



# The SHIRETOWN CONSERVER

The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

Volume 16, Number 2

Summer 2013

## Mary Elizabeth Greeley

1836-1924

Local Artist and Teacher

By Mary Annis



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**This year the Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society will be setting up an exhibit in the front room of the Observer Building Museum, featuring the works of Miss Mary Elizabeth Greeley. The exhibit will be open beginning on Whoopie Pie Day – June 22<sup>nd</sup> and will be available every Thursday from 11 am to 2 pm until Labor Day. Many of her paintings will be on display along with several personal artifacts.**

Mary Elizabeth Greeley was born in Foxcroft on February 13, 1836. Her parents were Samuel and Sarah (Chamberlain) Greeley. Her father came to Foxcroft in 1808 and her mother was the first white girl born in the town. “Lizzie” was educated in Foxcroft schools and graduated from Foxcroft Academy. She then attended Gilmantown Academy in Belknap County, New Hampshire, where her father was born.

Miss Greeley began her teaching career in her home town as assistant in the village school. There were only two schools in the village of Foxcroft, one for primary pupils and one for older pupils. Miss Greeley and Sara H. Carter taught the 90 pupils in one large room and one tiny one. Lizzie went on to teach in many other towns in Maine, and, although very successful in her teaching, she was looking for something more.

Lizzie set off to Boston to attend Dr. Diocletian Lewis’ school of calisthenics. Dr. Lewis was a prominent temperance leader and physical exercise advocate for women. This was quite an undertaking for a single lady of the era. Dr. Lewis’ school was located in Lexington, Massachusetts from 1864 to 1867 when it burned.

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## The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society

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Underrate every present and prospective public Enterprise; tell everybody the hotels are bad; enlarge the vices of people, especially the young people; withhold patronage from your merchants and tradesmen, and go to some other town to do your trading, or buy everything of pedlars; never subscribe for your home paper, and if you are doing business, refuse to advertise; also if you desire job printing patronize an uneducated tyro in the business, outside of an established office.

The above recipe is no humbug, but the truth.

*The Piscataquis Observer*, 1877



Foxcroft Academy, Chief of peers, -  
 Survivor bold of a hundred years.  
 We hail thee. Yes, with an honest pride,  
 For faithful work that ranges wide;  
 A hundred years, thy labor rife  
 To fit the young for noble life.

One hundred years! 'Tie a goodly span  
 With which to measure the works of man,  
 The growth and strength in a nation's life.  
 The better part of earthly strife  
 That makes us all a vision see- \_  
 of higher life and liberty.

Twass "eighteen hundred and twenty three,  
 And from mother statehood three years free,  
 When our fathers true with purpose bold  
 Made for youth a school's stronghold,  
 Sacrifice rare in early days!  
 We bless them now for Godly ways. .

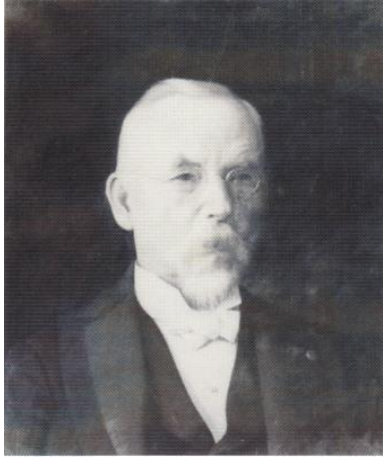
With many a tale of hardship fraught,  
 For toil and faith as they'd carry on,  
 That gave the youth and every son  
 A chance to rise and higher still  
 Noble stations in life to fill.

Dark days there were, but men loved thee well  
 And with grateful hearts we now can tell  
 How they struggled on and faltered not,—  
 A work of love with wisest thought.  
 God give us and our children, too,  
 Such loyal faith and courage true.

In the olden days they gathered here  
 From neighboring towns both far and near;  
 Did their best and strove with might and main  
 To reach the heights and knowledge gain  
 That made for life .and higher aim,  
 If not for fame and world's acclaim.

