

CHAPTER XV

MIDDLEFIELD PERSONALITIES AND TRADITIONS

IN THE preceding chapters the development of community and town life among the hills of Middlefield has been traced in a more or less abstract fashion, without any particular emphasis upon the individual characteristics of the people who were concerned in this development. It is the authors' intention in this chapter, through the medium of folklore, anecdote and reminiscence, to make more vivid some of the personalities with whom a first-hand acquaintance was impossible. This treatment will necessarily give only brief sidelights on the people and should not be interpreted as representing complete characterizations.

David Mack, through his resourcefulness and courage in accomplishing the incorporation of Middlefield and later in upholding the authority of the state militia against the insurgents of Shays' Rebellion, stands out sharply as the most prominent man during the first half century of the town's existence. It is rather remarkable that, though he had many lines of activity and was a leader among the early citizens, he was in a measure illiterate. Being the oldest son in a large family he had been able to attend school but eight weeks in all. He realized his ignorance, however, and to remedy it he was not ashamed to attend the district school near his house, even sitting in the same classes with his children. It is said that his young son, David, was always much elated when he was able to get the better of his father in spelling.

In making the most of his business opportunities, however, David Mack seems to have needed no schooling. He established the first store in town, and opened branches in other places. He financed the business ventures of the first blacksmith and the first harness and saddle maker. In the early days he bought wood ashes and manufactured potash. He kept tavern at his house a few years and was very active in securing good roads.

He traded in real estate and was interested in many financial enterprises. Thus from a condition of poverty,—for he is said to have come from Connecticut with nothing but his ox-team and his axe,—he became comparatively wealthy. Nor was this accomplished by hoarding his money, for his gifts in support of the Congregational Church, of educational institutions and other worthy causes amounted during his long life to over \$70,000 in addition to many other unknown amounts given to help young people in obtaining an education.

It is to be presumed from this recital that David Mack was naturally thrifty, and this seems to be verified by an incident told by Rev. Mr. Bisbee, who was a frequent visitor at the Mack homestead. One evening as a group sat about the great fireplace eating apples, some one threw parings into the fire. Quickly seizing the tongs, the old deacon rescued some large pieces from the flames, remarking as he did so, "Something will eat that."

Deacon Mack's land adjoined that of Andrew Meacham, and in the early days a dispute arose over the location of the boundary line between them. The deacon had already, for some reason, incurred Mr. Meacham's dislike, and when this dispute was settled in favor of Mr. Mack, this ill will was naturally intensified. So strong did this feeling become that whenever Deacon Mack engaged in public prayer Mr. Meacham would rise from his seat and walk out of the meetinghouse. Once when Meacham protested to Solomon Ingham that he could find nothing good in that man, Mr. Ingham remarked dryly, "Well, Meacham, he can do one thing, he can cast out devils."

Though a strong upholder of the Congregational faith, Deacon Mack was unsuccessful in keeping all his ten daughters in the proper denominational path. In addition to "Grandma Root," the youngest daughter, who was a staunch supporter of the Baptist Church, her elder sister, Lois Robbins, had previously followed her husband into the Baptist denomination in their frontier home in New York State. On her next visit to her childhood home, her good father was moved to inquire why she had "turned Baptist," and her ready reply was, "Because you gave me a Baptist Bible."

"And Deacon Newton, straight and stout,
Who knew his mind and spoke it out."

This characterization of the Baptist leader was probably emphasized in the mind of the poet of the Middlefield Centennial by the following incident. On one occasion Mr. Newton had advocated some policy in the church which met with violent opposition. The pastor brought the opposing factions together and got them to agree to support the majority vote on the matter, when that should be determined. The vote went against Deacon Newton. The pastor thinking to consecrate the formal agreement in a tactful way, asked Deacon Newton to lead in prayer for God's blessing upon the decision just made. To this Deacon Newton with sturdy honesty replied, "I can't pray and I won't pray."

The good deacon's irascibility was demonstrated upon another occasion. The story goes that one day he went into the field to obtain some information from the boys who were working a short distance away. As he left the farmyard the old turkey gobbler followed at his heels like a dog. After going a little way the deacon stopped and shouted his question to the boys. This shout excited the old gobbler who raised his cry of "Gobble, gobble, gobble" at just the instant that one of the boys was answering, with the result that Deacon Newton could not hear a word that he said. Again the deacon called and as before the old turkey replied drowning out the answer to the question. When upon repetition the same thing occurred a third time, he he could endure interruption no longer, and with a vicious swing of his cane he smote off the head of the intruder. "There," ejaculated Mr. Newton, with some heat, "You'll never gobble again."

Israel Pease, of Enfield, Connecticut, who settled on Ridgepole Road, was the ancestor of many families of that name in Middlefield, and his farm has always been in the hands of his descendants, in late years in the line of Harvey Root. Israel's son, Dan, first settled several miles north near the Peru line, but in 1821 he left this farm to his son, Dan, and purchased the Blossom Tavern property, which included the still which had been set up by Dr. Coleman, and was one of the best farms in the community. Of him a prominent citizen once said, "Mr. Pease was very hospitable in every way. It was difficult to pass his house without receiving an invitation to call and drink cider and look

at his stock of cattle and sheep which were always good specimens.”

Dan Pease was a man of excellent business judgment and a good provider for his family. As he prospered he purchased farms in the neighborhood of his own land which he presented to his sons, Walter, Eldridge, Morgan and Arnold, when they married. To his daughters he gave a thousand dollars each when they married,—the purchasing value of which was several times more than it would be to-day. He thus had the satisfaction of seeing five sons and five daughters in homes of their own within the town.

That he was a man of decided opinions is illustrated by an anecdote which has come down from very early days. It seems that there was a public trial of a case of church discipline in which his brother, Israel, was a witness. Israel was of a different temperament from his brother, and his testimony, in Dan's opinion, was so indefinite and unconvincing that after the hearing was over, Dan got hold of him, drew him aside, and in a partially subdued voice which choked with indignation, exclaimed, “Is'rul, Is'rul, I'd be suthin, or I'd be nuthin, but I wouldn't be a cussed fool.”

Probably the descendants of Captain Nathan Wright, through the Dan Pease and Nathan Wright, Jr., lines, are more numerous in Middlefield to-day than those of any other pioneer, but all of them except his grandson, Clark B. Wright, bear other surnames. Captain Wright purchased a large portion of the meadows above Glendale Falls on the Den Stream, while his brother, Jesse, purchased the remaining portion. The Wrights were among the foremost supporters of the Bethel Chapel which stood nearly opposite the Jesse Wright house, and for some years “the Den,” though quite difficult of access, was the center of a religious activity which had a wide circle of influence.

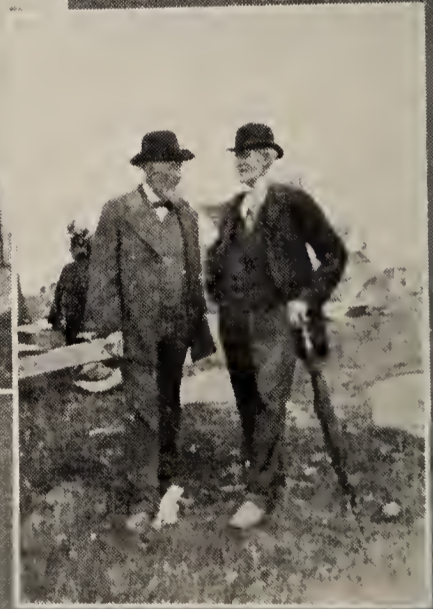
Captain Nathan Wright's son, Nathan, who succeeded his father, was a man, of vigorous mental powers and high moral character. In his later years he was something of a recluse, seldom being seen by visitors and passers-by. It was perhaps this characteristic that led him to train his horse to act without driver. In the morning the children would drive with him to the schoolhouse a quarter of a mile away, turn him

around and send him back home alone. In the afternoon Mr. Wright would harness him again and start him toward the schoolhouse, where he would wait until school was out and bring the youngsters safely home.

It is said that one inquisitive small boy who had never seen Mr. Wright was determined to get sight of him. One day when visiting the farm he seized the opportunity, when no one was looking, to peek through the key-hole of the bedroom door, and was much terrified when he beheld a bright blue eye staring right at him from the other side of that key-hole.

At the extreme southern point of the township where the three counties of Hampshire, Hampden and Berkshire meet, the Westfield River makes a sharp bend around the northern spur of Mt. Gobble. This picturesque spot, later recognized as the gateway to Berkshire and the West, was locally known as "the Gulf." Here settled Thomas Root, of Enfield, Connecticut, on the early road from Chester Factories to Middlefield Center which used to pass this Farm. Two sons and four daughters married and settled in the town, and as their mother was a sister of Israel Pease, another strain of the Pease blood was thus widely diffused throughout the community. The two sons, Solomon and Daniel, married so soon after the family located here that their father built them a double log house some distance back from the river, the foundations of which can still be seen. The eternal feminine is humorously evident in the tradition that Solomon's wife felt much superior to Daniel's wife because the window in her end of the house had one more pane of glass than the window in the other end.

Daniel Root, who succeeded to his father's farm, replaced his log home with what was known as "the old red house" until it was burned a few years ago. When the Pontoosuc Turnpike was laid out right past his door he had better communication with the outside world than anyone else in town, but this advantage disappeared when the Western Railroad bought out the turnpike company. Daniel Root's third wife was Anna (Smith) Martin, the mother of the late Thomas Martin of Hartford, Connecticut. Her lovable Christian character made a marked impression upon the people of that locality, especially during the building of the railroad when some of the workers boarded at the Root home.



