

THE THAYER HOMESTEAD & 2B OAK STREET

By Sue Cooper

[Thayer Homeplace, Choate Park, and the Stone Mill - West Medway, MA](#)

Summary

The story begins with the Partridges of Medfield. The first Partridge arrived in Medfield in 1653 and like most of the people who came to live there was a farmer. His grandson Jonathan "drew land" in Medway in 1713 and lived there as a farmer. He was Selectman there in 1738. He sold his farm to his brother James in 1742. James lived there all his life and had 6 sons and 6 daughters. James grandson Joel (b.1784) lived in Medway and in 1807 married Sarah Clark (d.1820) and had 4 children: Clark, Stephen, Joel Gilbert, and Sarah Ann.

Philo Sanford came to Medway and married Lydia Whiting in 1764. They had a large house behind Bee Hive Corner close to the Sanford Mill area on Sanford Street. One of their children David (b.1801) would become Pastor of the Medway Village Church from 1838-75; another child Joanna would become Joel Partridge's second wife. Sixty years later Joannas grandchild Emma Sarah Thayer would marry David's grandchild Sanford Lyman Cutler.

In 1820 Joel married Joanna Sanford and they had one surviving child Lydia (b.1830). In 1836 Joel bought 13 acres of land on the north side of Oak Street and west of Chicken Brook. An early map (Hales Survey 1831) shows a small road off of Oak Street leading to the place. He built his dwelling house there, established his homestead there, and farmed. His landholdings would grow to 70 acres.

Their daughter Lydia Sanford Partridge would attend the Mt Holyoke Female Seminary in 1848 and 49. She would return to West Medway as a schoolteacher. A letter to a friend shows a romantic interest before Addison Thayer. In October 1848 there was a letter to Lydia from Olive writing about Lydia's "dearest Stephen." Essays of Lydia's during these school years depict topics of interest at that time.

1-6-1849 "Education"
2-3-1848 "Cleopatra"
2-17-1849 "Soliloquy of a School Girl"
3-3-1849 "Musings on a Delightful Evening of Spring"
3-16-1849 "Mothers Influence"
3-30-1849 "Infancy of Moses"
5-26-1849 "Old Letters"
7-14-1849 "The Warrior"

There was also a letter from one of her West Medway students dated Sept 26, 1849:

To: Lydia S Partridge, teacher
From:
I am your Affectionate Scholar,
L. Francis Sparrow

Just east of the Partridge Homestead on Oak Street was Cephas Thayer's box factory.

Cephas Thayer (b.1789) moved to West Medway from Bellingham, married Lavinia Adams in 1813, established his homestead on Village Street just west of Chicken Brook, and was a farmer. Cephas and Lavinia had one surviving child, Addison (b.1814). In 1813, with Luther Metcalf Jr and Joel Hunt, Cephas established a factory for the manufacture of machines for cotton and woolen goods at the Charles River in West Medway. In 1827, Cephas purchased the land north and south of Main Street at Chicken Brook along with the rights to use the water to power mills. On the north side of Main Street, he built a dam (forming Choate Pond) to power the box board mill he had there east of the Partridge homestead.

In 1838 on the south side of Main Cephas built a second dam and mill using the same water for power, and in 1846 he gave his son Addison half ownership of the Stone Mill he had established there: "50% of 6.25 acres land with the stone factory and machine shop and all other outbuildings". In 1856, Cephas sold the remaining 50% to Addison: "on both side of Chicken Brook...with stone mill and shop, lumber house and coal house...with all the privileges including the dam for said mill...hereto fore owned in common by said Cephas and Addison Thayer jointly". Review of West Medway maps and historical documents from 1846 to 1888 list Thayer mills named: C. Thayer Box Board Mill, AP Thayer Thread Mill, AP Thayer Machine Shop, West Medway Mallet Company, and Rawhide Mallet Company.

In the 1850s with all the farmland occupied, the mills along Main Street gave non-inheriting sons and daughters an opportunity to stay and earn a living and start home and family in Medway Today these wooden mills along Main Street are gone with only the Thayer Stone Mill area at Chicken Brook remaining.

In October 1852, Joel Partridge died at 68 years of age. He left his wife Joanna his Homestead of 13 acres (2B Oak), a new house next door (2 Oak) on 1/4 acre land (Jos. Coolidge tenant), 10 acres of pastureland, and all his household provisions, furniture, livestock, farming tools, and personal property. To his 5 children, the remaining estate was divided equally. This included about 70 acres of farmland, and buildings throughout Town.

