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# When gypsies colored the local scene

Years ago, a convoy of brightly painted horse-drawn vehicles bearing families of dark skinned individuals along with all their earthly possessions meant that a band of gypsies was coming into town. By the 1920's the wagons had been replaced by buses, autos and trucks.

These nomadic people were descendants of tribes that probably originated in Asia near where Iran is today. They migrated to Europe in the 14th or 15th century and later to North America. Organized into closely knit family groups, they have maintained their ancient culture and Romany language.

Gypsies are usually nomadic and tend to reject the generally accepted American culture. The women frequently engage in fortune telling.

The name Gypsy comes from a shortening of Egyptian, because they were once believed to have come from Egypt.

Although they have not recently set up

## The way It was

By George A. Parkhurst



camp in Chelmsford, they visited here from time to time after World War I (and probably before, as well). The present writer recalls seeing Gypsy tents and buses on land at the intersection of North Road and Old Westford Road, just north of where the new dog pound has been erected.

At that time, before Route 3 and the traffic circle were constructed, North Road ran by the new office building and the dog pound, crossing Old Westford Road and continuing along what is now Western Avenue and thence to North Chelmsford.

The Gypsies were never welcomed into

town with open arms partly because they were "different" and did not conform to the accepted standards of New England behavior.

Since they looked upon material possessions as belonging to everyone, they soon aroused the ire of vegetable and fruit growers and storekeepers. Within 24 to 48 hours of their arrival, the selectmen would be deluged with complaints, whereupon the local constable or policeman would be instructed to escort them out of town.

Recent police reports have indicated that "gypsy con men" may still visit Chelmsford from time to time and that their business ethics have not changed appreciably over the years.

While Gypsies make interesting and colorful subjects for theatrical productions they are, in general, considered personae non gratae in this town.

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