

## Recollections of Seventy Summers in Princeton

By Eleanor Whitney Allen ~ 1970

My earliest recollections of Princeton (early 1890's) are the three summers we spent at the Howard House (on the right as you head toward Holden). It was a huge rambling boarding house, which was recently been demolished by Byron Smith. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Perkins and my family divided the house between them. The roof often leaked during a violent thunderstorm, and water would drop onto our beds, but we would just move into another dryer room. My bedroom was on the N.E. corner looking toward Jones Hill (toward Holden) over



*Howard House at 16 Worcester Rd. - No Longer Here*

the top of recently planted maple trees. There was a well in the back of the house, but of course there was no running water, just a squeaky hand pump in the kitchen sink. Our bath water was brought upstairs in pails, and my tub was a round tin one painted blue. Rather than carry the dirty water downstairs, I would sometime surreptitiously pour my water out my window. For toilets there was an "out-house" at the rear, furnished with a Sears-Roebuck catalogues for paper, and plenty of calcium chloride!

My parents and the Perkins became so fond of Princeton that they, together with Admiral Colby, bought three lots on the East side of Mountain Rd., which used to be the training field for soldiers during the Revolutionary War.

Mr. Perkins built his house where the Princeton Manor now stands (54 Mountain Rd.). My father, however, wanted to have a real farm, so he continued to search for a larger piece of land. He finally bought the Silas Fay farm in 1894, with the condition that Gramma Fay might continue to live in it for the rest of her life. As my parents preferred to have the whole house to themselves, they finally built their house on the left at the top of Allen Hill Rd. in 1895, and my father also started a farm.

*(Watch for a Then & Now article about the building of the Allen Estate in the future)*

Eventually we had:

- 4 cows, which we pastured between Meeting House Cemetery and Theo Browns house (33 Mountain Rd.),
- 2 farm horses,
- A pair of riding and driving horses
- 2 ponies,

- 400 chickens,
- A few ducks,
- Some pigeons,
- 2 hives of bees,
- 2 pigs,
- A few sheep,
- A pea-cock
- A pea-hen (which made the most awful screeches)
- An orchid of apples, peaches and pears.

A farm laborer in those days was paid a dollar a day.



*Silas Fay Farm at 19 Allen Hill Rd.*

Princeton has always been famous for its blueberries. People used to drive up from Worcester with their baskets and pails and spend the day picking. You could pick 4 1/2 quarts in an hours' time. Once we were so overwhelmed with trespassers that we had to call the sheriff, who warned not less than 100 persons from our premises. Little Wachusett was covered with berry bushes, was very popular until Susan Minns of Boston bought the mountain and gave it to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a wildlife sanctuary. Lois Fay was appointed guardian and for a while people were allowed on the property for a fee of 50 cents. Mr. Robert Washburn (30 Mountain Rd.) was so annoyed at this that he wrote to the Commissioner of Conservations requesting permission to enter the sanctuary, because it made him "wild" to be unable to climb it anyone, and he would like to be allowed to "consort with his kind".

Speaking of wild animals, I remember being told that the last bear was killed on Pine Hill, and we went to see the trap that did the job. It stood in Mr. Harvey Gregory's house, and Mrs. Gregory had it gilded and used it as a doorstep. Mrs. Gregory was very proud of her "Best-Room" the wall of which she had covered with samples of wallpaper, and had used large varicolored paper napkins, which she had sewn together for a bedspread and curtains.



In those motor-less days, we took the Boston & Albany R.R. from Boston to Worcester where we would wait for about an hour to take the Boston, Barre, Gardner train to Princeton, which stopped to "water" the steam engine at Brooks Station. It was said that the name given to the railroad was odd, because it didn't start at Boston, never went anywhere near Barre, and didn't stop in Gardner. We would be met at Princeton station by the four-horse coach driven by either Mr. Clark or Mr. Doolittle for the 2-mile pull up the hills to the village. There were 7 trains a day at that

period.



*Fire Engine Was Kept in Barn Behind the Wachusett Stage Co and the Doolittle House*

Mr. Doolittle was famous for his many occupations. He was a selectmen, an undertaker, horse-trader, contractor and builder. The fire engine was kept in

his barn, and his horses were used to pull it. Once in the early days of motoring, Mr. Hutchins car caught fire on the Station Rd. (Hubbardston Rd.), and the chauffeur ran to Mr. Doolittle's house (19 Mountain Rd.) calling for the engine. He was met with the reply that he couldn't have the engine just then, as Mr. Doolittle had lent the front wheels of it to a man that needed them for haying.

