

Treasures from the Sherman Room

An Introduction to Brimfield History from the Library's Historical Collections

August, 2020

Issue No. 8

The Last Brimfield Hotel



The third Brimfield Hotel just before completion in 1898

The following article is dated July 1, 1898 and describes the grand opening of the third and final Brimfield Hotel. Unfortunately, the newspaper clipping which is transcribed below does not identify which newspaper it came from.

BRIMFIELD'S FINE NEW HOTEL

A Handsome and Commodious Structure Opened to the Public Today

The fact that Brimfield once more possesses a hotel causes rejoicing which is not confined to the inhabitants of that town, but which is shared by the people of neighboring towns and deeply felt by many who live in more distant places. The former hotel was destroyed by fire in the fall of 1890, and it is seldom that the loss of a building is so widely and deeply regretted ; for the burning of the Brimfield hotel was mourned not only because of the seriousness of the disaster, but also on account of the associations which had centered there. The hotel was like a central home in a town noted for its hospitality. It had always been closely identified with the history of the town, and was cherished by the people as an essential part of their life and interests.

The original building on the present site was put up in 1808 by Elias Carter for John Gardner. It was occupied by Squire Gardner until Marquis Converse, the second postmaster, took the stand, and succeeding proprietors of the hotel have included other leading citizens of the town. In 1859 the property came into the hands of Silas C. Herring of New York, the well-known safe manufacturer, who spent his summers in Brimfield. Mr. Herring remodeled and fitted up the hotel, regardless of expense, converting it into a structure which was the ornament of the village and the pride of the people during the twenty years of its existence. The landlord who longest occupied the hotel was Amos Munroe, and it is with the memory of Mr. and Mrs. Munroe that the old Brimfield hotel will always be associated. The character of the hotel as a temperance house was early established, and was especially maintained by Mr. Munroe, who took pride in being able to say that he had never sold a drop of liquor in all his 40 years of hotel-keeping. The interests of the Hitchcock Academy and the Brimfield hotel were closely allied. Besides throwing open its doors on the public days of the school, the hotel offered to teachers and pupils the comforts of a home, and pupils driving daily to school from a distance were the recipients of numberless acts of kindness. Many alumni of the Academy cherish their recollections of the Brimfield hotel among their brightest school-day associations, and feel that the rebuilding of the hotel will contribute greatly to the future prosperity of the school. While in summer Brimfield naturally offers many attractions to visitors, in winter the hotel, with its fine ball-room and good suppers, was the favorite destination of sleigh-rides from the towns throughout all the country side. There are pleasant pictures in the memories of many people of the old-fashioned stage coach rolling up to the hotel with its load of travelers or happy students, and of the lines of gay winter turnouts stretching far along the country roads, and it is a cheering prospect that such scenes are no longer to be pictures of memory.

The history of the building of the present hotel in a town whose resources have greatly diminished during the last quarter of a century is interesting and significant, as it is the record of enterprising, persistent effort, public spirit, and cooperative labor and interest. When the hotel was burnt not long after Mr. Munroe's retirement from its management, the discouraging nature of the disaster was fully realized, as there was no outlook for rebuilding. The town had lost the wealth of former days, and its general prosperity had decreased for the same reasons that have caused the decadence of so many New England towns. Attempts to form plans for rebuilding the hotel proved fruitless, until the burning of the "Old Corner Store," which seemed to be the culmination of misfortunes, proved the occasion of a project out of which grew the present successful enterprise. The plan of undertaking to form a stock company was decided upon in a citizens' meeting, and after a creditable amount had been pledged by Brimfield people, old residents and other friends of the town were given the opportunity to assist in the enterprise. The response from outside was very encouraging, subscriptions for stock being received from people living in New York, Brooklyn, Boston, Washington, Worcester, Springfield, Newtonville, Palmer and Warren, all of whom are connected with Brimfield by family ties or other interests. Brimfield people have taken pride in raising the utmost possible amount however, and nearly three-fourths of the capital stock of \$9000 is owned by residents and those holding property in Brimfield. The first meeting of the stockholders was held in April, 1897, at which the directors of the corporation chosen were J.M. Warren, C.S. Tarbell, G.M. Hitchcock, H.L. Converse and C.L. Gould. Dr. R. V. Sawin was elected secretary and George M. Hitchcock treasurer. There are the same officers at present, with the exception of C. L. Gould and Dr. Sawin, who declined reelection at the annual meeting and whose respective places were filled by Porter Parker and C.S. Tarbell.