HARLOW LOVELAND
ORRIN WHEELER
AND
HARRY PEASE

HOWARD SMITH E. JAMES INGHAM THOMAS MARTIN

MRS. MARTIN HAUCK

E. JAMES INGHAM
AND
GEORGE HOLCOMB

Thomas Martin, who lived with his mother and step-father for a few years, was fond of recalling how one day when the old folks were at church he went strolling down by the brook where he discovered a large trout swimming lazily about in a quiet pool. Forgetting all about the sacredness of the day, he rushed for his fish pole, hastily dug a few worms, and hastening back to the brook, was fortunate enough to hook the big fish. When he informed the family of his good luck, his step-father said sternly, "Thomas, after supper you will meet me in the barn. I will settle with you for fishing on Sunday." But the fish which Thomas had to exhibit was of unusual size, and after his mother had cooked it for supper and they had all eaten heartily, there was no more talk of the settlement in the barn.

Above the old Root farm lived Solomon Root's father-in-law, "Granter Selden," at what is now the Alderman place. When the latter died, Solomon came into possession of his farm. Here were born his four sons, Solomon, Timothy, Harvey and Selden, all of whom lived in Middlefield. Solomon, Jr., moved to the Center where he kept store for many years in what is now the Cody house. He was especially popular with the children because he would sell them more raisins for a penny than would the Mack store across the way.

Solomon Root's wife, Laura Mack, became a fervent Baptist, and at times was quite outspoken against the standing order. It happened that when Mr. Selden Cone wanted to join the Congregational Church he seemed to have the blameless if not strictly orthodox desire to combine the benefits of rival creeds, for he requested the minister to baptize him by immersion. This the minister agreed to do. When "Grandma Root" heard of it she remarked, much to the amusement of her Congregationalist relatives, "those Congregationalists would compass heaven and earth to make one proselyte." In her later years, however, she became more tolerant toward the church of her childhood, and, after attending a meeting in Hinsdale with some of her relatives, admitted that the Congregationalists were a pretty good sort after all.

Harvey Root, located on the Israel Pease place. He managed several farms for his father-in-law, Dan Pease, and was a large producer of butter and cheese. During the times when there was

a demand in Connecticut for men who could lay stone walls, he with others went down in the spring with yokes of oxen and engaged in this laborious but well paid work until late in the fall. Root was a young man of unusual physical endurance and his reputation as a "waller" was such that John Ferris, of Danbury, for whom he had worked, bought his oxen and paid him a bonus of fifty dollars not to return to Danbury to do "walling."

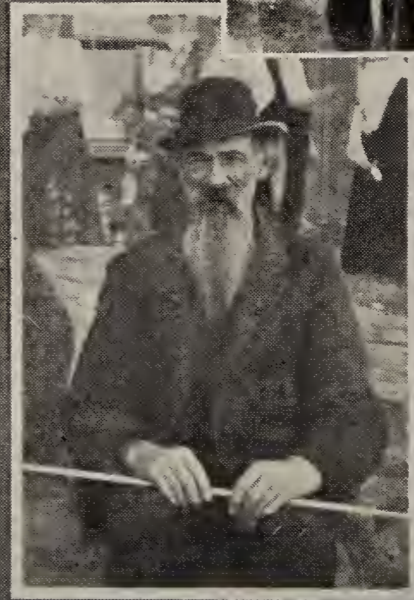
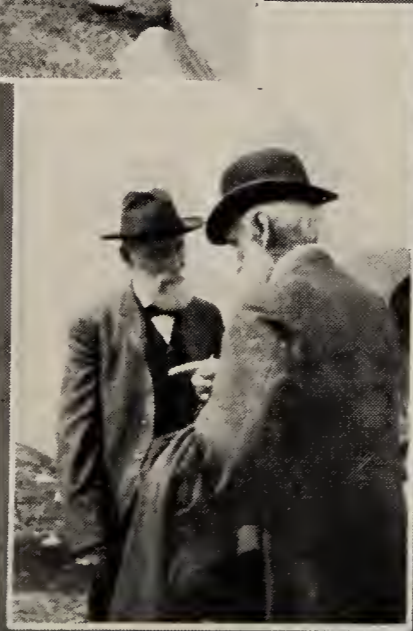
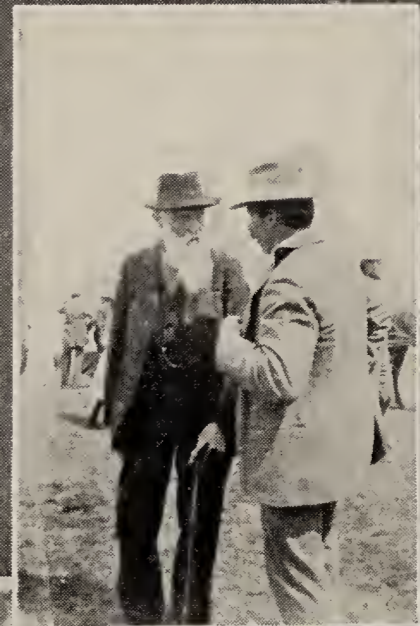
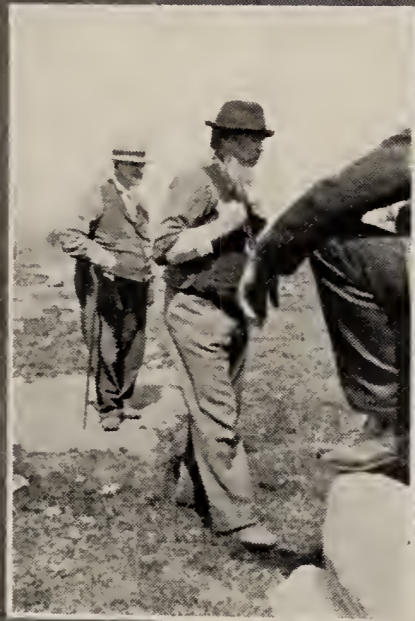
As has already been indicated, a great many of the early families of Middlefield either emigrated entirely after a few years stay or left only one or two representatives in successive generations to reap the benefits of the pioneer work already done. Even the prosperous David Mack, the first of his name to arrive, was the last of his name to survive, his brothers, sons and six of his ten daughters having moved to other towns. Several families, however, seem to have adapted themselves to local conditions so well that a number of groups of families arose, the high watermark of this development being about 1850. At this date there were twelve different Smith families of the Calvin and Matthew lines, seven by the name of Root, six of Church, and five of Pease. The large number of married daughters in the Pease and Root families, and also in the Wright and Metcalf families, settling in the town, made those family representations really larger than appears in the census of 1850.

Calvin Smith had the unusual good fortune of seeing his six sons settle within the town in a locality where farms near one another could be acquired. Calvin lived on the top of the eastern ridge where the Worthington Road crosses the Ridgepole Road, and was succeeded by his son, Ambrose. Obadiah Smith lived a short distance north on Ridgepole Road. Though all dwellings on this place had disappeared by the middle of the century, the locality is still called the "Diah Smith place." Two other sons, Asa and Orrin, choose the valley lands along the Worthington Road known as "Smith Hollow," while the intervening upland between these farms and their father's along this highway was taken up by the two remaining brothers, Oliver and Ebenezer. Adjoining Calvin Smith on the west was his brother, Matthew, with another large family, so that even as late as 1850 it was possible to go along the Worthington Road for three miles past land owned by members of this family.

In the remote valley of "Smith Hollow" the descendants of Calvin Smith and their neighbors had a community life of their own. The revival of the soapstone quarrying and the wooden bowl industry of their neighbor, Everett, raised momentary hopes of the formation of a considerable village, but the distance from the railroad was an effective deterrent to such development, and agriculture remained the fundamental pursuit of this region. Lawrence Smith, son of Orrin, was a nurseryman and orchardist whose skill was later employed by the poet, William Cullen Bryant, on his farm in Cunnington. The Ebenezer Smith farm, under his son, Howard Smith, became one of the most productive farms of Middlefield. Deacon Oliver Smith, a pillar in the Baptist Church, was succeeded on the farm by his son, Clarkson, who carried it on with success. He had an extensive "sugar bush" and produced large quantities of maple sugar and syrup.

The disadvantages of living in the remote part of the town is well illustrated in the following remark of one of the town wits at the Center. The Smith Hollow people were apt to be late in their attendance upon meetings of all kinds at the Center, as can be readily appreciated by anyone who has traversed "Smith Hollow Hill" and the other lesser inclines which separated them from the village. On one occasion the aforesaid wit expressed his vexation over the non-appearance of the tardy ones in the picturesque observation that "on the second Day of Judgement, along about half past five in the afternoon, those Smith Hollow folks would just be coming up by Aunt Betty Pinney's."

The Matthew Smith farm became a center from which went abroad a powerful influence for good. Matthew Smith, the pioneer, one of the founders of the Baptist Church in Middlefield, was a prominent public man, serving as selectman, justice of the peace, captain of militia and representative to the General Court. In most of these fields of activity he was followed by his son, Matthew, who acquired a farm a mile south of his father's. He had the distinction of being a member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1854. The youngest son, Samuel, followed his father at the old homestead, giving up the opportunity of a college education to take care of his parents in their declining years. But with the education he had already



HENRY FERRIS AND WALTER CHURCH
SOLOMON F. ROOT AND EDWIN McELWAIN

LESTER ROOT

MATTHEW SMITH
ORRIN PEASE

obtained he became a very useful citizen of the town, teaching school with marked success in Middlefield and in neighboring villages, and serving as leading member of the School Committee for many years. He was a strong supporter of higher education and among his children were some of the best teachers which the youth of Middlefield have ever had. Foremost among these was Metcalf John Smith, whose services as teacher, school supervisor, town official, helpful neighbor, conciliator and friend have been so fully recounted in previous chapters as to need no further mention here.

