

**A
HOUSE
IN
MERRIMACK**



Charlotte Foster's Flowers

1 - Our Place

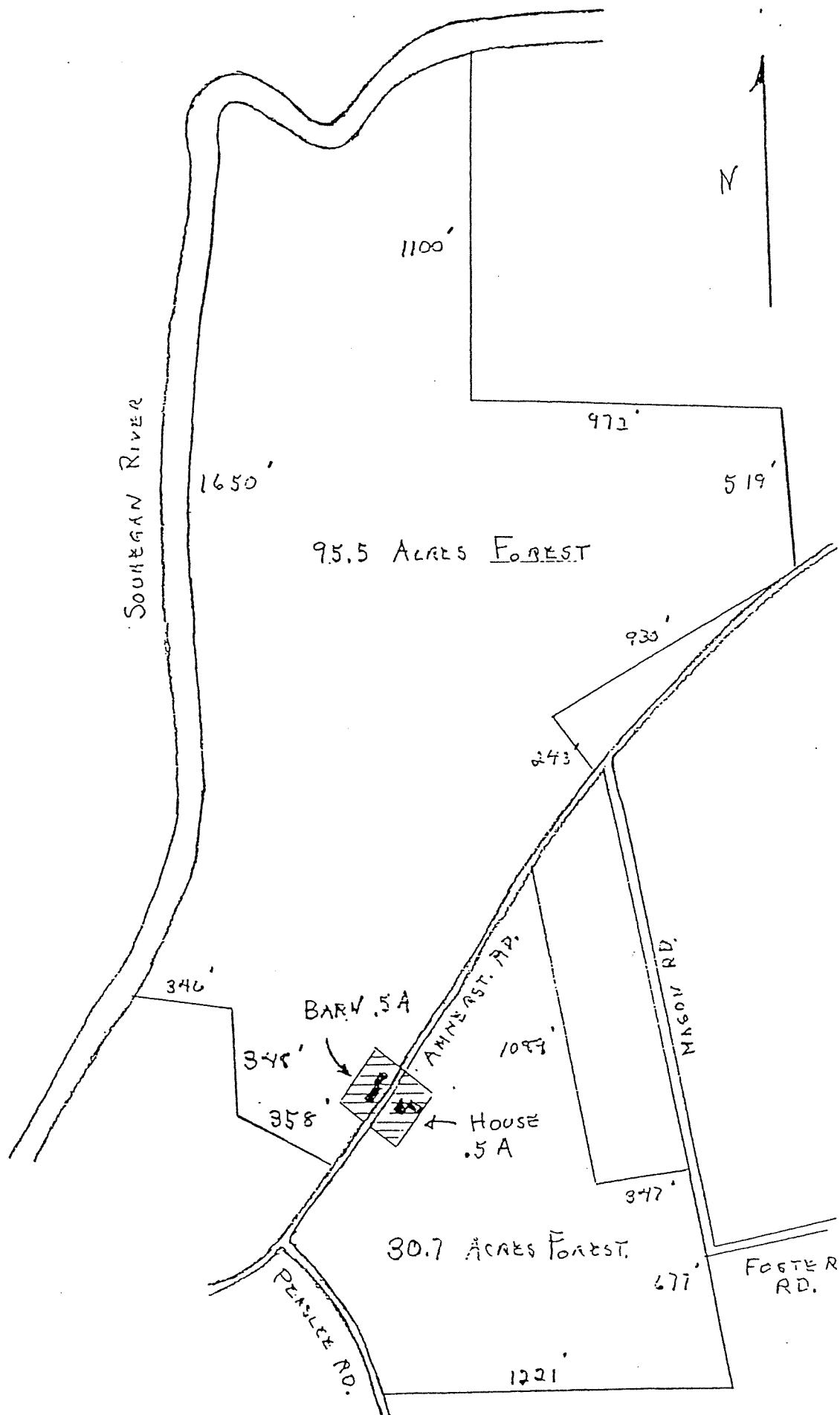
When we first came to Nashua the house we rented was right in the city. It was satisfactory, convenient to Arthur's school (across the street) and we had good neighbors. But we were only one block from Route 3, the main route north, and traffic on Lake St. was also heavy. After a few years there we started looking for something better, e.i. a place in the country. An old house was then even scarcer than now, most were still in the hands of the farmers, and did not come on the market. We looked at the house across from Leda Lanes on Amherst St. which was then well out in the country. It was too near the road, which even then was very busy, the rooms were very small - no place to put the pipe organ - and there was a chicken farm across the road.

We went to Hollis and saw a nice little place with a brook near Witches Spring. But it was too small, and the recent renovations were reflected in the price. Next came a small colonial north of the village with a "whaleback" - rounded - ceiling in the upstairs bedroom. This also was too small.

Our next prospect was a nice colonial on the east road out of Cricket Corner, in Amherst. The floors were a bit bouncy, it had no land on the opposite side of the road, and there was no place for the organ. We looked at the somewhat newer house next door; that also would not fit into our plans.

We next looked at another colonial in Amherst beyond Route 101. This one had room for the organ but was otherwise too big, the ell didn't seem to be securely attached to the main house, and it was really too far from Nashua. We were tempted, however, and had Charles' folks come down to see it. Their advice was that it if wasn't just what we wanted to wait and see what else turned up. So we waited.

Finally the Whalens, friends of ours living in South Merrimack - Barbara worked in the lab at Sprague Electric - told us about the Foster place being for sale and on a cold and windy February day took us to see it. They didn't have a key, of course, so we could only see it from the outside. We went back the next day, met the Peaslees who owned it, and saw the inside, which was like an icy tomb. It had all the requirements; 30 acres of land, on both side of the road, on a lightly traveled county road, good sized rooms, and place in the shed for the organ. The only disadvantages were that it was really too big for the three of us, and that it would require complete modernization. But the price was very reasonable, and that made the difference. Later that night we went back to the Peaslees and told them we wanted the house. The deal was closed on Feb.23, 1954.



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As soon as the weather warmed up in the spring, we started having the house renovated. We converted the downstairs bathroom into a half bath and wash room, putting the bath in the small bedroom upstairs. This was twice as large as it had to be, but so what. This involved all new plumbing, a new septic tank and a septic field. And we had the house rewired, and a hot air heating system installed. The old kitchen range was dumped outside - someone was very glad to cart it off for us - and the old counters and cabinets came out, to be replaced with new ones built of plywood, and resanded wide boards from the attic floor. More of the same went down for flooring in the lower and upper halls. The west chimney was extended into the cellar for the furnace, and a new stone foundation went under the woodshed. One kitchen window became a door, with the displaced window installed in between. Ceilings were replaced in the living room, entry, kitchen, and bathroom. And the horrible Victorian portico over the front door came down, and a new colonial style door, with sidelights, went in. By the middle of August enough had been accomplished so that we could finally move in. But Dottie had workmen underfoot for several months thereafter.

In 1960 Mr. Peaslee decided that he wanted to sell the remaining 90 acres of Foster land and we were quite happy to get it. This extended our holdings to the river and gave us additional privacy.

2 - The House

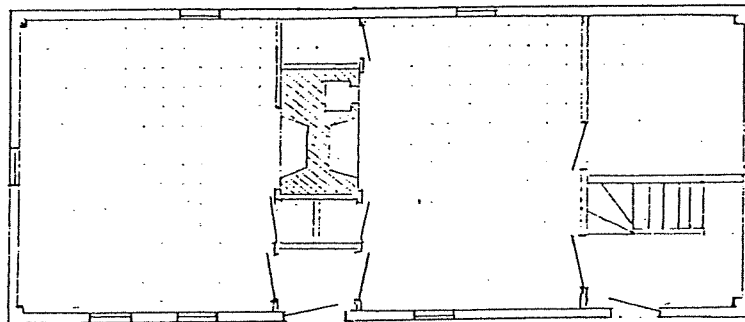
It is probable that Joshua Fields, Sr. never lived in the present house. His, like most other houses of the day is probably best represented by the Colburn house in the Upham field. Although in very poor condition, this house is remarkable in that it was never remodeled, hence shows all of its original features. And it represents the small $1\frac{1}{2}$ story farmhouse in its highest form. Twice as long as wide, 39 x 16 feet, and 15 feet high, it enclosed three rooms, a shed and a loft. The kitchen - family room if you like - was centrally located, with the usual fireplace and brick oven on the west wall. Beyond the chimney is the bedroom, also with a fireplace. The entry is between the two rooms, connecting them, with closets taking the rest of the space in the chimney partition. A small square room opens off the kitchen to the northeast, and south of it, beyond the stairs, is the back entry. Turning stairs go up to the loft, and straight stairs go down to the large and deep cellar. It is small, only 624 square feet, yet adequate for a small family.

Two more primitive versions were used. One omitted the large bedroom with its fireplace, the other omitted the shed end. These, however, were cramped and were usually enlarged one way or another at a later date. The dimensions of the old cellar in our house suggests that a similar house once stood here.

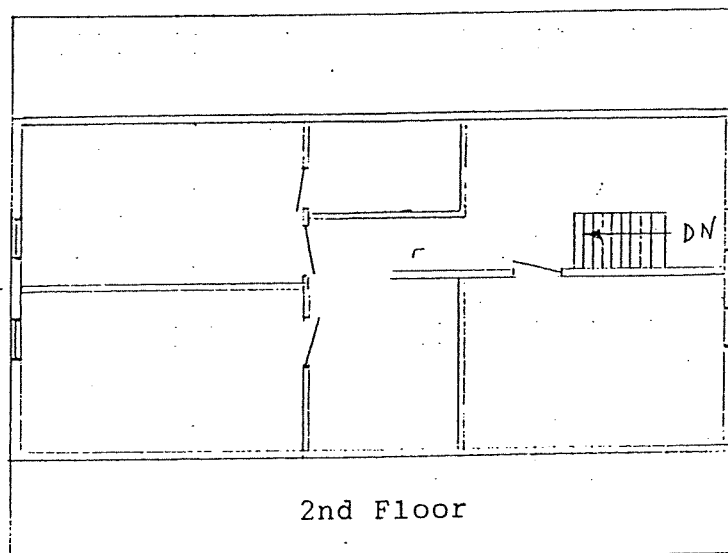
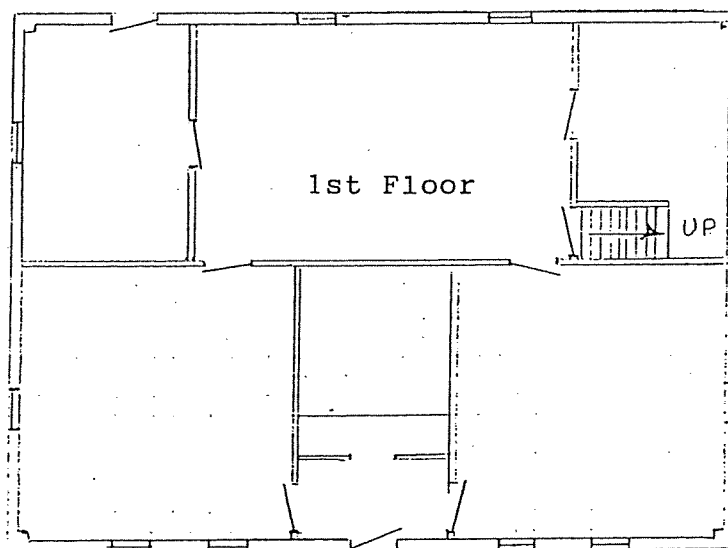
The present house does not appear to date earlier than 1800 since no hand-wrought nails were found in it when it was renovated. Moreover, the window casings in the parlor - now the dining room - are Greek revival in style, which would make it nearer 1820. Other than this it was a typical medium sized $1\frac{1}{2}$ story farmhouse. With dimensions of 28 x 38 feet, it was exactly the same size as Grandmother's farmhouse of the same type in Halifax, Vt. (A new house of similar appearance built within the last 10 years on Peaslee Road has dimensions of 26 x 36 feet.) The entry or "porch" as it was called at the time, was in the center of the house, in front of the large central chimney. A large room opened on either side, each with its own fireplace. The kitchen, with its fireplace and bake oven was behind the chimney, with a smaller room at either end. The east room was the entry, with the outside door on the southwest wall, toward the small barn. Part of the opposite end of this room was taken to form the pantry, which opened into the kitchen. The door that now leads to the cellar, then opened on the steep flight of stairs leading to the second floor. Entry to the cellar was through the outside bulkhead.

Upstairs were three small bedrooms, each about the same size as the present bathroom, with a similar open attic over the stairs. The first floor window casings are unusual,

Floor Plans
The Colburn House



The Foster House



sloping inward on the sides toward the smallish windows to bring the maximum light possible into the room.

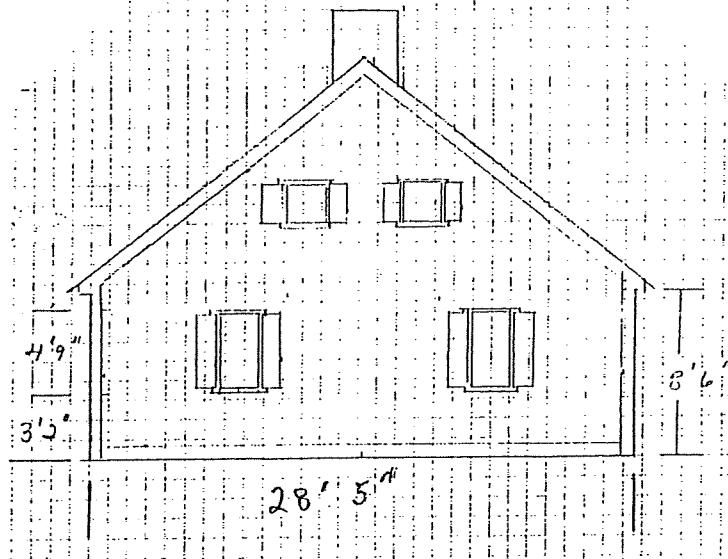
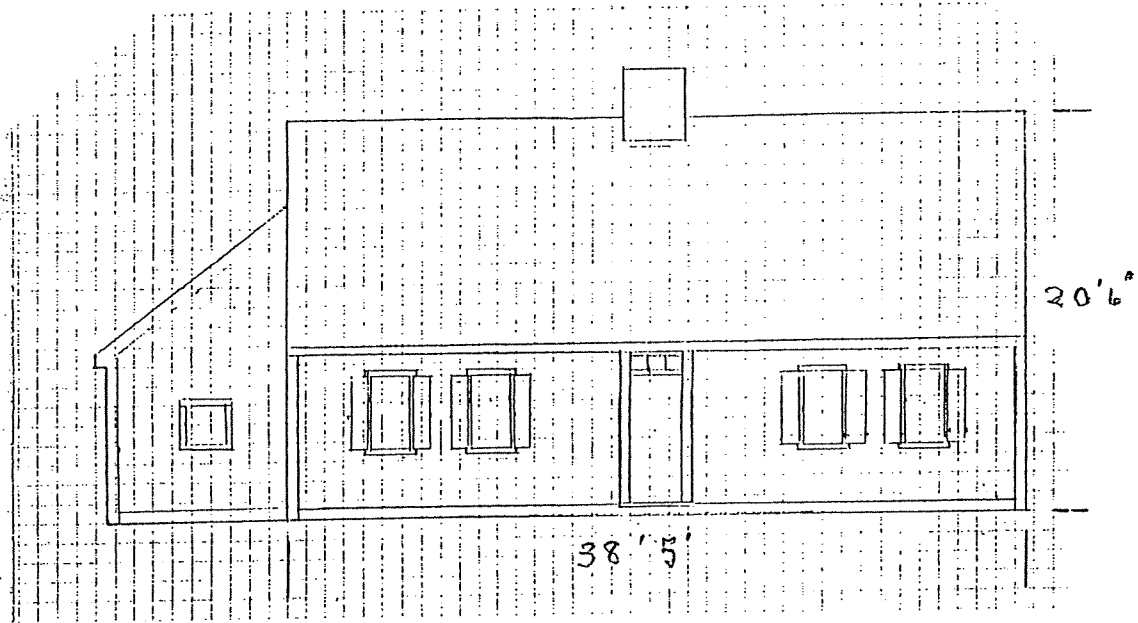
At a later period, perhaps when T.J.Foster bought the place, the first major renovations occurred. This involved taking out the large center chimney and replacing it with two smaller ones. Stoves had by now generally replaced the fireplaces for heating and cooking. The fireplace was mainly a source of radiant heat; most of the air it heated went up the chimney, along with a large part of what heated air it managed to put out into the room. One was never comfortable in really cold weather; one's frontside roasted while one's backsides froze. But the people then knew nothing better and so were accustomed to it. The stoves not only made it possible to heat the air in the room, giving a much more uniform temperature, but they used a quarter as much wood. Now more of the house could be heated, and with less fuel. With farm woodlots dwindling through overcutting, that was important.