Thomas J. Morgan and the late Newton S. Hubbard were members of the original committee that obtained stock subscriptions, Mr. Hubbard being actively engaged in promoting the undertaking at the time of his death.

The new hotel is erected upon the foundation of the former one with the exception of being set back ten feet, which gives a better frontage, including a grass plot sixteen feet wide. While the new building follows the same general design as the former one, it has the advantage of important improvements in the arrangement of rooms and the addition of modern conveniences. It is very attractive, convenient and well-appointed, and the workmanship and material which have entered into its construction are of unusual excellence. All the arrangements and details have received the most careful study and supervision in order to obtain the greatest possible amount of convenience and comfort. The hotel commands pleasant views in every direction, and the rooms are so arranged that each one has a fine outlook. The lower floor, which contains the parlors, office, dining room, kitchen and lavatory, is finished in ash and Southern pine. There are fireplaces with handsome mantels in the office and dining room. A beautiful staircase of quartered oak leads to the second story, which is finished in stained whitewood. The upper floor is finished in whitewood, and, besides sleeping rooms, contains a ball room which will accommodate 40 couples. The house is heated by steam and is furnished with electric bells. Especial care has been taken to have the best possible plumbing. The water supply is from springs on Haynes Hill. A commodious and convenient stable has been put up on the site of the former one. The contractor for the construction of the hotel was T. J. Hines of Monson, and the foreman of the building was Thomas Pardy of Worcester. The lumber was furnished by Keefe Bros. of Mashapaug, Ct. Advantage was taken of home talent by employing J. Wilson Brown of Brimfield, a student in the electrical department of Maine State College, to put in the electric bells, and Albert Brown of Brimfield to do the plumbing. Much gratuitous labor has been performed by citizens, all the work of grading being accomplished by citizens' "bees." A good illustration of public spirit and dependence upon native resources was seen in the setting of the curb in front of the hotel. When the improvement of enclosing a grass plot by means of a granite curb was being considered, the question arose as to how the extra expense could be met. A bed of gneiss on Haynes Hill was prospected and favorably reported upon, after which the services of men and teams were contributed for several days to draw the stone from the new "quarry" and put it in place.



Brimfield....

Hotel....

Brimfield, Mass.

House and furnishings new
Modern improvements
Fine spring water

Fishing and Hunting
Beautiful drives
Excellent Boating

Rates \$2.00 per day. Special rates by the week sent on application to

C. H. STODDARD, Mgr.

Perfect harmony of feeling and unity of effort have marked the enterprise which has been the center of attention in Brimfield for more than a year past; while the practical interest shown in the undertaking by friends outside has important significance, since it is upon such spirit of cooperation, however manifested, that the future of the old New England towns largely depends. Great credit belongs to those who have had the care and management of the enterprise, for its success has been due to their untiring effort and disinterested labor.

The hotel has been leased to Charles N. Stoddard of Rochester, Vt., for a number of years proprietor of the Rochester House, and who continues the management of that hotel. The knowledge of the spirit which put up such a hotel as that in Brimfield entered into Mr. Stoddard's decision to lease the property; while the directors feel that they have secured a landlord who is especially qualified for its successful management. The beautiful, quiet town of Brimfield, with its high elevation and fine scenery, has many attractions for summer visitors, and Mr. Stoddard has had successful experience in a mountain hotel patronized by summer boarders and tourists. Previous to Mr. Stoddard's experience as a landlord, his life in hotels, when a commercial traveler, gave him a thorough acquaintance with the requirements of hotel keeping. Mr. Stoddard is furnishing the hotel very handsomely from the ware-rooms of Atkinson & Co. of Boston, and opened the house for guests to-day, the day of the Hitchcock Academy commencement.