In January 1853, Joanna sold all of her inheritance to her children, with the exception of the new house on 1/4 acre of land (2 Oak). In February 1853, the Partridge children sold the homestead lot and 4 acres of tillage land to Addison Thayer (age 39) who married their sister Lydia Partridge (age 22) in April. Joanna died a week later, leaving her house and land to her only child Lydia Partridge Thayer.

Addison and Lydia Thayer moved into the Partridge Homestead (2B Oak) and made it their home, raising 3 children there. Their home was close to the brook, and pond, the mills, and the center of West Medway where the Church, stores, and post office could be found.

During the 1850s and 1860s Addison traveled through the Midwest. Lydia received mail from Fort Dodge, Iowa Falls, Council Bluffs, Lewis, and Dubuque IA, Milwaukee, WI, Chicago IL, and Kansas City in 1856. Also, in 1856 Lydia sent \$700. to pay for the Iowa Homestead they intended to move to. In 1856 a letter from Lydia to Addison mentioned the "village in which you had purchased...change of name from Centralia to Joyette".

Letters from 1856 and 57 show Addison in business with the Stafford Western Emigration Company (1856-1865), and Davenport and Wheeler Land Agents in Lewis, IA concerning his buying land in Cass County, Adair County, and in Lewis Township, Iowa.

(Note: other information shows the Strafford Western Emigration Company (1847-1873) intending to establish a "Congregationalist" town in Minnesota named "Zumbrota".)

In 1872, Addison inherited all the property of his aunt Charlotte Adams Slocumb; this included her home at 6 Slocumb Place, Cushings Block at 195 Main St, the west end of Bullards Tavern at the corner of Main and Slocumb, 8 acres of land between Main and Highland, and 4 acres of land between Main and Oak Streets.

The following year 1873, his father Cephas Thayer died and with the exception of his homestead on Village Street left to second wife Clara Hunt, all his Medway properties went to his only surviving child Addison. These properties included the 8 acres of land that enclosed Choate Pond and the water privilege, 3.5 acres of land with barn on the north side of Main Street, 1/3 acre land with house on Main Street, and 5 acres of meadowland on the south side of Main Street.

Fifteen years later in 1888 when Addison was 75 yrs old, his family went to court for permission for Lydia to be his legal guardian: "To the Honorable Judge of the Probate Court...that Addison P. Thayer is an insane person, and incapable of taking car of himself...your petitioners therefore pray that Lydia S. Thayer... be appointed guardian".

Addison died in 1889 without a will. His son Addison Sanford was a schoolteacher in Portland Maine. One daughter Emma was married and living in New York City; his other daughter Clara Louise was married and living in New Haven Connecticut. His children let all his property go to their mother Lydia.

Lydia (age 62) began to sell her properties

In 1892 Lydia sold the Thayer Homeplace, the 1 acre "well lot" between Main and Oak Streets, and a two acre lot across Mechanic Street from the Homplace to Burnett Fairbairn for \$1.00. The Homeplace belonged to the Fairbairn family until 1968.

In 1893 Lydia sold the Stone Mill building lot for \$1.00 to Lillian Hodgeson, a 25 year old unmarried schoolteacher in Medway. Her brothers were still running the Stone Mill Company, manufacturing woolen goods, in 1924.

In 1890 Lydia Thayer sold her 8 acre Choate Pond lot to Mary Fales, who 3 years later sold it to Lillian Hodgeson, new owner of the Stone Mill, for \$1.00. In 1914 Lillian sold it to the Medway Park Association.

From 1888 to 1893 Lydia sold her West Medway properties with the exception of the Old Tavern Stand or Old Hotel at the corner of Slocumb and Main Streets. She gave the property to her daughter Emma in 1902. Lydia resided there until her death in 1914.

In 1914, Lydia had money in 7 banks. Her estate was divided equally among her 3 children with certain exceptions and gifts. Her will reflected her concern over the education of her granddaughters, leaving money for their education at Mount Holyoke College of South Hadley Massachusetts. She also stipulated that if her bequest was not used as designated, that the money should be given to Tuskegee Institute in Alabama for the advancement of the colored race.

Lydia asked for cremation; her name and date of death is written on a tall stone she shares with her husband Addison and his aunt and uncle Christopher and Charlotte Slocumb in Evergreen Cemetery.

Sources:

Medway Library History Room
Norfolk County Probate Records
Norfolk County Registry of Deeds
PartridgeNest database
Evergreen Cemetery headstones
Ancestry.com
Rootsweb
FamilySearch.com

Massachusetts Historical Society:

Cutler Family Papers
Ms. N-175

Sanford Family Papers
Ms. N-871