The old chimney was probably in poor condition by this time, so new chimneys were a good idea; one was placed in the inside corner of the dining room, the second in the east corner of the old chimney area. This area was floored and became a central hall opening also into the kitchen while a new flight of stairs built in it led to the second floor. Removing the old stairs and patching the floor of the open attic gave one more bedroom. The opening in the floor for the cellar stairs was also made at this time, cutting through one floor beam in the process, but using the existing door in the kitchen. These stairs are unique, with straight stringers and both treads and risers combined in solid triangular blocks of wood. Hollows have been worn in the tops of the treads over the years, but they will never wear out.

The shed connecting the house and the woodshed - the old barn? - was probably built about this time. With a chimney of its own, the first floor would have been used as a summer kitchen, with pantry attached. The loft, reached by what probably were the old back stairs, would have housed a hired hand. This addition permitted inside access to the woodshed, convenient in winter, but reduced the usefulness of the rear door; the northeast window in the entry was moved to its present location and a side door installed in its former place. But the thing that the residents of the house must have found most rewarding was the enclosed "long walk" down the side of the woodshed with the two-holer at the end!

The major remodeling effort took place in the 1880's, probably after Joseph Henry's marriage, to make the house large enough for two families. One full story was added to the northwest and northeast sides of the house but with

The Original House



(3)

the old roof line retained in the east corner - to avoid reworking the shed roof. This made a jog in the ridge of the roof, and required a false wall on the east end. This gave three large rooms on the second floor with the possibility of a fourth in the attic. It was poor construction, but it achieved the desired results, and has lasted for nearly 90 years. What actually holds the roof up, however, remains a mystery.

Evidence that the attic was used to lodge the hired hands is given by the stovepipe opening in the chimney there, and from a whiskey bottle hidden under the floor boards. The Fosters were strict teetotalers!

The side porch, with its Victorian curlicues was probably built at this time, and a canopy of similar style was added to the front door as a final touch.

The woodshed, of course, was the original barn on the property and thus pre-dates the present house. The next barn, across the road, was smaller than the present one. If we assume that the same timbers were used for both, it was about 34 x 66 feet. The posts were of the "gunstock" type, sawed from a log with part of the root left on to give extra strength at the top. Some of the smaller timbers show the straight saw cuts of the "up-and-down" sawmill. In the 1880's the barn was rebuilt using the old timbers but widening the whole by six feet. The gap between the rafters can be seen at the ridge; it was not well patched in. Two additional bays were added on the west, bringing the length to 90 ft. Timbers and boards for this part were taken from an old barn near the cellar hole in the woods, where its foundation can still be seen. The barn windless is of rough construction but is fully 8 ft. in diameter.

3 - The Farm

The farm is located on the northwest slope of a rolling hill. It stretches about .8 of a mile from north to south, and averages about .5 of a mile from east to west. The elevation is highest, 340 feet on the southeast edge of the 10 acre field, while the house, at the lower end of the field is at the 300 foot level. From here, the land falls off to the river 100 feet below, most of the drop occurring near the river. The river forms a large part of the western and northern bounds of the farm.

Most of the subsoil of the farm is hardpan, a mixture of clay, sand, gravel and rocks deposited ages ago by the glaciers. It is very hard to dig, and absorbs water rather slowly. During spring run-off, and during periods of heavy

rain, the water saturates topsoil over it, and then runs off on the surface of the ground. This means that it is late in the spring before the ground is dry enough to plant. And it gives rise to a number of swamps and a number of small brooks, especially in the spring.

The "big" brook rises in a saddle southeast of the farm, and flows through a swampy area almost to the house. Below here the slope increases, and the last part of its travel to the river is a small V-shaped valley, part of which is just off the farm. Two small tributaries enter it from the north east. One passes behind the house, draining the field to the east; the second rises in the same field, near the road, crosses same in a culvert, and crosses the barn field underground in a rock-filled ditch, covered in with soil, the "hedgerow". It wanders into the woods, joins up with another branch from the swamp north of the "barn field", and enters the brook from the side of the valley.

Through the early part of our stay on the farm, the brooks crossed Amherst Road in stone culverts. These were ditches whose sides were "stoned up" into flat walls, and which were covered with flat slabs of stone. These were generally satisfactory, although frost heavings had narrowed the ditches to somewhat reduce their capacity, for during the hurricanes in the 50's the water went over the road. When Amherst Rd. was rebuilt in 1972, culverts of concrete pipe were installed, with the old stone slabs serving as retaining walls. Subsequent washing of gravel from the roads in heavy rains has filled in the first part of the underground ditch, and fresh sand can be found all the way along the little brook.

The brook isn't much good for fishing, for it usually dries up in June, not to revive until the Fall rains. We were told that there was always water in the pool near the stone wall, but that has not been true in recent years. However there is usually water in the pools about 100 feet downstream. Somewhat further there is a depression beside the brook with suggestions of foundation rocks. We have wondered if perhaps there had once been a small mill there.

Four other small brooks flow in the springtime. One rises in the swampy area north of the barn field and flows along the near edge of the "Pinewoods", then down to the river. The second rises in the Triangle lot, flows through a glacial channel to the woods road, after which it spreads out and loses itself. It reappears in the swamp beyond the "Pinewoods" and flows down into the river from there. A small one comes down the far side of the big hemlock grove from a swampy area above. The last rises north of the cellar hole, flows down into the flat area at the bend of the river, and joins it just west of the "Campsite" area.

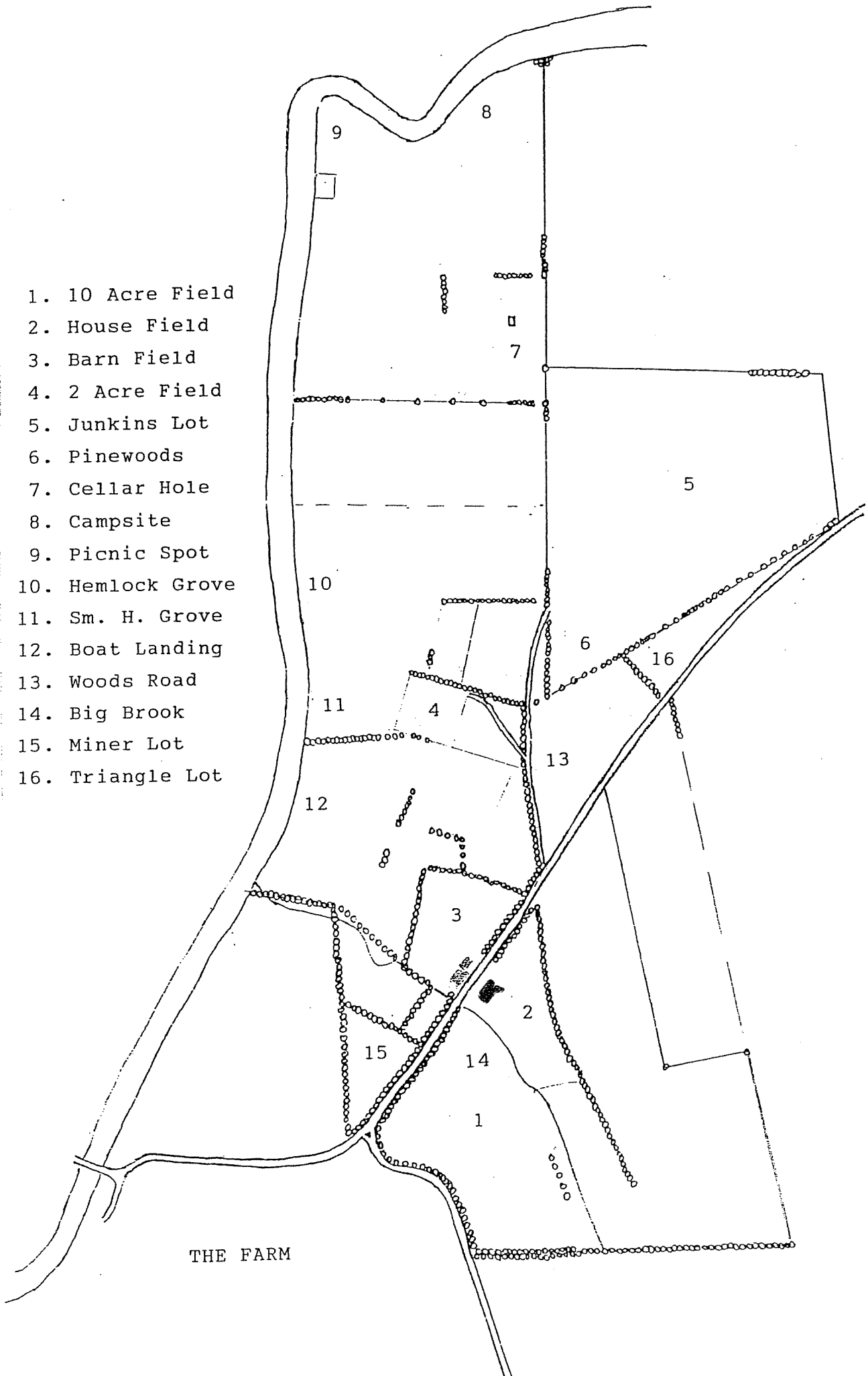
While flowing springs are not found here on the farm, there are a number of seepage springs that are wet in all but the driest weather. One is about 100 feet northeast of the end of the stone wall east of the house, at the base of a maple tree. A second is in the wall of the brook valley just above the mouth of the brooklet. A third is in the small hemlock grove, above the river bank; the fourth is on the riverbank below the campsite.

The stone walls remain as monument to those who erected them. Including those on the boundries, there were approximately 2 miles of them here on the farm. If one considers that the stone is granite, that an average wall is one foot thick and $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and of solid stone, they represent a total weight of 1300 tons! The most impressive is on the south end of the 10 acre field. Generations of cultivation of the fields on either side have here made a "double" wall averaging 20 feet across.

Wherever there are stone walls there were once plowed fields. They grew along with the crops in the fields, each winter's frost heaving up more rocks from below, and each plowing bringing them up to the surface. They were piled along the edges of the field to get rid of them; making them into walls reduced the space that they occupied and put them to good use as well.

Many of the farms stone walls are now deep in the woods. Yet photographs that Mary Foster Peaslee took have about 1900 show the area to be open fields at that time. There are a number of reasons why the fields were abandoned. At first they were used for grain crops and cultivated yearly. Then as soil fertility decreased and dairying increased, they were used for hay, being plowed up only when the grass needed reseeding. At first, the hay was cut and raked by hand, and the oxen or horses were used only for hauling it to the barn. A Mr. Peaslee of Amherst told of haying on the farm as a boy for 25 cents a day. When horse-drawn mowers and rakes came into use they could cut most of the fields, but the rough areas still had to be cut by hand. But wages paid to farm hands were continually increasing, and eventually it cost more to cut the rough areas than the hay was worth, and these poor areas started growing up to brush. Eventually the tractor driven mowing machines replaced the horses, but these could not mow well in wet places, and so more fields were abandoned. Prior to this time most of the woods on the hill had been cut off and much of the rain would run off rather than be absorbed. Increasing the amount of brush increased the absorption, and former swampy areas which had become dry enough to work with horses became to wet to work with tractors and yet more land went into brush.

1. 10 Acre Field
2. House Field
3. Barn Field
4. 2 Acre Field
5. Junkins Lot
6. Pinewoods
7. Cellar Hole
8. Campsite
9. Picnic Spot
10. Hemlock Grove
11. Sm. H. Grove
12. Boat Landing
13. Woods Road
14. Big Brook
15. Miner Lot
16. Triangle Lot



And when dairying on the farm stopped there was no need for the poorer fields, but the three larger fields continued to be cut. When we bought the place in 1954 the 10 acre field, the barn field, and the field east of the house were open, while the small field on the road west of the barn was starting to grow in. But the house field was now so wet that it could be cut only by horses. Mrs. Dunklee cut it for a couple of years, and then Mr. Mason for another year, and then it went wild, first into blueberries and then into birches, the largest of which are now 10 inches in diameter and 50 feet tall.

The barn field was drier, but stony and irregular, and was cut only a few years after this. With the decline of the dairy farms in the area, the demand for hay decreased while the number of available fields increased, so no one wanted to cut the poorer fields. And those who did want the hay were never willing to do any fertilizing in return. The 10 acre field was cut for a few years longer, and finally planted in fodder corn for two years. That destroyed what little grass there was and left it too rough to work. And so it has sat fallow since, and brush is now growing in it. The part that was cut off by the straightening of Peaslee Rd. seeded itself in pines.

From the stone walls, and the remnants of barbed wire fences that exist we can get an idea of the farm in its prime. The House field extended to the southeast boundary and with the 10 acre field made one large field. Mrs. Peaslee's photographs show some of the area east of the stone wall clear at that time, and there were no really large trees there except along the wall. It could have been used for hay or pasture, but there is no evidence of extensive cultivation there.

Across the road, the old fields surrounded the Barn field and stretched along the woods road to Joshua's 1777 boundary. Isolated fields occur on the river bank, near the cellar hole, and on the Junkins lot, on the far side of the woods road. Looking at these fields, one sees that flatness of the land rather than good drainage was apparently the most important consideration in their layout.

Of this Mrs. Edith Peaslee Caswell writes, "As a child I remember Grampa Foster telling about his father plowing around the field with oxen, which would stop at a certain place each time around and eat of the soil. Grandpa said it was a good place to raise strawberries. He buried his last horse, Don, down there; why I don't know. He seemed to have a special fondness for the "2 acre" field as he called it." So did Mr. Peaslee. It was noted for its lack of stones, at least in its later years. Unlike the rest of the farm, the subsoil here was pure sand. A stone wall on one side and a partial one on the other indicates

that there once were stones, but apparently once these were removed the land stayed clear. The other two sides of the field are marked with a shallow depression about two feet wide. Repeated plowing in the same directions has moved some of the topsoil from the very edge toward the center of the field. In archeological terms this is a "negative lynchet". There are a number of pits here where in later days sand was dug out to use on the floor of the Peaslee chicken house. One of the last of the old fields to be abandoned, it seeded itself in pine and is now a nice pine grove. Because of the easy digging in the sand, we buried, Lassie, our first dog here, and the "two acre" field is our "Lassiewoods", which it remains even though our second dog "Madel" and our third dog "Madi" also lie there.

What was used for pasture in the old days is hard to establish, although it was probably the steeper land along the river. In the later days the pasture included the land between the barn field and the river, and between the Woods Road fields and the river. Pastures were originally cleared land, but were never plowed to remove stumps and roots. Cattle liked nothing better than tender young tree shoots, hence kept it clear as long as they were there. While well wooded at present, it shows the characteristics of pasture that has grown back into woodland again, and the old cow paths can still be found in places.

The "Woods Road" remains something of a mystery. Judging from the curvature of the wall where it joins Amherst Rd. it pre-dates it and is probably the original road in the area. Researchers for the town history found action by the town to discontinue the road leading from Joshua Fields to Daniel Stearns mill, yet it has not been possible to trace the road that far on the ground. Up to the brooklet, it is bounded by the stone wall on the west only; the ground on the east was too ledgy for cultivation. The road did provide dry access to the fields along it, and to the additional lots that the Fosters added. A trace can be found of a road leading to the cellar hole from the Pinewoods, but the branch road now leading to the cellar hole is probably the result of logging operations made necessary by the Hurricane of '38.

A second old road leaves Amherst Rd. almost opposite to Farmer Rd. and crosses the Junkins lot to the north boundary. It appears to have been well established, but although it goes in the general direction of the cellar hole, it does not seem to get there. A third road extended from the House Field to Fuller Mill Rd. near the old Gamble place. The opening in the stone wall as it enters the field shows it to be relatively recent at this end, although curvature of the wall near the road suggests that the road might earlier have followed the wall.