Brimfield people feel that the welfare of their town in the future depends upon the hotel, as it has done in the past. While it is probable that a more extensive business will be carried on than in former days, it is desirable that the essential character of the old hotel, with its home-like hospitable atmosphere, be maintained. Mr. and Mrs. Stoddard are in sympathy with this feeling and are heartily welcomed by the people of Brimfield. There will be a formal opening of the new hotel some time before long, the date not yet having been determined.

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The following article appeared December 18, 1906 in the Palmer Journal and describes a raid conducted on the Brimfield Hotel by Palmer and Springfield police officers.

LIQUOR SEIZED AT BRIMFIELD

Successful Raid on Brimfield Hotel By Palmer Officers Tuesday Night

Deputy Sheriffs Bills and Northrop of Palmer, with Officer Crimmins of the same place and an officer from Springfield, made a call on Dr. S. H. Ellery at the Brimfield Hotel in Brimfield Tuesday night in search of liquors, and took away with them a one-horse load of contraband stuff.

It was a cold ride from Palmer to Brimfield Tuesday night, for the mercury had taken a drop in the afternoon and Wednesday morning registered about zero. It was about 9 o'clock when they reached Mine Host Ellery's, and the warm atmosphere of the interior of the building seemed might good to the quarter. After their fingers had been thawed out a bit Deputy Sheriff Bills, who had charge of the expedition, informed Dr. Ellery that they had come to make an official call. He said nothing but took a seat in the office while the officers made their search. It is safe to say, however, that he kept up something of a thinking. In the cellar the searchers found a quantity of lager beer, ale, wine, whiskey, and bottled goods of various sorts, enough to fill a one-horse wagon, and one was procured to transport the stuff to Palmer. In addition to the liquors seized the officers report a large number – several barrels – of empty bottles found on the cellar bottom.

Notices have been issued for a hearing on the condemnation proceedings for Saturday, January 5.

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In 1907, the Hotel's proprietor, George W. Brackett issued a souvenir booklet, describing the attractions of Brimfield and the hotel. It was prepared by John S. Webber, the book-keeper at the hotel. The following excerpts have been taken from the booklet.

Brimfield, Massachusetts, is one of the most interesting towns in the state. Delightfully situated in the rural district of Hampden County, its fertile farm-lands and forest-covered hills always a pleasing picture. No disagreeable odors here from the noisy factory; no objectionable population --- balmy, sweet-scented air, brimful of invigorating tonics; plenty of good fishing in the woodland brooks and valley ponds --- a paradise to the huntsman --- a place of absolute contentment to the lover of a quiet country life, and a popular resort for the summer tourist.

Delightful Drives, along the tree-bordered gravelly roads --- for the auto, the carriage or the bike. Within twenty minutes ride to the State Highway leading into Palmer.

To the Vacationist, no better place could be found to pass a week or two in the country than at this Hotel.

The Rooms are large, airy and clean; bed linen new.

The Cuisine is in charge of a competent chef, who is painstaking and willing to cater to his guests.