In those days the fire alarm was given by the ringing of the Church Bell and the whole village would respond. One afternoon Maude Doolittle and I were walking along Mountain Rd. when we saw smoke rising from the roof of Fernside Vacation House (162 Mountain Rd.). As there were not telephones in those days, we ran as fast as we could for 7/8 of a mile to the Village, gasping out the word "Fire"! It happened to be a Wednesday Prayer Meeting, and Mr. White, the minister, was already arrayed for the occasion, but I remember seeing him standing on the roof pouring water on the flames. The house was saved, though part of the ell had to be pulled down. The owner was so overcome by the occasion that



**Methodist Church at 45 Hubbardston Rd. -  
Before 1892 Fire**

she had a rocking chair carried out to the middle of the road and she sat rocking with her back to the blaze. My job, I remember, was to carry the kerosene lamps from the bedrooms to safety.

Fire was always a great danger, with an inadequate water supply. In 1892 the Methodist Church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. We were at the Howard House at that time, and I was very mad at my parents for not letting me go with the rest of the town to see the excitement. We heard afterwards that Mr. Wilkes Davis was the only person who refused to help. He sat on the fence across the road remarking, "If the Lord see fit to burn his Meeting House, I ain't a-going to interfere."

One by one the big summer hotels have burned the (see images at end):

- Grand View went in 1899,
- Mountain House across the road in 1914, the barn and Miss Mason's Tea Room were saved
- Wachusett House in 1910, so we no longer had the view of the guest's sponges hanging from their windows to dry.
- Prospect House, later called Princeton Inn, in 1923, and the fire departments from 4 nearby towns were called in. Fortunately, the rain fell heavily at midnight, so Mr. Josiah Gregory house next door was saved.
- The Mt. Pleasant House was then the only none left, after being purchase by the Whitney brothers (in 1912), it was later divided into two parts.
- In 1908 the Davis and Heywood houses which stood next to the Boylston Cemetery also burned.
- Ezra and Angela Haywood had 4 children: Hermes, Michael-Angelo, a girl Psyche-Ceres, and Vesta V. maybe Virgin.



**Tom's Bungalow at 32 Allen Hill Rd.  
Earlier a Golf Course Holes Was Here**

We ourselves are deeply indebted to the Princeton Fire Department for saving my brother Tom's "Aladdin" bungalow. A careless smoker had dropped a cigarette butt in the grass beside Allen Road, and flames quickly spread out. They were spotted by the

fire-warden on the top of Mt. Wachusett and he called the fire department while Beth sped to the Farm house and Tom to the fire extinguisher in the bungalow. The fire which had encircled the house scorching the trees and came to four feet of the house was stopped by the winds also the water from the fire-truck. My brother, cracked a rib while working the extinguisher and Dr. Krumbhaar strapped him up. Tom remarked later that he knew the crack had started when he had fallen out of bed during a nightmare some time back.

After all the hotels were gone there was only one boarding-house left - Pratt's Cottage, where the Alton Allen's now live. My sister Dorothy and I used to come up for Christmas and George Washington Birthday holidays and stay there. Miss Hattie Pratt was famous for her graham bread. We would borrow Mr. Grimes' double-runner sled and have wonderful coasting, starting at the top of the hill by the Washburn's, round the corner past the Store, and to the foot of Gregory's Hill. But it was a long pull back up again!



***Pratt's Cottage/Linden House  
at 2 Radford Rd.***



***Decorated Concord Parade Coach***

It was in the 1890's that female bicycle riders became active. It took me two years to persuade my father to buy me a wheel. Not only was it dangerous, he said, but very expensive—a good "Columbia" cost \$50.00! There were few level roads on which to practice, so we used to hire Mr. Wayland Davis's hay wagon, and Mrs. Perkins, Mrs. Getting, Mrs. Colby and my mother and myself would pile our wheels into the wagon and be carried down to the flat part of the East Princeton Road by Crow Pond, where we would practice for an hour or so and then get hauled back up again to the store. Once a great feat was accomplished by Jacob Yooker's brother (our farmer) who cycled from Worcester to Princeton without ever getting off his

wheel ! And those were the days of dirt roads!

