker.

When the Civil War broke out, seven Emersons were included in the list of 241 Chelmsford men that served in the armed

services. It is interesting to note that five of these seven were brothers, the sons of Bryant and Hannah (Bradford) Emerson, ranging in age from 19 to 31 years at time of enlistment.

Older residents of South Chelmsford remember when John B. Emerson operated the general store on Acton Road. In the early days of the 20th century, Arthur I. Emerson was Chelmsford's photographer with his studio in his home at 41 Westford Street.

Chelmsford's town government has frequently included a member of this family. J. Bradford Emerson served as selectman for seven years in the 1870's and, in recent years, T. W. Emerson was a selectmen, followed a few years later by his son, "Brad." John P. Emerson, Jr. is currently on the Board.

James Pitts Emerson, one of the Civil War veterans, operated the farm at 11 North Road for many years and was succeeded by his grandson, T. W. "Ted." This was the last farm in the center of town. It included the area now occupied by the stores and offices of Village Square.

The family name has been memorialized by Emerson Avenue and Emerson Square and there is a conference room at the Heritage Inn named "The Emerson Room."

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