

# The South Chelmsford village of 1883

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South Chelmsford in 1883 was a small village with farming the main, but not the only occupation of its inhabitants. However, for its size, the community supported a surprisingly large number of societies and associations. In fact the local newspaper correspondent, writing in the *Chelmsford Eagle*, suggested that some groups might be more productive if they combined their efforts.

In listing the various organizations, the first mentioned is "the Baptist Church and Society [now known as the First Baptist Church of Chelmsford] who, with their pastor, Rev. J.H. Tilton, are doing work needed at all times."

A group in the church, the Ladies Social Circle, "has a history of years, and was not organized to compete with any of like character, but to promote the good of its members, make benevolent contributions as ability and opportunity might determine, and raise funds for the incidental expenses of the church and society."

Another church affiliated group was the Women's Missionary Society which "meets once a month, is well sustained and is doing a noble work for missions."

The women of the village also had the Ladies Improvement Society which, besides other objectives, was interested in forming a library association and in securing a library of 266 volumes.

## The way it was

By George A.  
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The Village Improvement Association had "planted many trees and constructed some sidewalks, so as to give comfort to the traveler and beauty to the village."

The writer suggested that "the flagstaff, or liberty pole, which is to be repainted, might with propriety be under the care of this society."

Then there was "the Liberty Hall Association [which] had its origin in a purpose to provide a place for public meetings of various kinds, as might be desired. It consists of forty members or less, according to the number of shares each one might own. The hall erected is very accessible and commodious and is frequently occupied."

Educational and cultural interests were not overlooked. "The Farmers Cooperative Association gave up its trading department some time since, and now holds meetings mostly for lectures, discussions, readings and declamations, making them of common interest to all citizens."

A group of townsmen had organized the Hay Scale Association and had purchased and installed a vehicular platform scale which was reported to be "a great convenience to all who trade in heavy commodities."

"The money put into the Fairbanks scales is returned to the association with full weight," it was noted.

A small group of dairy farmers hauled their milk to the railroad depot each morning where it was loaded onto Brigham & Company's milk car.

Although South Chelmsford a century ago could hardly be looked upon as a mercantile center, it was reported that "Large numbers come here to trade, and this is good testimony in favor of our stores."

This one time sparsely settled farming village has, in recent years, become a rapidly growing residential bedroom community.

But that's the way it was in South Chelmsford in 1883.

*George A. Parkhurst is a Chelmsford historian whose family has lived in town since 1654.*