The rocky area east of the woods road shows evidence of some quarrying on the ledges there, perhaps for rock slabs for the barn foundation. A large boulder there was drilled and split but since the break was crooked, no more was done. Where ledges were not available, large rocks were often used as sources of building stone, getting item out of the way at the same time. Perhaps this is why there are so few really large boulders on the farm. There are some medium-sized ones near the end of the stone wall east of the house. One large boulder lies in the brook valley just upstream from the boundary fence, another is in the upper bank above the boat landing. There are some other boulders along the east edge of the 10 acre field, but since the glacier didn't put them there, they don't really count. These we had dug out of the field with a bull-dozer at the time when Peaslee Road was straightened.

5 - The River

With three quarters of a mile of shoreline, the river is one of the most interesting features of the farm. For much of the year, it is more like a pond. From the "falls" above the bridge site to the "big bend" at the northwest corner of the farm, the river fills the stream bed with just enough current to keep the water moving. During floods and spring run off, it is bank-full and the rapid current scours out the sand deposited the previous year. But at low water in August half the bed may be dry, especially in recent years since the Nashua water supply has been pumping into their reservoir from the river. Below the bend the river drops on a bed of rocks and boulders; in the spring it becomes a roaring tumult of white water yet in summer one can easily walk across on the stones.

Mr. Peaslee kept a rowboat in the river until he sold us the frontage in 1960. We then bought a 12 foot boat from an old man in Templeton, Mass who built them; it cost all of \$30. complete with oars. We padlocked it to the big pine tree at the "boat landing" keeping the oars and oarlocks in the barn. With it we could, under favorable conditions, go a considerable distance above the falls beyond the bridge, and a short distance below the big bend. In the winter the river often froze over; in the spring the current was too swift to row against. In late summer the water was so low that much care had to be taken in selecting the proper channel or the boat would ground, and each year the channels were different.

Every trip on the river showed us something different. We saw swimming snakes, huge snapping turtles, the ever present fish, baby ducks of all kinds, kingfishers and on rare occasions a heron, and once a pileated woodpecker. Our first dog, Lassie, loved to ride in the boat, climbing up on the bow with her front paws on the gunwale and his rear paws on the front seat like a figurehead. She fell in on some occasions, jumped in on others and had to be pulled back into the boat, only to drench us also when she shook. In June we would take a special trip when the mountain laurel was in bloom, one in late summer when the elderberries were ripe, and one in October when the foliage was at its peak.

The boat was carried downstream in the hurricane of 1955, but some kids found it and we were able to get it back. Another time kids broke the chain, loaded it with rocks, and sank it near the shore. Another time hunters broke the chain and used it to cross the river. We usually tried to take it out of water before winter and leave it upside down on the bank for the duration, but several times it was caught in a freeze up and spent the winter in the ice. This, of course, did not help its tightness, and we had to caulk it in the spring. It finally got so bad that

we tarred the bottom to seal it, which with boats is the last resort. That year it disappeared completely! We searched the river with the canoe, but could find no trace of it and had to conclude that someone had taken it out of the water and trucked it off. Knowing how heavy the boat was when waterlogged, and how much rot there was in the bottom, we figured that they were the losers on the deal. But our insurance paid us \$30 for the boat, and we still had the oars left!

We took this, and a bit more and bought ourselves an aluminum canoe, which stays in the barn. We would take it down to the bridge site on the car and put it in the water there. Due to bank conditions there, this was not too easy, and there was poison ivy around. We finally built a carrier using a couple of bicycle wheels to use in rolling it down to the boat landing. This was considerably easier, but we found that we didn't spend nearly as much time on the water as we did with the rowboat handy.

Although the river was best seen from a boat, we usually found that it was too much trouble to use it. We had been gradually improving our paths and there were some vantage points giving good views from the bank. Going downstream, a spot on the bank between the hemlock groves gives a good look south, and in low water the sand bar below the big hemlock grove gets one out in the stream bed. At the big bend one can see both up and downstream, but one must be careful of poison ivy.

And there is the "campsite". Here a knoll has been cut by the river so that the land rises abruptly 40 feet over the rapids, with a fine view looking upstream toward the big bend. When we bought this section Mr. Peaslee thought that this would make a fine spot for a camp. We agreed with him, but nothing ever came of it except the name. It is in the most remote part of the farm, .6 of a mile from the house, with only a rough trail leading to it.

But the best spot is on the big rock above the boat landing, where we put the bench. On the outside of a slight bend, it gives an unobstructed view upstream as far as the bridge, and downstream beyond the sand bar. Shaded by one of the big pine trees and partially screened by undergrowth it is inconspicuous from the river and one can enter with a minimum of disturbance. From here we have seen young beaver swimming in the spring high water, a buck walking quietly upstream in the summer shallows, and all kinds of water birds. And of all the places it is the most convenient to the house.

6 - The Bridge

The first mention of the "upper bridge over the Souhegan River" was in 1776 when the town voted to rebuild half of the bridge. The "Old County Road" was constructed in 1769 when Amherst became the "shire" town. With the creation of a district court, better communications with Portsmouth, then the State Capitol, were desirable. And this meant an improved road through Merrimack to Thorntons Ferry. A bridge must have existed across the Souhegan at that time even if not before.

The repair of the bridge suggested two things, that it was a double span bridge with a pier in the center, and that Amherst paid for the second half. It at first seems strange that Amherst would have been willing to pay for a bridge in Merrimack, but Amherst believed the river to be the boundary. The second charter of the town of Merrimack in 1750 set its western boundary as a continuation of that of the 1746 charter, a line due north from Pennichuck Pond. But through an oversight, the 1760 charter of the town of Amherst gave its eastern boundary as that of the earlier Naragansett Township #3 (Souhegan West), which was about a half mile to the east. Both towns claimed this same strip of land, on which Henry Fields' and Joshua Fields, Jr's farms were located. The fun began when Amherst tried to collect a property tax from the residents who had already paid to Merrimack. The controversy was finally settled in 1832 in favor of Merrimack by a committee of three from Hollis, Dunstable and Milford.

From 1776 on, the records show frequent expenses for repair and rebuilding of the bridges. They were probably not covered ones, but the one built in 1859 was, a single-span Town truss 184 feet long. The builder is not known, but carved on one side of the east portal was the name "James White, 1859".

The bridge was only .3 of a mile away, and along with our half-dozen neighboring families we assumed a proprietary interest. It was frequently the object of a walk, and we took many photographs of it. One year on Halloween, it became haunted. Knowing that Arthur and his young friends would be crossing it to Trick-or-Treat at the Fields house, Arthur's mother and a couple of co-conspirators rigged some noisy tin cans tied on a string, and installed it on the bridge after the kids had crossed. Coming back they experienced moans, owl hoots, and jangles. It produced the intended effect, and the kids made a fast trip up the hill. Although in thinking it over, Arthur was inclined to be suspicious.

We also had a second bridge, Turkey Hill Bridge, 2½ miles downstream. A Nashuan told of being out for a Sunday

(2)

drive, talking, and not taking too much interest in the scenery. He passed through one bridge and turned right, and continued on. Pretty soon he came to a second bridge and did the same. But only after he went through the third bridge did he wake up. There were only two bridges in Merrimack!

In later years there were a number of automobile accident at the east end of the bridge. The approach from Severns Bridge Road was steep and the curve was rather sharp and if the road was slippery, trouble could result. But the strangest one was the fellow who thought he was driving into the end of a barn and took evasive action! Surprisingly there was few serious injuries, and little damage to the bridge.

The bridge was a magnet for kids on bicycles. A few considered it a test of strenth to try to kick off the sideboards and little actual damage resulted. But there were always a few boards missing.

The bridge survived the Hurricanes of 1954 as it had all other storms. But in 1966 an attempt was made to burn the bridge. They used a can of liter fluid on the east portal, but a passer-by was able to smother it with sand. But we knew then that the bridge's days were numbered.

Another group tried again on June 7, 1967 and using gasoline as an accelerant, succeeded. After midnight we heard a car go racing up the road, followed by a strange-sounding motorcycle. Then all hell broke loose. They wouldn't let us do down to the bridge, but it was quite a night. We had brought Madel, our new shephard puppy, home with us, and she missed her mother. Between the two events we got very little sleep. They caught the arsonists. It seems that the motorcycle broke down and they discovered the perpetrators trying to load it into a truck. They brought them to trial, found them guilty, but only slapped their wrists. Less than a year later Turkey Hill bridge was similarly burned.

With the bridge gone, traffic by the house was greatly reduced, which did not make us unhappy. The bridge was not rebuilt until 1986, giving us almost 20 years of rural atmosphere. But with the new bridge, Amherst Road became a commuter speedway, feeding the toll house on Rt. 295.

For a long time we felt that the bridge should be named Fields Bridge because of its long association with that family. But the Severns family lived in the house for over three generations, longer than either family of the Fields.



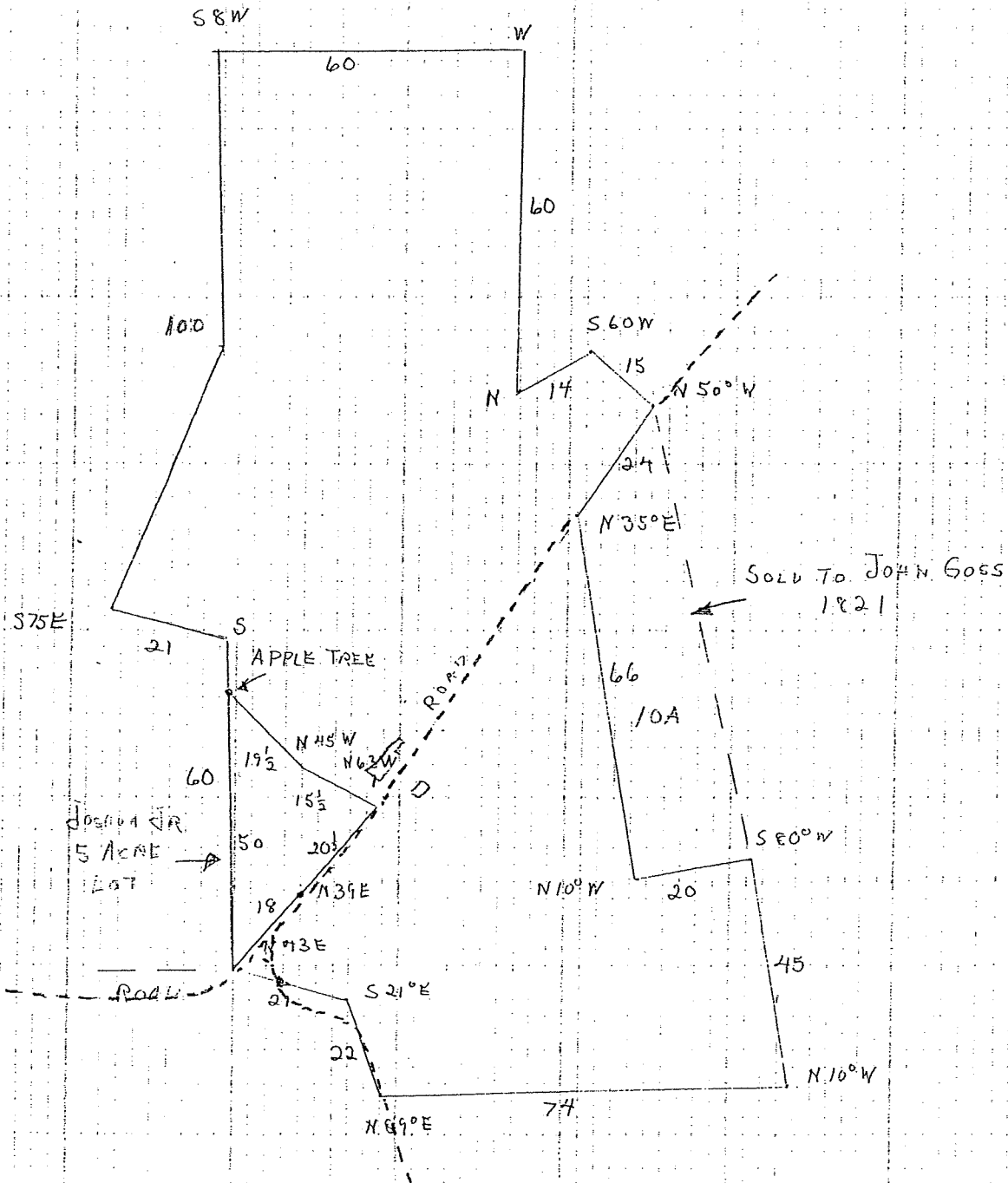
In January of 1777 he married Sarah Tenny of Merrimack; he was 27. Later that year he bought 28 acres of the Blanchard land that adjoined his on the north; Henry took the other 32 acres. This extended his land along Amherst Road to almost opposite his other bound. The northern edge of the lot was at the stone wall seen to the left of woods

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A hand-drawn survey map showing several land parcels. The map includes the following details:

- Top Parcel:** (H. FIELDS) 1781, 20 1/2' on the left, 22 1/2' on the right, 56' on the top.
- Middle Parcel:** (BLANCHARD) 1777, 25 ACRES, 75' on the left, 54' on the bottom.
- Left Parcel:** 3A H. (FIELDS) 1775, 52' on the left, 18' on the bottom, 35' on the right.
- Right Parcel:** 120' on the right, 35' on the left, 35' on the top, 10° E bearing.
- Bottom Parcel:** (BLANCHARD) 1772, 10 ACRES, 70' on the left, 37' on the bottom, 71' on the right, 10° E bearing.
- Other Features:**
 - RIVER:** Located on the left side of the map.
 - ROAD:** Located on the right side of the map.
 - MARKED TREES:** MARKED HEMLOCK TREE, LEANING WHITE OAK MARKED D.S., (DEAD) PINE TREE MARKED, PINE TREE MARKED, BLACK OAK TREE, MARKED.
 - Other Labels:** 54, 71, 70, 37, 10 ACRES, 154 ACRES, 1777, 1772, 1775, 1781, 20 1/2', 22 1/2', 56', 75', 35', 35', 10° E, 10° E, 70', 37', 10 ACRES, 154 ACRES, (BLANCHARD) 1772, (BLANCHARD) 1777, (H. FIELDS) 1775, (H. FIELDS) 1781, MARKED HEMLOCK TREE, LEANING WHITE OAK MARKED D.S., (DEAD) PINE TREE MARKED, PINE TREE MARKED, BLACK OAK TREE, MARKED, RIVER, ROAD, AD, S, W, N 15 E.

1824



road beyond the Pinewoods turnoff. This wall runs almost to the river, along the south edge of the big hemlock grove. He also bought another 24 acres of bottom land across the river.

His first child, Sarah was born later that year, to be followed by Joshua, Jr. in 1779, then James, John, and Jonas. His religious convictions must have weakened with time since the last three were not baptised.

In 1781 he bought from Henry another 8 acres to the north. This line is marked by the wide stone wall south of the cellar hole and was west to the river at the stone wall way beyond the big hemlock grove.

Joshua served Merrimack as a Juryman, Surveyor of Highways (Road Agent) and Constable. In 1798 daughter Sarah, 21, married Samuel Emerson and settled in Maine.

His health apparently declining, in 1800 Joshua deeded his land to his eldest son Joshua Jr. "reserving to myself the use and improvement of the house and $\frac{1}{2}$ the barn" during his lifetime. Joshua was 52, Junior 21. This is the first mention of a house on the property.

The date of Joshua Jr's marriage to Elizabeth (Emerson?) is unknown, but probably followed this. Problems must have resulted, for in 1804 Joshua Jr. deeded the farm back to his father, retaining the two intervale lots across the river, "buildings on the premises not excepted." Joshua Jr. now had his own farm.

In 1805 Joshua deeded the rest of his land to his son James "a Minor". He now makes no mention of his wife in the deed; she must have died in the interim. Joshua himself apparently died around 1811.

When Joshua Jr. deeded the farm back to his father, he also retained a 5 acre triangular garden lot (probably well fertilized) which, would eventually become the Miner Lot. This was returned to the farm in 1811.