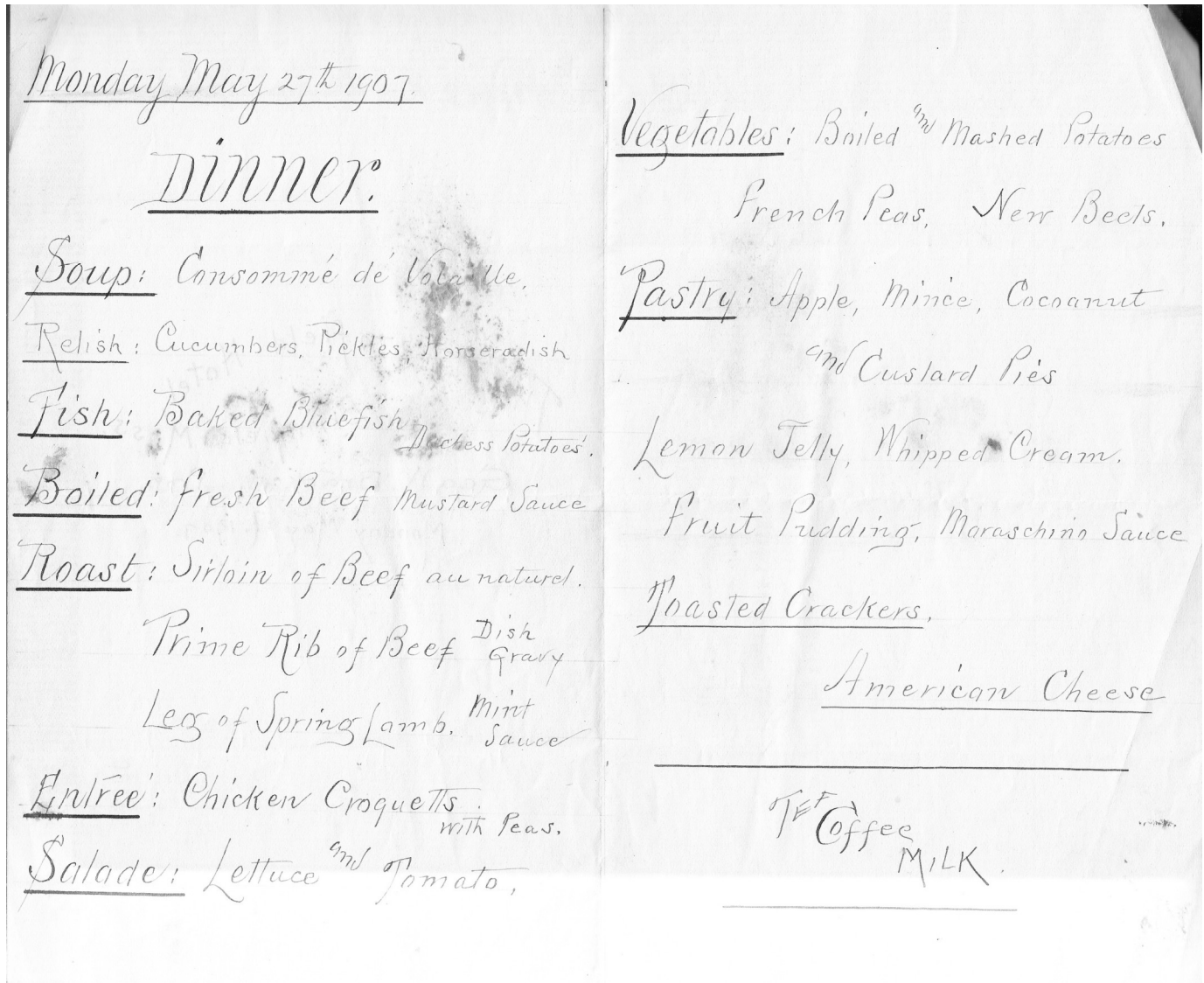
The Appointments are modern, electric bells, spacious Bath, Toilets and Wash Stands.

The Sanitary Arrangement is perfect.

The Livery Stable on the premises is well equipped, rolling stock is new, the horses good roadsters, gentle and easy to drive. The Large Farm connected with the Hotel will supply the table with fresh vegetables throughout the season.

Pure Spring Water in abundance from the natural reservoirs on the hills directly into the hotel. The water is unsurpassed by any other in the country for curative properties.