Matthew Smith, son of Matthew Smith, Jr., and eighth of that name in direct line from the emigrant ancestor of 1637, was a very energetic and generous citizen of Middlefield for many years. He kept store at the Center for a while. He greatly aided the Highland Agricultural Society in its earliest days by the generous gift of a large and sightly tract of land near the village for a Fair Ground. Later when opposition developed to the incorporation of the society at Middlefield, he represented the interests of the town before a committee of the General Court and secured for his native town the right to be the duly appointed spot for the annual cattle show. He was a staunch member of the Baptist Church and served several years as selectman and for one term as representative to the General Court. His brusque and outspoken honesty, combined with his good judgment and public spirit, made him exceptionally influential in town affairs.

The McElwain family has held a prominent position among the leading citizens of Middlefield since the town was founded. The late Jonathan McElwain was prominent in all local enterprises, having served as town clerk for over forty years, for many years as secretary of the Highland Agricultural Society, and as deacon and superintendent of the Sunday School of the Congregational Church. His father before him was selectman for many years and also a representative to the General Court.

Among local young men of talent is remembered Marvin Robbins, who, prevented by ill health from sharing in the activities of the life on the farm, studied to improve his opportunities. He learned "phonography," the short-hand of his day, and became so successful a teacher of the subject that one of his

pupils became a court stenographer in California. Robbins tried his hand at landscape and portrait painting in which he attained considerable proficiency. Not a few of his canvases have graced the walls of homes in Middlefield and elsewhere. Two of his works are reproduced in this volume.¹ When the art of photography was first discovered Robbins tried his hand at this work and produced some very creditable daguerreotypes.

The Church brothers were substantial citizens, upholders of all worthy public enterprises, and pillars of the church like their father before them. How they supported the musical interests as well as the material welfare of the Congregational Society, providing parsonage and chapel, has been fully told in a previous chapter. Their successful manufacturing establishments in Factory Village afforded employment for many happy families in Factory Village, whose welfare was not forgotten by their employers. In a community largely devoted to agriculture the business ventures of the Church brothers seem to have been a matter of general interest. It is said that after the Civil War the company, foreseeing a scarcity of wheat purchased a very large stock of flour at eleven and twelve dollars a barrel which they later sold for twenty dollars and fifty cents a barrel. As this was a dollar below the Pittsfield price, there were customers at the Hollow store from all the country round, including some from the Berkshire metropolis.

While the Churches gave their entire attention to their woolen manufacturing, the Blushes, who were also engaged in the same line and in a wood-turning industry as well, lived more in the manner of the English country squires, being fond of outdoor sports, hunting and fishing, with its outlay of dogs and horses, and with its hospitable entertainment and good cheer. William D. Blush was a connoisseur of fine horses, and the teams which he drove were matters of pride to himself and his neighbors. The Blush vehicle was always watched with admiration as it arrived at church on Sunday morning.

On the top of Johnnyeake Hill, in the old deserted house of Captain Elisha Mack, now standing, lived Captain Ambrose Loveland, grandson of the pioneer, Malachi Loveland, who built the homestead lower down on the hill. Captain Loveland was

¹ See illustration page 584.

known as an able moderator at town meetings, a singing master, and a leader in founding the Highland Agricultural Society, but by some he is remembered particularly for his fondness for superintending the marching on public occasions, such as the early days of Cattle Show, when the presence of a fife and drum corps gave opportunity for a grand review. The good citizens had cause to remember one Fourth of July celebration when the usual picnic was held on the knoll in the pasture north of the Fair Grounds where there was then a grove of large trees. Captain Loveland may have been an adept in military tactics against a human enemy, but he seems to have lacked judgment in dealing with the hostile forces of nature. In the face of a threatening thundershower he insisted in marshalling the assemblage and marching them up to the Fair Grounds for the preliminary exercises of saluting the flag, with the result that a tremendous onslaught from the skies, catching them unprepared, caused complete havoc in the commissary department and irreparable damage to the gay trappings of the women marchers.

On quite a different occasion, Captain Loveland, perhaps with this experience in mind, had more regard for weather conditions and the comfort of the people under his charge. His executive talent made his services often desired as a funeral director, an office which he enjoyed filling, but his orders were sometimes given with a military bluntness which under the circumstances was somewhat unusual. At one funeral where he was officiating the imminence of a shower induced him to hurry proceedings by announcing in his characteristic manner: "The corpse is now on exhibition in the arbor, the mourners will please step lively."

It was doubtless during the days of Captain Loveland that the town used the "old hearse" on funeral occasions. This dreadful affair is described by those who recall it as a sort of crate with top and black side curtains, mounted on a spring wagon. The depressing aspect of this contraption in general and the way the mountain breezes caused the somber curtains to flap and wave exposing the casket to view, made the vehicle a reproach and a byword in the community. This continued until certain of the young and determined spirits in the town stole the hearse one night and made it the fuel for the bonfire which celebrated the joy of the participants over its disappearance.

Speaking of funerals recalls the fact that during the earlier portion of the nineteenth century the demand for coffins in Middlefield and the surrounding towns was supplied by Deacon William W. Leonard, a farmer, carpenter and joiner living a quarter of a mile west of the Center. The coffins he made from basswood boards, stained with lampblack, furnished with japanned trimmings and lined with bishop lawn. They were sold at such a low figure, (three to five dollars) that almost anyone could afford to have one. The story goes, however, that when Uriah Church, Jr., and his wife were laid to rest within a week of each other, coffins costing from seven to eight dollars apiece were provided, an extravagance which scandalized the neighborhood.

Not far from the farm of Captain Loveland was the Solomon Ingham homestead, in its latter days known as "the pest house." Mr. Ingham, who was the first town clerk and prominent in local affairs, was a man often preoccupied or absent-minded, and his son Alexander used to tell how as a boy he once put his father to a psychological test on this point. Milking time having come, his father sent him to fetch the milk pail, but he returned with a market basket which he casually handed his father as he sat down

Solomon Ingham

to milk. Mr. Ingham proceeded as usual, not noticing that the milk was streaming down his legs, while the boy rolled upon the ground, overcome with uncontrollable laughter. "Alec, Alec, what are you laughing at?" questioned his father, and he had to repeat the query several times before the boy was able to control his shouts long enough to point out the absurdity of what his father was doing. If Alexander was punished for his experiment, he doubtless learned that there were some moments when his father was anything but absent-minded.

Deacon Alexander Ingham is well remembered by the older citizens as a man of deep religious zeal and a practical educator. He studied at Westfield Academy and is said to have taught select school at an early date. He was a tailor by trade and at one time had several women in his employ in his tailor shop in the ell of his house at the Center. He became prosperous enough

to help finance the woolen industry of Uriah Church, and in his later days he was looked after by the Church brothers who secured for him the position of deputy postmaster, which he held for many years.

He was a picturesque figure in his later days, a slender, stooped form in high silk hat and Camlet cloak, with cape, walking with a cane in each hand. It was his custom to repair to the grove south of the meetinghouse for a season of prayer, and it was occasionally the delight of some of the small boys of the town to climb high up in the nearby trees where they could not be seen and outdo in shouting the Deacon's loud beseechings. Another joke that leaves a pleasanter remembrance was one in which Uncle Sam was called in to play a prominent part. The originator, having picked up a card containing an offer to send sample calling cards to any one requesting them, became an agent for their sale. He conceived the idea of having these samples sent to every one in town. With the help of others the letters were so written that all the samples would arrive on the same day at the post office. The appointed day found all the school children of the village and many of the townspeople gathered to watch the excited Deacon as he sorted out the extra bag of mail on the long table which he formerly used for tailoring. This operation took so long that the children, much to their delight, were late to the afternoon session of their school.

The small boys of the village were not by any means malicious, for, though they found delight in teasing the deacon, they also found pleasure and an outlet for animal spirits in deeds of helpfulness. There lived opposite the Baptist Church Old Aunt Priscilla Steward, who though a most saintly and lovable soul had been burdened with a cruel and intemperate husband, whose irregular habits and more irregular employment had brought her to poverty. It is said that Benjamin Steward would hang the dog up over the fire just for meanness and get up in the night and sharpen the carving knife to frighten his wife. But she was uncomplaining and even when he once turned her out of doors at night she sat on the woodpile and braided a straw hat as calm as a clock with never a word of rebuke. And when at last her unkind spouse had gone to his reward the good woman was heard to say, "I ought to have been more patient

with him." So when "Aunt Steward" was left alone in want, it was the boys of the village who brought her firewood, and split and piled it up too. They would also start collecting money to help her out and many a time the poor woman would have suffered had not the youngsters looked after her needs.

Associated with Deacon Ingham in the postal service was his contemporary in the church, Deacon Amasa Graves. In his later years Deacon Graves lived at the Ingham house and carried the mail back and forth from the station to the Center. The two deacons thus represented as near a union of church and state as usually appears in a country town, and the fact that both wore stovepipe hats about their regular business unconsciously gave a dignity to the postal service which was somewhat unusual. Deacon Graves was the first man to carry the mail in a carriage, and his white horse and buggy and tall hat are well remembered by those who lived along the road to the station.

Another member of the Graves family, famous locally in his time, was Dwight Graves, who was an accomplished singer, player of the bass viol and leader of the choir of the Congregational Church. Though somewhat temperamental like most people who have the gift of song, and liable to offense when his efforts appeared not to be fully appreciated, he served very acceptably in various capacities in the choir of the Congregational Church for forty years.

One of the quaint characters of early days was "Aunt Betty" Pinney, doubtless the daughter of Deacon John Pinney. She was a tall gray-eyed spinster who lived alone the last twenty years of her life in a little house which stood opposite the cemetery. Though a tailoress by trade, she also made bedquilts and knitted stockings. She is said to have cut holes in her tablecloths so that visitors could see how skilfully she had mended them.

"Aunt Betty" was plain in speech and independent in thought and action. She used to say concerning her attendance at church that when she did not care much either way, she went to the Baptist Church which was near by; when she wanted to air her clothes she went to the Congregational Church, but when she wanted a down-right good meeting she went to the Methodist Chapel in the Den.