The first few years, with brothers John and Jonas' help, the farm was prosperous and additional hill land was purchased. In 1811, James married Sarah Davis, but there is no record of children. The present house was probably built after this; James listed his occupation as "carpenter".

Both James and John dabbled in land deals, perhaps trying to establish a homestead. Jonas bought four irregular pieces of land for a total of \$37. Together they made a two acre lot, the open field east of Mason Rd. He sold it to James, and it was part of the farm between 1813 and 1815 when it went back to Jonas for resale. The last

record of Jonas was in 1816; he settled in New York - and was probably successful. John left about the same time and settled in Maine.

Perhaps it was the expense of building the house, perhaps the loss of his brothers help, but in 1821 James was in financial trouble and had to mortgage the farm. He paid that off by selling John Goss a 10 acre strip from the east side of the farm, creating the jog in that boundary. The next year there was another mortgage, a bigger one, and two years later, in 1824 he sold the farm and left Merrimack.

Meanwhile, back across the river, Joshua Jr. had been doing well. He bought adjacent land and by 1826 had a farm of 100 acres extending from the river to the road.

He had three sons and two daughters. Hannah was to settle in Lowell, Mass. Smith E. was born in 1807. Sally was born in 1810 and married Peter Carleton, a second cousin, from a neighboring Amherst farm. Joshua III left the farm, eventually went to sea in a New Bedford whaler. He subsequently died at sea, probably about 1835. Jonas never married. Joshua Jr's wife died in 1820. In 1823 he married Eunice Truel of Amherst.

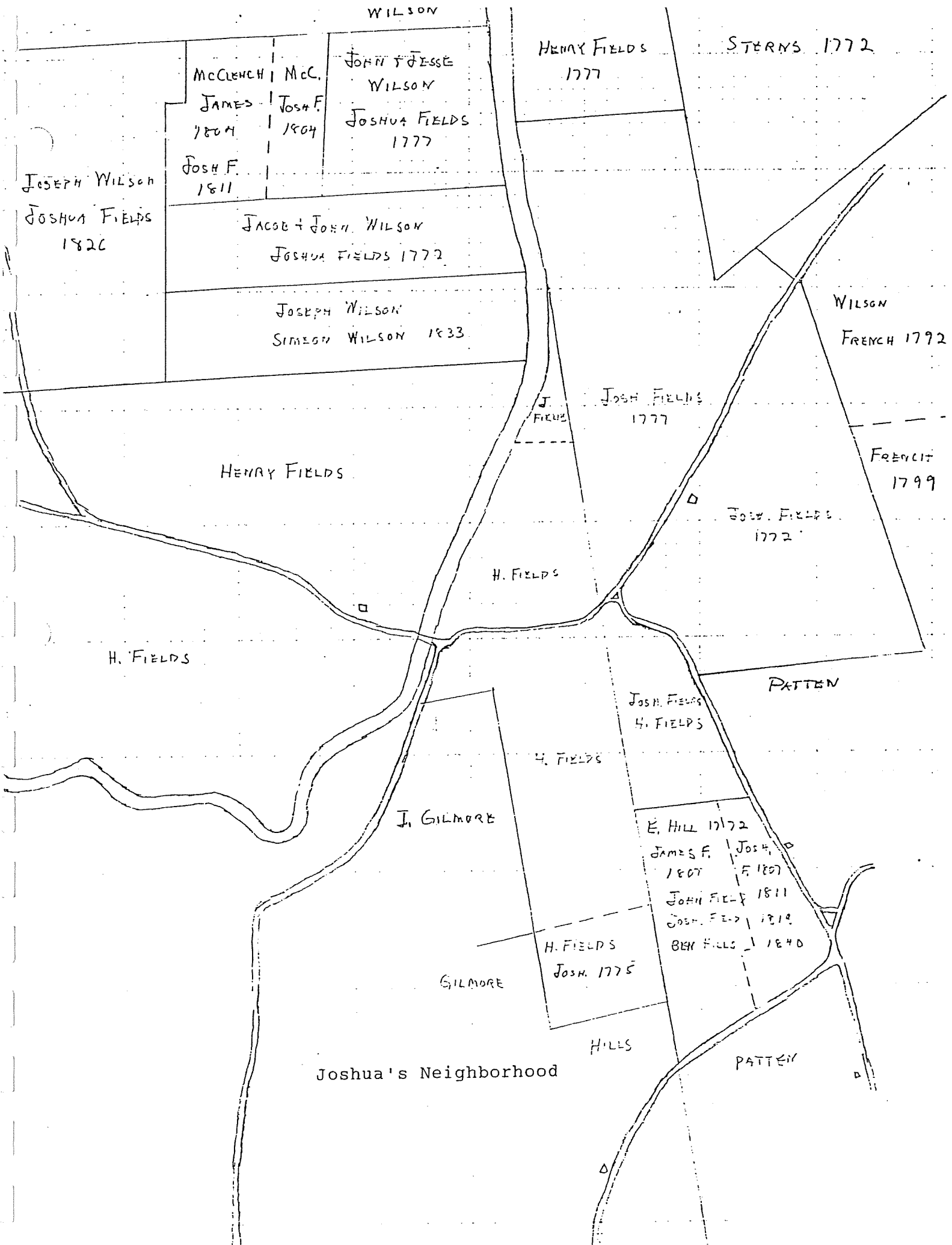
In 1840 Smith E. Fields bought the Waterman place and moved back from Alexandria, N.H. He had married Mary Moses of Meridith in 1835. Sally (Sarah E) Fields was born in New Hampton, N.H., Charles S. in Alexandria, N.H., but Joshua E., Mary Ann, Herman S, and Franklin Pierce were born in Merrimack, in the years from 1842 to 1856. Herman Scott was Charles Fields father.

In 1849, at the age of 70, Joshua Jr. deeded his 100 acre farm by the river to Smith E. Fields and received in return an "annuity" mortgage. He died six years later in 1855, probably on the Waterman place.

8 - JOSHUA'S FOLKS

Joshua was not the first Fields to come to Merrimack. Two years before in 1770 his brother Henry had purchased a neighboring farm. With the end of the French and Indian wars a few years earlier, the frontiers had been reopened for settlement. The growing population, cooped up in the well-established communities for the duration, flowed out again to the new land. And everyone at least considered moving farther inland.

Samuel Fields farm on the slopes of Roughmeadow Hill in Andover, Massachusetts had been large enough to support him, his wife Sarah, and their six children. But Henry, the eldest son had married, and the old farm its fertility



WILSON

HENRY FIELDS
1777

STERNS 1772

JOSEPH WILSON
JOSHUA FIELDS
1826

McCLENNCH | McC.
JAMES 1804 | JOS. F. 1804
JOSH F. 1811

JOHN F. JESSE
WILSON
JOSHUA FIELDS
1777

JACOB & JOHN WILSON
JOSHUA FIELDS 1772

JOSEPH WILSON
SIMON WILSON 1833

HENRY FIELDS

J. FIELDS
JOSH FIELDS
1777

WILSON
FRENCH 1792

FRENCH
1799

JOSH. FIELDS
1772

H. FIELDS

H. FIELDS

PATTEN

JOSH. FIELDS
H. FIELDS

H. FIELDS

J. GILMORE

GILMORE

H. FIELDS
JOSH. 1775

E. HILL 1772
JAMES F. 1807 | JOS. F. 1807
JOHN FIELDS 1811
JOSH. FIELDS 1818
BEN FIELDS 1840

HILLS

PATTEN

Joshua's Neighborhood

depleted by generations of cultivation, would not support all of them indefinitely. And land was expensive in Andover.

But apparently frontier life did not appeal to Henry and his bride Rebecca. While land was cheapest at the frontiers, it was relatively inexpensive in the still partly settled towns to the south. And so Henry bought a farm on the west bank of the Souhegan River, near the "great bridge". It was mainly flat bottom land, one of the choice pieces sought out by the first settlers. A house mentioned in an 1848 deed, but that was probably the ell of the present house. The cost was about one-tenth that of an equivalent farm in Andover.

Henry was 27, his wife Rebecca was 24. His first child, Rebecca was born in Andover in 1771, and his mother Sarah died shortly afterwards. This left father Samuel's family without a housekeeper; Sally (Sarah) was only 13. That September, Marston, the second son, brought home a bride. But apparently they didn't stay there too long for the birth of Marston Jr. was recorded in August of 1772 in both Andover and Merrimack, and Joshua, of course, bought his farm in November of the same year. In (June?) of 1773 Marsden bought a farm on the north side of Blodgett Hill. Father Samuel apparently remained behind in Andover, dying there three years later in 1776. It is not known when the younger children moved to Merrimack, but the passage of time shows them all well established here.

Henry was the most successful of the brothers. The farm prospered, and he enlarged it by buying adjoining lots in both Merrimack and Amherst. Grain and fodder crops were apparently planted on the flat lands, with the family vegetable garden in the corner lot across the bridge. There was more moisture here, and frost did not pocket here as it did on the flats. An orchard covered much of the rest of the side hill.

The farm was reasonably good also for growing children. Between the years of 1773 and 1789 four additional children were born, however two did not reach maturity. Rebecca at 21 married Timothy Carlton, the son of a neighbor. Susan at 25 married Phinias Whitney of Dunstable, Mass., and lived in Nashua. Henry Jr. at 29 married Elizabeth Warner of Amherst and went to Massachusetts to live.

Henry was also something of a business man, buying small mills in both Amherst and Merrimack, and operating them with his younger brother John. He took an active interest in community affairs. As was the custom, he worked out his taxes repairing the nearby farm roads. He oversaw the rebuilding of the east half of "Fields Bridge" as it

came to be called. (The bridge at that time was apparently built with two spans and a pier in the center. Amherst was responsible for the western half. Merrimack the eastern. This bridge was probably built at the time of the new county road in 1769.) He was one of the 14 founders of the present Congregational Church and when relations with England worsened in 1775 was a member of the first Committee of Safety. He is on record as a Lieutenant in Col. Nahum Baldwin's regiment in 1776, and was apparently promoted to Captain before his discharge. He served at times in such capacities as Juryman, Constable, Selectman, Fence Viewer, Surveyor of Highways and treasurer of the local tax district.

By 1803 he had acquired over 300 acres of land. He was 60 now, and apparently tired of the responsibility of running the farm, so he called son Henry Jr. back from Charlestown, Mass. and deeded the farm over to him. Henry Jr. of course, giving his father back the usual "annuity" deed. Henry died a year later, in 1804. Perhaps mother Rebecca did not feel comfortable in daughter-in-law Elizabeth's home, for in February of 1806 she married James Gilmore, a widowed neighbor. She died in 1825 and rejoined Henry in the Turkey Hill cemetery.

Henry's will shows him to be a deeply religious man. On his tombstone is written:

"Beneath this stone I turn to dust
But I hereafter shall arise
And he in whom I put my trust
Will bear me upward to the skies"

Henry Jr. had three children; David Warner, born in Charlestown, Mass. in 1803 - he died young in 1825 - Charles Henry in Merrimack in 1805, and Eliza Ann in 1807. In 1819, he sold the farm to Benjamin Pierce "with the exception of all public roads and also a garden on the east side of the river belonging to Mrs. Gilmore, my honored mother." The stone wall at the bottom of the garden can still be seen. Continual plowing worked the soil downhill so that ground there is level with the top of the wall. (This is known archaeologically as a "positive lynchet." Benjamin Pierce was apparently a brother of Franklin Pierce, who was to be our 14th president. Franklin witnessed the deed. Benjamin apparently bought the farm as an investment, for Henry was living there in 1830 when he bought back the farm to sell to Josiah Severns of Roxbury, Mass. The farm remained in the Severns family for three generations, long enough to give the bridge its most common name. In 1903 the farm was purchased by Charles H. Fields, Joshua Fields great-great-grandson. He lived on the farm for 54 years.

In 1773 Marston Fields purchased a farm of 110 acres on the west side of Naticook Road, about a half mile south of Lawrence Corners. Perched high on Blodgett Hill, it overlooked the western part of town. Although hill land, it was still fertile enough to provide a good living. Marston was able to expand his farm over the years, although to a lesser extent than Henry. Like Henry he was also active in community affairs; he too served as Jurymen, Surveyor of Highways, Fence Viewer, Selectman, and Tax District treasurer.

Between the years 1774 and 1793 he had two more sons, and three daughters. Marston Jr. at 32 married Mary Howe, 23, of Merrimack; Samuel at 30 married Sarah Hills, 22, Zebadia at the age of 22 married Mary Fields. Little is recorded of daughters Hannah and Elizabeth-Osgood, but the youngest Pricilla at the age of 25 married Seneca Greely of Merrimack.

In 1806 at the age of 60 Marston sold one half of his farm to Marston Jr. In March of 1815 his wife Hannah died at the age of 67, and his unmarried daughters Hannah and Elizabeth-Osgood took over the housekeeping. Marston Jr. died in October of that year, and things took a turn for the worse. Marston Jr. had given his father a lifetime lease on his half of the farm but Marston was too old to farm himself, and apparently the grand children didn't like farming, and he could'nt sell off any of the land since he no longer had a clear title. He died nine years later in 1724, leaving the bulk of his estate to son Samuel. Samuel, however, died a year later at 49 leaving little but debts behind.

The family line continued through Marston Jr's son Zebadiah, and his son James and grandson Harrison, Samuel's son Samuel Bartlett, and Issac's son Gerry Madison.

Joshua has already been discussed. Much less is known about his younger brother Samuel. In 1781, at the age of 29 he married Zerviah Taylor of Amherst. In 1780 he bought an 52 acre farm in Amherst adjacent to Henry's. He had three children, born in the 80's. Daughters Zerviah and Abigail married men from neighboring towns and went west to Denmark, Iowa. His son Joseph and daughter-in-law Hannah settled in Temple, N.H. Samuel's wife Zerviah died in February 1824; Samuel followed in December.

The youngest Fields brother John served as a private in the Continental Army throughout the revolution as a fifer in Col. Isaac Wyman's regiment. In 1797 he purchased a half interest in Henry's mill in Merrimack. In 1800 he married Elizabeth (King) Goss, the widow of John Goss of Amherst. Her sons John and Samuel Goss were in their early teens and undoubtedly grew up helping at the mill. A son Henry was

born in 1801 but did not live to maturity; his daughter Elizabeth was born in 1803.

Subject to damage from high water in the spring run-off, the mill may have been a questionable asset to a man of 59. At any rate John sold the mill to step-son Sam in 1815, only to buy it back again in 1818. John Fields pension of \$96 per year started that year. In 1833 he again sold it to Sam, but daughter Elizabeth, apparently tired of this swapping, bought it back in 1836, less the water rights, and gave her father a lifetime tenancy in it.

In the late 30's daughter Elizabeth married Charles W. Colburn who had recently moved onto the next farm. John was listed as living with the Colburns in June of 1840. Elizabeth Fields died in December; John followed 8 months later at the age of 85.

The Colburns had only one child, a daughter, Catherine born in November of 1840. She married John H. Upham, in 1862.

Last of the Andover Fields, and the only daughter, was Sally (Sarah). In 1782 at the age of 24 she married Andrew Wilkins, 21, who lived a half mile east on Amherst Rd. His father Stephen Jr. sold them land and they built a small house half way between Fuller Mill and Lester roads. She had 8 children in the years between 1783 and 1800, six boys and two girls. James apparently did not reach maturity. Amos settled in Merrimack and later moved to Vermont. Mehitible and Sarah married and lived in Merrimack. Andrew and Asa did not marry. Samuel married and moved to Amherst, but John settled in Merrimack. Andrew died in 1810 at the age of 49; no record of Sally's death has been found.

The Fields family parent and grandparents in Andover spelled the name in the normal way. But in Merrimack there was a tendency to spell it Fiealds, especially by Marston. Perhaps it was pronounced that way. Most dropped this during their lifetime, yet it is Fiealds on Marston's gravestone in the Turkey Hill Cemetery.

9 - THE FOSTER PLACE

Joseph Litchfield, Jr. bought the farm in 1824. The son of a Kittery, Me., minister, he was 36 at the time. One wonders how he happened to learn of the farm being for sale from so great a distance. But James' sister Hannah and brother Jonas had both settled in Maine, and the Junkins family east on Amherst Rd. had come from York, Me. a few years before.

