

# When is September not September?

Except for the American Indians, every family in this country came here as immigrants at one time or another. The same holds true in regard to our town.

While most of the more than 30,000 residents arrived after World War II, other families settled here during the preceding three centuries. A few of these trace their ancestry back to the small band of hardy pioneers who established homes here between 1653 and 1655, before Chelmsford became an incorporated town.

The names may be different now because of descent through maternal lines but they are, nevertheless, just as much descendants as if their names were Spaulding, Fletcher, Underwood or Adams.

One of these original families — the Fletchers — continued to actively participate in town affairs for many years. William Fletcher was a leader in the community from the beginning. History tells us that "The first meeting was holden at William Fletcher's house, 22d ninth month, 1654," i.e. Nov. 22, 1654.

If it seems strange that the ninth month be translated November instead of September, it must be remembered that the colonies used the Old Style calendar until 1751. With that calendar, the year began on March 25 and March was considered to be the first month.

William Fletcher was named one of the seven trustees of the town at that first meeting. (The title was changed to Selectman in 1658.) He continued to serve in that capacity for the next 15 years. The other trustees were Esdras Read, Edward Spaulding, Isaac Lerner, Simon Thompson, William Underwood, and Thomas Adams.

## The way it was

By George A.  
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William Fletcher's house (some sources say it was the first frame house erected in Chelmsford) was located on a knoll just east of the present end of Crosby Lane. Its existence was known until as late as 1847 when the cellar hole was filled in. A few years ago the Chelmsford Historical Commission hired a professional archeologist to confirm the location. He uncovered evidence of a house at that spot.

In 1925 the town erected a granite marker on privately-owned land near the site of the first Town Meeting. The marker was moved a few yards west, but still "near" the site, when the land on which it had been placed was sold. It can now be seen at the end of Crosby Lane. However, it is expected that it will be returned to its original location in the near future.

Charles Parlee, who is constructing an office complex off Fletcher Street, has developed plans that call for the relocation of the monument with appropriate landscaping and a walkway from the parking lot of his new building, giving this truly historic site the exposure it deserves. He will then present the land on which the marker stands to the town. The boundary of the Historic District should be extended to include the marker in its new location.

It may seem strange today that a house

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would be built in such an out-of-the-way spot. However, one of the very first streets to be built ran from the Meeting House (First Parish Church) over what is now Westford Street, Worthen Street, and Crosby Lane to a point near Golden Cove. Since the house was there first, it is conceivable that the road was put in to accommodate one of Chelmsford's leading citizens.

William Fletcher and his brother, Samuel, who settled in what is now Westford, were the progenitors of the Fletchers of Chelmsford and Westford, one of the descendants being the present writer.

H.E. Fletcher, who ran the granite quarry on the Westford-Chelmsford line, was a descendant of William as was J.V. Fletcher for whom the Westford Library was named.

The Westford branch of William's descendants is represented today by Austin, Dana, Harold, and George Fletcher.

Alan Fletcher, who operates the Nashoba Valley Ski Area is from the Samuel line.

In Chelmsford the family remained in the same area for many years. Capt. Josiah Fletcher built the house at 14 Crosby Lane about 1790. The house at 33 North Road was built by a William Fletcher about 1817. Fletcher Street, named in memory of this family, is a relatively new street, dating back to only the 1890s.

While municipal government in Chelmsford began in the home of one of its leading citizens, it soon moved to the Meeting House, then the Town Hall, and now the Town Office Building.

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