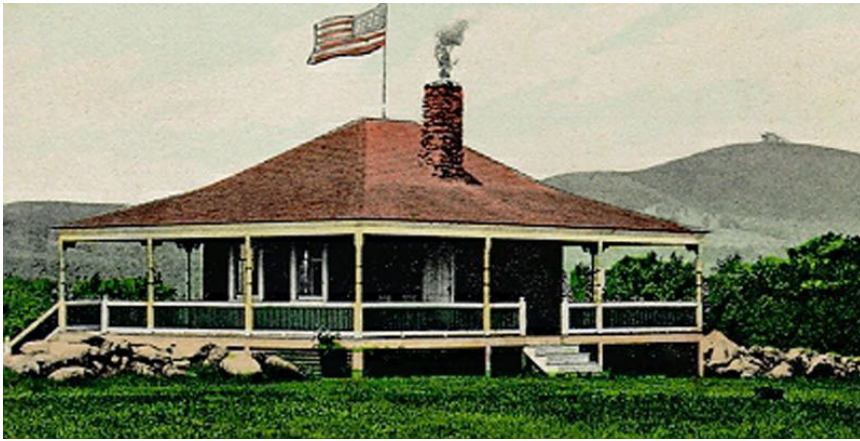
Coaching parades were very popular also, and were usually held in Rutland. We spent days decorating Mr. Doolittle's Concord coach with bunting and flowers. The elderly ladies sat inside the coach, and the children would beg to sit on the front seat beside the driver of the six horses. He kept a pail of small green apples between his feet, and because his whip wasn't long enough to reach the lead pair he would throw the apples on their backs to speed them on their way. That seven mile drive to Rutland seemed pretty long, but we were once rewarded by winning the prize.



***Eleanor Allen In Front of Town Pound  
Getting Ready to Hit a Drive***



Croquet and tennis tournaments were annual affairs, and we even laid out a 6 hole golf course on our pasture. The first tee was where my brother's bungalow now stands, and a "pulled" ball often landed in the old cemetery. I remember one player who lost his ball among the tomb-stones, who finally called out: "I've got it—it's on Mary Gregory's grave !" The third hole was on the site of Mr. Theo Brown's house. The ground was so rough that we had a local rule that any ball could be lifted without the usual two stroke penalty.



*Russell Corner Golf Clubhouse -  
Across from the Triangle on Sterling Rd.*

Croquet tournaments, both American and British variety were very popular. Mrs. Goddard and Mrs. Houghton won in the doubles match on the lawn of the Wachusett House in 1920 when they earned \$50.00 for the Church. Mrs. Alec Bullock built a tennis court below her house and Mr. Needham and I won a cup there. A nine hole golf course was laid out on the Russell Corner fields, the stone walls were sodded for bunkers, and we had dirt, rather than grass greens,

for putting. Dick Stanwood won one of the first tournaments with the score of 95. I shall never forget the time when my father gave Mrs. Alec Bullock a black eye with the end of a club while showing her how to use it.

I used to sing in the Choir in those days. The organ was pumped by hand. I was the tallest singer and Grace West the shortest, and we were both altos, so we had to stand side by side. Ray Gregory was the only bass. No choir gowns were worn in those days, and every lady wore her best hat. When song time came the Choir curtains were drawn and we faced the congregation— I suppose so nobody would fall asleep. In 1916 Mary Doolittle was married in the church. The first wedding there in 25 years. My sister Dorothy was married there in 1922 to Commander Kendall Preston U.S.N.— a military wedding with the officer's swords crossed above their heads as they left the church.

Old Folks concerts in costume were an annual affair, with an occasional Toy Symphony. We once earned \$200.00 for the church. When my sister was twelve years old, she organized "The Princeton Dramatic Club" whose members were Emily Gregory Florence and Beatrice Hamilton, Mary Doolittle, Katherine Lewis, and Mildred Bryant. Once they produced scenes from "Little Women" in the Town Hall, and another year scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in the open glade in our woods. Edith Yonker, Elinor Stimson and two Hamilton's were the fairies, Dorothy was Oberon, and Mildred Bryant was Puck. This was in 1915, so the proceeds, \$90.00, were sent to the American Red Cross Hospital in France. There were 80 persons in the audience who were perched on wooden benches under the pine trees.

The Church Fair was held once also in our woods, in 1920. We had a band, and there were donkey and pony rides for the children. We cleared \$300.00. We used to make the candy for the Fairs ourselves, in Mrs. Goddard's kitchen.

But our "big" day was the Fourth of July. My father would put a notice in the Store inviting everyone to come and see the fireworks and to partake of ice cream and cake. The fireworks were set off from the little knoll near the entrance to our driveway. There were no "Dixie-cups" in those days,—the ice cream came in great 25 lb. slabs. We set two barrels across the driveway to the East of the house, with a hoard on the top, and my brother and I spent the evening slicing ice cream with a carving knife. The audience used paper plates and tin spoons, and for days afterwards we would have to collect them from amidst the bushes. Slicing ice cream for 100 to 400 people was quite a job. We finally had to

discontinue the fireworks because Mr. Perkins was afraid the prevailing wind would blow the rocket sticks onto the roof of his stable. So, after that we decorated the place with paper Japanese lanterns on bamboo poles along the paths in the woods, and we had Chaffins' Band to sit in the court and "make music" such as it was! The weather was usually kind, but we did adjourn twice to the Town Hall. (Bagg Hall.)