The Litchfields apparently made few changes in the farm. But according to one story that has come down, Mr. L. got mad at his wife one day, and when she was off visiting a neighbor, started to paint the house black. Perhaps an excess of cider was involved. There are places on the house where chipping paint seemed to show black areas beneath.

Things seem to have gone well for the Litchfields for a number of years, but in 1839 Joseph died. His widowed mother Hannah followed in 1843, and in 1845 his daughter Francis. In February of 1846 Elizabeth Litchfield sold the farm to Thomas Jefferson Foster of Alexandria, N.H., and went back to Kittery.

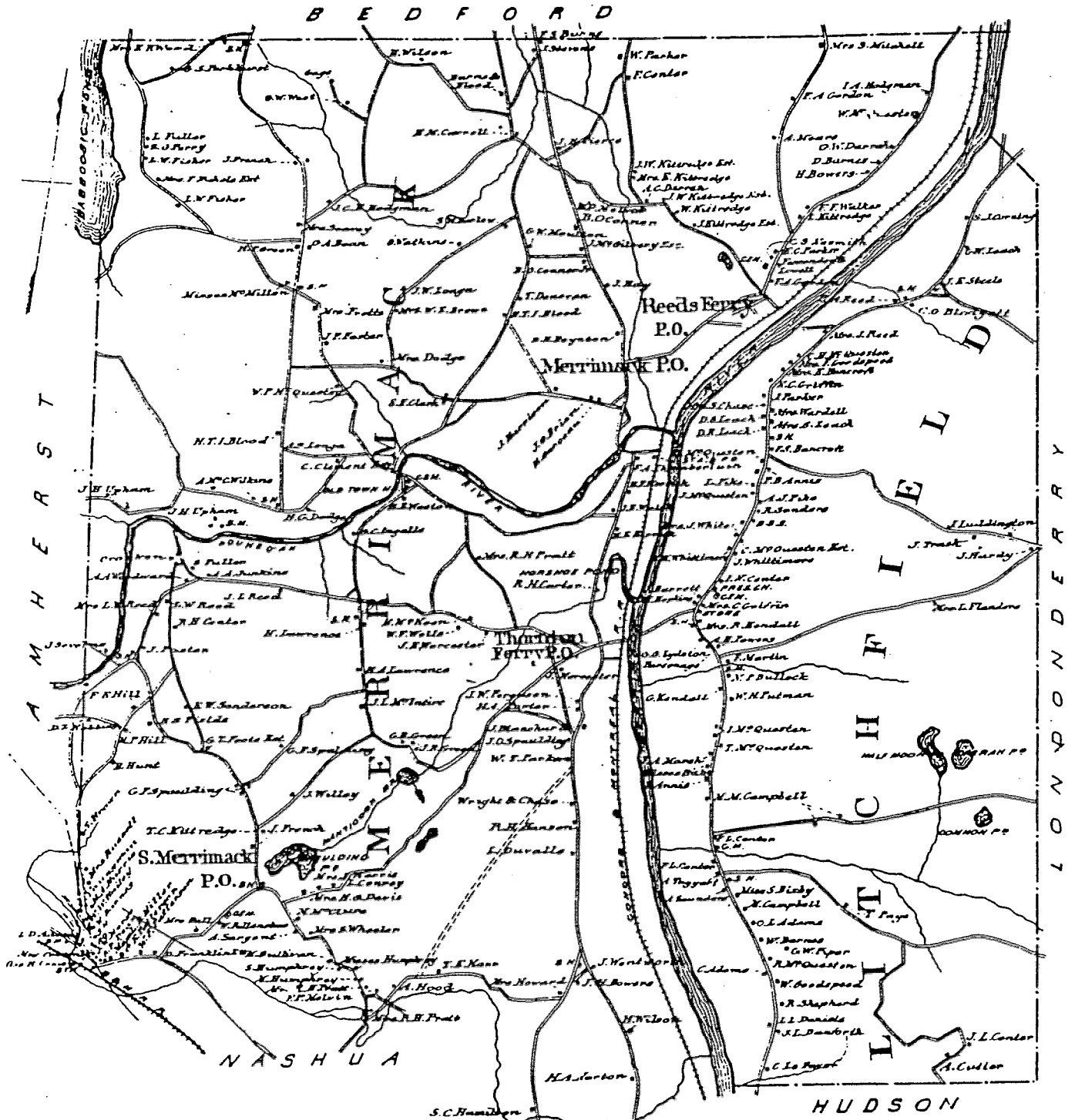
Thomas J. Foster's forebears also came from Andover, Mass. but his folks settled in Canterbury, N.H. about the same time that the Fields came to Merrimack. Father Joseph had settled in Alexandria, and T.J., born in 1819, was the third of 8 children. He had been educated in the district schools and came to Merrimack a year before he bought the farm. Although somewhat younger, he undoubtedly knew Smith E. Fields in Alexandria. He paid \$2000 for the farm, giving Mrs. Litchfield a five year mortgage for the total. Later in the year he married Hannah C. Junkins from that neighboring family.

The mortgage was paid off by 1852, and the first remodeling of the house, removal of the center chimney, probably occurred about this time. In 1857 Thomas bought two additional tracts of land from Hannah's brother Albert. One roughly rectangular and containing 18 acres, lay east of the farm, north of Amherst Rd. The second, containing 24 acres, was the north part of the Blanchard lot that Henry Fields had split with Joshua. Henry's deed of 1803 notes that some of the land here had been cleared, but the land dropped out of sight, probably due to someone's not registering a deed, to appear in the possession of Samuel Fuller in 1847. Stone walls now indicate the cultivated area, and a cellar hole shows the existence of a house. Who built it is anyone's guess since it is not mentioned in any deed, but it was undoubtedly there when T.J. bought the lot, apparently as a place for his father Joseph to live. Joseph died in 1875. Mrs. Peaslee told of her great-grandfather living there.

MERRIMACK & LITCHFIELD

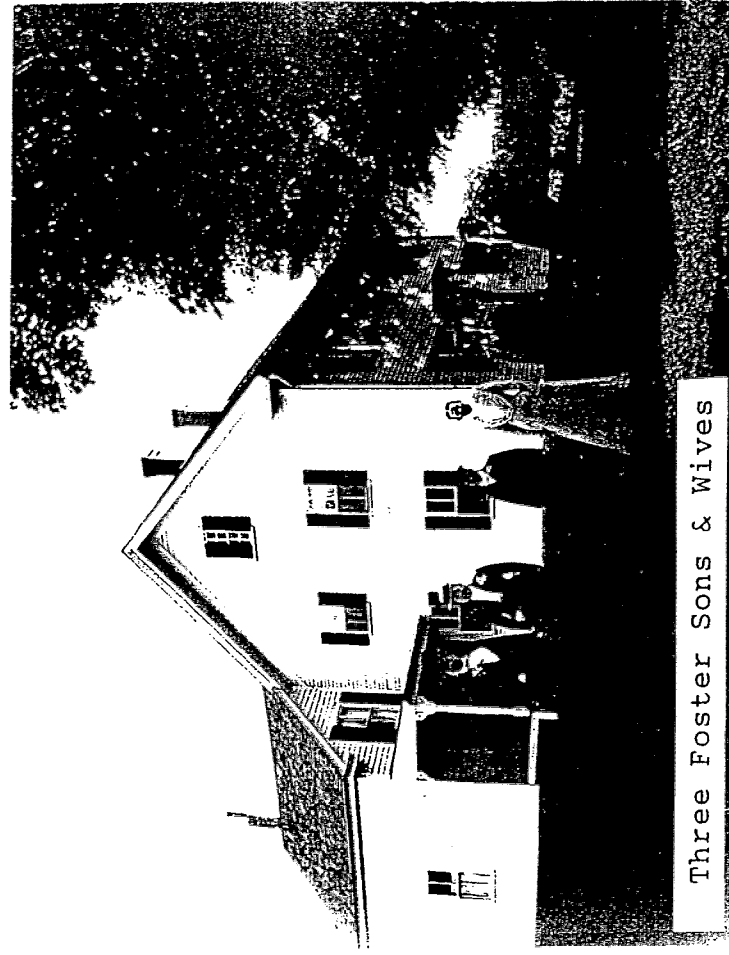
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

1892





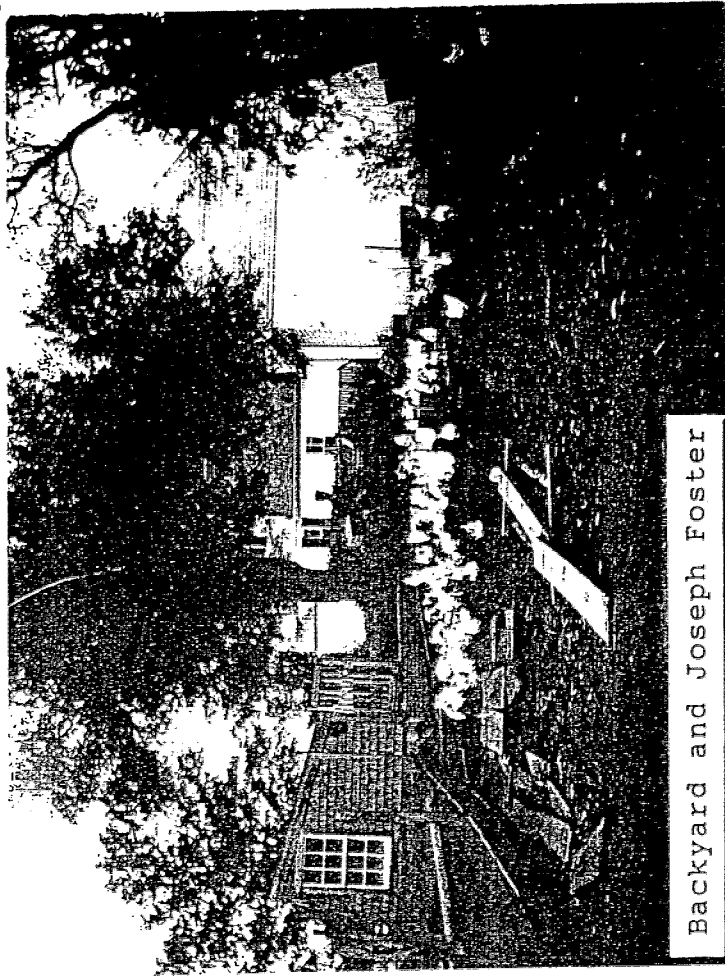
Mr. Joseph Foster



Three Foster Sons & Wives



Lida Severns and Friend



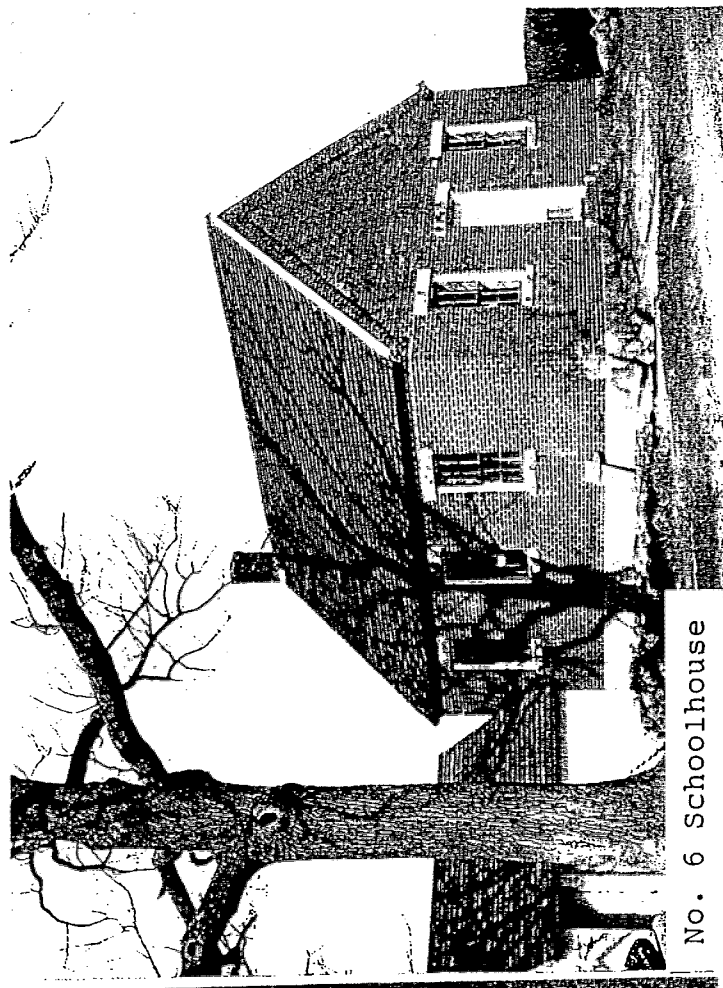
Backyard and Joseph Foster



Converse Cousins



Converse Cousins



No. 6 Schoolhouse

T.J.Foster was, of course, a farmer but he did blacksmithing also. He was a Democrat, a member of the Grange, and an ardent temperance man. Three sons were born in the years between 1851 and 1863. George W., the middle one, went to Portland, Me.; Charles W. lived in Winthrop, Mass. Joseph Henry, the eldest stayed on the farm. He was educated in the common schools and at Mt. Vernon (Academy) graduating at the age of 22. Returning home, he worked for his father with general farming and the milk business. At the age of 27 he married Charlotte Converse of Amherst. It appears that he may have planned to live in the little house near the river, but it is not certain that they did so, for about this time the farm house was enlarged to accomodate the two families. Their only child, Mary Lizzie, was born in 1880. The barn was probably enlarged about this time also. Family tradition has it that wife Charlotte paid some of the construction costs.

When Joseph bought the farm in 1881 it was described as 142 acres. With nearby markets for milk and produce, and plenty of stock to provide manure to replenish the fields, the farm prospered. Joseph also was a Democrat, served on the school board for six years, and was tax collector and selectman for two terms each. He was a member of the Thornton Grange and of the Odd Fellows. His father, Thomas J. died in 1892.

In 1901 Mary Lizzie married Bertie Peaslee of Bedford. They lived at first at the family homestead there but in 1905 purchased the Hill homestead on the east side of Peaslee Rd. Joseph Henry died in 1929. Bert Peaslee bought the farm in October of 1938, a month after the bad hurricane which had blown down large amounts of timber on the property. Charlotte Foster died in 1945.

The original schoolhouse for the #6 school district was located in the triangle lot that was almost opposite Bates Road. In 1849, T. J. Foster sold to the school district part of the present Miner lot for \$75, with the provision that the land would revert when school was no longer used. A new brick school was built on the lot that year, nearly opposite present Peaslee Road. It was customary for the teacher there to board at the Foster place, which meant cash income for the Fosters. One teacher was Ruby Hadley, 19, from Wear, N.H. There was no well at the school, and the pupils used to be sent up to the house to get water, which was a pleasant chore indeed.

In the early 1960's a former teacher stopped at the house. She lived in Florida, was traveling in the vicinity and wondered if she could find the place. The school was gone, of course, but she recognised the house, which brought back many memories. But she didn't want to go inside and see changes.

1881

SOUTHERN
RIVER

24 ACRES

(JUNKINS)

1857

78

S 45° W

59

N 87° W

60

N

W

S 8° W

18 ACRES

(JUNKINS)

1857

71

60

31½

N 82° W

75½

DANIEL LARABEE

S 60° W

N 50° W

N

17

15

24

100 ACRES

(LITCHFIELD)

1846

100

N 35° E

66

S 75° E

21

S

60

N 10° W

21

S 80° W

S 74° E

21

S 21° E

18

N 89° E

74

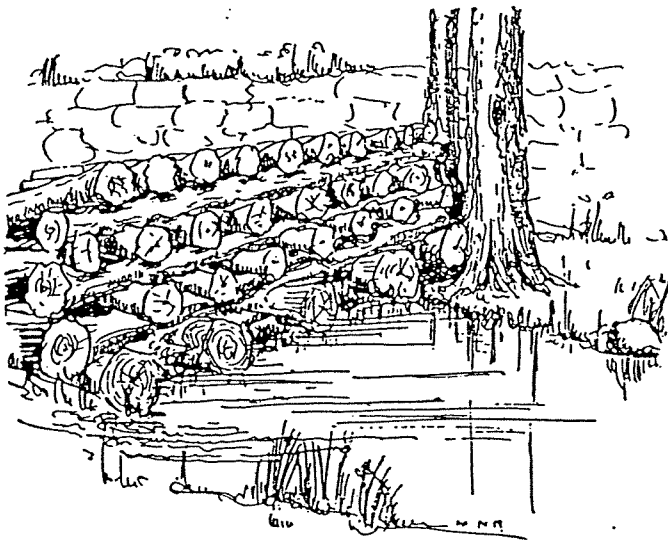
N 10° W

41

FREEMAN HILLS

The school was finally discontinued about 1938, and the land reverted to Mr. Peaslee. In 1940 the school house "a brick building, wood shed and outhouse, as is" was auctioned off, and he bought it for \$50. Who would want to move a brick school? In 1941 he sold the Miner lot plus the building to a relative for a camp. The property subsequently passed through many hands, the school burning in the process. The Miner family took possession of the land in 1951.