So here's to Foxcroft Academy  
 Now facing another century  
 As guide to youth and a stepping stone  
 To higher life and nobler tone,  
 Loyal to state and nation, too.  
 Anew! To thee we pledge anew.  
*Observer*, Academy Centennial, 1924

**Portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Thompson, in the Thompson Free Library**  
**By Mary Elizabeth Greeley**



Dr. Elbridge Thompson



Lucia Eddy Thompson

Following her studies in Boston she went to New York City to teach in a school founded by one of Dr. Lewis' pupils. Her students enjoyed learning from her. On display at the Historical Society museum here in Dover-Foxcroft are miniature barbells and rings presented to Miss Greeley in 1866 by members of her class.

Lizzie had a longing to draw and to paint. As she earned money she began to study art. With her customary energy, she threw herself into this new and most fascinating line of work while continuing to earn respect as a teacher of physical exercise.

She finally was offered a position as Art Teacher in Dr. West's School for Girls, one of the most exclusive private schools in Brooklyn. She taught there for 13 years. At one time she had a studio in Brooklyn where she attained a reputation as a portrait painter.

As her mother began to advance in years and her own health began to fail, Lizzie gave up her studio and returned to her mother's home (876 West Main Street – the current home of Joyce and Jeff Cross) in 1885. She remained in Foxcroft the rest of her life. When her health began to improve, her mother needed her care and after her mother passed away, Lizzie felt that at 50 years of age she was too old to return to the city.



Portrait of Foster Gray (1907-1991)

Now alone in her home on West Main Street, Miss Greeley rented part of her home and began instructing private pupils from the area. During these years she painted excellent portraits of local people and lovely pictures of flowers, fruit and animals. At the age of 74 she was commissioned by Dr. Thompson to paint portraits of himself and his wife. As Mrs. Thompson was deceased, Lizzie painted her portrait from a photograph. Dr. Thompson thought his wife's image was too severe, so he asked Lizzie to "pretty up" the portrait, which she did by adding a very lacy fichu to enhance her plain gown. These paintings hang in the Maine Room at the Thompson Free Library.

At the age of 80, Miss Greeley was still teaching, but soon after, failing eyesight compelled her to give up on her work. She fell in her home in December of 1924 and fractured her hip. She died three weeks later on December 31, 1924.

Lizzie's funeral was held at the Congregational Church where she had attended services faithfully for many years. She is buried in the family plot in the Rural Grove Cemetery.

(continued on page 4)

(Mary Elizabeth Greeley, from page 3)

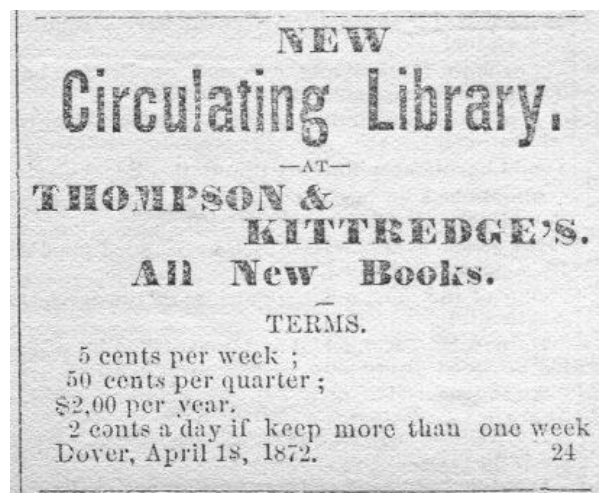
Lizzie Greeley was a very active and talented person. It was with bravery and determination that she left the small village of Foxcroft and set off to Boston and New York City to have a successful career in two very unusual professions – gymnastic exercises and painting. But Miss Greeley was more than a teacher and artist. She was very interested in the town's activities, and when the right to vote was given to women, Miss Greeley, the daughter of the first female white child to be born in Foxcroft, at the age of 84 years, cast the first vote on that election day in 1920.



