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SPEECH TO THE SENATE
SEPTEMBER 18, 1979

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MR. PRESIDENT. THE CITIZENS OF WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS CELEBRATE THEIR TOWN'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY ON SEPTEMBER 23. IT IS FITTING THAT WE COMMEMORATE THIS OCCASION IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

WESTFORD IS A TOWN THAT IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BEAUTY OF NEW ENGLAND. ANYONE WALKING THROUGH ITS STREETS, AS I HAVE DONE, IS IMPRESSED BY THE FINE OLD HOUSES AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBORHOODS. BUT PERHAPS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ASPECT OF WESTFORD IS ITS STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY. THE TOWN'S HUMAN RESOURCES ARE EVEN GREATER THAN THE PHYSICAL RESOURCES THERE.

THE TOWN OF WESTFORD IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE STRENGTH¹ OF MASSACHUSETTS. IT IS NOT THE QUANTITY OF MARKETABLE THINGS. THE STRENGTH OF MY STATE IS ITS QUALITY OF LIFE -- PRICELESS QUALITIES SUCH AS CLEAN AIR, OPEN SPACE, NATURAL BEAUTY AND HISTORICAL TRADITION. QUALITY OF LIFE INVOLVES THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, BUT IT ALSO DEPENDS ON THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT. THE CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY OF WESTFORD IS A FINE EXAMPLE OF THE HUMAN VALUES THAT MAKE MASSACHUSETTS² SPECIAL.

MR. PRESIDENT, WESTFORD IS A NEIGHBOR OF THE HISTORIC CITY OF LOWELL, WHERE I GREW UP AND CONTINUE TO LIVE. AS A NEIGHBOR WITH MANY FRIENDS IN WESTFORD, I AM PLEASED THAT MY COLLEAGUES HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT WESTFORD'S HISTORY. I AM INDEBTED TO THE WESTFORD 250TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE'S COMMEMORATIVE BOOK FOR MANY OF THE HISTORICAL DETAILS THAT FOLLOW.

WESTFORD'S PAST IS NOT DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE REGION'S OTHER RURAL TOWNS. NOR IS ITS PAST VASTLY DIFFERENT FROM ITS PRESENT.

THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF WESTFORD WERE THE PAWTUCKET, WAMESIT AND NASHOBA INDIANS. IN 1653, THE PLANTATION OF CHELMSFORD WAS GRANTED TO 39 PETITIONERS. EACH MAN CHOSE LAND TO CLEAR AND FARM. WHAT WAS KNOWN AS THE "WEST PRECINCT" OF CHELMSFORD BECAME A SEPARATE TOWNSHIP ON SEPTEMBER 23, 1729.

WESTFORD WAS A GROWING AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY. IN THE FIRST YEARS, ISSUES DECIDED AT THE YEARLY TOWN MEETINGS RAN FROM ESTABLISHING A BOUNTY TO BE PAID FOR KILLING SQUIRRELS, BLACKBIRDS, AND WOLVES TO THE PURCHASE OF A MEETING HOUSE BELL. BUDGET MATTERS INCLUDED A ONE POUND YEARLY SALARY TO THE ^{BELL-RINGER,} ~~BELLRINGER,~~ DISCUSSION OF WHETHER TO PAY FOR TOWN OFFICERS TO HAVE SUPPER AT THE TOWN MEETING (VOTED DOWN), AND MANY ITEMS RELATING TO CARING FOR WESTFORD'S POOR. THE TOWN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING FOOD AND CLOTHING FOR ANY RESIDENT IN NEED.

FORMING COMMITTEES WAS A MAJOR ACTIVITY. THERE WAS A "COMITY" TO STUDY THE FORMATION OF A NEW COUNTY, A "COMITY" TO MEET WITH ANOTHER COMMITTEE TO DECIDE IF WESTFORD SHOULD JOIN THE COUNTY ROAD, A "COMITY" TO FIND THE BOUNDARY OF THE FIRST BURYING GROUNDS, A "COMITY" TO BUILD A FENCE FOR THE BURYING GROUND WHEN THE BOUNDARY WAS FINALLY FOUND (AFTER TWO YEARS), A FISH COMMITTEE TO HELP FISH PASS THE DAMS BETWEEN THE MERRIMACK RIVER AND FORGE POND, AND OTHERS.

A SYSTEM OF SCHOOLING WAS ESTABLISHED. AT FIRST, SCHOOL WAS HELD IN PRIVATE HOUSES FOR A SHORT TIME DURING THE YEAR. EVENTUALLY, SCHOOL HOUSES WERE BUILT. AT TIMES ONE TEACHER WOULD ROTATE A MONTH AT ONE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL, THE NEXT MONTH AT ANOTHER.