When Joshua Fields deeded his farm to son James, the total acreage of the lots was 93. James sold 10 acres to John Goss, yet described the farm in his deed to the Litchfields as 100 acres more or less. When T.J. Foster bought it in 1846 it was still 100 acres. He added 42 acres, and when Joseph Henry bought it, it was 142 acres, as it was when Bert Peaslee bought it in 1938. When we bought the wood lot in 1960, however, we were told that the total was 120 acres, but in 1989, when the town was reassessed, the acreage was given as 127.2. The 5 acres of the Miner lot brings the total to 132.2. $142 - 132.2 = 9.8$. For over 114 years taxes were paid on almost 9.8 acres of non-existent land! The 10 acres that James Field sold John Goss.



Old Style Cribwork Dam

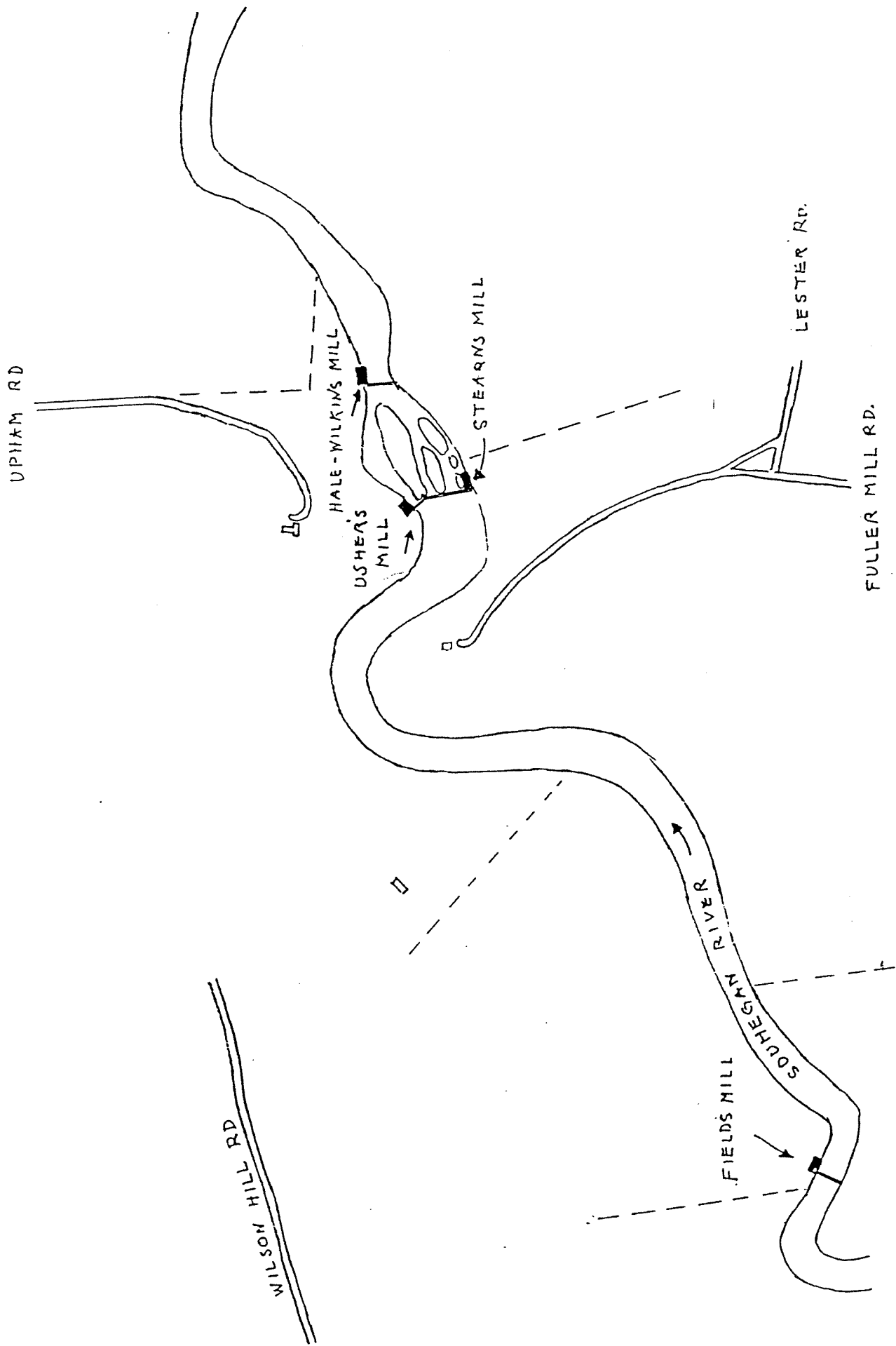
10 - The Mills On The River

With the settlers heavily dependent on corn and rye for food, the means of converting the grain to an edible form was very important. Since many farmers did not own horses, and travel by oxen is notoriously slow, a nearby grist mill benefited the entire area. Normally, ownership of land on both side of a stream was required to establish rights to the water flowing therein. But in western Merrimack, the land on the south side of the Souhegan River was an undivided tract belonging to Joseph Blanchard. But Joseph needed to have his grain ground as well as his neighbors so it is probable that he offered no objection to mills on the north side of the Souhegan, as long as he could get his grain ground at a discount. The earliest mills seem to have been built without the customary water rights.

Fields Mill - The first suggestion of a mill in western Merrimack is given in the deed that Joseph Blanchard's widow gave Daniel Stearns in 1772 to a piece of the Blanchard tract. "Northerly 135 rods to a pitch pine tree marked near the water in Millers Falls". It hardly seems likely that a part of the river would be so called without the presence of a mill. The property north of the river at that time was owned by Robert Usher. In 1774 he sold part of it to Hugh Clark, a tailor from Danvers, Mass. No mention is made of buildings, but the price is too high for land alone. In 1777 the Blanchard estate sold Henry Fields an opposing lot on the south side of the river. After Hugh Clark's death in 1786, his property was sold at public auction. No mill is mentioned in the deed - it had probably been badly damaged by high water - but buildings are noted. Owing the land across the river and its associated water rights, Henry could outbid any competitor for the mill site and did so. He was apparently content to let Hugh's widow and her new husband live in the house on the property, for he did not purchase her dower right then. These he purchased in 1797 when he sold his brother John a half interest in the property. It was now described as containing both a saw mill and grist mill. And John probably took up residence in the house.

This mill was located several hundred feet downstream from the big bend. The dam was probably built of log cribwork filled with large rocks from the river to anchor it and faced with planks. Since the river banks here are low, it could not have been a high dam. A canal led from the mill several hundred feet downstream to rejoin the river; parts of this can still be seen.

Buying and operating a mill was one of the few ways that a man of means could invest his money. Since he received a share of the product for processing it, he need extend little credit to his neighbors. Since his surplus



was sold on a wholesale basis, he had a reasonably good chance of getting paid for it. The main risk was damage to the mill but most of the machinery was made of wood; only the bearings and certain critical components were metal. Repairs could be made on the spot with local lumber when needed but it took money to do it. A mill could rarely be run with limited capital; the good years would outnumber the bad, but there had to be enough reserve cash to carry one through the bad years.

This was apparently Henry's second venture into mills. In 1783 he purchased a 45 acre lot containing a mill privilege in Amherst, possibly at the Converse Mill location. Before Henry died in 1804 he had sold John a half interest in this one also. But in 1809 John purchased the remaining half interest in the second mill from Henry's estate and sold the whole to Timothy Carleton, Henry's son-in-law. At the same time John acquired the other half of the Souhegan mill. A very good relationship must have existed between John and Henry. While most of the Fields brothers named their firstborn after themselves, John named his son "Henry". Young Henry died in childhood.

For some years John operated the mill successfully, undoubtedly with the help of his step-sons John and Samuel Goss. In 1815 John sold the mill to Sam, but bought it back in 1818 when his pension started. In 1821 John again sold the mill, this time to the Goss brothers jointly. They traded it back and forth among themselves, a deed of 1833 stating "as there is an ancient mill privilege on the above described premises it is hereby covenanted that Sam does not purchase water rights". This tends to establish the antiquity of the mill site, and indicates that the mill no longer existed. In 1836 John's daughter bought back the land and gave her father a lifetime tennancy in it.

Stearns and Ushers Mills - The 1772 deed of Dan Stearns' that was previously mentioned continues "part of which premises have been improved by the said Daniel Stearns" It is suspected that these improvements may have been another mill. A mill on the south side of the river would be much more convenient for the Blanchards and they would have encouraged its construction on their property. In 1774 Stearns bought the east half of the Usher lot, thus establishing his water rights. But when he sold it back to Robert Usher in 1778, it was complete "with house and grist mill". The house mentioned is probably the present ell of the Upham house, and the mill was located at the bottom edge of the big pool below Tomasians, between the north bank and the island. Dan would not have built a mill on the north side of the river unless he already had the stream dammed with a mill on his own property. No mill is actually mentioned however, until Simeon Cummings deed of 1793 in which he gives Dan "all the right, interest and possession

I have or ever had in the privilege of the falls on the North side of the Souhegan River formerly owned by John McConile of Boston against the said Stearn's mills in Merrimack". Dan was at this time apparently trying to reacquire the water rights on the north side which went with the mill that he sold. This deed was not recorded until 1835. Dan owned the mill until his death in the early 1830's.

The Hale-Wilkins Mill - In 1823, two years after they bought John Fields mill, the Goss brothers bought the east section of the Usher lot with the house and gristmill that Dan Stearns had built, which property had meanwhile passed through a number of different hands. The same year John bought a small adjacent lot on the river from Richard Hale, his neighbor to the east. In 1828 he bought the Wilkins farm across the river and carved off a strip along the river to establish water rights for a new mill. This was apparently built in the next few years. John describes himself at this time as a "housewright" and "carpenter", Samuel as a "machine builder".

The big problem with all mills was high water damage in the spring. The banks of the Souhegan in this area are a clayey gravel, and it was difficult to tie the dams into the banks so that the ends would not wash out. At this new location ledges stretched across the river and the dam could be anchored to solid rock.

In 1832 John Goss sold Richard Hale $\frac{1}{2}$ interest in the new mill. The mill is not specifically mentioned, but is implied in the purchase price of \$600. In 1833 Sam sold John his $\frac{1}{2}$ interest in the mill, for another \$600, specifying a "certain set of mills, mill privilege, and land around same". Sam agrees not to "erect a grist mill or mills or a saw mill or mills for sawing boards and other common lumber upon a mill privilege now owned by him heretofore known as the Usher or Fields privilege". Unless there was a nearby bridge, which in this case there wasn't, a mill on one side of the river would not compete with one on the opposite side; each had their separate clientele. But two nearby mills on the same side of the river would compete for trade. John knew Sam and wasn't taking any chances!

But John kept his half of the mill for only two years; in 1835 he sold his share to Alexander McCauley Wilkins and for years it would be known as the Hale-Wilkins mill. It seems that John and Sam were more interested in building mills than running them. Perhaps they saw too much of the latter under John Fields!

From then on the mill changed hands every few years. A deed of 1870 states "Said grantees to have all the mill

tools such as Millbars, cant hooks, mill dogs, etc. Also 4 circular saws, 3 upright saws, one sawing machine (Gilman's patent) and one set mill stones".

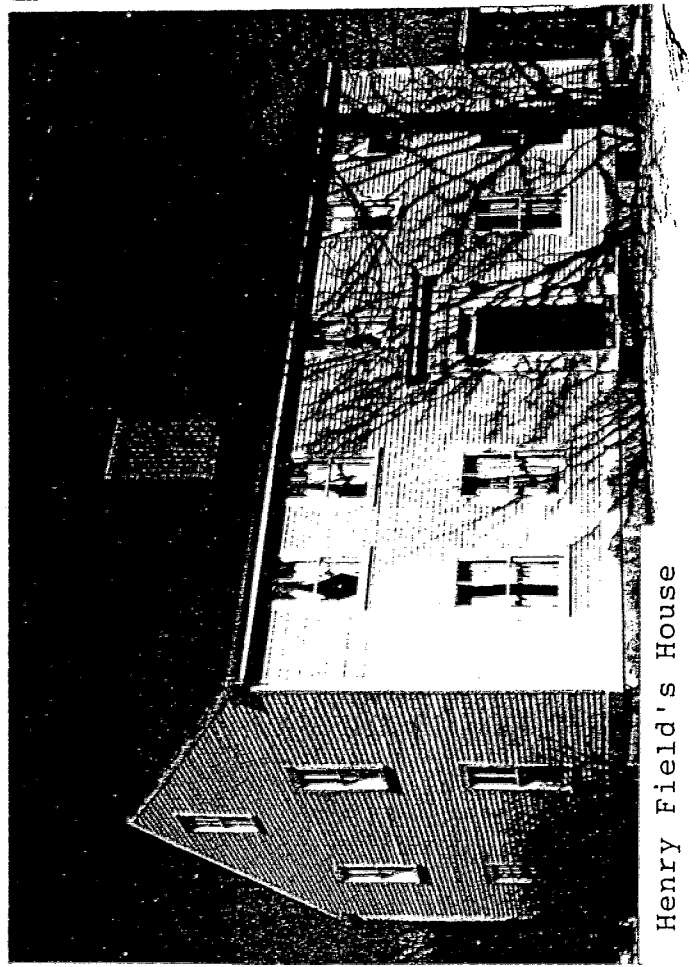
As previously noted, in 1836 John Goss sold John Fields' land to Elizabeth Fields, less the water rights, and 1837 John and Sam sold the eastern section of the Usher lot to John H. Colburn, excepting the mill rights and a few acres adjacent to the new mill. Colburn was then a farmer, not a miller. He married Elizabeth about 1838, and their only child, Catherine was born in 1840.

In 1862 Catherine Colburn married John H. Upham of Amherst (?). In 1888 John Upham bought the mill complex from Joseph L. Dow. John Colburn died the following July bringing both the John Fields and Colburn holdings into the Upham family. The mill was probably operated up until the turn of the century, but the water rights were sold in 1908. The mill and dam were badly damaged in the 1938 hurricane, and the mill was torn down shortly thereafter. Much of the river property still remains in the family.

