

"Harvard University Woodlands in Petersham"

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When you drive over the main travelled road from Athol to Petersham, you may see, about five miles from the former town, on a rise of ground a dozen rods or so, to the left of the highway, a long, three story frame house, with a mansard roof. The house was once white, and the window shutters were green, but time and the elements have played havoc with the paint. All the indications point to the fact that the house has long been uninhabited.

By next spring, however, or at the latest by next fall, the solitude of the place will be gone, and in its stead will doubtless be heard the Harvard "Rah; Rah; Rah;" for the house will be the headquarters of the forestry division of the graduate school of applied science of Harvard University, where the students of forestry and their instructors will be stationed.

The building, which is locally known as the "Community House," and is about 3 1/2 miles from Petersham village, has a rather interesting history, from the fact that it once sheltered a semireligious and semiindustrial socialistic body whose legal name was the Adonai Shomo society. No one in Petersham can tell you what the words Adonai Shomo mean, but perhaps you may find it in a Hebrew dictionary.

Branch of Millerites

The community was founded in 1859 by a man named Howland and two sisters named Hawkes. They belonged to one of the branches of the Millerites, who believed that the world was coming to a speedy end, although they were careful not to assign a definite day that important event. They also believed that no member of their little community would ever die.

The body was very small at first, containing not more than half a dozen members, but within a year or so it had twice as many adherents, who possessed all things in common and looked up to Howland as their spiritual leader.

He was a very honest and upright man, and a persistent advocate of the belief that neither he nor any other member of the community would ever see death. But accidents will happen, and unfortunately after getting the community affairs into a prosperous condition, was kicked by a colt and died.

His death did not shake the faith of the Adonai Shomo members, who chose a Mr Fuller of Athol as Howland's successor. From him the members of the community came to be known as "Fullerites." The new leader, who was wholly esteemed by not only by his adherents but also throughout the whole region as a sincere and most devoted man, continued the prosperity of the community.

The small farmhouse, which had been the home of the members, was replaced by the commodious building which will be used by the Harvard students. Adjoining farms were gradually acquired by the community, until about 800 acres were included in the estate. The membership increased, and at one time there were about 35-40 persons living in the house. The farm was well and economically managed. Produce was going out by the ton, and wealth was rolling in.

Adonai Shomo was noted far and wide for the extra fine quality of its jellies, jams, preserves, cider, and wine. Even to this day the older residents of Petersham will roll their eyes

heavenward and smack their lips at the recollection of the delicious jellies and fine flavor of the wine.

The socialistic community was apparently a most successful experiment, because it was honestly managed, and the members were industrious. It went through on a much smaller scale the experience repeated years ago at Zion City, Ill., by John Alexander Dowie, who for a time very successfully combined business and religion. Nor was the education of the 10 or 12 children in the community neglected. The town of Petersham built a schoolhouse for them close by the Athol road. The building, which figured prominently a few years ago in the case of Burns, the Athol jewelry peddler who disappeared mysteriously and is supposed to have been murdered, has recently been taken down and put up as a dwelling on the Barre road, southeast of Petersham village.

Like his predecessor, Mr Fuller believed in the immortality of the body for all members of the community. He could prove his theory by argument, but not by facts, for he, too, died.

Made Things Mum

Then Asa Richards, who had been a successful hotel keeper at Dana, and who made up in executive ability what he lacked in spirituality, took charge of the Adoni Shomo affairs. For a time he made things mum.

"Old Ace Richards was the sharpest businessman I ever see," said a Petersham resident to the reporter. "Wunst I went to buy a calf from him, and he kept me waiting for an hour and a half while he conducted religious services, then he cheated me on the calf."

In the days of the community's prosperity religious services were held in the chapel, a long, 2-storey building behind the house, later used as a stable and henhouse. The building will serve well as a barn for the Harvard contingent.

For a time the community flourished under Richard's management. Converts came in now and then, and among them were 2 women from Vermont, who brought with them \$10,000, which they put into the community. They never saw it again.

2 men from Boston, who said they had been sent by the Lord to help run the community, lived there for a while, but Richards wasn't in need of assistance. There were lively scenes between him and the apostles of Boston, and they were finally banished.

Little by little the community began to dwindle. Several deaths occurred among the members, which didn't tend to confirm the survivors in the immortality of the body. Financial affairs began to assume a bad aspect, and gradually as a business venture the community went to pieces.

Finally, about 10 years ago, Richards died, leaving a rather involved estate, which was bought by a Mr Leonard, cigar manufacturer of Boston who paid about \$4000 for it, cut off timber worth \$2500 and then his heirs sold the 850 acres to James W. Brooks of Petersham for \$5500.

This much by way of reminiscence of one of the very numerous religio-economic experiments in community life which flourished for a time in the latter half of the 19th century in many parts of the country. It is chiefly interesting from the fact that the scene of the experiment is now to be the headquarters of one of the important departments of a great institution of learning.

Fine Forest Lands

Petersham, which lies south and southeast of Athol, abounds in fine forest lands, upon which grow the best body of timber to be found on an equal area in Massachusetts. The lands have not been denuded of their timber chiefly because they have come into the possession of Brooks, a native of Petersham, and its most public-spirited citizen. His father was a noted lawyer, and he himself is a graduate of the Harvard law school class of 1858.

Little by little Mr Brooks added to his holdings, acquiring one piece of woodland after another, until, before the recent sale to Harvard university, he owned between 2500 and 3000 acres of valuable timberland. About 1800 acres of this, together with 200-300 acres of adjoining lots and holdings, have been transferred, to hold in perpetuity.

