

Has Withstood Rigors of Time for 270 Years



[Sun Staff Photo]

The "Railroad House" at Chelmsford Center, built in 1677 as a parsonage for Rev. Thomas Fiske on the site of the present railroad station, used for years as a "garrison house" for five families in the latter years of the 17th century when the danger of Indian attacks ever were present, and still later moved out Littleton road to make way for the railroad station, and then used as a tenement house, is to be torn down to make way for an addition to the ginger ale plant.

The structure known as the "railroad house," situated on Littleton street, Chelmsford Center, which is to be torn down to permit the enlargement of the Chelmsford Ginger Ale company plant, will deprive the town of one of its most historic buildings. According to the "History of Chelmsford," compiled by the late Rev. Wilson Waters, former rector of All Saints church, the house was built in 1677, for Rev. Thomas Clarke, second minister in the town of Chelmsford.

Records show that the town agreed, at the time of Rev. Mr. Clarke's coming, "to pay 60 pounds in money towards the purchase of Corsers land lying in Chelmsford." The house

provided was of ample proportions, being 40 by 20 feet, two stories in height, with an ell 16 feet square for a kitchen.

There is good reason to believe that the house was the parsonage later occupied by his successors in the ministry, Rev. Samson Stoddard and Rev. Ebenezer Bridge. At that time, the building stood upon the site of the present passenger depot, and was removed to the present location in Littleton street when the railroad was put through the village in 1872. The house has been enlarged by the addition of a wing which faces Littleton street, the old part facing east corresponding in width and height to the house built for Mr. Clarke, although now somewhat longer.

When the house was remodelled about 53 years ago, the walls of one room were found to be lined with planks. According to records, five families were assigned to Mr. Thomas Clarke's house, besides his own. The explanation is that these five families were to resort to his house for safety, in case of an Indian attack. This fact explains the object of the plank lining found in the walls of the old house, and supports the belief that it is the identical house built by the town for Mr. Clarke 260 years ago. In addition to the old house, which stands beside the old depot, two cottages located between it and the present ginger ale plant also will be razed to make way for the new structure.



1677 Railroad House - Demolished in 1937 to make way for Ginger Ale Co. expansion