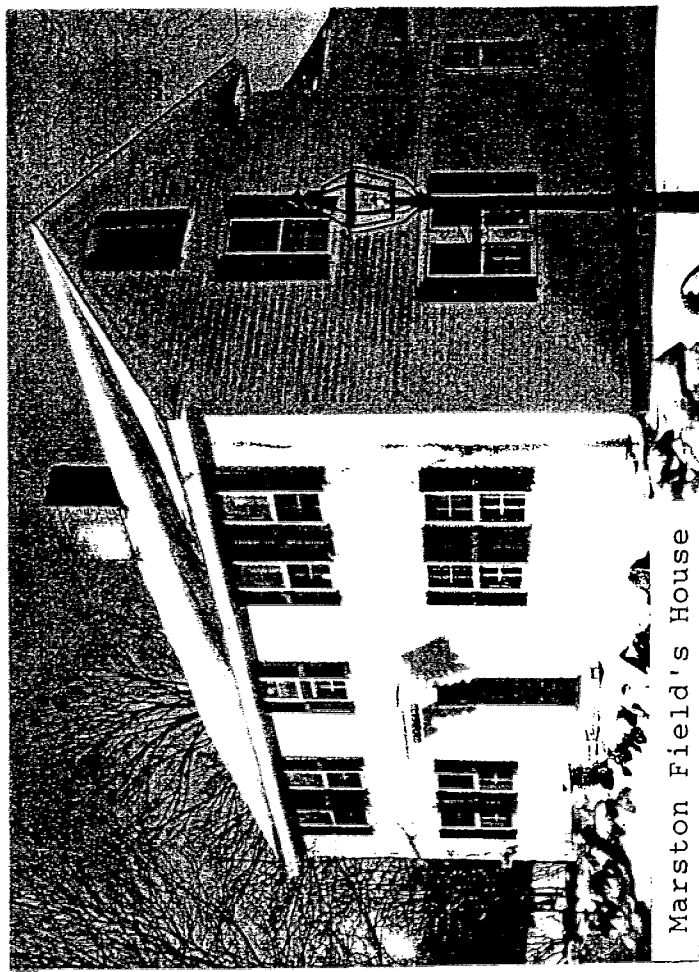
Henry Fields mill site may have been abandoned but it was not so with Stearns mill on the south side of the river. After Dan Stearns death we find the mill in the possession of Nicholas French, Dan's neighbor to the east. This seems strange until we discover that Nicholas French was John Goss's brother-in-law. Nothing like keeping the mill business in the family. When Nicholas sold it in 1835 it was "together with the dwelling house and grain mill standing thereon with all the machinery, mill stones, bolt picks and irons belonging to said mill, the mill dams and the right to keep up the said dams and erect new dams across the said river, together with the Island in said river between the two mill dams and all the right and privilege to flow the land above and below said mill and to use the water running in the said river that Daniel Stearns late of said Merrimack deceased, the former owner of said premises had at the time of his decease". Again one wonders if this deed could convey all that it promised since John Goss then owned the water rights on the north end of the site.

French sold to Asa Spaulding, who in turn sold to James Thompson and John L. Reed in 1836. The property now had a "saw mill and grain mill standing thereon". The property subsequently passed through a number of hands, and was bought by Samuel Fuller in 1841. He apparently knew his business, for it remained in his possession for over 47 years.

Thanks to the activity at the mills, a small village grew up in the vicinity of Fuller Mill Road. The 1858 map shows 9 houses there and 1892 there were still eight. But by 1958 only five remained, with four cellar holes marking the former locations.



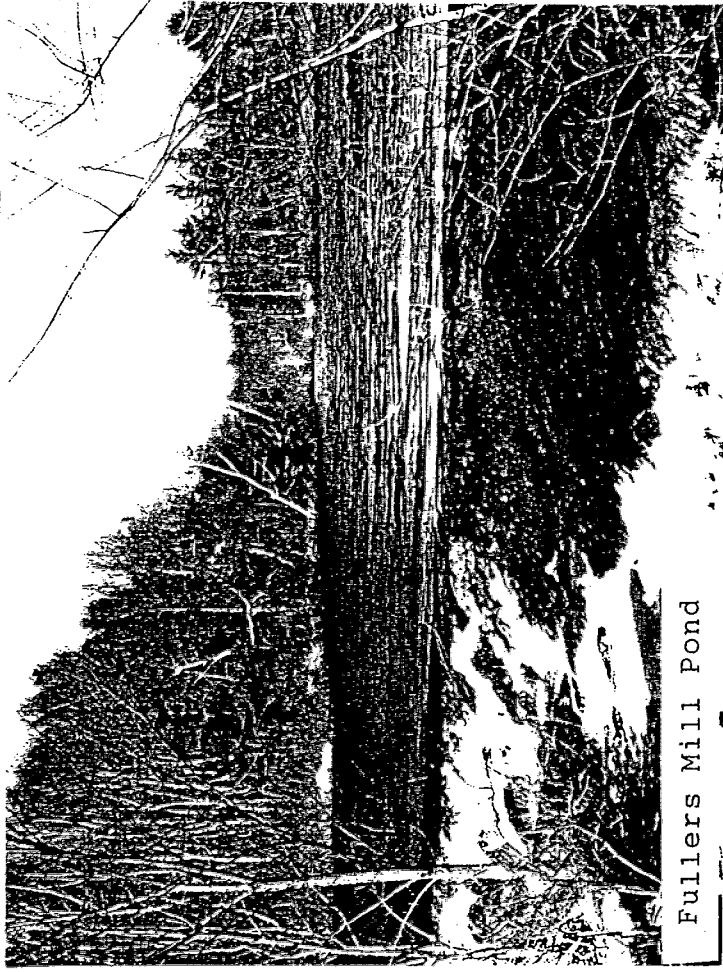
Henry Field's House



Marston Field's House



S. From Field's Mill Site



Fullers Mill Pond

11 - GLIMPSES OF LONG AGO

Official records give interesting glimpses into the past. Deeds of colonial times might conclude "Dated the 1st of May in the 15th year of his Majesty's Reign 1775" but come July 4, 1776 that phase disappears. English money however, continued to be used in land transactions for some time. A deed of 1780 mentions payment at the rate of "six schillings per Spanish milled dollar". Since a shilling is 1/20 of a pound, one pound was equal to \$3.33. In 1794, the New Hampshire legislature made the dollar the official coin.

Deeds are also a source of information about the individual. They tell where he lived, if he was married, his wife's name, and his degree of prosperity. If he was buying additional land he was doing well; if he had to mortgage the farm he was having a spell of bad luck. In a mortgage deed, a borrower deeds his property to the lender conditionally; when the money is repaid and the fact noted on the deed, the deed becomes invalid. A similar type of deed was used when a father turned his farm over to a son, usually the eldest. The father executed a conventional deed to the son, who then deeded it back to his father with a conditional deed, the condition in this case being the support of the parents in their old age. From these deeds we can learn quite a bit about the individual, the family and customs of the day.

When Joshua turned his farm over to his son in 1800 Joshua Jr. agreed to "well and faithfully husband and manage to the best advantage the above said farm in keeping the fences and buildings in good repair and bring in to the said Joshua annually $\frac{1}{2}$ of the produce of said farm viz; $\frac{1}{2}$ of all the hay and other fodder to be put in the said Joshua's barn in good order, $\frac{1}{2}$ of all the grain and corn of all kinds and $\frac{1}{2}$ of all sauce, cider and winter apples into the house and cellar; haul to the door of said Joshua sufficient firewood for summer and winter and cut the same fit for the fire and take care and tend the stock of the said Joshua summer and winter and take care of the said Joshua and his the said Joshua's wife Sarah in sickness and health and furnish them with nursing and doctoring and all necessaries for their comfort that may from time to time stand in need of during their natural lives and at their decease to furnish each of them a decent burial and also pay unto James Fields, John Fields, and Jonas Fields the sum of \$60. each when they shall arrive at the age of 21 years with interest from then till paid. Also if the said John, James and Jonas or either of them shall continue on said farm and assist the said Joshua, Jr. in carrying on said farm till he or they arrive to the age of 21 years, the said Joshua is to pay him or them the further sum of \$60. each when he or they shall arrive to the age of 21 years with interest from then till paid. It is understood that the said Joshua, Jr. is to keep

those who so work for him in decent clothing for everyday and for Sundays and to furnish them with necessary schooling, viz, with one month schooling in the winter per year and at the age of 21 years he or they who serve their time out as above are to be well clothed as apprentices in general of this standing"

When brother Henry did the same in 1803 he was more specific with his support requirements. "To pay or cause to be paid to the said Henry during his life and the life of his wife, 30 bushels Indian corn, 25 bushels of rye, 30 bushels of potatoes and $\frac{1}{4}$ part of the Cyder made on said homestead annually whilst they both live and after the decease of either or them then he is only to pay $\frac{1}{2}$ the quantity of corn, rye, potatoes and cyder above mentioned. Also to keep on said homestead for the said Henry and wife, one horse, 2 cows, and 8 sheep and after decease of either of them then the said Henry, Jr. is to keep $\frac{1}{2}$ that number for and during the life of the survivor. Also to cut and haul as much firewood to the door of the said Henry as will support one fire and more in case of sickness for their use during both their lives or the longest lives and allow them the use and improvement of the garden on the east side of the river."

Nicholas French, Joshua's neighbor to the east in 1812 required that Nicholas, Jr. "engage to furnish his two sisters, daughters of said Nicholas and Rachel, with a home, grant them full privileges of living and boarding with their parents during the time that they remain disconnected from the matrimonial state."

This general procedure was widely used, even as late as 1850, with apparently successful results. Marston Fields used a somewhat different approach. In 1806 he sold a half interest in his farm to Marston Jr. Marston died in 1815 at the early age of 43. He did, however, give his father a lifetime lease of the property. His death left Marston short handed, and with the farm so entailed he could not sell off any of the land to raise money.

His second son Samuel must have helped out with the farm, for when Marston died in 1824, he left him his share in the farm. Samuel probably had to borrow heavily to satisfy his father's creditors, for when he himself died a year later, he was deeply in debt. Under these conditions the courts appointed an administrator to oversee the settlement of the estate. The estate would be appraised and liquidated, and the resulting cash used to pay off the debts. In this case, Marston's estate had not been settled by the time of Samuel's death so both estates were handled at the same time. From these detailed inventories we can piece together a very interesting picture of a farm in Merrimack in 1826.

(3)

Since this was the fall of the year, the crops were nearly all harvested. We find:

"Corn on the ear	\$24.00
Rye in the sheaf	18.00
Oats in the sheaf	17.50
Potatoes in the ground	13.33
Potatoes in the cellar	8.33
1 lot beans	1.50
Old corn	7.50
Old rye	6.00
9 barrels cider	9.00

Corn, rye and oats make up the grain crop. Wheat could be grown for a few years on newly cleared land, but soon exhausted the nutrients necessary for a good crop. If grown at all it was a cash crop, to be sold rather than consumed. Corn, rye, and oats were the staple crops, and corn bread or rye bread or a mixture of both, ground from their own crops at the local mill, were used for their bread. Potatoes obviously had an important place on the table, also beans. Cider, in varying degrees of hardness, was the beverage of the time, and some eventually provided the vinegar for cooking and pickling.

To feed the animals we find:

"Hay in the Barns	\$60.00
Corn fodder	4.00

Some of the grain and corn obviously went to feed the animals, and some of the oats as well.

The animals themselves were:

"1 old cow	\$10.00
3 cows	26.00
1 young cow	10.00
1 calf	3.50
8 sheep	8.00
2 old swine	18.00
2 shoats	7.50
2 yoke oxen	80.00
1 horse	15.00

The cows were the most useful animals. In addition to giving the farmer milk, and the dairy products that could be made from it, they produced calves, both male and female, at regular intervals. The heifers would be raised either to replace one of the older calves or for sale. The little bulls could have an operation to make them into oxen or would end up as meat for the table, early as veal or later as beef. Fed on slops, corn and milk by-products. Pigs also played a considerable part in the farm diet. Due to the small size of the flock, lamb or mutton was probably not eaten too often.

(4)

Their wool was made into cloth on:

2 Spinning wheels	\$1.50
2 Weavers reeds	.75
1 Weavers loom	.30

Oxen, not horses, did the heavy work on the farm. Powerful and easy to manage, they were however very slow, and as cud chewers could only be worked for a few hours at a time without rest. Two teams had to be alternated if continuous work was required. Young replacement teams appeared at intervals of a few years, and their early training was the responsibility of the farm boys. And once a yoke of oxen became surplus, it could either be sold for cash or provide beef for the winter. Oxen were seldom used after they were 10 years old. On this farm they were used with:

1 Ox Cart	\$10.00
1 Wagon	25.00
3 Sleds	3.00
1 large Chain	2.50
1 large Plow	4.00
1 small Plow	1.50
1 Harrow	1.25

The horse was too small for heavy work and was used for transportation. And it cost considerable less than a good ox. For it we find:

1 saddle and bridle	\$1.50
1 pair saddle bags	.50
1 single sleigh	3.00
1 small waggon and harness	7.00

Manure was a valuable by-product of the animals, since commercial fertilizers were not available. It was used mainly on the vegetable garden and grain crops; there was not enough for the whole farm.

The lighter work of the farm was done with human hands. For these we find:

2 axes	1.50
2 hoes	.12
1 dung fork	.12
2 "pick" forks	.40
1 lot scythes	.16
1 lot "sniths"	.33
1 bush scythe	.75
1 grindstone	1.50
2 iron bars	.75
1 winnowing mill	1.00

Marston's framing tools included:

1 hand saw	.75
1 auger	.25
1 carpenter's adze	.33
1 square	.25
1 pair pincers	.25
1 lot of old iron	3.00

The square was probably made of wood. And since iron was rather scarce, the old iron would go to the blacksmiths to be recycled into something that was needed.

Building supplies:

1 lot pine boards	7.00
1 lot plank	1.20
1 lot joist	.50
1 lot pine timber	2.00
2½M shingles	5.00
1 lot bricks	4.00
1 lot lime	.50

Inside the house it was the kitchen that saw the bulk of the work. It contained:

1 churn	.25
1 iron fire set	2.00
1 large kettle	2.00
1 Tea kettle	.25
1 pot	.75
1 skillet	.16
1 spider	.16
1 brass kettle	3.00
1 lot tin ware	.42
1 lot brown ware	.50
1 lot old crockery	.50
1 lot glassware	1.00
1 lot knives and forks	.33
6 silver spoons	2.50
1 Tea set	.67
1 tin stove	.25
1 large table	2.00
1 old table	.16
3 table cloths	1.00
9 towels	.50
1 soap barrel and soap	1.50
1 churn	.25
1 looking glass	1.00

The tin stove mentioned is probably a footwarmer, not a real stove. And there is no mention of lamps. Homemade tallow candles, and of course the fireplace, provided illumination.

In the bedrooms we find:

4 beds and bedding	28.00
1 pine chest	.75
1 bureau	1.50
1 desk	1.50
13 yds. bed tick	2.75
5 bed sheets	1.25
3 pillow cases	.30
1 small table	1.00
1 small looking glass	.50

There were no chairs mentioned anywhere, and no clock.

Books include:

"New Hampshire Justice"	.75
"Farmers Gazetteer"	.50
"All Religion & Ceremonies"	1.00
"Beauties of the Bible"	.25
"Wilson's Surveying"	.33

Samuel owed the Proprietors of the Merrimack Library the sum of \$3.31.

His clothes were:

1 Great coat	5.00
1 old coat	.50
2 coats	2.25
1 pair pantaloons	.75
2 pair drawers	.50
2 waistcoats	1.75
3 shirts	1.00
1 lot of stockings	2.00
2 handkerchiefs	.20
1 hat	1.00

Miscellaneous items were:

1 Surveyors chain	1.50
1 pr. steelyards	.83
1 gun	2.00
1 powder horn	.10
1 Buffalo robe	1.00
1 lot of bells	.33
1 lot of measures	.25
Half a pew in the Merrimack Meeting House	18.00

Wills of the period also give further insight into the individuals concerned. Henry Field had already deeded his farm to son Henry Jr. so he gave him only his log chain. His daughters, Rebecca Carlton and Susanne Fields, shared equally in a piece of land and a sum of money, but Susanne was to get his eight-day clock when his wife was willing to part with it.

(8)

Mother, Brothers and Sisters, Friends, and Relatives and acquaintances. God be with you amen.

N.B.
You must excuse
this piece of Com
position as it wrote
in a great hurry.

I Remain Your true Son
Joshua Field, Jr.

In addressing this letter to you I omitted in telling you the Ship or Capt. name. The Eagle is her name and Grinnell is the Capt. name. Since we left New Bedford the whole crew has enjoyed excellent health and fine Spirits. Capt. Grinnell is as fine a man as doubled Cape Horn and as smart a man and liking his Officers and Crew. The next opportunity that I have to write I shall endeavor to give you a more perfect history of this Voyage. The time I got to write this letter I stole away consequently you must excuse all the Errors you may find here as no doubt you will find many. Farwell till you here from me again.

Joshua Field, Jr.

Service on a whaling ship was no picnic. Due to the length of the cruise, regular sailors would not sign on for them, and the crews were mainly composed of young adventurers from the farms, who had to be turned into sailors in a few days time. Discipline was strict, often brutal, and the ships usually stayed clear of ports to avoid desertion. As compensation, crew members received a very small fractional share of the profits, and a ship did not return to home port until she was full of oil. If he and the ship were lucky, a man could return in a couple of years with enough money to buy himself a farm. For some the trip could take 3 to 4 years. Some trips ended in shipwreck, with a man getting nothing for his labors even if he survived. And some never came home. Young Joshua was one of those.