The Ku Klux Klan and the Suffrage campaigns provided excitement for some years. My mother refused to go to church while the Minister, then Mr. Strong, advocated for the Klan. She was an ardent "anti-suffragist" and persuaded 5% Princeton ladies to join the "antis".

My brother and his family used to spend his vacation in our big house, but as his family increased in size, my father decided they should have a house of their own. He ordered a "Ready-cut" house from the Aladdin Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan (pictured earlier). It came, complete with fixtures, in a freight car, and could be put together in one month. Richmond Hamilton's father declared it couldn't be done, but he took the contract. (In 1980 while I, Elizabeth Allen Nowell, rewrote this paper for Aunt Eleanor's great grandchildren, the beloved bungalow, now sixty years old, is in good shape and owned now by my brother Tom Allen )

Princeton had a "first" in 1919— the first airplane to fly over the town. It was an open cock-pit JN4 piloted by an aviator named Lee, with my sister Dorothy as his passenger. Everyone in town turned out to watch. Another pilot took Dorothy up a second time, and they did "stunts" a "spinning nose-dive" a "loop-the-loop" and a "slide slip". We have a snap shot of Dorothy in her helmet and goggles.



***Wachusett House Tennis On Lawn – At 2 Worcester Rd.  
Burned in 1910***

Each summer my father and I competed to see who could find the greatest number of wild flowers and ferns on our property. Our count was 100 flowers and 20 varieties of ferns. Occasionally Ray Gregory would invite me to go on one of his "bird walks" and one day in 1916 we counted 37 different kinds of birds.

I learned to drive a car in 1922, buying my sister's Chevrolet when she got married. It used to take 2 1/2 hours for the trip to Boston. Our favorite trip around Mt. Monadnock of 93 miles would take us 4 hours. We often "stalled" on our driveway when we returned, and we nearly always had at least one puncture on route. On one trip moving from Boston to our house here, in the family car, we had no less than four blow-outs. In those days the tools were kept under the back seat, so it meant that everyone and everything had to be moved out so the tools could be unloaded.

But we weren't afraid of walking in those days, I thought nothing of walking down to the Collins (probably 42 Sterling Rd.) place and back again, and I often climbed the mountain by the Harrington trail, starting from our house. A man was lost on the mountain one year while we were at Pratts' Cottage. He wandered away from his companion and evidently fell between some boulders. An organized search of the whole area was made, but his body was not found until some years later— quite by accident.

Does anyone remember Princeton's Hermit? William Barney was a Harvard graduate, and his father was Collector of the port of New York in Civil War days. Mr. Barney was a victim of the Civil War, and had retreated to a wee house at the foot of Little Wachusett (next to our Property), where he kept a flock of hens round whose necks he tied bells "to keep the foxes off". Mr. Barney used to walk to the Village with a big sack over his shoulders for supplies, and for some reason he always wore three hats! He became so peculiar, choosing to sleep in our field rather than in his own home that my father feared he might come - to harm one of us children. So, he "bought him out" and Mr. Barney retreated to a chicken house opposite Mrs. Proctor's place (288 Mirick Rd.). The year after buying Mr. B's house we

celebrated the Fourth of July by burning that house down. Millions of moth millers flew out of the door and windows as it burned. It made a grand bon-fire, and we did not call the Fire Department! Later, he moved to the top of Mile Hill, evidently having been unable to climb to the top one day he was finally found frozen to death at the bottom of that hill. He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, and I am told that the horses drawing his hearse were decorated with cow bells, as no sleigh bells were available.



***Washburn Sponsored - Collection of Vegetables Trophy***

The Princeton Grange was active for many years, and I vividly remember my brother's and my initiation. Prizes were given for the best fruits and vegetables, also for the best collection. We once won a trophy for "the best collection", and our farmer, Jacob Yonker, was very proud of it.

For many years a contest was held on the Princeton Common between the Fire Depts of three or four neighboring towns. My parents gave a cup to be held each year by the winner. The object was to see which team could get into action most speedily. I believe Princeton has won that trophy 15 times at this writing. The contest will be held this year in Lancaster, the Sunday after Labor Day.

As stated before, Elizabeth Allen Nowell rewrote this document in 1980 for Aunt Eleanor's great-grand-children.

