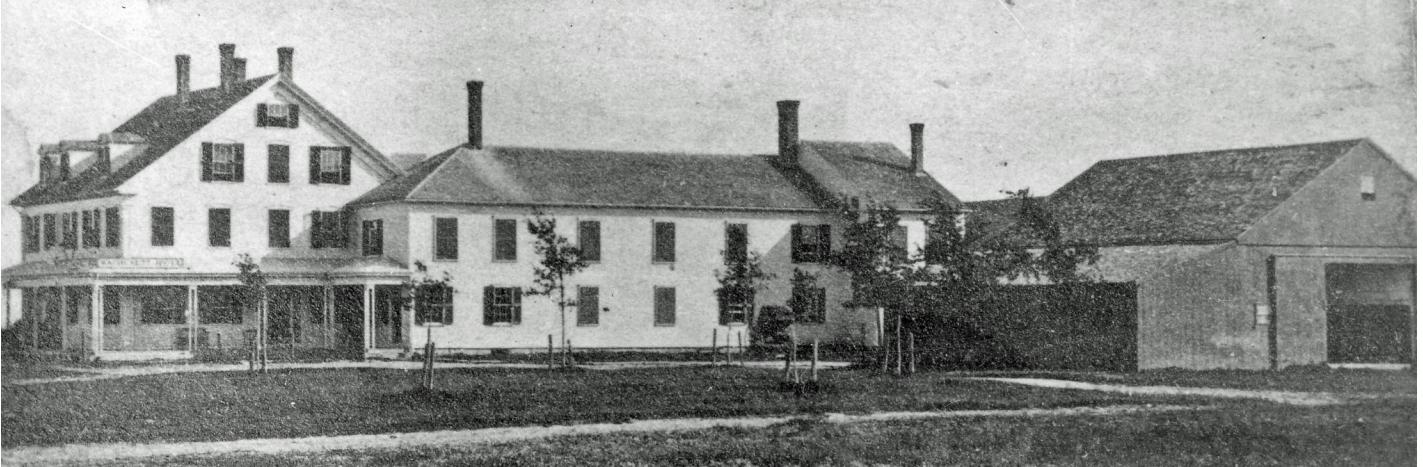


Then & Now – Lower Common Princeton Center



2 Worcester Rd. Before 1869

Wachusett House

From 1822 to 1910, this large prominent structure was a significant presence in the center of Princeton. For most visitors today, it is hard to believe that this four-level hotel with a separate laundry building, bowling alley and large barn was located on this small, now open, park area called Dingman Park. However, it is a reminder of the times in Princeton's history, from about 1820-1920, when people would take stages, carriages, and ultimately trains to enjoy the fresh clean mountain air of Princeton. At its peak, as a vacation destination, Princeton would receive nine trains daily filled with visitors, resulting in an enormous growth in hotel, boarding and rooming house businesses. At its peak, the Wachusett House alone housed over 200 people a weekend and "many were turned away for lack of accommodation."

- After 1820 - the first stage to Boston would stop here 2 times a week, eventually leading to 3 different stage routes passing through town.
- 1861 - A bowling alley and laundry additions were built
- 1864 - The barn was expanded
- 1869 - The entire structure was jacked up to add a new ground floor level
- 1873 - A more "commodious" dining room was added
- 1883 - The adjacent Beaman residence, 7 Boylston Ave, was annexed and remodeled for 41 additional rooms.
- 1910 - On November 28, the hotel & barns were destroyed by fire.



1869-70 Hotel Expansion

Gregory/Village Store

This building, sometimes referred to as the “yellow building,” was originally built circa 1775, on the lower Common, by Lt. Gov Gill as a private residence. It served as the parsonage for the Baptist Church (at 8 Mountain Rd), and private residence until it was moved to its current location. At that time, Pynson Blake opened a small store called Blake & Allen, which began to develop Princeton center into the commercial focal point lasting for over 100 years. Through the years, it housed the Princeton Post Office (1866 to 1987), a general store and market, a feed store, coffee shops and restaurants, a bank branch and a gasoline station. It is now divided into apartments upstairs with a place for business opportunities on the first floor.



Village Store, Post Office & Gas Station

In 1840, the post office was re-located to the front room of Ivory Wilder’s house at 1 Hubbardston Rd., across the street (corner of Boylston Ave and Hubbardston Road). Then in 1866, the post office was moved to the “yellow building”.

In 1840 the D. H. Gregory Store opened at 2 Mountain Rd., and it remained, operated by the Gregory family, for over 100 years. David Hoyt Gregory was Princeton’s postmaster from 1866 to 1885 and participated in the business that bears his name for over 50 years. Future store owners and Postmasters were Charles Woollett, Alfred Vanasse, Malcolm & Ruth Chase, & Rockwood Mason.