Sancti Spiritus, Oct. 15th 1834

Dear Father, ^{being} the first opportunity that I have
of sending home a letter I thought I would address you a few
lines to let ^{that} know I was living, I left New Bedford Aug. 14, 1833
since that time I have enjoyed excellent health & well & pretty
good spirits, but have cursed the day that I ever attempted
to cross the Briny Ocean. I think I better stuck to shore work
& I thought (as Pinon said) fair in that art than I was
in shipping up Mastheads, I think I never shall
understand ^{any} sort of Traffic, if I only could
move ^{up} on the American shore you will never catch
me again, in crossing the Gulf Stream

We shall probably remain here 14 or 15 days & must
have paint made necessary repairs &c then we
shall sail for the Coast of Peru one of the Spanish
Coast if we meet ^{with} such ill luck for the time to
come as we have yet before us & I will verba-
bly we shall not get home short of 40 months.
You must write every opportunity you have & I
shall do the same I have my best regards to my
beloved Mother Brothers & Sisters Friends & Relations
and acquaintances (God be ^{with} you Amen.)

Yours truly
Joshua Field Jr.
in great hurry

MERRIMACK - AS IT WAS THEN

Charles Ireland

After 4 years of city living in Nashua, we finally found an old house on the "Old County Road" - now Amherst Road - in Merrimack. It looked to be much too large for the 3 of us, but it was a $1\frac{1}{2}$ story house that had been enlarged to $2\frac{1}{2}$ stories - $\frac{3}{4}$ of it, that is - so it was not really that big.

We bought the house and land from Burt Peaslee, a neighboring farmer. He was a former Selectman who was still active in town affairs. He, in turn, had acquired it from Mrs. Foster, his wife's mother. Guess where he lived - although that came later.

Our house warming was actually a baptism, by the two hurricanes of September of 1954. We had no serious damage but at one time the water went over the road here. And we were without power for 5 days. But we had cold water from the well up in the field. In the woods you could still find areas of blowdown from the hurricane of 1938, and the overgrown logging roads that were opened then.

As our son, Arthur, had a good collection of toys, our house soon became the neighborhood playground. Someone asked, "How many kids does that guy Ireland have?" and was surprised at the answer. We also had a TV, which then was quite an attraction.

My wife Dorothy was a city gal, who enthusiastically took to country life. She played the organ at the South Merrimack Church for a number of years, and enjoyed working on the Saturday night suppers there. At that time the price was 75¢ for the meal. One of the regulars there was a cabinet-maker from Nashua who paid 5¢ extra for a second

piece of pie. Seeing this, another patron thought he also should have a second piece. But he wasn't willing to pay the extra nickel for it! The custard pie that was so much in demand was cooked by Mrs. Follansbee on an old woodstove. The cost of a meal could be low since much of the food and labor was donated.

Our telephone was crank-type, on a 12 party line. Peaslee Road then was black-topped, but not Amherst Road, and winters we had fine "rip-sliding" on it. Traffic was so infrequent that the missus would run to the window to see who might be driving by.

After our first wet year came several dry ones, and water became a problem. While the two wells never went dry, the quantity was limited, and of poor quality. Like many others then, we got our drinking water from Witches Spring in Hollis. Faced with reality, we had an artesian well drilled, and found to our surprise that it was a flowing one. We needed a pump to get the water up to the bathroom, but not to water the garden.

The river was not too far from the house, and here we had our own private swimming pool in a deep spot. But after we found that we tended to break out in a rash after swimming, we used Lake Naticook instead. Following Mr. Peaslee's suggestion, we got a rowboat and put it on the river, chained to a big pine tree. We could travel up or down the river for about a half a mile either way, and we always saw something different each trip. It was most beautiful in the late spring when the mountain laurel was in bloom, and in the fall when the foliage was peaking. After quite a few years the boat disappeared. It was then old, rotten, and waterlogged. Whoever took it didn't get much for his efforts.

After it was originally "sub-divided" in 1772, the land here was purchased by one Joshua Fields of Andover, Mass. whose siblings had also emigrated to Merrimack. Here he had his house, which was probably just a small 1 story one. The present house, over the old cellar, may have been built by his son, James around 1820. James, however, was not a successful farmer, and was soon forced to sell out.

In 1824 it was purchased by Joseph Litchfield Jr. of Kittery, Me. According to a story which has come down, he got mad at his wife one day, and when she was off visiting a neighbor, started painting the house black to spite her. (When we first painted the house, we found traces of black paint.)

After his death, it was purchased in 1846 by Thomas J. Foster of Alexandria, NH., also with Andover antecedents. He, no doubt, replaced the old center chimney with the two smaller ones. His son, Joseph, took over the farm in 1881, and the enlargement of the house dates from that time. The younger Mrs. Foster was an avid gardener, and many of her old-fashioned flowers still bloom around the house. Her daughter married Mr. Peaslee, who eventually bought the property in 1938.

The brick schoolhouse for the #6 School District was located across from the north end of Peaslee Road, on land that T. J. Foster had provided. It was customary for the school teachers to stay at the Foster place, which meant a source of steady cash income for them. One such teacher was Ruby Hadley, 19, of Weare, NH. There was no well at the school, and the pupils used to be sent up to the Foster house to get water, a very pleasant chore, as some remembered it. The school was discontinued about 1938,

and burned some years later. It was just a cellar-hole when we first came here.

In the early 1960's, a former teacher stopped at the house. Now living in Florida and traveling in the vicinity, she wondered if she would be able to find the place. The school was gone, of course, but she recognized the house. It brought back many memories for her, but she didn't want to go inside.

Visiting with the our elderly neighbors gave us some interesting bits of lore. At Charley Field's place across the river we met an old-timer who had hand mowed our 10 acre field for 25¢ a day. Another commented, "The Gauthier Place? Why that land's so poor that if a grasshopper wanted to cross it he'd have to carry a lunch!"

At that time Gauthier Road ran through from Peaslee to Amherst Road and Fuller Mill Road continued on down to the Lester place. When the south end of Gauthier became dead-end, Fuller Mill Road was extended across Amherst Road to include the north end. Recently the old section was renamed Thomasian Road, and so the present Fuller Mill Road has lost all connection with the mill it once served!

Mr. Gamble had a farm on the north end of Gauthier Rd. In his later years he became somewhat confused, and a couple living there looked after him. He used to work mornings at the Field farm across the river, walking there and back. One afternoon I met him walking down the road, and he wanted to know the time. I told him, and he turned around and went back home. He had wakened from his nap, thought that it was morning, that he had overslept and was late for work! Growing old can be difficult.

Floor Plan

OLD OUTDOOR
TOILET

LONG WALK

WOOD
SHED

Cellar

ORGAN
Room

BACK
Door

BULKHEAD

CLOSET

ENTRY

KITCHEN

LAUNDRY

POACH

SIDE
Door

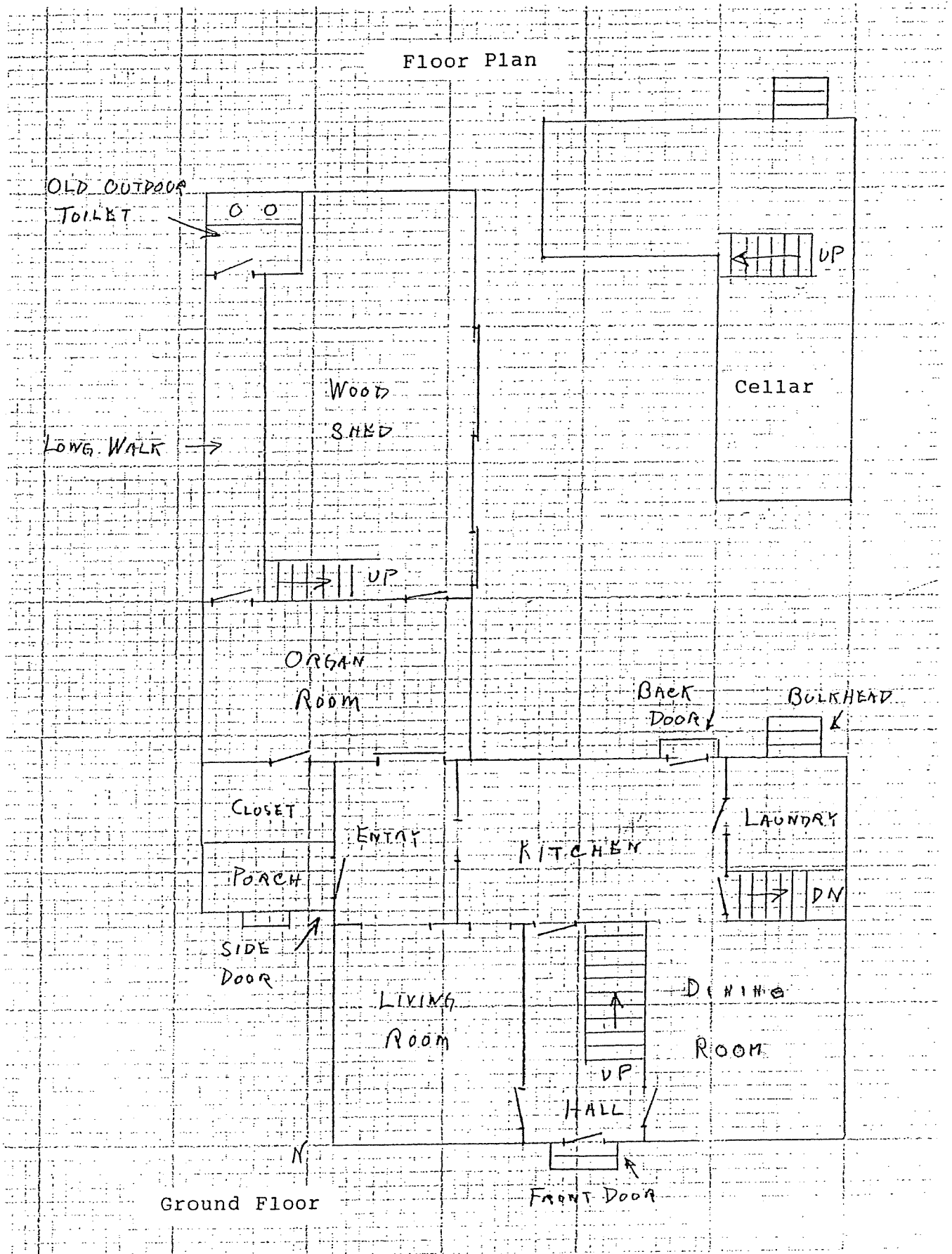
LIVING
Room

DINING
Room

HALL

Ground Floor

FRONT Door



Attic

DN

DN

WOOD WORKING

SHOP

BATH
Room

CLOSET

BABY
BED ROOM

OUR
Room

UP

CLOSET CLOSET

ARTHUR'S
Room

UPPER
HALL

CLOSET

Second Floor

SPRING WATER

When we moved here in 1956, there were 2 wells, one near the house, and another larger one up in the field near the swamp, that was supposedly located by a dowser. In spite of the 3 hurricanes, the first years were dry ones, and we ended up hauling our drinking water from the Witches Spring in Hollis. So we brought in a well-driller, and we started drilling. We went from famine to feast. The well came in at 125 feet with a flow of a pail a minute, and a static pressure of 10 pounds per square foot! We had hit an aquifer.

From then on, our interest in springs was mainly curiosity. On our walks we had found several small water-holes, especially in the spring. But repeated diggings failed to reveal any sign of the original source. We called them "seepage springs". And so, for 50 years, that was the extent of my understanding of the subject.

But recently a neighbor had occasion to deepen his well. When he did so, he soon hit ledge, From a hole in which a stream of water was pouring. Obviously from "our" aquifer. A few hundred feet downhill from the well, a small brook emerges, which then flows down to the river on the left side of Amhrest Rd. The conclusion is obvious, the source of a "seepage spring" is a hole in the bedrock

If the overlaying soil were sandy and permeable, these leaks would find their way to the surface as regular springs. But the local soils have a high clay content and are relatively impermeable. As long as leakage from a vein of water does not exceed the carrying power of the soil, it is contained therein. If it does, the excess is forced vertically to the surface. This happens when the soil is saturated during spring run-off. So seepage springs indicate separate leaks from the aquifer. So may small swampy areas. On this property, 20 such areas can be seen, with 5 more adjacent to it. All of the small brooks leading to the river have these as a source.

The early settlers recognized the signs of available water. Mason Brook is a spring flow with a surface well near the house. The pond was dug out afterwards. The Peaslees told us that the old well at our house was located in back of the shed near the little brook, which would have been in the outflow area of a good spring. This well was filled in when they built the privy in the end of the shed. Although nearer the cellar, the one replacing it was not nearly as good.

The influence of the "spring field" next to the house is seen in the failure to enlarge the cellar when the house was rebuilt after 1800. The cellar probably flooded during the spring months. Direct access to the cellar from the kitchen was first provided at the time of the 1880 rebuild, when one assumes that they also installed a cellar drain.

The big spring is on Amherst Road near the house, at the end of the stone wall. Drainage flows east along the road, and crosses it at the culvert. It then goes underground in a rock-filled ditch across a former field, to emerge 3/4 of the way along. Formerly this formed most of the culvert flow, but the black-topping of the road increased the downhill drainage. Gravel subsequently, washed into the ditch has partially blocked it and somewhat diverted the flow.

With the winter snow plowed off black-top, the frost goes deep and the road heaves accordingly. But with an appreciable amount of 50°F ground water flowing through it, the culvert area doesn't freeze. Result -- 1 good bump!

I had been thinking of the seepage as basically horizontal, down along the surface of the bedrock. But the impermeable soil adds another dimension, vertical. Obviously the way to develop such a spring is to place a surface well over it, or to tap it with a pipe, drilled or washed into place.

Marston Fields' will reflects his problems. To the heirs of his son Marston Jr. he gave 50 cents. (They had inherited half of the farm from their father, which was part and parcel of the trouble.) To his daughter Prescilla Greely, one dollar. To his son Isaac, \$20. To his unmarried daughters Hannah and Elizabeth \$100 apiece, all his household furniture, and the use of half of his house. And to his son Samuel his farm, tools, livestock and clothes.

The most human document is the letter to Joshua Fields, Jr. from his son Joshua in Hawaii.

Sandwich Islands Oct. 15th 1834

Dear Father

Sir

This being the first opportunity that I have of sending home a letter I thought I would address you a few lines to let know that I was living. I left New Bedford Aug. 14, 1833. Since that time I have enjoyed excellent health as well pretty Good Spirits, but have cursed the day that I ever attempted to cross the Briny Ocean. I think I better stuck to the hoe handle and Plough as I more Scientific in that art than I am in Shinning up Masthead. I think I never shall undertake such sort of Traffic again if I only once more get on the American Shores you will never will catch me again. In crossing the Gulf Stream we had some Gales of Wind accompanied with Rain. Before we get to Cape Horn we took 3 whales which made us 150 Barrells oil. A Whale resemble a ship bottom upward. Sometimes they are going slowly at other times very fast and when the Harponneer throws his Javlin into them they will run the line out of the boat in the twinkling of a bed post and when the Beatheader tickles them up with his lance they will make their tail fly like a hopper to a Grist Mill and make a noise like the snapping and cracking of a Coach Whip. In doubling Cape Horn we have several severe gales of Wind with snowstorm. Saw many Islands of Ice. Some judged to be 20 miles in length but by the will of God we get round in 16 days. We arrived at Pata on the Spanish Coast 4 months out then we recruited ship. After remaining here 8 days we sailed for off shore grounds. Here we cruised 3-1/2 months and then put away for the Sandwich Islands. We arrived at the Islands 8 months out with 400 Barrells oil. After we recruited ship sailed for the Coast of Jappan there we had hard luck, only 250 Blls. We have just arrived back to the Islands. This Island is called Mowei. We are new 14 months out with 650 barrells of oil. We shall probably remain here 14 or 15 days recruit ship, paint, make necessary repairs and then we shall sail for the Coast of Peru one of the Spanish Coast. If we meet with such ill luck for the time to come as we have yet before, in all probability we shall not get home short of 40 months. You must write every opportunity you have and I shall do the same. Give my best regards to my beloved