

Making Moore of Chelmsford mills JAN. 8, 1987

The mills of North Chelmsford have given employment to many of our townsmen over the years. Of these employers, one man stands out. He was George C. Moore.

Mr. Moore was born at Brookside (Nabnasett), a village of the Town of Westford, to a well to do but by no means wealthy family. His father, at the time, ran a wool scouring business in a most unpretentious shanty that was dignified with the name of the Brookside mill. This was 1848.

Young George decided that the way to make money was to get out and hustle for it, and at the age of 15 years he entered his father's employ and was given the not so easy task of scouring 100 pounds of wool at a time, without the benefit of modern inventions.

In 1872 he bought the old Sheldon foundry on the north side of the passageway that runs between Princeton and Middlesex Streets, between the McKittrick and Wang buildings. He also secured certain water rights of Stoney Brook, which runs nearby. Machinery was installed and wool scouring was started immediately.

Three years later, Mr. Moore started the first of his mills, a 200 foot long structure, three stories high. Just as it was completed and ready for opening, fire struck and the building was reduced to two stories of nothing but brick walls — a \$100,000 loss with no insurance.

Not disheartened by the situation, he put

The way It was

By George A.
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up a one story building and was soon back in business. He had a rush of orders from the start and soon outgrew his temporary quarters. He then erected the main mill building, a floor at a time, as his business demanded the space. In 1896-7 he built the new storehouse (now the McKittrick building), incorporating the latest designs in fire-proof construction.

The spinning and scouring mill was run by electric, steam, and water power. Two dynamos supplied over 2500 lights and there were 30 local telephones. Electric buttons located throughout the mill could stop the entire plant in case of accident. The operation was considered unique as it was owned solely by one person, Mr. Moore.

He owned about 40 houses in the village and, in addition to controlling the flow of Stoney Brook, he owned Lake Nabnasett, one of four bodies of water from which he drew his water supply. Mr. Moore also operated the Brookside mill in Westford on the site of his first labors.

An article in *The Lowell Sun* of December

23, 1897 says, "One of the secrets of Mr. Moore's success is the fact he is one of the hardest and steadiest workers in the mills... He works from morning until night. Shut-downs, cut-downs and strikes are unknown quantities in Moore's mills and at present the plant is running in many departments until 9:30 o'clock at night, so great is the rush of business.

"The business of the mill consists of wool scouring and the manufacture of fine worsted and carpet yarns and also the manufacture of the celebrated Moore camels-hair press cloth."

In 1903 Mr. Moore sold the North Chelmsford mill to Silesia Mills of the United States Worsted Company and built and operated the mill across Princeton Street which today is "The Mill" complex. The new mill burned down in 1909 but was promptly rebuilt.

Older residents will remember the names of some of Moore's middle management: William Brown, John O'Connor, J. Gallagher, Jeremiah O'Connor, John H. McEnaney, Walter A. Leigh, and Edgar A. Dixon. Mr. Dixon and Walter I. Chase took over the mill after Mr. Moore's death in November, 1923.

George C. Moore resided in the large Victorian house on Wright Street with his wife and two daughters.

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