“Aunt Betty” once had a jackknife which John Spencer, a boy who lived near by, was allowed to take in his hand and admire. She told him one day that when she died he should have the knife. The boy had probably often seen the sexton digging graves in the cemetery. After hearing of the good fortune that was to come to him he was gone for a while, but returned to “Aunt Betty” and told her that he had dug her grave. Tradition says that the good woman was so pleased that she gave him the knife at once.

A well remembered resident of the village was “Aunt Sally Dickson,” the wife of the Methodist minister, enthusiastic in religion, and quaint and voluble in speech. If a minister had a ready flow of language and was an earnest preacher, she characterized him as having “wings.” Once when a candidate preached a rather lengthy sermon she observed “his crank is too long,” and the circulation of this saying no doubt had considerable influence in the decision not to choose him as a pastor. Once when some of the young folks were having supper at her house, and burned their mouths on her hot mince pie, she is remembered to have remarked, “Quite a comfortable pie.”

Living alone in her later years her originality manifested itself in a decorative way, and her parlor became a veritable museum of curiosities. There were hair flowers, and festoons of eggshells which were adorned with roses cut from wall paper and covered with a coat of varnish. Once when Orrin Pease was going by she rushed out to ask him to pull out some white hairs from his horse’s tail so that she could complete a false front she was making. It would have been interesting to hear Orrin’s remarks on this unusual incident.

The mention of Orrin Pease brings us to one of the last of the original characters of a type that is fast passing from rural New England. He was a bachelor who lived with his sister, Jane, a short distance north of the village on the old James Dickson farm. In his youth he was an active, dapper fellow, who fiddled for the country dances, but as he grew older he became less careful as to dress, allowing his hair and beard to grow as they would for long periods. In addition to his side lines of blacksmithing and cider making, Orrin discovered a demand for charcoal, and manufactured this product for some

years with considerable profit. As a farmer, however, he did not readily take up with new ideas. He would not use modern horse-rake with a seat, fearing that in case of a runaway he would not be able to extricate himself quickly enough; he preferred to walk behind the old-fashioned type of rake without wheels, lifting it by main strength at the windrows. He also refused to ride on a mowing machine, always walking behind the cutter bar.

Orrin was a well known figure among the wits who frequented the village store, and his droll remarks were always listened to with interest, and widely repeated. Upon returning from Chester after viewing a disastrous railroad wreck, he remarked in the course of his narration which he desired to make impressive: "It's a wonder that b'iler didn't blow up. Why, I've known them b'ilers, when there w'n't a drop of water in 'em, to bust and kill people for miles around." Not being one who was inspired by the beauties of nature, he could not understand the request of a citizen who enjoyed the view of the village from Pelton Hill and who asked his permission to cut down one or two trees in his wood lot which obstructed this view. "Want to see the Center do ye?" was his reply. "Well, if you want to see it, some day when you are over to the Center, why don't you look at it?"

The earliest anecdotes of Middlefield settlers tell of their experiences with wild animals with which they had to contend in trying to establish themselves in the forested hills and valleys. It was not necessary in those days to roam widely to encounter them. In order to have crops to harvest Solomon Ingham frequently had to get up in the night to drive the bears out of his garden. David Mack on the other hand, assumed the offensive and gained some reputation as a hunter. Once when he was in pursuit of a large deer in the deep snow, the animal, turning suddenly upon him, pressed his antlers against Mack's breast, at the same time planting his feet upon his snowshoes. In this perilous position David with difficulty drew his hunting knife and passed it across the deer's throat. The deer retaliated with a terrific blow of his hind hoof upon David's forehead, and both contestants sank unconscious to the ground. After an hour, however, David regained consciousness, with the thought that he

was dead, but soon realized that he was alive and that it was the deer which had succumbed in the encounter.

The names of certain localities within the township, such as "Bear Mountain," "Wildcat Ledge" and "The Den," certainly suggest that these places were once the haunts of unfriendly creatures, but only in the case of the last named have we a verification of the appropriateness of the name. "The Den Stream" is said to have received its name from an experience of Captain Thomas Ward. One evening when walking down toward the Jesse Wright place, a large black dog brushed past him on the narrow road. He paid no attention to this incident until two more black dogs brushed past him, when he concluded that they must be bears. This was verified the following day when the tracks of the animals were followed to the rocky hillside above the Den Stream north of the old Churchill place, where a den of black bears was discovered. Another version is that the stream was named from the discovery of a den of snakes in the same region, a number of snakes being found coiled together in a writhing mass.

A more thrilling experience, which must have occurred at an earlier date was that of John Gordon, who lived in what is now known as the Holcomb Hill region, just south of the Middlefield line. He had been in "the Den" one cool autumn day, helping a neighbor slaughter his hogs, and started home on horseback early in the evening, taking with him a torch from the fire. He had not gone far when he was attacked by a pack of wolves. He kept them off for a time with his torch. Finally thinking to get rid of them once for all, he detached from his saddle a large piece of fresh meat, and threw it to the ravenous creatures. There was a moment's respite while the pack were snarling over this tidbit, but this only whetted their appetites and they were soon snapping at his horses flanks more savagely than ever. For nearly two miles he kept the animals at bay with his torch while he encouraged his horse up the hillside trail, reaching the house in safety just as his steed sank exhausted at the door.

The days of "raisings" furnish a number of anecdotes, most of which seem to be connected with the drinking customs of those days. Probably the general use of liquor on such occasions, which was furnished free, gave rise to unusual incidents

the narration of which under the circumstances would be given wide circulation. That the raising of a building in the old-fashioned way was not unattended with danger is indicated by the death of Alpheus Russell, one of the early builders, in the raising of his own barn. There is no reason to suppose that he was the workman, who after having helped himself too liberally to stimulants, shouted, "See me walk on the dildin" as he attempted unsuccessfully to walk aloft on a top beam. Whoever he was, his fatal ending has been handed down as a horrible example of the evils of intemperance, against which Deacon Alexander Ingham started his vigorous campaign about 1830.

An incident which is no doubt typical of the merrymaking at "raisings" occurred at the erection of the house of William Church on the West Hill in 1834. Young Alexander Dickson, a nephew of Mr. Church, and later a Methodist minister, was just riding up on horseback with a jug of spirits to replenish the depleted supply, when a sportive youth from Washington also on horseback, at an opportune moment seized the jug and dashed up the road toward his native heath. Alexander pursued in haste and the level stretch along the West Hill ridge saw as furious a race as ever took place on the Cattle Show grounds. The Washingtonian was overtaken and the riders raced back to the starting point amid the applause of the interested crowd when they saw that the brown jug had been recaptured by its Middlefield owner. Such exploits as these, no doubt, enabled Dickson about twenty years later to discharge efficiently his duties as official dispenser of spiritous liquors for medicinal purposes during a brief period of state prohibition. A former prominent Middlefield resident recalls his impressions of this same occasion as a small boy. It seems that he followed the example of his elders in the use of liquid refreshments for on his homeward walk down the West Hill the "thank-you-ma'ams" rose in front of him to such an extent that he thought he was going up hill instead of down. When he finally reached home his parents were mystified at his actions and condition until vomiting revealed the source of the disturbance.

An incident which is told in connection with the raising of Deacon Newton's barn on the north road occurred at a much earlier date. Among those who attended were John Pinney,

sometimes called "Deacon," and his neighbors, Captain John Ward and Andrew Meacham. The "Deacon," being one who was easily overcome by liquor, was often a victim of the jokes of his sport-loving neighbors. As the "raising" progressed Meacham and Ward watched with amusement Mr. Pinney as he sampled the liquid refreshments from time to time, as they expected to have some fun at his expense, and were somewhat disappointed to find when the work was over that he had disappeared. As they were leisurely returning home, Meacham on horseback and Captain Ward on foot, they came upon Pinney lying by the roadside apparently the worse for his indulgence of the afternoon. Being unable to walk or even stand, the "Deacon" was lifted onto Meacham's horse, and with Meacham on behind to steady him and Ward leading the animal, they proceeded slowly toward Pinney's home, passing their own dwellings on the way. As they drew up to the doorstep, the "Deacon" straightening himself, suddenly slid gracefully from the horse, and remarked with huge enjoyment, "There boys, you're a couple of cussed fools."

As a result of the state laws regarding military training in force during the early part of the last century, "training days" occurred at stated periods. On these occasions certain citizens who were officers in the militia appeared in uniform and put their friends and neighbors through the drill. Among the officers remembered are Captain Orrin Millard, Lieutenant Milton Ingham and Ensign John Ward. David Mack, Jr., who was a major in the Massachusetts troops during the War of 1812, became a general of militia, and directed tactics on a larger scale in other localities. The music for the drill was furnished by a fife and kettle drum, the latter being played at one time by Warren Wheeler. At least twice the Center resounded with the din of a sham battle, events which elicited from the small boys much admiration and patriotic enthusiasm, and caused as much excitement as the more serious military maneuvering of Shays' Rebellion.

The muster ground, located just north of the meetinghouse, was sold to the town by Oliver Blush as early as 1793 when the only buildings at the Center were the meetinghouse and Blush's Tavern. Blush certainly lost nothing by this step. This land

with its generous outcropping of bed rock was worthless for any other purpose, and its proximity to the tavern gave his bar a monopoly of the patronage of the town's people in the general jollification which took place after the drill was over. To at least one of the older generation the remembrance of the delicious smell, and perhaps the taste, of the toddy served on these occasions lingered vividly into the twentieth century.

