

The Harriet Wilson Project

Presents

Site selection and information researched, compiled and edited

by

JerriAnne Boggis for The Harriet Wilson Project

Sources includes:

George Ramsdell, The History of Milford;

Winifred A. Wright, The Granite Town;

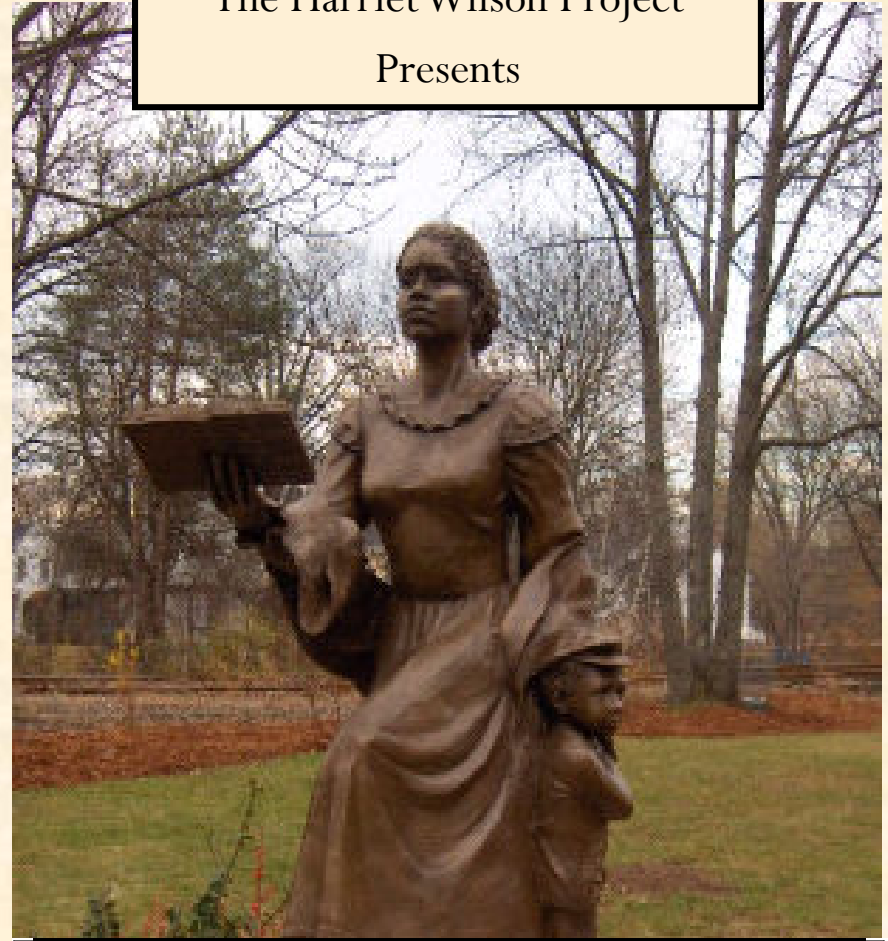
Andrew E. Rothovius, The Lodge;

Carol Brink, Harps in the Wind;

Barbara White, *New Information on Harriet Wilson and the Belmont Family*.

Gabrielle Foreman and Reginald H. Pitts, 2005 edition of Harriet Wilson's novel Our Nig.

Special thanks to Polly Cote and Louis Carey from the Milford Historical Society for their help with research .



© 2005The Harriet Wilson Project

The

Harriet

Wilson

Project

For additional information or to arrange

a group tour please contact us at:

The Harriet Wilson Project

614 Nashua St, #121

Milford, NH 03055

Phone: 603-494-4475

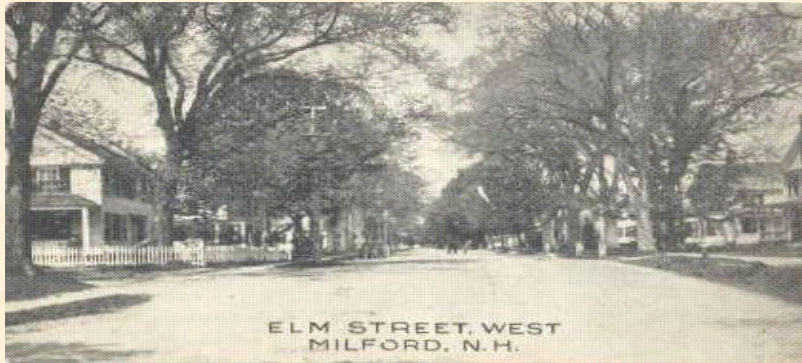
www.harrietwilsonproject.net

MILFORD, HARRIET WILSON,
& THE ANTI-SLAVERY
MOVEMENT



A BLACK HERITAGE TOUR

BLACK HERITAGE TOUR SITES



MILFORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Although settlements in the territory began as early as 1738, Milford was not incorporated as a town until 1794. All of Milford's territory south of the river (except the Mile Slip) was known as Dunstable prior to 1746; from 1746 to 1770 as Monson; from 1770 to 1794 as Amherst, and on the north side of the river prior to 1794, as Narragansit No. 3.

