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EARLY GREENFIELD HOMES  
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(Abridged from a paper written by Lucy Cutler Kellogg and read at a meeting of the Board of Organized Work, Fr. Co. Pub. Hosp. Dec. 6, 1948)

In the early history of Greenfield the Wells family figured prominently, and one of this family, Joshua Wells, was the original settler on the site of Mrs. Pratt Potter's home on east Main Street. The house stood on the east side of the Country road and by order of the authorities was fortified in 1744 and consequently called Wells fort. That alone would indicate that his was a larger house than the usual log cabin of the settler. He also had a wife and twelve children to shelter, which might account for its size. In 1767 he deeded his property to sons Abner and Joel, and died the following year. Soon after, Abner acquired the property and in 1819 transferred the place to one Oliver Cooley who, in 1827 sold it to Elijah Gould who came here from Templeton. Mr. Gould won \$25,000 in a lottery, which sum he invested in the house he built, now owned by Mrs. Potter.

When Joshua made his home there, the road, the main highway from Deerfield to Bernardston and Northfield, in reality little more than a bridle path, ran west of the house, across the easterly side of Dr. Freeman's lot, thence crossing the present High street, way up onto the ridge, on North, crossing George St. near the east end, on by the East side of Fort Stocking on the present Beacon Field and back into the High St. of today, a little distance north of the present Riddell residence.

At the south side of West Main St. early, stood the fine old colonial house of Samuel Wells, styled lieutenant, His carriage house and barn were opposite where is now the large brick house. This Lieutenant Samuel Wells was a nephew of Joshua of East Main St. and among his papers was found a map of Main St. as it appeared in 1774. From this it appears that there was then a physician at each end of Main St. At the west end lived one Dr. Zachariah Converse, who came here from

Killingly, Conn., soon after the town was organized. The only record of him beyond this is that of Rev. Roger Newton under date of Oct. 13, 1790, when he wrote; "Dr. Zacharian Converse died suddenly by an apoplectic fit- a man who had been capable of doing good, and peculiar for his contentment with small things, and for his refraining from resentful reviling language and conduct towards mankind."

Joshua Wells' near neighbor at the East end of Main St. on the present Tufts place was one Dr. John Caldwell who was here before 1774 and on July first of that year bought of his neighbor, Ebenezer Smead, who lived on the site of Mrs. Elizabeth Allen Keith's home 105 acres. In 1787 he sold to Col. William Moore. Moore in 1792 conveyed the property to George Grennell Sr. and until it passed to the ownership fairly recently of Nathan Tufts, a large portion of the acres remained in the Grennell family. The original house on this site was moved to the east side of High St. and was the home of the Misses Clarissa and Mary Williams, nieces of George Grennell Sr. and there they kept a boarding school for young women. This house was torn down and was replaced by the house now owned by Miss Janet Russell, across the street from the Weldon. The early Grennell barn was on the site of Mrs. Keith's house.

In many towns in Colonial days it was the custom to store the town's supply of powder in the church, often times under the stairs leading to the gallery. Such was not the case in Greenfield, but the town did have a house for storing the artillery, and this was located on the hill just east of the present Tufts house, thus giving that locality the name "Gun House Hill", and here is found the origin of the name given to the property of the late Chief Justice Aiken, now owned by Mrs. Mary Davenport Wentworth, on Orchard Street. The land opposite the Wells fort on the Main Street side changed ownership several times. By 1827 one Martin Smith had built the two-story brick house now owned by Mrs. Keith, and in a shop which stood at the rear of the lot, was

making guns. Two years later he purchased the lot, now the west end of the Court House site, and erected another brick house, to which he transferred his gun shop. He connected the well at his residence by a pipe, with this shop and in 1836 sold the building, together with the water rights to William C. Clement. The house later became the property of the late Judge Franklin Fessenden and was his home until he bought the present Sheldon house on East Main St. Later it was occupied by the Girls' Club and the Grand Army Post until it was razed to make room for the new county court house.

When Henry Wells Clapp came to Greenfield in the 1830's he bought the Gould place, now Mrs. Potter's home. It was then the only house on the square formed by the present Main, Franklin, Church and High Streets. This whole tract once had a deep ravine, the upper end of which was on the site of the house recently known as the Coddard place. Mr. Clapp expended thousands of dollars filling and draining the lot, including the draining of the "Frog Pond" where many young people use to skate. At that time the only houses on Franklin street were one at each end, the one facing on Main St. owned by Sylvester Allen and is now the Post Office site. Franklin St. as far north as Church St. was laid out in 1845 and formed by contributions of equal shares of land by Messrs. Allen Clapp. The latter set the trees which now line the St.

Major Alvord wrote of the Clapp meadow of seven acres; "When the right day came the neighborhood was awakened by the music of stone and steel, and it was truly inspiring to see the line often of a dozen skillful mowers move across the field, swinging their scythes in even cadence and stopping at intervals to whet the blade, all together. During these brief intervals it was my ambition to help distribute from big pails, iced molasses and water, spiced well with ginger. Banishment from the lot would have been instant had I ventured to molest the nests of the bobolinks and meadow larks, around which

if discovered in season, was left standing a large tuft of grass. The nests of the bumble bees were treated with like consideration. Clapp was a good farmer, and this mowing lot was his pride. It used to be said that the sound of the scythe in that field was the signal to begin haying all over Franklin County. In the proceedings of the old United Agricultural Society is the record of a crop of almost fifty tons of well cured hay cut from that field in a single season (three cuttings) or nearly seven tons to the acre.

