

This is the fourth of a series of articles about Merrimack's History. The series will continue monthly hosted by the Merrimack Historical Society.

This one was originally published in the "Village Crier" on May 22, 1974 by Joyce Bishop, then president of the Society.

"A HOME AT LAST"

"I was built sometime between 1810 and 1820 It has been so long I can't remember exactly when. My first home was in South Merrimack near Reed's Pond. (now called Lake Naticook) I was Schoolhouse #5. I liked it there surrounded by rich farms. The children came every day to have lessons and play around my door. I was there about fifty years and had begun to fall apart, but they fixed me up and I continued until I was outgrown in 1945. (Merrimack was about to have a central school near the middle of town.)

A family lived with me for a few years after that and then some men came to look at me. I heard talk about moving me to Baboosic Lake Road, now where was that? Well, I was soon to find out. They came with blocks and timbers and a truck. I was lifted into the air, placed on the truck and driven across town. My new owners were the American Legion, and I became Merrimack Memorial Post #98. I was filled with people again, but not children this time. These people were veterans and was I ever proud! I recall many good times there, meetings, dances, and picnics in the grove. But then, alas, I was outgrown again.

This time it looked like I was doomed, no one wanted me. I was moved down to the Town Hall parking lot, and there I sat while my fate was decided. The Historical Society wanted me. I had my hopes up, because they would restore me to my original state as a school. But, they had no place to put me. The Parks and Recreation Dept. said they would take me, but changed their mind.

There I sat for another year and things looked very dark for me, but I didn't give up hope and fall apart. I was rewarded. The Historical Society was given a piece of land, and I began to hear talk about Front Street and restoration. I understand I'll soon be leaving the Town Hall I do hope that those who have stopped to wonder what I was doing at Town Hall for so long will come to see me when I am a schoolhouse once more and part of "Barnes Location" on Front Street."

"AND NOW LOST"

An update: Although the land was donated by Henry Beique for the relocation of the school, the Society could not finance the restoration. Plans were to also reconstruct the Barnes' Homestead from Patten Road alongside the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was moved to the parking lot of what was then Fessenden & Lowell Cooperage (they made boxes), soon to become Pilgrim Furniture, then Yield House, currently a warehouse at the end of Elm Street. It was finally demolished, never again to be a schoolhouse. Some of the desks are in the current Historical Society Schoolhouse #12 on Boston Post Road. The original site for #5 Schoolhouse was in the intersection of Camp Sargent Road and Naticook Rd. where there is a triangular piece of land, soon also to be part of Merrimack's history, since the triangle will be replaced by a safer intersection.

Perhaps sometime soon, we can gather some of the old students or their families to relive the "good old days" of Schoolhouse #5. What about the Pikes,

Wrights, Kellers, Dichards, Fontaines, LeBlancs, Levesques, Andersons or the teachers: Elinor Anderson, Mary Shea, Mattie Kilbourn, Lucy Spalding, Ada Severns, Marion Butterfield, Ruth Hamblett or Madeline Bennett. We have many class photos from Schoolhouse #5.

Come to visit the Merrimack Historical Society at 520 Boston Post Road in South Merrimack. We are open on Tuesdays from noon to 8 PM with parking across the street in the Merrimack Valley Baptist Church lot.