

The Abington Store

Mrs. Abbie Holbrook

The Abington Store building stood at the Four Corners for a great many years, probably more than a hundred, but no one today can give any information about it except that it was there a long time. As time went by it became more and more necessary to have more room, and Mr. Brooks who owned it about 1900, and lived in the ell part of the building began to use one and another of the rooms so that he could add more stock, thus cutting down on the living space of the family until, I understand, his wife rebelled and he sold out and moved away.

Mr. A. Newton Vaughn bought out the business and the building, and with his brother-in-law Mike McGorty built up considerable trade, delivering goods to Pomfret, Pomfret Landing, Elliotts and even to parts of the Town of Hampton.

The Post Office was in the Store ^{BUILDING} and that drew trade, naturally.

Mr. Vaughn's health was not too good so he sold out after a few years to George P. Sumner and Oren Weeks. But Mr. Weeks' health became impaired and Mr. Sumner ran the business alone, 1908-1910, when ^{C.} Andrew Sharpe bought him out. He was there maybe two years and Bert Whitehouse and Andrew Amidon took over. I don't remember how long this firm lasted, but we knew Andrew Sharpe returned to take over again, a few years later.

Meanwhile, the road now known as Route 44 had been improved and paved, as well as widened, and had encroached upon the land next to the Store building thus making it more difficult in getting the horses and wagons off the road to tie up to the hitching rail, and giving less space for the Grocery Carts at the barn which was attached to the building at the West end. Beyond that was a big swamp where the school boys, and girls too, had great fun skating in the winters.

In 1920 and 1921, there were many young folks around Abington and Elliotts as well as nearby Pomfret, (not the ^{so-called} "high-toned" section) who

were members of the Church, Grange, and other social groups who were lively and full of fun. Rev. Richard Elliott was our Minister and he was just as full of life as the rest, besides being the liveliest minister I have known here in Town. He got the young folks together every Monday night on the Church lawn to play games - among them was volley ball, which was a great favorite.

As the winter came on and the afternoons became shorter it became apparent that a large hall, or a Community Hall was needed so these gatherings could be continued, but where was the money coming from? Nobody could say.

But two men put their heads together to build a Hall, at the same time build a larger store building. The old one was getting very dilapidated and in much disrepair. Besides there was news of another widening of route 44 which would necessitate taking more land on both sides of it. So these two men, George Sumner and Joseph Elliott, decided to erect a building large enough so there would be plenty of room for a Store with a Hall upstairs where the folks could play their games, hold dances and put on plays and have fun generally. ~~Mr. Sumner was to supply the money~~

~~and~~ ^{supplied} Mr. Elliott the lumber. & owned the building for a number of years.

In the Fall of 1921, the foundation was laid and the building was started. It was built behind the former store building and out of sight from the road, and there was some difficulty because of the swampy soil where part of the wall was to be laid. But all difficulties were overcome at last and by early Spring in 1922 the roof of this huge building could be seen readily. Durward Kenyon and Fred Botham were the contractors and were very proud of their work as well they might be.

One great disappointment to Mr. Sumner was, he couldn't have a moving picture theater there because long metal rods had to be placed across the Hall in order to hold it from spreading apart and collapsing

from the weight of the roof. At the same time neither could there be any volley ball for the same reason. But by the time the Hall was completed, Rev. Elliott had moved away and the young folks had lost much of the interest they had had while he had been here to encourage them.

Now to go back to the former story. Mr. Andrew Sharpe was the owner of the Store Business at the time the new building came into being. He stayed on until 1925 when he sold out to A. C. and O. A. Weeks.

In 1928 they sold the business to George C. Potvin who remained until 1958, 30 years. He was obliged to purchase the building in 1946, from B. W. Whitehouse in order to put it in good order. It was sagging in a number of places because of the nature of the soil on which it was originally erected.

Here is a list of the Storekeepers as remembered by Oren Weeks:

Randolph Bullard

Frank Bird

George Hicks and Warren Fuller

Charles Brooks

A. N. Vaughn and Co.

early 1900's

Sumner and Weeks

George P. Sumner

1908-1910

C. A. Sharpe

1910-1911 ?

Whitehouse and Amidon

C. A. Sharpe

1920 to 1925

A. C. and O. A. Weeks

1925-1928

George C. Potvin

1928-1958

W. J. Ruckl

1958 -

Mr. Andrew Sharpe, while he was in the Grocery Business, also handled grain of all kinds and did a huge bit of business in that line. Carloads of grain came into the Abington Station every week, so many that ^{R.F.} it became necessary to put up a building there to hold the quantities that were to be unloaded there. Mr. William Warren of Eastford bought all

his grain from Mr. Sharpe as did Joseph Stoddard who had a big herd of cattle, and there were many other farmers in the town who handled quantities of milk and of course grain. A number of chicken farmers were in this town also and neighboring town too who bought their grain from Mr. Sharpe, so he developed a very large business, ~~in grain.~~

According to Susan Griggs' book "Folklore and Firesides", another owner of ~~the~~ Abington Store was the "widow of Solomon Sumner owner of the cider mill on the brook, she having followed Peter Allen 1856." This must have been the building which once stood across the corner from the present store building. This building was torn down ~~in~~ when route 44 was widened in 1941. *and not the "Abington Store" of this theme.*



ABINGTON FOUR CORNERS: This old time photograph was taken about 1908. Jessie Dennis lived in the house behind the picket fence, and Mrs. Michael McGorty lived in the house on the right, just before the store. Mrs. McGorty was born where the Valentine Greenhouses are (now owned by Fritz). Mr. McGorty ran an insurance business in Putnam in 1900. The Episcopal Church you see in the picture, formerly stood in Pomfret and was dismantled in 1883 and re-built in Abington. The stones that were used for the present Christ Episcopal Church in Pomfret and the Grebe house were hauled from the farm where Merritt Peck lives in Abington. Nick Chase's father hauled the stones and used a three-horse hitch for the job. This interesting information was supplied by Harry Chase of Pomfret Center.