Before the time when overseers were appointed to look after the poor, it was the custom to auction off the support of town paupers to the lowest bidder at town meeting. Although the lowest bidder gave a bond to the selectman for proper care of the poor, this practice was open to abuse, as it was a temptation to make the low bid yield an undue profit at the expense of the unfortunates. The poor are pictured as attending the meetings and shivering with apprehension during the bidding as their comfort for the coming year was largely dependent upon the character and disposition of the low bidder. Sometimes, however, the winner got the worst of it as in the case of Uncle Runey Matoon of Washington, a man of generous disposition, who had charge of the poor one year. His remark that the town charges had had "a devilish good living" indicated that the care he had given them was not recompensed by the low bid he had made.

There was one unusual problem concerning the town poor which required the exercise of inter-town diplomacy. Among the dependents of Middlefield was Betty Crowell, daughter of a pioneer who lived on the West Hill, while in Washington lived an old friend of Betty, Russell West, a former resident of Middlefield, now a town charge. It was their desire to get married, and in the usual course of events this would have removed one dependent from Middlefield and added one to Washington. As the latter town objected to this, the town of Middlefield agreed to support the indigent couple for six months of the year, and the course of true love was permitted to "run smooth."

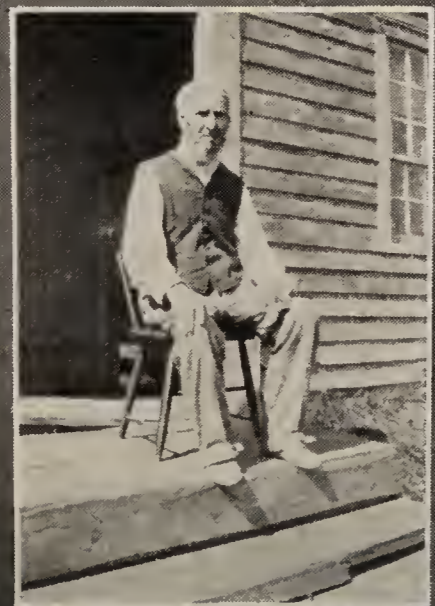
Johnnycake Hill has been mentioned a number of times without any explanation of the origin of such a peculiar name. This name was first applied to the steep western slope of the central ridge down which ran the old Becket road leading from Blossom's Tavern by Loveland's gristmill on Factory Brook. The destruction of the gristmill by the flood of 1874 and the burning

of the Loveland homestead on the maple-sheltered side road, caused this highway to be abandoned, leaving none on the hillside to tell how this old thoroughfare came to be called "The Johnnycake Hill Road."

One story, which has been confirmed from several sources, runs as follows: At one time when there were a number of farmers in that region working on the road for a few days, there was one of the men who always went off by himself to eat his lunch. This action stimulated the curiosity of the others to such an extent that at a convenient opportunity they investigated his dinner pail and found that it contained only johnnycake. This caused so much amusement that the name has clung to the locality, though to-day it is more generally applied to the bare, rounded eminence at the top of the ridge past which the road originally ran.

In the good-natured, social intercourse which characterized the industrial life in Factory Village, many must have been the pleasantries arising out of the clash of different nationalities and personalities, yet but few anecdotes of this kind have been preserved. The general contentment of the employees was no doubt due to the less agreeable conditions of existence in the countries from which they had recently emigrated. The absence of records of criminal offenses and general quarrelsomeness makes it seem likely that wherever ill-will arose, it rarely passed beyond violent language and practical joking.

At one time Job Robbins was keeper of the old boarding-house in the upper village. In his daily round of duties Job was accustomed to cross a footbridge over Factory Brook to fetch drinking water from a spring, but one day when he was returning with a full pail in each hand, one of the wooden cross boards of the bridge gave away, precipitating the surprised water-carrier into the shallow but icy stream below. As Robbins had incurred the displeasure of "Captain" Brackett, one of his boarders, it was generally concluded that the "Captain" or some of his friends, had been at some pains to loosen the support of the board just enough so that it would succumb only under the extra weight of the water carried by Robbins on his return trip across the bridge. The fact that Brackett happened to be passing just as the accident occurred and appeared to show



MISS MARY LEACH
ALBERT GORDON



THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH
JOSEPH BENNETT



JACOB ROBBINS
LYMAN CHURCHILL

undue surprise rather gave strength to the idea that he somehow had something to do with the affair.

It was perhaps natural that after the flood the people in the "Hollow" should be a bit nervous about the recurrence of any such disaster. One day during the long process of rebuilding the dam, a workman strolled into Church brothers' store and told about the giving away of a certain portion of the embankment. This so fired the imagination of George Suriner who lived in the lower village that without further inquiry he started on a head-long run down the road and across the bridge, shouting, "Dam's gone again, Dam's gone again," whenever he saw anyone. It is presumed that those who heard him kept on high ground until the predicted flood failed to materialize, and felt themselves victims of a joke. When they heard the whole story and learned that Suriner had continued on his mad career all the way to his home near Leach's gristmill they concluded that the joke was on him rather than on them.

Daniel Leach, who once owned the saw and gristmills on Factory Brook, was a victim of consumption, but being of a stubborn disposition was determined not to die. However, to his surprise no doubt, he succumbed, after a ride on horseback through the street at Jehu-like speed, a daily practice which he fancied would lengthen his days. Mr. Leach married for his second wife Fanny Wolcott, a distant relative of Governor Wolcott of Connecticut. Of her a prominent citizen once wrote, "Fanny was a tailoress and the writer has never had a very kindly remembrance of her, she being the architect of several misfit garments, which under circumstances beyond his control, he was once a week obliged to exhibit in the sanctuary much to his disgust and mortification."

One of the interesting characters of the lower village was Daniel Leach's son, Hiram, who carried on his father's mills for some years, but retired from active life earlier than was usually the custom for Middlefield citizens. Some said he was lazy, while others attributed his inactivity to ill-health. But probably his cider mill furnished him with sufficient income to keep him in comfort in the old Simeon Wood house to which he and his sister, Mary, retired. He was a great reader, sitting up far into the night with his books. He was also mathematical and

exact in his accounts, placing a monetary value on the most insignificant of his activities whether for himself or for other people.

In some way Hiram Leach came to a disagreement about some financial transaction with a certain neighbor. Unfortunately this neighbor had to pass the Leach house every day and all too frequently when he stopped at the watering trough below Hiram's on his return trip to the Center, he would find his accuser there with his usual question, "Why don't you pay me what you owe me," followed by others in similar vein as he walked along beside the slow moving vehicle for nearly half a mile. As this went on for some time without any settlement of the dispute, it seemed to outsiders that Hiram was getting his money's worth in thus tormenting the gentleman and was receiving the benefit of some needed physical exercise at the same time.

The traditional shrewdness of the Yankee appears in the remarks of Daniel Leach, Jr., who went to Ohio, following the death of his mother and his father's second marriage in 1830. In May, 1832, he wrote from Bainbridge saying that he made seventy dollars on the purchase of fifteen cows from the Dutch. "Cows never was known so high on the Reserve as now,—and the Dutch sell cow just as cow, not knowing that they are rising." A year or two later there was a demand for apples and he offered to buy a thousand bushels of dried apples from his Middlefield relatives, giving horses in exchange. In 1835 he made thirteen dollars a day for eighteen days in the cheese business, but the following year, this article was a drug on the market, and he lost money on a trip to the south, also contracting illness from which he died upon his return.

One of the drawbacks to emigration to Ohio seems to have been the climate. The lowness of the lands was for the first year or two, an unwelcome change from the higher and drier hills and ague and rheumatism flourished. From Aurora the report came in 1832 that "health in this section of the country as a general thing has been very poor; a great many people are complaining."

Town politics in Middlefield, with its various factions and the rise and fall of leaders, exhibited on a small scale the characteristics of politics in general. So long as the Baptist and

Congregational Societies flourished, their members had a traditional antagonism to one another long after the bitterness engendered by early theological differences had disappeared. Many minor circumstances, such as an intermarriage of members of opposing groups or the sudden switch of a prominent leader from one society to the other as the result of some quarrel, arose to cause the balance of power to shift from time to time, but the fundamental cleavage still remained for many years.

In Congregational circles the Church brothers with the backing of their factory employees and the business connections established through their store exerted a large influence, though they followed the well-considered policy of business men in not becoming personally active in managing town affairs. None of them ever held the office of selectman. As they were the heaviest tax-payers of the town, at one time paying more than one half the total assessment, they naturally advocated the election of men who would listen to their counsels, and the continued service of John L. Bell, Morgan Pease and Hiram Taylor as selectmen was to some extent due to their influence. Oliver Church was the leading politician of the Church brothers, and he was generally on hand at caucuses and elections with slips of paper containing the names of the favored candidates for voters who had not made up their minds on the subject.

The Smiths, Roots, Wrights and Aldermans formed the nucleus of the Baptist Church. In later years the opinions of Metcalf J. Smith were often sought after, and he was the nominal leader in many campaigns. Broadly educated, he fought hard for increased appropriations and better management for the schools and the library, encountering much partisan opposition, but leaving a marked impress on these institutions. Two prominent citizens waged a strong fight against appropriations for the library, especially when it was proposed to use the revenue from the Dog Tax for that purpose. The vote at one meeting on this question was a tie, but the moderator, Matthew Smith, cast the deciding vote in the affirmative. It is interesting to note that the two vigorous opponents to the appropriations for the library were in after years among the most diligent patrons of that institution.

The numerous Pease family and their followers formed another influential group which acted more independently of religious

affiliations than either the Churches or the Smiths. When allied with the former they could command many votes, but there were times when the Blush Hollow contingent, arriving in full force at the critical moment of a town caucus, would upset their plans. Arnold Pease, Morgan Pease and Asher Pease all had their turn at controlling town policies, and while their opponents may have considered some of their methods at times too dictatorial, they could be depended upon to give the town a good business administration.