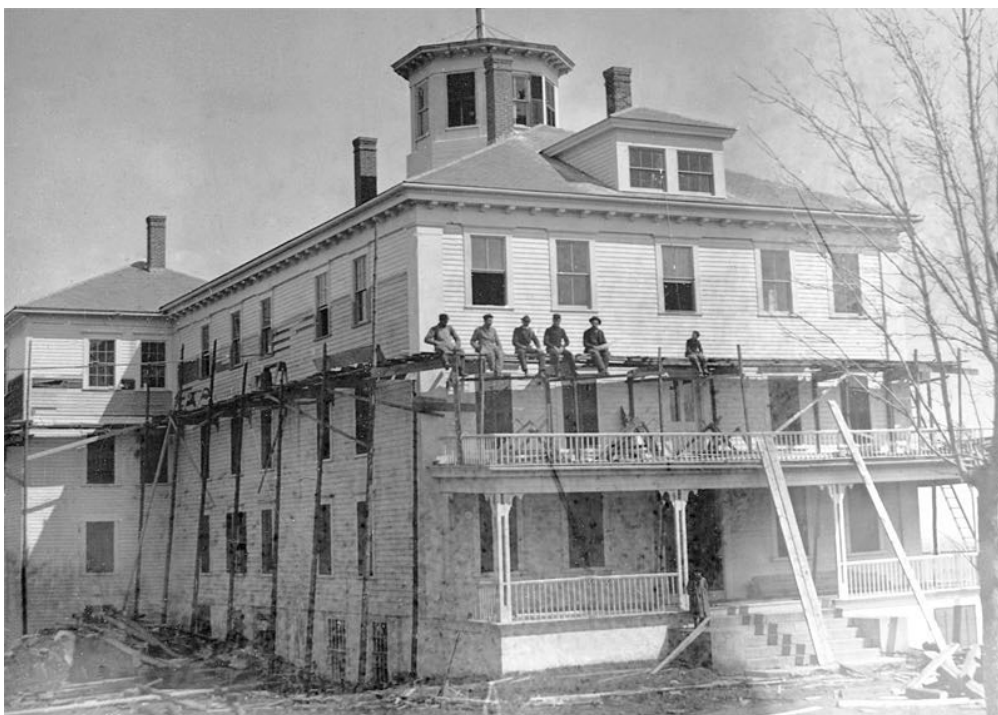
This central location seems like a natural spot for the post office now, but Princeton’s original post office location was established in 1812 at Russell Corner at the corner of Merriam & Gregory Hill Roads. As the town grew and the current center became a preferred location, Princetonians then demanded the post office be moved to this area for easier access.



Samuel Clark House, Baptist Church with its Four Columns, Gregory Store, Croquet on the Common

Prospect House

This building at 8 Mountain Rd. is another building on the common, no longer standing. It was nestled into the space just south of the church between The Samuel Clark house at 10 Mountain Rd, and the Victorian-style house next to the yellow building, which was owned by Josiah Gregory at 6 Mountain Rd. Surprisingly, this bustling hotel was built around 1840 as a Baptist Church (see above photo), but in 1860 it was purchased and remodeled as a hotel. At its peak size in 1895, it was expanded and could accommodate over 100



1895 Prospect House Expansion

guests. An 1890's newspaper advertisement for the Inn suggests its appeal:

"It has a broad piazza on three sides, from which is seen one of the finest views in New England. The house is very clean and home-like, the beds are good, and the excellence of its table is well known to its numerous guests of the past eleven years."

To the rear of this hotel, was a very large barn, with a

stable, dance floor, and bowling alley.

A night's lodging at the Prospect House was \$2.00 to \$2.50 depending upon the specific room location and its view east.

In the early 1900's The Prospect House was renamed as The Princeton Inn, and it burned in 1923. Nothing has been built to replace it.



1913 Princeton Inn - 3 Large Piazzas With a View East & of the Common

Ivory Wilder Telephone House

In 1775 William Richardson built a house and store in the triangle of the Common.



Ivory Wilder House Circa 1865, the Barn to the Left Was Part of the Wachusett House Property - Expanded in 1864

In 1842, Ivory Wilder (1804-1886), pulled down the old store and had built at the corner of Boylston Ave and Hubbardston Road where the William Richards once stood a house. The house was planned by Wilder but built by Lewis Solomon and George Howe who walked from Orange, MA to build it. This house contains lumber from the original store, which William Richardson built on the Common. The house was a long, narrow, double house, one half of which was rented to the Congregational Church, serving as a parsonage for Rev. Harding. In 1871 Ezra H. Heywood bought the

North half and moved it to 7 Hubbardston Road (this portion burned in 1908).

Ivory Wilder came to Princeton sometime between 1825 and 1830 and lived in the house until 1885. While living there, he was postmaster from 1854-1856 and 1862-1865. Mr. Wilder owned most of the land between Boylston Ave and Pratt's Corner to the west at the junction of Hubbardston and Radford Roads.

After 1885 the house was used as a Telephone Office by N.E. Tel and Tel Co., and since the late 1940's as a private residence.



Wachusett House Annex at 7 Boylston Ave

The lower portion of this Annex was the original Wachusett House built in 1822, and it was later moved to its current location at 7 Boylston Ave in 1849. In 1883, it was expanded by adding the porches and a third story with a mansard roof to accommodate up to 41 overflow guests from the Wachusett House. Currently it is a private residence, and back in the late 1990's, you could still find room numbers above the rooms on the third floor.



2 Mountain Rd. Today Minus the White Fence

Currently, the old Village Store and Post Office provides business space for lease on the first floor and apartments on the upper floors.

Please visit www.princetonmahistory.org to learn more about Princeton's rich history.

We would love to hear from you at, princetonmahistory@gmail.com