Bristol Enterprise, December 28, 1939

HEBRON ACADEMY - HISTORICAL

On its recent observance of the 100th anniversary of the Hebron academy, the following paper, written by Mrs. Ellen Webster of Franklin and Hebron, was read. The Enterprise takes pleasure in passing it on to its readers.

Hebron Academy

By Ellen Emeline Webster

In 1492 Columbus discovered America, this large continent whereon not a single white man had ever lived. Just three hundred years later, in 1792, a tiny section of America, in the state of New Hampshire, was surveyed and boundary lines were established to make a town which was given the scriptural name of Hebron. This was done just 21 years after the first white settler, Mr. Gould, had built his log cabin in 1771 near the Jewell bridge on the Cockermouth River on the land which is now a part of Syd Huckins' field.

Hebron was that one vast forestland with no open pastures or fields. There were no roads anywhere in town. For six months after Mrs. Gould moved into her log cabin, she never saw a woman's face. Then her nearest neighbor made her a call, coming from Plymouth a distance of six miles. Soon after this, another neighbor from Dorchester paid her a call, walking over deep snows on snowshoes through the dense Dorchester woods, a round trip distance of sixteen miles. She did this entirely alone, coming in the afternoon and going back in the evening, but probably she chose a moonlight night for the venture. Wolves and bears were numerous; bobcats, wolverines and other wild animals were common, any one of which she might have met with on this journey. Women, as well as men, had to have pluck in those days. As Hebron became an incorporated town in 1792, twenty-one years after the first white settler arrived, we say that the town, having grown sufficiently in population, then became of age with a distinctive name and personality, just as boys and girls, become men and women at the age of 21, when they are given all the legal privileges belonging to adults. Hebron made a very good appearance at the time she became of age. Men of brain, brawn, and vision had moved in. Not only the smoke flag from the crude chimneys of a goodly number of log cabins in small clearings were to be seen, but also smoke flags from remarkably well-built houses such as that on the old Hardy farm. About half of the original set of buildings, erected in 1791, are now standing and owned by Mr. Cordon. By the year 1800, there had been built a road extending from Plymouth through Hebron to Groton and Dorchester, and rough roads climbed up Hobart and Tenney Hills. The house and barn where Mary and Celia Jewell live had been built. The Town Fathers had decided upon having a Village Common and had cut down the pine trees which stood so thick that the sun's rays could not penetrate to the ground and, surrounding this Common, they had erected a good-sized church building, a school house in the corner of Harry Morgan's field, opposite Mrs. Arnold's, a small store, and a few homesteads. At that time, in 1800, there were 281 people living in Hebron, but in 1811 the population had doubled. In the 1800s there were several families of real distinction living on Hebron Common and along the various highways. These men were addressed as "Doctor," "Priest" or "Elder," "Colonel," "Captain," "Esquire." or "Mister." There were several district schools in Hebron: the village

school had 60 pupils, the one on Tenney Hill had 40, while four more schools in East Hebron and opposite what is now the Jewish Summer Camp were all well attended

But in spite of all these schools, the Hebron Fathers were not satisfied. They wanted their sons and daughters to receive a higher education. As there were no academies in Plymouth or Bristol, these men got together in conference. It was just as if Arthur Blodgett, George Gibbs, Manson Smith, Harry Morgan, Donald Esty, Ned Braley, Syd Huckins, and others - you may distribute the titles of Honorable, Colonel, Captain, Esquire and Mister as you think appropriate - these dignitaries got together and said: "We are going to have an Academy for the purpose of giving our children higher education than is possible in the district schools."

"Very good, very good," we say.

Now what committees were appointed to induce the President of the United States of America, the Senators and the Congressmen to appropriate sufficient money for the carrying out of this worthy project? Who was chosen to pull every political leg that could possibly he made to crook toward Hebron's interests? Will you believe it? NOT ONE! This Academy of 1839 was no PWA or CCC or any other vegetable soup project. Why, just imagine it! These simple forefathers of ours, one hundred years ago, did not even demand that the town should levy an extra tax by which to meet the expenditures! They formed a corporation, put their hands in their own pockets, probably gave land, lumber, and work and soon they had erected the fine commodious Hebron Academy, a building which stands today as one of the distinctive features of architecture on Hebron Common. They equipped the structure with desks, stoves, and a big bell in the belfry. They hired two competent teachers as Principal and Assistant Principal or Lady Preceptress. Hebron Academy offered courses in English, the Sciences, Mathematics, Latin, Greek, French, Penmanship, Painting, and Drawing.

According to educational standards of that day in comparison with those of today, Hebron Academy stood in the same relation to the colleges of a century ago as our Junior colleges do to present-day colleges and universities. A graduate of Hebron Academy would have been admitted to the Junior Class of Dartmouth or Harvard Colleges or to a law school or a medical school.