Town meetings had their pleasantries as well as their serious business. In the early days Jim Dickson was always on hand to oppose anything that his nephew, 'Riah Church, had to propose. Spencer Knox is remembered as one who had much to say, usually on the unpopular side of any question. It was an annual performance for Orrin Pease to rise and nominate Deacon Ingham for pound keeper, after which some newly married citizen would be chosen for this office.

For many years Hiram Taylor was a bachelor,—due largely, it was thought, to his mother's influence,—and he was the subject of much joking on this point. At one time he made an elaborate speech in town meeting protesting against the high taxes for school purposes. When he had finished, Matthew Smith jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "Well, Mr. Moderator, Mr. Taylor says that he hasn't a chick nor a child. I hope he doesn't blame the town for that!"

With his natural aptitude for public affairs, Henry Hawes would have achieved eminence in a broader field. As moderator in town meeting he presided with ease, dignity and impartiality, relieving with timely jokes the tense situations created by harsh criticisms and heated debates. One of the most amusing incidents on record occurred during the election of officers at one annual March meeting. On this occasion an esteemed citizen, after having voted early in the day, later in a moment of pre-occupation deposited a second ballot in the box and had returned to his seat before the checkers were aware of the error. Henry Hawes, the moderator, upon being advised of the matter, made it known in a tactful manner, without giving the name of the offender, and asked what was the pleasure of the citizens upon this unusual situation. Instantly the name was requested, but

the moderator politely yet firmly refused to give it. Finally Ambrose Newton rose and sternly demanded that the name be given, putting his request in the form of a motion, so that the moderator reluctantly had to yield to the will of the meeting. "The man is Ambrose Newton," calmly announced Mr. Hawes, and everyone was thunderstruck, none more so than Mr. Newton himself, who finally broke the dead silence by rising again, and in a much less peremptory manner than before apologizing profusely for his absentmindedness which made necessary the preparation of a whole new set of ballots.

It is a frequent observation that a very large percentage of the people who become successful in all departments of life in the cities are from the country. It has recently been stated² that the progress of every city comes from the energy, imagination and courage of two percent of the people, and that ninety-five percent of this two percent comes from the country. As Middlefield has been a town from which a very large number of people have gone out to make their fortunes it will be of interest to follow the careers of a few of these in the effort to determine how well their early training helped them to achieve success and what particular lines they followed.

One of the first to achieve prominence after leaving Middlefield was Azariah, son of the pioneer, Matthew Smith, whose example has been cited as typical of pioneers from western Massachusetts settling in New York State.³ Some of his Smith relatives from East Haddam, Connecticut had already emigrated to Onandaga County, when, preceded by his cousin, Calvin Smith from Middlefield, and with a winter term at Westfield Academy to supplement his district school learning, Azariah Smith started on horseback for Onandaga Hill in 1807 to become clerk in the store of his cousin. After a few months he opened a branch store in Manlius, New York, for John Meeker, a former Middlefield man, and became unusually successful in this line as well as later in the manufacturing of cotton goods. He returned in 1810 to marry Zilpha, the daughter of Deacon David Mack. Smith became widely known for his business capacity, integrity and public spirit, and was selected for many important

² *New Tasks for Old Churches*, p. 14 by Roger W. Babson.

³ *Expansion of New England* by Lois Kimball Matthews.

positions of trust. He was a presidential elector in 1824 and a member of the state assembly from 1838 to 1840. He was zealous in the cause of education, being a particularly generous supporter of Manlius Academy, and at the time of his death a trustee of Hamilton College and of Auburn Theological Seminary.

Among the distinguished descendants of Middlefield emigrants to New York State was the late Andrew Dickson White, author, educator and diplomat, the first president of Cornell University, and United States Minister to Berlin. In his autobiography he describes his grandfather, Andrew Dickson, who left Middlefield as a young man about 1800 and became a prosperous business man in Cortland, New York. He was known as "Colonel" and "Squire," and was representative of his county to the state legislature. He was an ardent Democrat, taking his practical creed from Thomas Jefferson, and admiring Andrew Jackson, while his son-in-law, Mr. White's father, was an adherent of Henry Clay and Alexander Hamilton. "My grandfather," says Mr. White, "loved the Hampshire Hills of Massachusetts from which he came. Year after year he took long journeys to visit them." This was, no doubt, to visit his parents who were up to the time of his death, in 1835, living on the old homestead near the Robbins farm. Mr. White says, "When I was ten years old I saw my great-grandfather (John Dickson) at Middlefield, eighty-two years of age, sturdy and vigorous; he had mowed a broad field the day before, and walked four miles to church the day after."

Several families in which business talent was conspicuous were the Durants, Newtons, Macks, McElwains and Hamiltons. William Durant was a prominent merchant in Albany, while his brother, Clark Durant followed the example of his brother in Albany and New York City. William Newton and John Newton built up a merchandizing and milling business in these same cities. Here also their nephew, John Andrew Newton learned the milling business, and then developed an enterprise of his own in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. His son, William Newton, following the family tradition, is now president of Haskins and Brothers, soap makers, in Omaha, Nebraska.

In the Mack family General David Mack continued in Amherst the successful store business he developed in Middlefield, and

also carried on the manufacture of straw hats. His son, Samuel Mack, was a merchant in St. Louis. In another branch of the Mack family, Elisha H. Mack is a prominent dry goods merchant in Erie, Pennsylvania. The late Amos P. Mack was president of the Rochester Machine Tool Company, Rochester, New York. In the McElwain family, John Smith McElwain, his son, Henry E. McElwain, and R. Franklin McElwain, son of Oliver McElwain have been prominent executives in the paper industry in Holyoke. In Springfield, Edwin McElwain was treasurer of Kibbe Brothers, candy manufacturers, which position is now held by his son, Charles C. McElwain.

The merchandising instinct in the David Hamilton family was first shown by David himself, who at times left his farm in charge of his sons and took trips about the country selling "Hamilton Bitters," a preparation of aloes, salts of wormwood, castile soap, etc., of his own compounding for which he claimed a superior efficacy. Of his six sons, Clark Thomas was a prominent physician in Brooklyn, New York, while Henry Leland was a Baptist minister in Georgia, and a large land owner. Franklin David spent most of his life in the oil fields of Pennsylvania where he at times had large interests. With their practical experience gained on the home farm, John Meacham and Charles Wesley engaged in the lumber business chiefly at Rantoul, Illinois, while Cutler Ebenezer, after following mercantile pursuits in Brooklyn, New York, and the lumber business at Penfield, Illinois, joined his brothers at Rantoul where he engaged in the hardware and insurance lines.

To mention a few others, Edmund P. Morgan, though not a native, as a merchant in Cleveland, Ohio, demonstrated the business capacity which he first displayed as partner of General Mack in Middlefield. Russell Mack Little became president of the Glens Falls Insurance Company at Glens Falls, New York. Franklin Smith was a merchant and manufacturer at Hazardville, Connecticut. In later years John W. Crane, Alfred S. Crane and Charles H. Alderman have been prominent in the real estate business in Springfield.

A number of Middlefield's sons or their descendants have reached executive positions through technical and professional training. Of those who have graduated from the Worcester

Polytechnic Institute, Louis C. Smith is a member of the firm of Heard, Smith and Tennant, patent lawyers, in Boston. Clayton O. Smith is with the Baldwin Chain Company, Worcester. Clarence E. Alderman, formerly engineer with Norcross Brothers, is now an expert estimator for the War Department in Washington, D. C. George Alderman is chief draftsman for the United Shoe Machinery Company, at Beverly. Percy C. Smith, grandson of Samuel Smith, Jr., but not a native of Middlefield, is in the legal department of the Western Electric Company of New York City. Edward Church Smith, a graduate of Amherst College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a chemist with the National Carbon Company, Fremont, Ohio. Of those who have graduated from the Massachusetts Agricultural College, Bernard H. Smith is chief chemist for the Virginia Dare Extract Company in New York City; Samuel E. Smith is at Ward Farm, Westboro; Richard Waite is superintendent of a farm in Williamstown.

Middlefield has sent many of her sons into the learned professions. Among students of theology have been Rev. Alvan Nash of Yale College who was a pastor in Ohio; Rev. Lyman Coleman, D.D. of Williams College, professor in Lafayette College; Rev. William Crowell, D.D. of Brown University, Editor in Boston and St. Louis; Rev. Judson Smith, D.D. of Amherst College, Professor at Oberlin and later Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; Rev. Gerald B. Smith, D.D., Editor of the *Journal of Religion* and Professor at the University of Chicago. Others who became ministers were Ebenezer Brown and John C. Martin, under the Methodist denomination, and Warren Little and Charles Pease.

Middlefield has been well represented in the missionary field. Rev. Samuel Ingham served at the Dacotah Mission where he died in the midst of a great work. Miss Mary A. Rockwood went as a teacher to the Toungoo Mission in Burmah, and also fell a victim to her labors. Azariah Smith, son of Azariah Smith who went to Manlius, New York, was a medical missionary under the American Board, serving at Ezerroom in Asia Minor and at Aintab in Syria.

In the home missionary field the story of Rev. Samuel Bissell is of interest. Among the Bissell families who emigrated to

Ohio about 1806 was that of Robert Bissell, who had come to Middlefield with his brothers when quite young. There he married Thankful Cheeseman who had similarly come to town with her brothers after being left an orphan when six years old. Being thus early accustomed to frontier conditions they were well fitted to repeat the experiences in Ohio. After the forty day journey from Middlefield to Mantua, Ohio, Bissell, being a carpenter, left his family to roll up a log cabin one mile west of Aurora, covering the roof with bark. When the family moved in there was no chimney or fireplace, and a plank floor only in the corner where the beds stood. Here mother and children stayed while Mr. Bissell was away at his trade. One night they heard an animal brushing against the cabin and the next morning they found bear's hair on the log wall. Here amid wild beasts, without meat, vegetables, butter or milk, having only bread and a jug of molasses brought from Middlefield, they began their new life in the Western Reserve.