“The eldest sister’s 79<sup>th</sup> birthday” - Pencil sketch, 1879

Miss Greeley had a great interest in all her pupils. Besides teaching them to use the many techniques used in drawing and painting, she showed them the beauty in common things and the character which shines in wrinkled faces and gnarled hands. She taught them to work hard and to love their work. Among her many talented pupils was young Mary Stuart, a long time artist, who in turn, taught her daughter Judy Segerson.

This article is based on Mary Elizabeth Greeley’s obituary and an article written by Madelyn C. Betts.



**DR. THOMPSON HAD AN EARLY INTEREST IN LIBRARIES**



### **“The Chief”**

And now.... for the rest of the story –

To continue with Betty Smith’s story – Betty’s sister, Sylvia Backen, was married to Douglas Tibbets in June of 1969. Attending the couple were Mr. and Mrs. Herb Green. After the ceremony, the happy couple dashed to their hidden car for the get-away, when they found they could not get into the vehicle because it was filled with crumpled newspapers! Sheriff Frank Murch was on top of the case. In fact the car was hidden in his garage! Who was the culprit?



A note was received from Wallace Hewett of Venice, Florida –

I was one of those youths who benefited from Herb’s guidance. One story I love to tell was as follows –

While I was courting my future wife (Elizabeth Warren) I had an auto which quite often would be reluctant to start. So on returning from a dance or a movie, I would drive through town and wave to Herb, then go park in front of Elizabeth’s home to say our good night parting words. In exactly one hour a vehicle would drive up behind us and blink its lights. My Belle would quickly leave me and dash into her home and Herb would give me a push start sending me homeward bound.

I never knew if Herb did this as a favor to a young lad or to be sure I got home for a good night’s sleep so I would be ready for work the next day.



### **A Note to our Readers**

We are always interested in stories about folks who may be gone, but are dear to our memories and close to our hearts. If you have a favorite memory or might even be interested in writing a page or two on your favorite person who was well known in the community, drop us a line. We would be delighted to hear from you. A few of those in whom we are especially interested in hearing more include Hap Garrish, A.T. Gellerson, Lap Lary and Charlotte White. If you have some memories to share, write to us. We will share them with our readers.



From the *Observer*, 1874

“Pat had to write to his folks in Ireland to tell them of his brother’s hanging. “Dear Mother, Mike recently spoke before a very large crowd. Unfortunately, as soon as he was done speaking the stage gave way and he fell to his death”.

## Foxcroft Academy Centennial, 1924

Edited by Louis Stevens

This extra large headline for *The Piscataquis Observer*, and most unusual for that time, appeared on page one of the edition of June 12, 1924, to describe what had happened just two days before on Tuesday, June 10, when Foxcroft Academy presented its 100th anniversary festivities all day not with a parade, floats, and fireworks outside, but inside the Congregational church and Central Hall with programs mentioned in the headline. It marked the third centennial in the town. First was Foxcroft's celebration of its birthday on October 1, 1912, as it was incorporated on February 29, 1812 (so a Leap Year baby you could say!)- But Dover had to wait until August in 1923 for its centennial as it was not incorporated until 1823. This year the united town will join for its bi-centennial on Saturday, August 4, and just 11 years from now in 2023, the Academy can be rightfully pleased to be 200 years old as it was established in 1823. One of the speakers at the church will tell how well the school has done to remain in existence for such a long time\_ [NOTE: It should be mentioned that a huge celebration but not a centennial, occurred on July 4, 1919, when the town greeted the returning soldiers from World War I in France to be honored with a great parade. ]

The total inches of type for the Foxcroft celebration (which included two comparison photos of the 1860 and 1924 Academy buildings) filled about 180 inches of reading material with three full columns on the front, entire page three, and two columns on four. The introductory long paragraph which appeared under the headline contained this well-written summary of the day, and could easily have been composed by

Ora Evans who owned the Observer Publishing Co. with his father, Liston Evans. Both were long-term members of the Foxcroft Trustees, so naturally they gave excellent coverage to the school in the paper. Here is the paragraph: "If Joshua Carpenter, Esq., and the others associated with him in the founding of Foxcroft Academy, could have looked down on the school Tuesday and could have seen the exercises which were taking place commemorating the 100th anniversary of their labors, they would have felt proud of the institution which they helped to establish, and proud of the present and former students who played so large a part in the Centennial celebration into which so much thought and effort had gone and which was such a decided success from whatever angle it is considered.