THE FIRST IMMIGRANTS TO SETTLE IN WESTFORD PROBABLY WERE FROM NOVA SCOTIA. AFTER THE ENGLISH TOOK POSSESSION OF NOVA SCOTIA, THEY REQUIRED ALL THE FRENCH CATHOLIC INHABITANTS TO TAKE AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE. WHEN THESE ARCADIANs REFUSED TO COMPLY THEY WERE EXPELLED. MANY WERE SENT TO FRANCE AND THE BRITISH COLONIES, INCLUDING MASSACHUSETTS. A GROUP OF THEM BECAME INHABITANTS OF WESTFORD.

RESIDENTS OF WESTFORD STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE STRUGGLE FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE. IN 1756 WESTFORD CITIZENS PUT THEIR PROTEST ^{of the Stamp Act} ON RECORD AT THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING. IN 1770 THE TOWN VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO BOYCOTT BRITISH GOODS. IN 1773, A "COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE" WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE COMMUNICATION AMONG THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS. THE NEXT YEAR THE TOWN VOTED TO BOYCOTT TEA UNTIL THE TAX ON IT WAS REPEALED.

THREE COMPANIES OF MINUTEMEN FROM WESTFORD FOUGHT THE REDCOATS AT CONCORD ON APRIL 19, 1775. AS THE REVOLUTION PROGRESSED, THE PEOPLE OF WESTFORD PARTICIPATED NOT ONLY IN MILITARY ACTIONS, BUT ALSO IN GOVERNMENTAL DELIBERATIONS. IN 1778⁸ WESTFORD INSTRUCTED ITS REPRESENTATIVE TO CONGRESS VOTE FOR THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION.

AFTER THE WAR WAS WON, HARD TIMES CONTINUED. MANY FAMILIES WERE BROKEN; MANY FACED POVERTY. BUT LIFE IN WESTFORD WENT ON, AND SLOWLY CONDITIONS IMPROVED. BY 1792, CITIZENS WERE READY TO TAKE ON A NEW PROJECT. THEY RAISED MONEY TO BUILD WESTFORD ACADEMY. (THE ACADEMY BUILDING, WHICH STILL STANDS, IS BEING REMODELED TO SERVE AS THE FUTURE HOME OF THE WESTFORD MUSEUM.) THE BASIC CURRICULUM INCLUDED ENGLISH, LATIN, GREEK, WRITING AND ARITHM^EMATIC. THEN THEY BUILT A LIBRARY.

THE TOWN WORK FARM WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE EARLY 1800s. CITIZENS DECIDED THAT ONE WAY TO CARE FOR THE SICK AND THE NEEDY WAS TO ESTABLISH A FARM WHERE RESIDENTS COULD LIVE AND WORK. THE FARM WAS PURCHASED ALONG WITH TOOLS, PROVISIONS, AND FURNITURE. A "MASTER AND MISTRESS" WAS CHOSEN AND A BOARD OF OVERSEERS SELECTED. THE WORK FARM WAS IN OPERATION ^{EP} UNTIL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS SUCH AS WELFARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY CAME INTO EFFECT.

ONE OF WESTFORD'S MOST IMPORTANT AND BEST KNOWN BUSINESSES -- GRANITE QUARRYING -- STARTED IN THE EARLY 1800s. LARGE, LOOSE BOULDERS WERE SOLD. IN THE 1820s, ISAAC CARKIN OPENED THE FIRST QUARRY AND WAS SOON FOLLOWED BY MANY OTHERS. THE GRANITE WAS HAULED BY TEAMS OF HORSES OR OXEN AND LOADED ON TRAINS AT SPECIAL SITES TO BE TRANSPORTED TO OTHER AREAS OF MASSACHUSETTS AND TO PLACES AS FAR AWAY AS NEW YORK, CHICAGO, NEW ORLEANS, AND WASHINGTON, D. C. FANEUIL HALL, CONCORD'S MINUTEMAN STATUE, BUILDINGS IN WASHINGTON, D. C. (INCLUDING A WING OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE AND THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT), AND OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST INCLUDE WESTFORD GRANITE IN THE CONSTRUCTION.

IN THE 1860s, WESTFORD WAS AGAIN FACED WITH WAR -- THE CIVIL WAR. SOME ENLISTED; OTHERS WERE DRAFTED. THE WOMEN OF WESTFORD WERE MAKING THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WAR, TOO.