It was in this environment that Samuel Bissell, son of Robert Bissell, grew up. Having to work hard and with no opportunity to go to school, he bought himself a slate and studied arithmetic at home. Later he studied with Mr. Seward, the minister at Aurora; then with thirty-three dollars and a horse he returned east to Hartford to study for the ministry. After completing his course he returned home and decided to help the cause of education in his state which was at a low ebb. Having obtained from Moses Eggleston, who was also an emigrant from Middlefield to Ohio, permission to cut ten cords of wood on his land, he hauled it to what was known as 'the old academy' and announced that on a certain day school would commence, with a tuition of two dollars a week for a course of twelve weeks. As money was scarce, he said, "You may pay me anything you please, and when you please, and nothing at all if you don't please." The school prospered, several pupils preparing for college there.

Moving to Twinsburg in 1828 to accept the pastorate of the Presbyterian Church, he built a log schoolhouse next to the log church and began teaching. This became later the Twinsburg Institute. He went to Edinburg in 1838 and started a school there, but returned to Twinsburg to the Second Presbyterian

Church and built up the Institute to over three hundred members including Indians of seven tribes, some of whom became teachers and missionaries. Through his long life of ninety-eight years he did a great work with little means and with great personal sacrifice. "But minds were quickened, new purposes brought to life, and currents of thought and action started that can be terminated only by the end of time."

In law Elisha Mack, son of David Mack, became a lawyer and judge of excellent reputation and his nephew David studied law with him but afterward became a successful teacher, commanding the highest esteem for his ability and his worth.

Possibly it is in the field of teaching that the children of Middlefield have made their most notable contribution to the world's progress. In 1859 after four years of college teaching, Metcalf J. Smith became principal of Lewiston Academy in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. Here he had a number of Middlefield young people as members of his teaching force, including besides his brothers Azariah and Edward, his cousin, Cynthia Smith, and also Elma Meacham, the daughter of Parsons Meacham who was an early emigrant from Middlefield to Cato, New York.

Edward Payson Smith, who graduated at Amherst College, was professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute for many years. Another son of Samuel Smith was the late Azariah Smith of Brookline. After becoming a successful teacher he filled a place of responsibility with Houghton, Mifflin and Company of Boston. He was selected to write the memorial poem for the Middlefield Centennial exercises in 1883.⁴ In 1901 he wrote a poem for the Old Home Week celebration which is worthy of preservation.

"The strength of the hills is His" indeed,
So vast, so high, so sure;
And Middlefield hills are strong and rich
In blessings that endure.

"Thro' storms and ages they stand fast;
And when fierce Summer burns
Their forests glad with countless birds,
And sweet with shrubs and ferns.

⁴ *A Memorial of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of Middlefield*, page 50.

“How wide the prospect they reveal;
How swells the heart to view
The vast horizon’s mighty sweep
From Greylock to Ballou.

“Does earth afford a sweeter note
Than when in woodland hush
Pours forth the clear, supernal strain
Of saintly hermit thrush?

“How musical the Springtime’s air
And days on Summer’s brink,
With robin, bluebird, oriole,
And gleeful bobolink.

“Morn issues from her Eastern gates
And floods the world with gold
As when our fathers trod these hills
In days and ways of old.

“The sky, the clouds, the nightly stars
Are now the same as when
The air first poured from Heaven’s urn
As perfect now as then.

“Yet how the noiseless wand of time
Has changed the human scene;
The generations swift have passed
As tho’ they scarce had been.

“Brave souls, kind hearts, the tried and true
Have sanctified these hills.
As their rich memories throng the mind
Glad gratitude full fills.

“The spirit of their priceless lives,
The rich inheritance
Of faith and courage, hope and love,
That blessed their sure advance.

“And we to-day with glad, bowed hearts,
As o’er the past we range
Give thanks for all the countless joys
That live throughout all change.

“For through all change the viewless hand
Doth careful reckoning take;
‘The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make.’ ”

Another son of Middlefield who has won distinction is Professor Azariah S. Root, who was graduated from Oberlin in 1884 and has been librarian of that college since 1887. He stands at the head of his profession and has been president of the American Library Association.

Probably the most widely known son of Middlefield was Edward King, journalist, novelist and poet, who was born at the home of his grandfather, Obadiah Smith, in 1848. After the strange disappearance of his father, a clergyman, his mother married Samuel W. Fisher, and they kept a school of high standing in Huntington where Edward received his education. At the age of sixteen he went to work as a reporter in Springfield, first for the *Union*, then for the *Republican*, which he represented at the Paris Exposition in 1867, at the age of nineteen. In 1870 he went into the service of the *Boston Journal*, reporting on foreign events which included the Franco-Prussian War, the Commune, and the Balkan War in 1877-78. His work both for this paper, and later for the *New York Telegram* was considered as valuable and entertaining as any sent from Europe. His quick intellect and pleasing manners gave him an entrée to some of the most attractive salons of Paris, and he became one of the most widely known Americans in Europe. Among his intimate friends was Henry M. Stanley. While on a trip through the south in 1873 he discovered George W. Cable, and was the means of bringing this author's works before the public. Several ambitious works of his own were in preparation at the time of his death in Brooklyn in 1896. His published works were: *My Paris* and *The Great South*, books of travel and description; *Songs of the Orient* and *Venetian Lover*, poems; and the novels, *The Gentle Savage* and *Joseph Salmonah*, the latter directed against the evils of the sweat shops on the east side of New York City. Probably his best known poems are *The Tsigane's Canzonet* and *A Woman's Execution*, which are included in Stedman's *Anthology of American Poetry*.

One of his poems, "Remember Him," was written about Abraham Lincoln.

REMEMBER HIM

“Out of the mellow West there came
A man who neither praise nor blame
Could guild or tarnish; one who rose

With fate-appointed swiftness far
 Above his friends, above his foes;
 Whose life shone like a splendid star
 To fill his people's hearts with flame—
 Who never sought for gold or fame,
 But gave himself without a price—
 A willing, humble sacrifice—
 An erring nation's Paschal lamb—
 The great, gaunt, patient Abraham.

“I never saw his wrinkled face,
 Where tears and smiles disputed place;
 I never touched his homely hand
 That seemed in benediction raised
 E'en when it emphasized command,
 That time the fires of battle blazed—
 The hand that signed the act of grace
 Which freed a wronged and tortured race,
 And yet I feel that he is mine—
 My country's; and that light divine
 Streams from the saintly oriflamme
 Of great, gaunt, patient Abraham.

“Majestic, sweet, was Washington;
 And Jefferson was like the sun—
 He glorified the simplest thing
 He touched; and Andrew Jackson seems
 The impress of a fiery king
 To leave upon us. These in dreams
 Are oft before us; but the one
 Whose vast work was so simply done—
 The Lincoln of our war-tried years—
 Had all our deepest love; in tears
 We chant the ‘In Memoriam’
 Of great, gaunt, patient Abraham.”

William Fuller Church was the “rolling stone” among the Church brothers. He went West and traveled much, being one of the party accompanying Mark Twain on that famous trip to the orient immortalized in *Innocents Abroad*. He was appointed by Governor Noyes as State Commissioner of Insurance for Ohio, where he conducted the department for several years with marked ability.

Several of the daughters of Middlefield have studied at seminaries and colleges for women, some entering the teaching

profession, among them Lucy Smith (Newton), Sarah Smith (Gardner), Sophia A. Smith (Burt), Kate Winifred Smith, Julia Mack (Harrington), Lorissa Loveland (Carpenter), Carolyn Church (McElwain), Mary Emmons Church, Julia Church (Smith), Susan Rockwood, Mary Rockwood, Myra Ward (Little), Sarah Ingham (Bonney), Martha Blush (Klyver), Helen Alderman, Ethel Pease.

Probably no daughter of Middlefield has reached a higher social position than Helen M. Smith, daughter of Matthew Smith, the founder of the Highland Agricultural Society. Having married Francis E. Warren, of Hinsdale, who went west to Wyoming, she rose with him as he became first governor of that state and later United States senator. In Washington she is remembered for her gracious hospitality. The marriage of their daughter, Frances, to Major John J. Pershing, was a brilliant event of the McKinley administration. The tragic death of Mrs. Pershing and three of the children in a fire at the Presidio of San Francisco just before the World War left the bereaved commander of the American forces in France with only one member of his family, his son, Warren Pershing.

The first two young men from Middlefield who took up the study of medicine and surgery, and who studied at about the same time, were Dr. Austin Church and Dr. Ebenezer Emmons. Dr. Church did not follow the practice of medicine, but turned his attention to the science of chemistry, in which he was an expert, and engaged in the manufacture of several articles of commerce which for their purity and excellence of preparation always found a ready market. He located in New York City and was a gentleman of acknowledged worth and was much esteemed by all who knew him.

Dr. Ebenezer Emmons practiced a short time in Chester, then removed to Williamstown, where he soon rose to eminence as a physician and surgeon. The case which first brought him into notoriety was unique. A little daughter of Major Sloane, who lived near the college, accidentally got a pin into her throat which all the older doctors in the vicinity failed to remove. The mother of the child insisted upon having young Dr. Emmons called. He modestly approached that august body of doctors and proposed the following plan of operation, which he successfully carried

out. He cut a piece of dry sponge of suitable size and tying a strong string to it, induced the little child to swallow it. After waiting a sufficient time for the sponge to become expanded by absorbing the juices of the stomach, he pulled steadily upon the string, and up came the pin, sticking in the piece of sponge. He was subsequently appointed tutor, then professor of chemistry and natural history in Williams College, his Alma Mater. He was very popular with the faculty and students, and especially so with the president of the college, Rev. Dr. Edward Griffin. He wrote several treatises on geology and published a class book in mineralogy, which for several years was used as a text-book in all or nearly all of our colleges. He also made a geological survey of several of the states of the Union. He removed from Williamstown to Albany, and spent some time in North Carolina. When the war broke out, he was not permitted to leave the south but was compelled to show the rebels how to make gunpowder to shoot the Yankees with.