By 1871 the William Wise, now Dr. Thorn's place on Church Street had been built, also the former Woldskillhouse and the Stetson house on Franklin Street and two houses on the north side of Park Street. It is said that the square of land bounded by the present Park, Franklin, Main and High Streets. Mr. Clapp had planned to reserve for a public park, and hence it was thought came the name of Park Street. By 1880 the present apartment house on the corner of Park and Franklin streets had been built, also the Association Library building, the present quarters of the Greenfield Club, and the Maigis house on High Street had been erected.

Mr. Clapp was a descendant of the Wells family of Brattleboro, of Deerfield origin, and of the Montague Clapps. which fact is supposed to have influenced his final settlement in Greenfield. A man of great public spirit, he was one of the two men employing at their own expense an engineer to estimate the cost of bringing in an abundant water supply, either by erecting a reservoir on Rocky Mountain and forcing the supply from the Connecticut, or by other means.

The present Glen water was introduced in 1869-70, just after Mr. Clapp's death. John E. Russell alludes to its introduction as follows; "Our fathers, who never went out in the morning without shaving and putting on a claw hammer coat, were not strenuous about daily bathing. When the Glen water was introduced, it is told of a man whose house was being altered to allow its use, that he refused to have hot water in



the bathroom, for "in summer you don't need it and in winter you don't bathe." He also recalled that a member of a distinguished Boston family told that in his boyhood he had an aunt for whose health sea-bathing was recommended; mornings she was taken to the shore, water was dipped in a basin and she washed her face and hands sitting in the chaise.

About the Old Samuel Wells house on west Main Street, Wells built early a fine old colonial house, and it was there until after 1880. Baxter Noyes eventually bought it and in place of the old square white house, built the one now standing on the brow of the hill, as one goes down to the Tree River bridge. This Wells place is of special interest as during the Civil War it has always been said that it served as a station on the "underground railroad" and many a fugitive slave was there housed, coming in from a station to the west, and sent on to the north.

Before leaving West Main Street, it may interest you to know that the first hospital was established there as a private institution in the large brick house with white pillars on the north side opposite the old Wells place. This was in the early 1890's and was fitted up and opened by the late Dr. Willard H. Pierce. Upon the establishment of the Franklin County Hospital, located first in the old Dr. Robbins, West Side, Dr. Pierce gladly contributed all his furnishings and equipment to the proposed larger institution and closed his own.

Now before leaving the east end of Main Street it may be of interest to you to know that through the large Grinnell estate there were laid out five streets; Congress named from the fact that George Grinnell, Jr. was a member of Congress; Orchard, because it was laid out through the old Grinnell orchard; George, from the name of George Grinnell; James and Grinnell, from the name of James Grinnell, the last owner of the old Grinnell farm, a barn of which stood until nearly 1900 on the site of the home of the late William Pratt.

At the corner of High and Silver Streets at one time lived one Wise Grinnell, grandfather of Edward Benton who bequeathed to the Greenfield

Historical Society among other of his possessions, money which was used for the purchase of its home on Church Street. South of the Wise Grinnell 13-acre farm was a distillery whose owner in 1813 announced that he manufactured a product of superior quality which was for sale by the hogshead, barrel, keg, or smaller quantities.

The present hospital grounds as of 1870 to about 1880 were most uneven. At about the former main entrance from High St. stood the first greenhouse on a knoll under the large elm. It was burned in 1877, with an estimated loss of \$400.

On the site of the present field stood the home of the first minister of Greenfield, Rev. Edward Billing, who came here in 1754 from Cold Spring, now known as Belchertown. This house, long known as Fort Stocking, stood until 1874, and the well remained until much later. The original part of the house was built of pine logs nearly a foot square and carefully matched. The south side of the house was built later by one Merrick Hitchcock, who obtained title in 1792. The road then ran much nearer Rocky Mountain than the present High St, and the fort stood on the westerly side of the road. It was surrounded by a stockade, as were nearly all ministers' houses of that day, but that disappeared before Revolutionary times. The Name of the fort, "stocking" was said to have originated from the fact that in the early days a woman lived there who had immense ankles, and her stockings, hanging on the clothesline were believed to have measured at least a quarter of a yard in width. A wag of that period called the place "Stocking Fort" and the name was ever after applied to it. In the old cellar were found the remains of a rude coffin made by splitting a log and hollowing out the two halves. A few small bones were found in it, indicating that an infant had sometime been buried in the cellar.

Just north of the hospital grounds lay the old Hastings farm. When St. were laid out across this, the names Hastings, Hawood, and Riddell were given them by the owner, Mr. John Westly Riddell, thus perpetuating the

names of the successive owners of the tract since the town's incorporation, but three families being represented as owners in the past two hundred years.