

## *“REVEREND WRIGHT’S HOME”*

Many people have been asking “What’s happening to that big brick house near Horseshoe Pond?” There is a great deal of history behind that land and buildings. It was part of a grant given by King George to Chief Passaconaway, sagamore of the Penacook Band, who were the original occupants of the Merrimack River Valley all the way to the Atlantic Ocean in Massachusetts. Land on both sides of the river and two islands in Merrimack were granted to the chief, where he planned to retire. Many Indian arrowheads have been collected on those islands over the years. Passaconaway died sometime after 1669, never again living there to our knowledge.

In 1778, it was then granted to Joseph Chamberlain as the land north of the Pennichuck Brook was being settled. In 1840 it shows on an early deed as lots 15 and 16 of Brinton’s Farm with a house shown on the deed. By 1858 Isiah Herrick is shown as the owner and homesteader, having added the brick portion to the home, with bricks from Kaolin Farm brickyard. Deeds in 1861 show it as having a “cottage” with more land added.

It remained in the Herrick family until 1920, when Reverend John Wright and his wife Mary purchased the home and land. He was the minister of the First Congregational Church (now First Church) on Baboosic Lake Rd. but often preached at the church in South Merrimack as well. He served as a minister and involved citizen of Merrimack for Fifty five years until his death in 1974 at age 87.



He farmed the fertile land, which eventually had many out-buildings and barns. He raised dairy-cows, and the Merrimack Historical Society has a glass one-pint milk bottle from the Wright Farm. John and Mary raised a son, John in that home. In the early 1970’s, part of his land along Wright Avenue was used for Community Gardens, which were tilled with lots being available to town resident. My family had two

lots there, which the woodchucks enjoyed as much as we did. Rev. Wright also leased portions of the land to others, including a trucking company, whose owner opened a petting farm with some of the animals from the old Benson's Wild Animal Farm in Hudson, which was closing.

When Mary Kelly Wright, John's wife died, he wanted the home to be remembered in her name. It was described as a brick colonial with white trim and an addition at the back. It had a stone foundation with concrete facing and two brick chimneys. Two barns were said to have been built around 1900, but in poor condition at that time. Rev. Wright wanted to leave his land to the Town of Merrimack, but complications set in, resulting in his leaving it to the Manchester YMCA for "Conservation, Recreation, Education and Agricultural use", with a memorial plaque to be placed on the home in memory of Mary Wright. He continued to live in the home until his death in 1974. The YMCA hoped to build recreation fields, but there were many more financial and legal complications. The Y offered the home and 3 acres to the Merrimack Historical Society, once the legal situation was cleared, but that didn't happen. It remained vacant with a caretaker for many years as windows and the roof were damaged until 2016, when it became available for sale. In 2018, it was purchased along with 88 acres and is currently being restored and converted to apartments. Unfortunately, the chimneys were not salvageable. Most outbuildings are gone, and the land has been landscaped to make it an attractive setting to remember its history. It will soon have a plaque to honor Mary and John Wright.

The Merrimack Historical Society has records and photos of many old homes in town. Our "Blue Books" record much information available to the public. Stop over at our headquarters in a one-room schoolhouse at 520 Boston Post Road in South Merrimack. We are open from noon to 8 PM on Tuesdays or by appointment. Contact Anita Creager at 424-5084 or [anitacreager58@comcast.net](mailto:anitacreager58@comcast.net) for more information.