ONE WAY OF DOING THIS WAS TO JOIN THE SOLDIERS' AID SOCIETY. THEY PROVIDED SUCH ITEMS AS FLANNEL SHIRTS, "DRAWERS AND SOCKS," TOWELS, PIN CUSHIONS, NEEDLES, BUTTONS, MITTENS, BANDAGES, POULTICES, FEATHER PILLOWS, HANDKERCHIEFS (454), "CUSHIONS FOR LIMBS," 440 POUNDS OF DRIED APPLES, 62 GALLONS OF PICKLES, ^{and} CURRANT WINE ~~AND MORE.~~

WHEN THE CIVIL WAR ENDED, SOLDIERS RETURNED TO A PROSPEROUS WESTFORD. INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE HAD DONE WELL DURING THE WAR YEARS. ~~NEW BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS~~ ^{improvements soon} ~~TO EXISTING BUILDINGS~~ WERE ~~SOON~~ KEEPING THE TOWN BUSY. THE MAJOR BUILDING CONSTRUCTED DURING THIS PERIOD WAS THE TOWN HALL THAT STANDS TODAY.

OVER THE YEARS, WESTFORD DEVELOPED MANY SMALL BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES. ^{been businesses} ~~THERE WERE SAWMILLS, BLACKSMITHS, TANNERIES AND OTHER SERVICES FROM THE EARLY DAYS.~~ BRICKMAKING, POTTERY MAKING, A HORSE NAIL COMPANY, CURTAIN MAKING AND MINK FARMING HAVE ~~TENDED TO BUSINESS~~ THERE AT VARIOUS TIMES.

IN 1854 CHARLES G. SARGENT CAME TO WESTFORD FROM LOWELL. HE AND FRANCES CALVERT BOUGHT A FARM AND GRIST MILL IN GRANITEVILLE AND CONVERTED THEM TO MANUFACTURE WOOLEN MACHINERY. WITHIN A YEAR THEY ^{had} ~~HAS~~ BEEN RAZED TO THE GROUND, BUT NEW BUILDINGS WERE ~~BUILT~~ ^{constructed.}

IN 1855, JOHN W. ABBOT, JOHN W. P. ABBOT, AND CHARLES SARGENT FORMED A PARTNERSHIP TO BECOME THE ABBOT WORSTED MILLS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF WORSTED YARNS FOR UPHOLSTERY GOODS. FIRE ~~ALSO~~ DESTROYED THE MILLS, ^{AND} THE BUSINESS CONTINUED IN HALF OF A LARGE STONE MILL WHICH NOW PRODUCED YARNS USED IN THE MANUFACTURE OF CARPETS. THEY CONTINUED TO EXPAND, SOON OCCUPYING ALL THE MILL AND THEN THE BUILDING THAT ONCE HOUSED THE FORGE VILLAGE HORSE NAIL COMPANY. THE FIRM CONTINUED TO GROW THROUGH THE YEARS. IN THE EARLY 1900S THE OWNERS PLANNED MAJOR EXPANSION BUT WERE UNABLE TO FIND SUFFICIENT HELP TO MEET THEIR GROWING NEEDS.

THEY SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO EUROPE AND MADE AGREEMENTS WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE TO EMIGRATE. THEY ADVANCED THE PRICE OF A TRAIN TICKET ACROSS EUROPE AND A BOAT TICKET TO NEW YORK'S ELLIS ISLAND. THERE THEY WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AND GIVEN SPECIAL TAGS THAT IDENTIFIED THEM AS DESTINED FOR THE MILLS OF WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS. MANY FRENCH CANADIANS ALSO TRAVELED TO THE AREA IN SEARCH OF WORK IN THE MILLS. THE WORKERS WERE SUPERVISED BY MEN FROM ENGLAND, IRELAND, AND SCOTLAND WHO WERE BROUGHT HERE FOR THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF SOCCER. IN THE TOWN MARRIAGE RECORDS FOR THE EARLY 1900S, THE PLACE OF BIRTH, IN MOST CASES, WAS LISTED AS RUSSIA, POLAND, ITALY, IRELAND, SCOTLAND, SWEDEN, OR QUEBEC. THE COMPANY BUILT HOUSES NEAR THE MILL AND RENTED SMALL APARTMENTS AT LOW RENTS TO THE IMMIGRANTS.

AT ONE TIME ABOUT HALF OF WESTFORD'S RESIDENTS WERE MILL WORKERS, BUT THE IMMIGRANTS WERE NOT READILY ACCEPTED INTO THE COMMUNITY. THEY WERE LOOKED DOWN UPON FOR THEIR ~~ALIEN~~ BIRTH. A DIVISION WAS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE AGRICULTURAL PART OF TOWN AND THE MILLS. FOR SOME YEARS OFFICIAL RECORDS OF MARRIAGES AND BIRTHS HAD SPECIAL NOTES DIVIDING THE NUMBERS INTO "AMERICANS" AND "FOREIGNERS".