Sample menu dated May 27th, 1907



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The following article appeared October 23, 1941 (newspaper not identified) and describes the fire that destroyed the final Brimfield Hotel.

Fire Destroys Brimfield Inn; Seven Are Injured

Brimfield Inn Destroyed By \$20,000 Fire; Seven Are Injured in Fleeing Blaze

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Sullivan, Proprietors, in Hospital – Son and Four Roomers Suffer Burns – Truck Drivers Give Alarm

BRIMFIELD. Oct. 23 – The Brimfield Inn, three-story wooden structure, famous throughout New England, was burned to the ground this morning at 3:15. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel B. Sullivan, proprietors, and their son, John Sullivan, along with four roomers, had difficulty escaping and suffered injuries. Loss was estimated at \$20,000.



Two in Hospital

Mrs. Sullivan is in Wing Memorial Hospital in Palmer suffering from a fracture of the right wrist and slight shock. Mr. Sullivan is also confined by shock and inhalation of smoke. Hospital officials said they did not believe their condition was serious. Mr. Sullivan is 62 and his wife, 60.

Another son, Daniel B. Sullivan, Jr., first selectee and a volunteer, to leave the Palmer district and the first to be honorably discharged, was at work on the night shift at the Warren Steam Pump Company plant and did not know of the fire until returning home this morning.

Three roomers were forced to flee from the second story of the building with John Sullivan. They were Ernest Schmidz of New York City, superintendent of the Bronx Water Works Company doing construction work on the new Route 20 highway, and John DiMartini, also of New York, vice-president of the company, and the third, unnamed. They were forced to escape in various

ways. Sullivan, Schmidz, and DiMartini slid down a rope lifeline, erected by the Brimfield Fire Department while the fourth, also a construction worker, jumped into a near-by tree about two feet from a window and made his escape.

Treated for Burns

Schmidz, DiMartini and Sullivan were treated for burns on the hands by State Trooper William Ryan and later went to Wing Memorial Hospital for additional treatment. Schmidz and DiMartini were at their work this morning while Sullivan was busy shopping for clothing.

All furniture and equipment of the hotel along with the personal belongings of the Sullivan family were lost. Loss of the building, furniture, equipment and personal effects was estimated at \$20,000 by the family and Fire Department officials.

The Palmer Fire Department was called to assist the Brimfield firefighters and they combined efforts to save the large barn, filled with hay. The barn is about 40 feet from the northwest corner of the inn. Fire officials were at a loss to determine the cause of the fire, but it is believed by Fire Chief Harry Landen that it got its start in a toilet beneath the main stairway.

Mrs. Sullivan was injured when she fell down the stairs after being called by her husband, who saw flames raging in the lower front part of the building. Mrs. Sullivan did not realize she was as close to the stairs as she actually was, tripping on the top stair and rolling to the first floor.

Seen by Truckmen

Truck drivers discovered the blaze shortly after 3 and combined their efforts in sounding the horns on the trucks so that the entire center of the town was awakened. Sullivan, hearing the horns, was aroused and smelling smoke hurried downstairs to see the flames raging. The truckmen broke down the front door and also moved cars owned by John Sullivan and John DiMartini from near the building.

John Sullivan said that he arrived home about midnight and immediately went to his room. He reported that everything was in order when he retired.

Lt. William Puzzo, connected with the state fire marshal's office in Springfield, was notified by Chief Landen and State Police and he was expected to investigate.

The building was well known as a hostelry and was situated on a prominent site at Route 20 in Brimfield Center. The inn was rebuilt in 1884 [Ed. Note: it burned down November 24, 1890 and reopened July 1, 1898] after being burned to the ground, the rebuilding taking place as a co-operative enterprise, with the townspeople operating the inn. It was later disposed of to private interests. The building also was owned by William F. Griswold of Palmer. The Sullivans had been proprietors for 15 years.