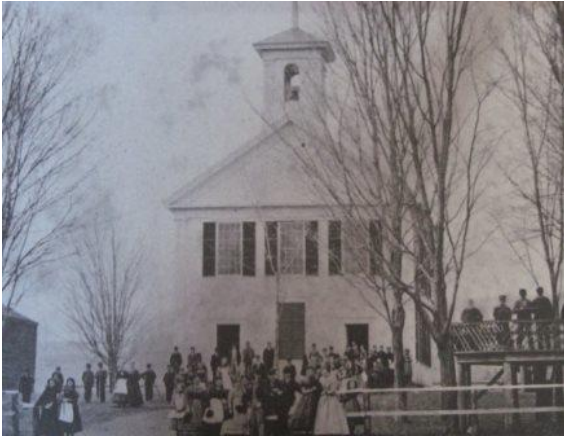


" After an opening prayer by the Rev. J. Frank Thompson of the Universalist church, "a good attendance" at the Congregational church, said the Observer reporter, was ready for the historical address by the Hon. Willis E. Parsons whose subject was the history of the Academy. He had been a Trustee member and also secretary and treasurer many years, so he was extremely knowledgeable of the school's history as he was so intimately involved with decisions, especially financial, over the years. He had frequently written about the history of the separate towns and then the one united, and the school for the Observer.

(Continued on Page 7)

(Foxcroft Academy Centennial, Continued from Page 6)

Mr. Parsons began his address, History of Foxcroft Academy, by explaining the two very important conditions that the State imposed upon the Trustees in order to complete the Act of Incorporation: First, the Trustees would need to have in possession the sum of \$1500, and also start classes in 1823. Folks could help by providing material and hours of work to count as money, and Col. Foxcroft, who had purchased the future town area years before, gave \$50 to help. Enough funds were raised and so the Academy was born. Classes started in another building for a while.



Now, let's jump ahead 81 years from 1823 to 1904 when once more the Trustees were badly in need of money to enlarge and renovate the Academy, then in use, due to increasing enrollment and the addition of the students of Dover High School which closed that year. But where would the funds come from? It seemed, wrote Mr. Parsons, "Must be by voluntary contributions." Mr. Parsons was treasurer of the Trustees then, so, in his address, he tells how the contributions came about from his personal slant as he remembered it. This is the entire paragraph as printed in the Observer. "While the ways and means were being discussed, one of the Trustees, Edward J. Mayo, in behalf of his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Josiah B. Mayo, made the following offer--

That if the Trustees and other citizens would raise a fund sufficient to put in a good heating plant, build the foundation for the new building, and thoroughly equip the school, that Mr. and Mrs. Mayo would erect the building, according to the architects' plans...in addition, John D. Mayo gave \$600 for the purchase of a laboratory, which is of great value in physics and chemistry." In June, a year later 1905, the new building was dedicated and formal presentation of the keys made by J.D. Mayo to the treasurer, W. E. Parsons before a grateful throng of Dover and Foxcroft citizens, said the Observer.

Between the afternoon oration and the evening pageant, there was a supper served to 165 at the United Baptist Parish House (later to become the Assembly of God church on East Main in the 1930s). There were two speakers at the Supper. The first was Principal Lindsay J. March Whose address contained these statistics: The school had a present enrollment of 217 with an average of 205; the faculty was composed of 12 teachers with another to be added that fall when a full-time clerk would also be hired. (He could also have praised the football coach who was his brother Leland, who had a three—year record (1923-4-5) of 14 wins, 8 losses and 3 ties). He added that the school was the third largest of the 56 academies in Maine with Calais and Thornton being higher, and lastly, that among the 218 high schools in the state it stands 30th in size.