WOMEN AND CHILDREN WORKED LONG HOURS BESIDE THE MEN IN THE MILLS. EVEN AFTER CHILD LABOR LAWS WERE PASSED, CHILDREN AS YOUNG AS ELEVEN WERE FOUND AT WORK THERE.

THE 1890s BROUGHT IMPROVEMENTS TO WESTFORD -- NEW SCHOOLS, ELECTRIC STREET LIGHTS AND AN ELECTRIC FIRE ALARM SYSTEM. AT ONE TIME IN THE 1900s, THERE WERE EIGHT TRAIN STATIONS FOR THREE SEPARATE RAILROAD LINES AND TWO TROLLEYS IN WESTFORD.

WESTFORD'S ECONOMY ALWAYS WAS BASED ON AGRICULTURE. PEACHES, BERRIES, AND OTHER SMALL FRUIT WERE GROWN, BUT APPLES WERE THE PRINCIPAL CROP. AGRICULTURE BEGAN TO DECLINE IN THE MID-1940s.

THE DEPRESSION WAS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT PERIODS OF WESTFORD HISTORY. IT LEFT MANY WITHOUT WORK OR ENOUGH MONEY. THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WELFARE WAS ESTABLISHED TO HELP SUPPORT FAMILIES IN NEED AND TO OVERSEE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

ESTABLISHED TO SUPPLY JOBS. JOBS WERE PROVIDED IN THE FORM OF BUILDING AND REPAIRING ROADS IN THE TOWN. OTHERS WORKED FOR THE PROJECT ^{that} WHICH CANNED AND DISTRIBUTED FOOD. YOUNG MEN BETWEEN 18 AND 25 WERE ABLE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT WITH THE CONSERVATION CORPS.

THE DEPRESSION DEALT THE FINAL BLOW TO THE GENERAL STORES IN TOWN. BEGINNING IN THE 1800s, THE GENERAL STORES HAD FURNISHED THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY. THEY SOLD EVERYTHING FROM FARMING TOOLS TO HOUSEHOLD GOODS, FOOD, SHOES AND BOOTS, AND NON-PRESCRIPTION DRUGS. THESE STORES WERE ALSO THE SOCIAL CENTERS OF TOWN. A CROWD WOULD ALWAYS BE GATHERED AROUND THE POT BELLIED STOVE FOR A LIVELY DISCUSSION OR ~~SIMPLE~~ SMALL TALK. AFTER WORLD WAR I, CHAIN STORES CAME INTO THE AREA. ALTHOUGH THEY DID NOT ALLOW CREDIT AS DID THE GENERAL STORES, THEY ^{had} ~~DID MAINTAIN~~ LOWER PRICES. DURING THE HARD TIMES OF THE DEPRESSION, PEOPLE NEEDED THE BARGAINS OF THE CHAIN STORES AND THE GENERAL STORES NEVER RECOVERED.

THE YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR II BROUGHT NEW LIFE TO THE TOWN IN THE FORM OF NEW HOUSING AND NEW PEOPLE. LOTS WERE SOLD IN 5000 SQUARE FOOT PARCELS AROUND THE NABNASSET POND. WHAT WAS ONCE FARMLAND BECAME HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS THROUGHOUT THE TOWN. SINCE THAT TIME THE POPULATION OF WESTFORD HAS STEADILY GROWN TO THE APPROXIMATELY 14,000 RESIDENTS OF TODAY.

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING NEWCOMERS TO TOWN IS THE "HAYSTACK OBSERVATORY." THIS ODD-LOOKING STRUCTURE IS A RADIO-ASTRONOMY OBSERVATORY -- USING RADIO WAVES TO GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIVERSE, ~~SIMILAR TO THE USE OF A TELESCOPE.~~ IT WAS DEDICATED IN 1964 BY NORTHEAST RADIO OBSERVATORY CORP., AN ASSOCIATION OF 13 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE NORTHEAST.

MR. PRESIDENT, THE TOWN OF WESTFORD HAS CHANGED IN ITS TWO AND ONE-HALF CENTURIES, BUT IT HAS TAKEN WHAT WE CALL "PROGRESS" WITH A GRAIN OF SALT. LIFE IN WESTFORD IS SEASONED WITH A 250-YEAR OLD TRADITION OF COMMUNITY -- CARING ABOUT OTHER RESIDENTS AND OTHER AMERICANS.

IT IS A TIME FOR THE PEOPLE OF WESTFORD TO CELEBRATE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AS IT HAS CONTINUED IN THEIR BEAUTIFUL TOWN.