Dr. Jefferson Church, a native of Middlefield, studied under Professor Tulley to whose theory and principles of practice he always enthusiastically adhered. Dr. Church, being of a literary turn of mind, edited and published the lectures of Professor Tulley. After practicing a short time in Peru he moved to Springfield where he carried on his profession for many years. He was a pronounced abolitionist and fearlessly upheld the anti-slavery cause.

One of the first, and possibly the most distinguished woman to go out from Middlefield was Dr. Cynthia Smith, the daughter of Orrin Smith. Fitting herself to be a physician, she practiced her profession in Rochester, New York, with much skill and with genuine interest in the well-being of her patients. She invented a surgical appliance of great value which might have brought her fame and fortune if it had been properly placed before the public. Her mental endowments gave her a keen appreciation of the beautiful in art and nature, and her unselfish devotion to her work and her deep religious convictions were a constant inspiration to the friends who mourned her death in 1887.

Another physician who, though a native of Becket, spent his boyhood days in Middlefield, was Frank Whittemore. He once remarked that "Middlefield was the most intelligent town in

Hampshire County about 1848 because of the number of keen witted and well educated people it contained." Dr. Whittemore studied medicine with Dr. Jefferson Church and elsewhere, practiced in New York City, in Connecticut, and for twenty-five years was a specialist in chronic diseases at Clyde, Ohio, where he became quite famous and very successful. When he came to Middlefield, he lived first on the fine farm at the head of the Reservoir. Later he lived in Blush Hollow when Factory Village was a bustling hive of industry. He had attended a select school at the Center when that hamlet was a busy mart of trade.

Not many years ago, Dr. Whittemore, at the age of eighty, revisited Middlefield after an absence of more than fifty years. It was in the fall, and without notifying any of the townspeople, he drove over from Becket, passing Factory Village and through the Center to the James Church homestead. So changed was the character of the place with the disappearance of the Reservoir and the mills at Factory Village and with the absence of people on the roads that he could scarcely believe that it could be the thriving town in which he grew up. Setting out on foot to visit his old home at the head of the Reservoir he found that the flood of 1874 and the subsequent reversion of the region to a state of nature had so changed the aspect of things that it was only with much muscular effort and prolonged search that it was possible to locate the old house,—an overgrown pile of ruins being the only clue. He returned thoroughly exhausted to the Church house, then owned by William Bryan, and after refreshment he drove back to Becket without meeting a soul to inform him whether there was any citizen in town who might have remembered the aged doctor in the days of his youth.

Middlefield seems to have been supplied with a doctor during most of its existence up to 1870. The first ones were Bazaleel Wright, familiarly known as "Dr. Zela" for short, and Philip Jones, who lived in the region of Blossom's Tavern which was the earliest community of the town. Dr. William Coleman also moved to the tavern after first living east of the Center. When the Center began to develop in the '30's Dr. Joseph Warren built the house now owned by the Duggan family, where he practiced for many years. He is chiefly remembered by some for his big black horse which had a reputation for being very fierce.

Of another school was Dr. William E. Underwood, who practiced for some years about 1850. His office was the two-story building which once stood north of the Congregational Church, originally Solomon Root's button shop. Dr. Underwood was a "Thompsonian," a "botanical doctor" some styled him, ignoring ipecac and calomel, prescribing lobelia for emetics, and also "steaming remedy." Though looked down upon by the regular practitioners, he was singularly successful in the treatment of his patients. He practiced dentistry also. It is related of him that he extracted a tooth and filled and replaced it successfully. Some of the young folk of that day became quite friendly with Dr. Underwood, playing checkers with him in his office and being permitted to sniff his chloroform and wander in dreamland as a result.

The most popular physician Middlefield ever had was probably Dr. James Uriah Church, who after long study began practicing in New York City. Upon receiving a petition signed by no fewer than eighty-six men urging him to take up practice in Middlefield, he came back to his native town where he practiced for six years. Not only was he a faithful and successful physician, extending his ride into neighboring towns, but he was active in public affairs and an enthusiastic member of the Highland Agricultural Society. His sudden death by accident while driving down a steep hill in Peru was a great shock to all his fellow citizens.

Dr. Edwin C. Bidwell, a graduate of Yale, followed Dr. Church as physician in Middlefield, and proved himself a good physician and skillful surgeon. But being an honest doctor he sometimes did not deal out medicine in old time quantities. When medicine was not needed he would not give it; and this rendered him unpopular with certain people in town. When the Civil War broke out he was made an assistant surgeon, was promoted and served with distinction. Probably the last physician was Dr. Charles F. Starkweather, who did not remain long in town. He is characterized in "The Middlefield Alphabet"⁵ under the letter "P" as follows:

"Also for Physician, our beloved Starkweather,
Who prescribes for our ills and charges light as a feather,"

But whether this was said in praise or satire is not known.

⁵ See *Mack Genealogy*, page 1675.

Another resident of the town who should be mentioned here was the mother of the late Hiram Taylor, "Granny Taylor" as she was called. She was the midwife of the town and is remembered as a picturesque figure mounted on horseback with her saddlebags, riding in hot haste to accommodate her patrons.

A case of "treatment" which was not performed by any of the practitioners of medicine, is related by a former resident as follows: "It was said that sudden immersion in cold water would cure an insane person. The writer's father and others determined to try the experiment on Urbane Crowell, a man thus afflicted. To effect the object, men were placed at the ends of a large timber railing (of the bridge over the pond in the Hollow) with Urbane in the middle, the avowed intention being to turn the timber over into the pond: whilst Urbane was lifting with his might my father came quietly behind and easily thrust him head over heels into the water. He was soon rescued, but the devil had not vacated, but was somewhat enraged."

Dr. Elbridge G. Wheeler, who practiced many years in Becket, spent his last years in Factory Village. He is recalled by some as a good teacher in his early days, but is especially remembered by others because of his severe and strict discipline. One former pupil states: "When detected in breach of school rules the doctor would quietly approach the culprit, generally stroke his head, remarking that he was a nice boy, had a nice head of hair, then suddenly grasping him by the back hair and bringing him to his perpendicular which was preliminary to further discipline."

As in other places it was usually the custom for newly graduated scholars of the local schools to teach for a year or two whether or not this profession was to be adopted as a life work. It was regarded as a sort of test of good schooling that a graduate was able to teach acceptably, and it was in fact a valuable experience whatever work he eventually did. With the girls continually getting married and boys leaving town, the personnel of the teachers was constantly changing. Among those who made a more constant profession of teaching was Amos W. Cross, who taught in many of the districts, and was accounted a good educator. He was a strict disciplinarian. This gave him a reputation for being cruel in the excited imaginations of certain new

pupils in a district where he had not taught before, and the following jingle has been handed down from these old days:

“Cross by name and cross by nature,
 Cross to every human creature,
 I pray the Lord to take his breath
 Before he whips us all to death.”

It is safe to say that the exaggerated fears of the pupils were not borne out.

Deacon Harry Meacham, who achieved local fame through his long ride to warn the Blush Hollow residents of the approaching flood in 1874, is the only Middlefield man known to have been made the subject of a poem. It was written by Arthur Haskell, a resident of Peru, and was first printed in a Southbridge newspaper. Its quaintness and originality make it an interesting addition to the local folklore of the region.

“THE MIDDLEFIELD FLOOD”

“Good Deacon Meacham, aged and gray,
 Sat in his house on a Sabbath day
 Reading about Father Noah and his flood,
 And his great big ark of gopher wood.
 And he suddenly closed the sacred book
 And went to the window to take a look
 At the green old Middlefield hills and plains,
 He said to his wife, ‘I declare, how it rains,’
 And his good old wife also declared that she had
 Never seen such a shower in all her born days,
 Except when Noah went into the ark with all his worldly gains.

“So the deacon took down his oldest umbrel’
 And went out in the rain which in torrents fell,
 Soberly thinking of floods and disasters,
 Fearing the cows might get drowned in their pastures.
 For he knew that the reservoir down at the brook
 Was full to the brim, and had a serious look.
 So he hurried along, this venerable man,
 And stood on the top of the reservoir dam,
 And to his astonishment he saw that goose-pond
 Had broken loose and that the dammed waters were
 Rushing through the dam like a wild ram.

“So he hurried back in fearful alarm,
 Mounted old Dobbin that stood in the barn,

Not stopping for saddle, for spur or for goad
He shouted 'Get up here' and dashed down the road,
Down, down to Blush Hollow he fled like the wind
His hair and his coat-tails both streaming behind,
And his neighbors were shocked on that wet Sabbath day,
To see the good deacon go rushing that way,
For they concluded he must be mad or crazy, or at
Least something dreadful was to pay.

“But on flew the deacon, not stopping to hear
The roar of the waters most dreadfully near,
And the clatter of hoofs and the pant of his horse
Like a cavalry charge shook the earth in its course,
Till the folks of Blush Hollow stood breathless and pale
As the Deacon and Dobbin dashed into their vale,
For he warned them to 'get up and git' instantly
Both young and old, male and female.

“Like the roar of a hurricane on came the flood
With the crash of an avalanche through the tall wood,
It came roaring and sweeping with terrible might,
For mill, bridge and dwelling, unable to stand,
Were swept down the stream with flood-wood and sand,
But the warning of good Deacon Meacham that day
Saved the folks of Blush Hollow from swimming away.
And when he saw not a life was lost not even a pig's
He went home like a man, gave Dobbin some oats,
Took down his Bible and read some more about Noah and his flood,
And said to his wife, 'I declare, this is dreadful, let us pray.' ”