Of course, being a principal, Mr. March expressed the need for two necessities at the school. The Observer reporter wrote: "Mr. March strongly advocated the provision of an auditorium built in theatre style which could be used for assemblies, music classes, plays, rehearsals, Class meetings, rallies, etc,' Another pressing need is a gymnasium which could be used for physical training classes, basketball games, school socials, and dances; also providing locker rooms, and shower baths, and rest room. (It would be 38 years before the gymnasium at the new brick Academy would be built: and open for basketball in the season of 1962—3.)

Trustee Stacy Lanpher of Sebec then told of the creation and formation of the Alumni Association. He volunteered to raise a fund of \$500 to help pay for the expenses of the Centennial. The Observer said, "The response was so generous that it was decided to expand the scope of the work and to create an Alumni Fund, the income from which will be used to promote some phase of the Academy's work.

(Continued on Page 8)



The fund now amounts to over \$1800. Gifts of all sizes were received, ranging from \$500 from Col. E. J. Mayo [NOTE: In 1923, he had paid for the new baseball grandstand at the new fairground in honor of his son who was an excellent athlete during his days at the Academy] and \$200 from Harry Oakes [NOTE: Not yet "Sir"], and the brother of Louis Oakes who would contribute so much to the Academy when it was built on land once occupied by the Oakes homestead.] to Contributions of fifty cents. It would seem that Mr. Lanpher made this comment: "They all, of whatever denomination show an interest in and love for the institution that is very gratifying."

A standing-room-only crowd filled Central Hall to capacity for the historical pageant in the evening, Father Time (Ernest Bailey, Jr.), wearing a white robe, long white beard, and carrying a Scythe, could possibly have been the one who introduced the scenes, though the Observer report does not say so. The Dance of the Wilderness (danced by young ladies attired in green with wreaths of flowers); Meeting next between Indians and early white settlers; Early settlers in Typical Pioneer Home doing their activities in pantomime except for the singing of Home Sweet Home. Now came the Spirit of Education and the Spirit of Progress, each carrying a lighted torch, and they were followed by the entrance of the men who were the first Board of Trustees. They discussed how they would possibly acquire the \$1500 needed to build the first Academy. Old Time Dances, such as lancers, waltz, and minuet with dancers all dressed in "old fashioned costumes".

The Lyceum days of the 1860s when discussions and debates were held at the school. Then came 1924 when students who played girls and boys' basketball, baseball, football, and boys taking manual training (Shop) or girls in Household Arts (Home Economics) came on Stage representing their sports and two class subjects. During the Memorial Service ("beautifully and impressively done" said the Observer), a tablet with the inscription "To our Soldiers and Sailors" was placed on the stage, and reveille was sounded by Earl Greeley. Members of the classes from 1854 to 1922 then presented flowers to Miss Marion McKechnie who in turn handed them to Miss Grace Chase who put them on the tablet. Taps was then sounded (presumably by Mr. Greeley though it did not say so.) Years ahead, Miss Chase would work as a secretary in the school's office. Now came the closing of the pageant according to the Observer: "Future students of Foxcroft Academy, the boys and girls of today then made their appearance, carrying placards stating that they were members of the football team of 1930, etc. The pageant closed with a Grand Review, nearly all those participating passing from the stage down the center aisle."



*Observer*, March 2, 1905 – "A few more weeks will see the Academy building completed. The finish has nearly all been put on and the floors are now being varnished. The third story, with the exception of the hanging of the doors, is nearly finished. Friday, work was commenced on the old portion of the building, which is to be entirely renovated. When complete, it will be one of the finest structures of its kind in this part of the State. There are to be six recitation rooms, three laboratories, a library, cloak rooms and the assembly room which will seat 144 students. The corridors are large and roomy and very well lighted. The laboratories, which are on the third floor, are exceptionally pleasant and considering all, are the best in the building. The chemistry suite is to have 24 lockers which will accommodate an equal number of students. New apparatus has been ordered for these rooms which affords great satisfaction to all concerned. In the assembly room, a portion of the desks are old, but newly finished. Taken in all, the accommodations are to be of the very best.