In 2022, images were added to help tell Eleanor's original story, the addresses of places mentioned were added by William "Bud" Brooks.

During the summer of 2022, this document was OCR scanned, images added from the PHS collection, and slightly updated using parenthesis to clarify locations of places mentioned in this document by William "Bud" Brooks. The original typed versions can be found in a Gray File Box entitled "PHS Previous Research and Talks."





***Expanded Grand View Hotel  
254 Mountain Rd - Burns in 1899***



***Expanded Mountain House  
261 Mountain Rd. - Burns in 1914***

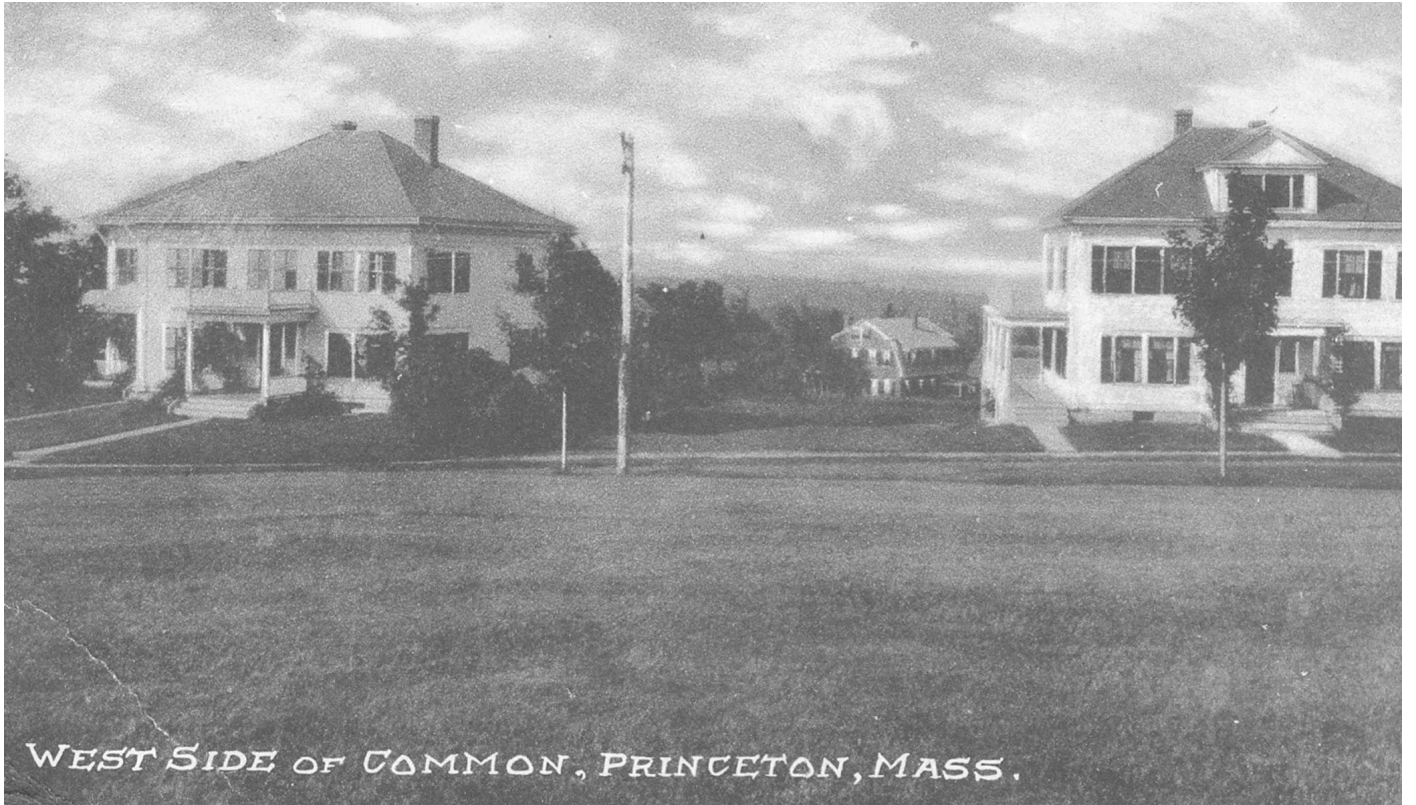


***Baptist Church Converted to Prospect House 1860***



***Prospect House/Princeton Inn 1921***





***The Rufus Davis and Ezra/Angela Heywood Homes Located Where These Two Homes are Today  
at #5 and #7 Hubbardston Rd. - Burned in 1908***