

# One large hotel and a post office later...

**W**hile dining recently at the Radisson Heritage Inn, one of the hotel employees came to me and asked, "Do you know what was on this particular piece of land before the hotel?"

I replied that I certainly did and proceeded to tell him what I remembered. As I spoke, I kept thinking of more and more changes that had taken place over the years.

My direct answer to his question was, "This was known as Emerson's pasture in the 1930's and probably for some time previous to that."

At that time, Ted Emerson, Selectman Brad Emerson's father, and his family lived at 11 North Road in the house now occupied by the Fred C. Church Insurance Company. This house, built about 1835 by Stephen Pierce and later owned by Hildreth P. Dutton, had been the home of James Pitts Emerson, who had served in the Civil War along with four of his brothers. James P. Emerson was the great grandfather of our selectman, Brad.

The barns behind the house stood about where

the Central Savings Bank drive-up tellers are today. A farm road ran down into the field to a point near where the Gourmet Express restaurant is in Village Square, then turned out onto and across Fletcher Street, adjacent to the office of the *Chelmsford Independent*. It went down the road which, until a few years ago, entered the present parking lot of the Radisson Conference Center. It was down this farm road that the Emerson cows were driven to pasture.

A small brook ran through the property and one winter, probably in the 1950's, the members of the Center Fire Company built a dam across the brook and flooded the meadow for skating.

Back in 1653 or 1654, before the Town of

## THE WAY IT WAS

George  
Parkhurst

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Chelmsford was incorporated, William Fletcher built what is reputed to have been the first frame house in this frontier settlement. It was located where there is a large pile of dirt at the end of Meetinghouse Road and it was in this house that the so-called first town meeting was held.

To those of us who were not in Chelmsford 337 years ago, this seems like a strange place to erect a residence. However, what we know as Crosby Lane was one of the earliest streets in town. Starting at the Meeting House (on the site of the present First Parish Church) the road -- actually a crude cart path -- followed what is now Westford Street and turned right onto our present Worthen Street. It turned right again in front of the funeral home, crossed what years later would be North Road and continued down Crosby Lane, passed William Fletcher's house and on until it came to what we know as Stedman Street near number 16. So, it is evident that Mr. Fletcher's house was on one of the very few roads in town at that time. Chelmsford Street was not laid out until 1827.

Although Crosby Lane beyond number 14 had long since been discontinued by the 1920's, a small cart path extended it to a point where it crossed the small brook on a stone bridge. At this point, Ted Emerson had two pig pens where he raised the porkers.

There was nothing but a footpath beyond here but one could continue through Perley Kimball's

wheat field to the Zabierek farm at number 93 Dalton Road.

Now to look at that area of Chelmsford Street in the 1930's. There were few buildings on the left side of the street between Fletcher Street and Stedman Street. The Adams/Sturtevant house and Bert Sturtevant's automobile repair shop stood where the filling station is today on the corner of Fletcher Street. Next came the house -- now a commercial building -- at number 92 Chelmsford Street. This was the last building until John Kydd moved in his lunch cart and built the ice cream stand in the late 1930's. (Kydd's diner is, of course, now known as Skip's Restaurant.)

About where the Shell Station is today, there was Emerson's gravel pit. A few years later, the lunch cart, that had been parked in the alley where the drive-up teller of the Shawmut Bank in the Center is located today, was towed to the driveway into the gravel pit. This served Bill Hollis as a home.

There was a street car "turn-out" about where I-495 crosses Chelmsford Street. What is a "turn-out?" It's a short length of double track inserted into a single track car line, making it possible for street car to pass at this point if one car pulled onto the "turn-out" and the other stayed on the main line.

A person returning to Chelmsford after an absence of fifty-odd years would see a great change just in this small area. The office buildings on Meeting House Road, the Radisson/Heritage Hotel, the Post Office and commercial buildings on Parliamont Plaza and the Town Meeting Restaurant would turn it into an entirely new world in the eyes of the visitor.

But, that's the way it was

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