Thus the cherished dream of Mr Brooks, to preserve for all time the forest growth of Petersham, and likewise to render it of use to the community and to the cause of education has been realized. Whatever happens to the other forests of New England, the woods of Petersham will remain.

The Petersham woods, whose purchase by Harvard was made possible by the generosity of John S Ames of Boston, are in 3 separate tracts in different parts of the town. There is first the Adoni Shomo, or community tract of 850 acres in the northeastern section of Petersham. This tract includes the slopes of Prospect Hill, the highest point of land in the town, which rises behind the community house. Only a small part of this land is in sight from the Athol road.

A Counterfeiter

The second tract lies north/northwest of Petersham village and contains about 600 acres around the shores of a swampy pond, to which the poetic name of Meadow Water has been given by some imaginative mind. For years the pond was known as Tom Swamp, from the legend that, once, long ago, a mysterious character by the name of Tom, who was believed to be a counterfeiter, lived on its shores and is supposed to have disappeared in its waters. No one in Petersham remembers Tom's last name, or even if he had one. Meadow Water, or some parts of it, are not unpicturesque. Handsome pines of various ages fringe its sides, and not far away on the slope of a hill are a lot of noble chestnut trees, perhaps 60 years old. The pond is about a mile and a half from the village.

The third tract of the Harvard woodland lies in the southeastern part of the town, for about 3 miles along the valley of the beautiful Swift River. Here is one of the beauty spots of Petersham. The tract begins near East Street, runs southeast along the river to Brooks pond, across the Barre road, and for a mile and a half further down the valley. In these woods Mr Brooks has built miles and miles of the most beautiful forest drives in New England. The timber is mostly pine. On both sides of the drives the underbrush has been cut off for quite a distance and the lower branches of the trees trimmed off, so that for hours one may walk or drive through a most delightful pine grove. These woodland walks will always be open to the public, at least to that part of the public which is fortunate enough to visit Petersham.

Lovely Body of Water

On the road to Barre, about 2 miles from the village of Petersham, lies Brooks Pond, as lovely a body of water as there is in the state. The Swift River flows into the pond, and is also its outlet. There is a dam at the lower end which once furnished water power for a sawmill that did a flourishing business and gave employment to a number of men who lived nearby in a little

settlement called Slab City, and to this day that name has stuck to the spot, although the 'city' has vanished. Water in considerable quantities is still running to waste over the dam, and it is not unlikely that the power be utilized in some way.

On East Street, near the beginning of the Swift River tract, are Roaring Brook and Wilson's Pond, two of the "show places" of Petersham. They are scarcely a mile from the village, and are very attractive, both in summer and in winter. The town abounds in natural beauty, all of which are accessible to the pedestrian, and many of which of now are now on the Harvard woodland tracts.

The professors and instructors in the forestry division at Harvard consider the institution particularly in its possession of the Petersham lands, which, as Assistant Professor R. T. Fisher says, "will furnish a working model of systematic logging." The timber being of various ages, from the young sapling to the mature tree, a fine opportunity is thus afforded both for forestry instruction and for practical lumbering. In this respect the Petersham woodlands have superior advantages over any other forest area of the same size that is accessible.

Just as there are forests in Germany which for many centuries have given a yearly crop of timber, as an orchid produces its apples every fall, and today they are in better condition than ever before, so the Petersham woods will be treated. Each year the older trees will be cut down, but with such discrimination that their removal will only add to the value and beauty of the forest and at the same time the younger trees will gradually be brought into good growing condition by improvement cuttings and the reproduction of bare and cut-over area will be provided for either by planting or by natural seeding.

Source of Revenue

It has been estimated that about 300,000 board feet of lumber may be cut annually at first and that this amount, more than enough of itself to defray all the expenses of the forestry division at Petersham, will later be considerably increased, so that the division will in time become a steady and unfailing source of revenue to the university. To attain this end, the Petersham woods will be managed on a strictly business basis, and this will contribute to their other purpose of forestry instruction.

Harvard, Yale, and the University of Michigan are the only institutions of learning which have full courses in forestry, although there are many other colleges and universities which offer partial courses.

Any college graduate who can show sufficient preparation in geology, botany, chemistry, mathematics and surveying is admitted to the Harvard forestry division. There are now about 40 such students, with a corps of four instructors.

Beginning next spring, or next fall, they will go to Petersham and be domiciled at the Adonai Shomo house, which will be made ready for occupancy. The house contains 18 large sleeping rooms on the second and third floors, while on the first floor there are two spacious rooms running the whole width of the building, which will serve finely as lecture or recitation rooms.

Although the headquarters are at some distance from the Meadow Water tract, and four to six miles distant from the Swift River tract, the opportunities for research and for work in the immediate neighborhood are unlimited, and, as Professor Fisher very astutely remarks, the students will be "under the supremely beneficial influence of a prolonged common residence apart from other distractions."

Trained Foresters

Forestry as an occupation is becoming each year more and more important, as well as attractive. Holders of the degree of master of forestry are in great demand, because the public is rapidly awakening to the urgent necessity of forest preservation. An efficient graduate forester has no difficulty in obtaining a government position, which pays at the start \$1000 a year and expenses. Most of the states are employing state foresters. All the great lumbering companies and many individual owners of forest areas are eagerly looking for trained foresters.

It is said on the best of authority that the great lumber manufacturers are as much alarmed at the steadily diminishing lumbering supply, and as anxious to avert the threatened danger, as President Roosevelt himself, who has repeatedly called it to the attention of the nation.

Germany has a much smaller forested area than the United States, and yet there is no lumber famine in that country, because the resources are wisely husbanded on scientific principles. The same methods both of forest utilization and of forest preservation will be applied at Petersham, and the beneficent results will be felt throughout the land.