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## Annual Dues

Many thanks to all those who have sent in their Historical Society dues for 2013. We really appreciate having you as a member. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, please do so now so you can continue to enjoy all of the benefits of membership in the Historical Society, including receiving copies of the *Conserver*.

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### The Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society – Membership Application Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues are \$10 per person and \$7.00 for senior memberships. Please make checks payable to: Dover-Foxcroft Historical Society, 874 West Main Street, Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426. Dues cover January to December. If you are giving a gift membership, please include the name and address and we'll gladly notify the recipient of your gift.

The Society is on the Web at [www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs](http://www.rootsweb.com/~medfhs) and on Facebook.

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Foxcroft Academy Football Team of 1924

Row 1: Edward Starbird, Roland Butler, Robert Palmer, Capt., Edward Berry, Earl McNaughton

Row 2: Anthony Zilinsky, Donald Marshall, William Crabtree, Carter Lee, Carroll Pingree, Richmond Roderick

Row 3: Coach Leland March, Sumner Ward, Ford Dyer, Dana Bryant, Herbert Hayes, Mgr.



**HATS IN THE ATTIC!**



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JUNE 8, 2013  
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**Proceeds to benefit the work of the  
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**E. B. Spearing, Proprietor.**

### Message from Mary

Our grand opening this summer at the Observer Building is scheduled for Whoopie Pie Festival – June 22<sup>nd</sup>. I hope you plan to visit and check out our two new exhibits. Carmen Smith – an artist in her own right – has been helping with the Mary Elizabeth Greeley art display. Dennis Lyford has set up a display of Foxcroft Academy sports teams. The Blacksmith Shop is open and ready to receive visitors. The shop is open as long as the flag is flying – most days. The Observer Building will be open from 11 – 2 on Thursdays until Labor Day. We'll also be open on Homecoming. Please stop by.

We welcome two new volunteers on Thursdays. Irene (Tumosa) Thomas is presently working on setting up a filing cabinet of local genealogies. Steve Ringle is recently retired and is using his many years of skills in museum work to help. We welcome these folks aboard. Both have been coming in faithfully and we're all having a good time together. We always welcome new volunteers.

Hope to see you this summer!!!

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### Our Corporate Sponsors

A grateful thank you to the following businesses whose funds support the Society and its efforts to preserve our history. When you shop or see these folks, please tell them 'thank you' for their support!

Ellen Anderson, DPM

Dover True Value

Dover-Foxcroft Chiropractic  
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Green Door Gallery

Lary Funeral Home

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Mallett Real Estate

Mayo Regional Hospital

Pleasant River Lumber

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Mark Stitham, M.D.

Sean Stitham, M.D.

**Thank you all!**

### Items Available

We thank Bob's Home and Garden on Lincoln Street for stocking our ornaments and DVD's. Please stop by their store and support this local business.

Glass Christmas ornaments: \$6.00 each (add \$4.00 for shipping)

2008 – Blacksmith Shop

2009 – Observer Building

2010 – Central Hall

2011 – Thompson Free Library

2012 – Foxcroft Academy

2013 – The Blethen House

DVD's :

Glimpses of Dover and Foxcroft - \$10.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Memories of Central Hall/Lou Stevens - \$15.00 (add \$3.00 for shipping)

Dover-Foxcroft throws: \$40.00 (add \$8.00 for shipping)

### Work Day at the Historical Society

Thursdays are almost always work days at the Historical Society. We generally start work at about 10:00 and work from two to four or five hours. If you are interested in joining us for an interesting and enjoyable day working with good friends, contact Mary for more information. At the moment we are cataloging thousands of old *Observer* photos. Come along and help us identify folks in those pictures.

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**The Original 1825 Foxcroft Academy**  
**(moved to this location when the “new” Academy was built in 1860)**