

Another Chelmsford Centre Landmark Yields to Progress

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THE OLD SAW AND GRIST MILL AT CHELMSFORD CENTRE.

Chelmsford, Aug. 29.

As in other localities, the progress of modern methods and business is crowding out the old and familiar landmarks and replacing them with new and up-to-date buildings. Within the past week the large old grist and saw mill in the yard of the J. Cushing Co., at Chelmsford Centre has been levelled and the accompanying photograph was taken shortly after the work had started. During the process of taking down the timbers a small piece of sheet lead was found on one of the rafters almost hidden by the ancient dust of the old grain mill. On this bit of metal were the following words

"Built 1826
Burned 1861
Rebuilt 1862
George S. Wood."

which shows that the old mill was in the vicinity of 100 years old. This Mr. Wood bought the mill in 1857 from Joseph Stearns and sold it back to him in 1864. A company called the Chelmsford Mill Co., operated the mill for about 20 years and consisted of David Perham, Levi Howard, Benjamin Minot Fish and E. King Parkhurst. At this time "Deacon" Perham as he was always called, was the miller and lived in what is known as the "mill house," situated at the entrance of the mill yard. His office was in the westerly end of this house. The Dutton Bros., Edwin E. and Lewis M., bought it from David Perham and afterwards, it was owned by H. C. Sweetser, Sweetser & Day, George W. Day, the latter controlling it until the present owners bought the property. The old mill was both a saw and a grist mill. Great loads of logs were hauled from the local forests as soon as the snow settled and the horse sleds could be used. The mill yards were filled with the fragrant fresh sawed pine boards and the sound of the saw was a familiar one in all parts of the village. The old saw, which is still at the mill, was a straight up and down one but later the circular saws were brought into use. Loads of corn and other

grains were also brought to the old mill by the farmers who raised them, to be ground into meal and flour between the great round stones, for the family table, but for many years now there has been no grinding carried on at the mill.

Our forefathers were very dependent on the miller and consequently anxious to have a mill established as a part of the industries of the town. The old records show that to Samuel Adams, who erected the first mill in the town in 1657, was granted 100 acres of land in consideration of his erecting and maintaining a corn mill for the town's supply, and 450 acres of land in consideration of his erecting a saw mill. This mill was where the one known as "Russell's mill" is, about two miles south of the one just razed, and was carried on for five generations of the Adams family.

The first mill erected on Beaver brook, as the site of the mill just removed is known, was built by Jacob Parker in 1678, according to a deed still in existence. This was probably at the upper end of the pond, where the old wheel pit and sluice way may still be seen beside the railroad tracks. The mill was later removed to the present site.

In taking down the old frame it was found that the beams were fastened together with wooden pins and it was impossible to break the joints. So well were they put together that it was necessary to saw them apart. The big floor timbers, which were set on great slabs of granite underpinning, were smoothed on one side only, the rough bark being left on the other three sides. Many of the boards used in construction were from 15 to 18 inches wide and 20 feet long, perfect lumber without a knot, which made the carpenters who were at work on the old structure express the wish that such lumber was procurable nowadays. The wood from the old mill is to be used in the erection of the new store houses which the J. Cushing Co. is already erecting on their land parallel to the railroad tracks.





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