In this Hebron Academy, there was a "Male Department" and a "Female Department" but there were a few more "Gents" than "Ladies" in attendance. The first term opened in the fall of 1839. Almost at once, the rooms were crowded. In 1841, there were 89 enrolled; in 1843, 129; and in 1845, 97 Students came from Alexandria, Bristol, Plymouth, Groton, Dorchester, Lebanon, Canaan, Romney, Campton, Haverhill, Bridgewater, Salem, Sanbornton, Whitefield, Canterbury, Lyme, Danbury; Rygate, Vermont; Newbury, Vermont; Thetford, Vermont; Westford, Mass.; Lowell, Mass.; and even Boston, Mass. Did the town or the state buy the books and pay the tuition for these students? By no means. Each one had to meet his or her own expenses. The tuition for a term of 12 weeks was $3 in English branches and $4 for those who took Latin, Greek, or French. That made an expense of from $9 to $16 per year for tuition. As for rooms and board, everybody up and down the valley opened their houses for one or more students. My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Ichabod P. Hardy, owned the house where Mr. Hope Norton now has a summer home. But in those days, the house did not have the dormer windows in the ell, which were added when Harry Morgan lived there, so that the rooming conditions then could not have been equal to what the house would afford today. My grandmother reckoned those years when she dwelt in that house the happiest of her long life. She liked the Hebron society. She was

President of the Ladies' Aid, and considered the position an honor. It is said that the society prospered under her leadership. She had three small children. But did these children and her social duties occupy all her time? Far from it. She took to room and board the Principal of the Academy who occupied her front, down-stairs, corner room and, in addition, sixteen of the students! As she kept a girl to help with the work, that made twenty-three people living in that house! And did she get rich? Each student paid per week for room, board and washing only $1.17. The Principal may have paid $1.34 or $1.42 or $1.50, as all those prices are mentioned for the highest-priced board during the Academy years, and I'll warrant there was not better bed or board to be had in the whole valley, for my grandmother was a good cook and my grandfather a bountiful provider. His business then was freighting goods to and from Hebron, Concord and Boston. He had four-horse, and six-horse teams for this purpose with regular drivers. Therefore my grandmother's pantry was well-stocked with barrels of flour, meal and crackers; kits of pickled salmon, and mackerel; whole dried cod fish; boxes of raisins; kegs of molasses, besides an abundance of beans, peas, potatoes, garden vegetables and apples. But figure the profits on a student's board for a week at $1.17 with room rent and washing thrown in!

And besides this, my grandparents allowed the students to have parties at their home. A social function that must have set the hearts of the Academy gentlemen and ladies all a flutter with anticipations was given in 1846. This party of nearly a century ago was carefully arranged by a committee of the most up-standing young men who were in attendance at Hebron Academy. This committee issued very formal, printed invitations, according to the most approved style of that day. The invitation occupied the center of the front page of a four-page sheet of letter paper and the printer used several different sizes and styles of type in the set-up. It read:

SCHOLARS LEVEE
at I. P. Hardy's Boarding House, Hebron,
Thursday Evening, November 19, 1846
The attendance of Miss J. B. Noyes
is respectfully solicited.
Committee of invitation, Hebron Academy

William Berry	William P. Crosby
Lucius W. Hammond	Joseph C. Fifield
Zebina Woodbury	A. E. Jaques
Pliny Woodbury	D. P. Prescott
Anthony Colby Hardy	A. M. Pitman

It may be of interest to know something about these gentlemen.

William A. Berry was the son of Honorable Nathaniel S. Berry, who was then a leading business man in Hebron, a recognized political leader, a pillar in the church, and later, he became the governor of the state. He lived in the house of Albert Moore's that was recently burned.

Lucius W. Hammond was the son of John C. Hammond, Esquire, who then lived on the farm which my father later owned for over 40 years and is now owned by Mr. Cordon. Lucius became a merchant of some note in N. H.

Zebina Woodbury was the father, and Pliny Woodbury the uncle of Mrs. Lizzie Sargent.

Anthony Colby Hardy, my great uncle, taught school, became the Principal of Fisherville Academy and held the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of New Hampshire from 1867 to 1871. He was instrumental in starting the Plymouth Normal School. He was given the honorary degree of Master of Arts by Dartmouth College for his distinguished work in educational developments during his term of office. He was also a clergyman for many years.

William P. Crosby was the son of Capt. Samuel Crosby. He took the classical course in the Academy.

Joseph C. Fifield came from Plymouth.

A. E. Jaques became a clerk in the village store when owned by D. Hazelton & Co., at which time, Mr. Hazelton built for his use the house now owned by Mrs. Arnold. Later, Mr. Jaques became owner of the store.

I have at hand no information concerning D. P. Prescott and A. M. Pitman.

That Miss J. B. Noyes to whom one invitation was sent was no other than the bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked Joanna Noyes who later married Mark Jewell and became the mother of Mary, Celia, and Ed Jewell. Joanna prized this invitation so highly that she never destroyed it and it is now in the possession of her daughters.

