

ANOTHER OLD HOME GONE

Many of you have noticed that the old brick-fronted home at 598 DW Highway, across from Reeds Ferry Market is no longer standing. The Merrimack Historical Society sought to secure this old home as its headquarters, but without success. On December 30, 2018 it was demolished as “unsafe” and will now be only in our memories. So, we bring you some of those memories.

The original wooden portion of this building was built in about 1799, about the same time as Chuck Mower’s home on Depot Street was built, probably by the same builder and very similar in design. The land for both of these homes was owned by Robert McGaw, whose family owned much land in the Reeds Ferry area along with the Parker family. The brick portion was added to both in about 1814, using brick from the Kittredge family brick yards along Bedford/Pearson Roads.

John Anderson owned this and many other properties in this area in 1835 with the home already there. He rented many of them, including many postmasters over the years, including Matthew Nichols in 1841. Various buildings held post offices over time, including in McGaw’s Tavern, where the gas station is currently located and in Reeds Ferry Market, with postmasters living in the home, and sometimes operating the post office from there. A newer version of the Reeds Ferry Post Office was in the current Charlie’s Diner, previously known as “Ruthie’s Post Parlor”, before the current Post Office was built.

The property went to Nancy and Maria Anderson, John’s daughters in 1867. These ‘Anderson girls’ owned several other homes, which are said to have been built for them, including the two homes now occupied by Tortilla Flats Mexican Restaurant. In the early 1900’s, a Mr. Jackson owned the building, but rented it to Frank French, a famous artist, woodworker and engraver, who used it as his studio called “The Sycamores”. Frank has works on display at the Currier Art Gallery in Manchester and also at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. In 1915, photos show a beautiful picket fence surrounding the home. After he died in 1933, his daughter, Mabel, owned the building and it continued in use as a studio and gift shop. The Historical Society has a flyer advertising the shop as open to the public.

By 1953, Raymond and Doris Hall owned the home, which is often now known as the “Hall House”, for which we have interior photos taken at the time and the exterior shows a picket fence around the graceful home.. From 1961-71, Clarence and Aline Farr owned the home. By then it was often covered with ivy for which it was well known.

From 1973 to the end, it was a commercial property, first owned by Arthur Brown Associates, then Greg Michael with his legal offices in the front portion. Greg’s father, George, was well known around New England as an historical antique expert, with many books and TV shows to his credit. George was also the first president of the Merrimack Historical Society. By 2010, the building was unoccupied, but owned by Brick and Granite LLC and in 2016 by NH Stamping Company and” for sale or lease -will build to suit”. The electrical cables and the interior portions had been removed, and the end was in sight.

On December 30, the construction equipment arrived in within hours this graceful home was no longer located in this portion of Reeds Ferry. We will miss it, along with many other historic homes replaced with grocery stores, gas stations and drug stores. It is appreciated that some of these beautiful buildings have been renovated to be such places as The Thornton Place, Tortilla Flats, Buckley’s Great Steaks, Homestead Restaurant and Merrimack Vision Care. Rev. John Wright’s home at 381 Daniel Webster

Highway, built in 1840 by Isaiah Herrick, has recently been purchased and we understand it will be preserved. The Wheeler Chapel, built in 1889 remains as it was for its original use.

To learn more about Merrimack's history, visit the Merrimack Historical Society at 520 Boston Post Road in South Merrimack. We are in a one-room schoolhouse and open on Tuesdays from noon-8 PM. Monthly meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month and are open to the public at no cost. For any questions, contact Anita at 603-424-5084 or anitacreager58@comcast.net