We should like to have attended that time "Levee" and to have seen the brilliant and vivacious young "gentlemen," clad in their long-tailed, black broadcloth coats, their high dickies, and their voluminous cravats, some of which may have cost Two Dollars as we know the price to have been that year in Pike's store at Groton Corner. And what a thrill it would give us if we could have seen all the charming and decorous young "Ladies," blossomed out in fancy delaines and cashmeres, with very tight waists and long billowing skirts! Everybody was minding their P's and Q's that night for it was not an ordinary party, but the great, aristocratic event of the year.

We should like to know just how they entertained themselves where such a number as there must have been were crowded into the rooms of a private home. They could not have danced or played cards hut there were guessing games that tested their wits, hunt the thimble, roll the platter, and genies of forfeits that gave as much pleasure as any of the present-day pastimes—I'll vouch for that.

Having had a glimpse of the good times that the Academy students had, and the formality with which they carried out a "Levee," we will take notice of a phase or two of their serious schoolroom work. Many of the books they used are in existence today—I have four of their texts—so that we may turn their pages and learn what was taught. But the time limit of this paper will not allow the introduction of the specific extracts that are given in my longer paper.

Much attention was given to debates and declamations by the gentlemen and the writing of essays by the ladies. Rhetoricals were conducted once a fortnight. All students were required to attend these academic exercises, and frequently visitors were present. It is recorded that once these were held in John Sanborn's grove. Naturally, every gentleman and every lady tried to do his or her best. An amusing story was told me by Albert E. Moore in connection with one of

these semi-public events. It shows that a “gent,” of a century ago enjoyed playing a joke quite as well as the present-day college boy. Hadley Fowler of Bristol was the perpetrator of this joke.

Hadley was out-standing for his retentive memory. If he heard a selection read or recited once or twice, he could recite it verbatim. It chanced that a fellow-student was practicing his declamation to be used on next Rhetorical Day in a room adjoining the one occupied by Hadley Fowler. Hadley Fowler gave heed and chuckled to himself. And the Fates were propitious, for on the appointed day, Hadley Fowler was called up to "declaim" before his victim had been called to the platform, therefore imagine the chagrin of this fellow student when be heard Fowler give the declamation that he had chosen and so laboriously rehearsed!

Hadley Fowler afterward did very noteworthy hospital work during the Civil War. During his later years he practiced medicine in Bristol. I can remember hearing very often about "Old Dr. Fowler."

It is supposed that the Academy's door was closed in 1847. As the Hebron Church was remodeled and put in its present form as to its exterior about this time, the Academy bell was removed from its scholastic belfry and placed in the church belfry, where it has hung ever since.

What was the cause of the discontinuance of the Academy when it had done such noteworthy work? The main reason was the lack of dormitories. With so many out-of-town students, dormitories were imperative. For eight years citizens had been almost crowded out of their own homes by these extra students who were willing even to sleep on the sitting-room lounge or in almost any cubbyhole for the privilege of attending the Academy. Had there been someone to come forward and finance the building of a dormitory, no doubt Hebron Academy would have been with us today and would have rivaled the Junior College on New London hill. It might, even, have developed into the State College. But, alas! It must be confessed that the "gents" of the Academy had got somewhat on the citizens’ nerves, for they had their freaks of "cutting-up" when they thought it great sport to uproot from various garden patches the cabbages and turnips that should have been left to furnish vegetables for their good and nourishing New England "boiled dinners." After all the sacrifices the older people had made, it was too bad that a few rowd acts should have helped to shut the door of opportunity to so large a number of young men and young women.

The Academy building remained closed and unoccupied for some years when it was bought by the town and has since been used for a school house and, latterly, for the public library as what shall we say of the influence of the brief life of Hebron Academy? In looking over the list of students and in tracing their subsequent careers, a surprising number of notable people are counted among its Alumni: Doctors, lawyers, merchantmen, clergymen, teachers, a state supervisor of education, a United States senator, and many loyal and enterprising citizens can be named. As a tree is known by its fruit, so an educational institution is judged by its alumni. For a sample of the fruit of Hebron Academy, we do not need to go outside the limits of this town of Hebron to find a more delightful and wholesome product from any institution of higher learning than was produced in the life and influence of Joanna Noyes Jewell. There is little doubt that Joanna took to heart and put in practice many of the teachings taught in Moral Philosophy and Watt on the Mind. Throughout nearly a century of time, the Jewell home has been a shining example of the best New England type. Thrift, industry, integrity, orderliness, scrupulous neatness, generous hospitality, neighborly kindness, a large share in local public service, loyalty

and devotion to the church, are all predominant characteristics, Particularly would 1 emphasize her strict observance of the "Sabbath," as she would call it. Looking back over a period of 90 years, I'll venture to say that one could count on the fingers of one hand the times when there was not to be found a Jewell in the Jewell pew. In fact, the pew was generally full.

As for her daughters, Mary and Celia, who are still with us, there will be no contradiction to this statement that there have never been two people in this town who are so universally loved and esteemed as are they. When any person visits Hebron, whether native born or a third generation pilgrim, that person drives over to call on the "Jewell girls" as naturally as the tourist to the White Hills stops to look upon the face of the Old Man of the Mountain.

Sure, by their fruits ye shall know them.