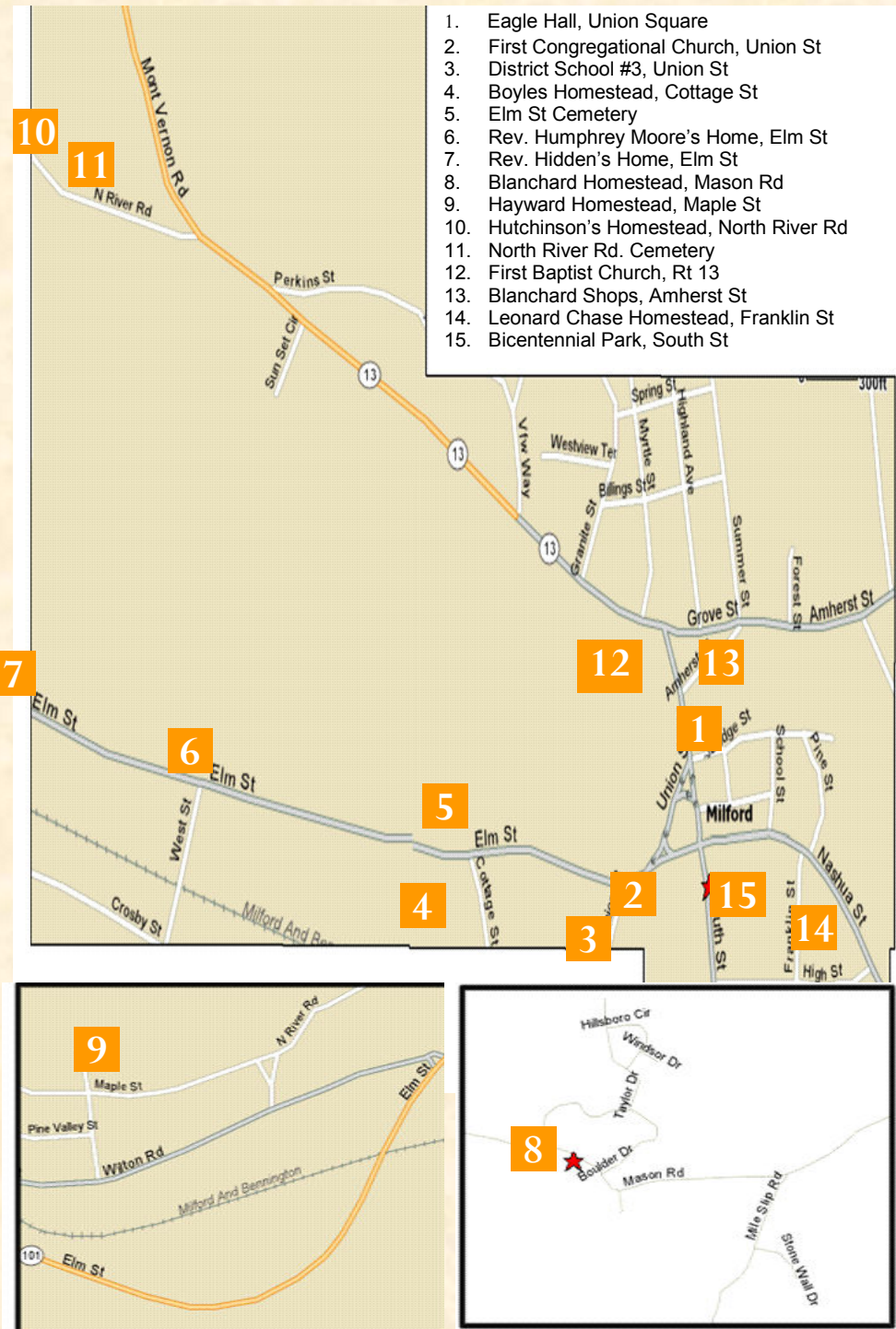
In 1741, John Shepard built a mill on the north bank of the Souhegan River near a shallow spot that could be forded easily. His mill became known as the "mill by the ford" thus the town got its name — Milford.

Slavery was never legalized or established by law in New Hampshire, but it was tolerated and regulated. Slaves were owned and taxed as property up to 1789. The existence of one slave in Milford is seen as a footnote in Ramsdell's *History of Milford*.

"Captain Josiah Crosby came to Milford in 1753, he brought with him two children one white and the other colored."

They named the child Jeffrey and sold him at the age of five when they moved to Billerica. An earlier documentation for the year 1743 seen in Rothovius's book *The Lodge*, introduces Boad:

"While the Groton residents never actually settled in the Gore, they drove cattle up each spring to pasture in the meadows of Spaulding Brook. A Negro Slave named Boad looked after these cattle and the site of his 225-year-old cabin is probably marked by a rude foundation on the Mason side of the Mile Slip's western line."

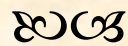


15



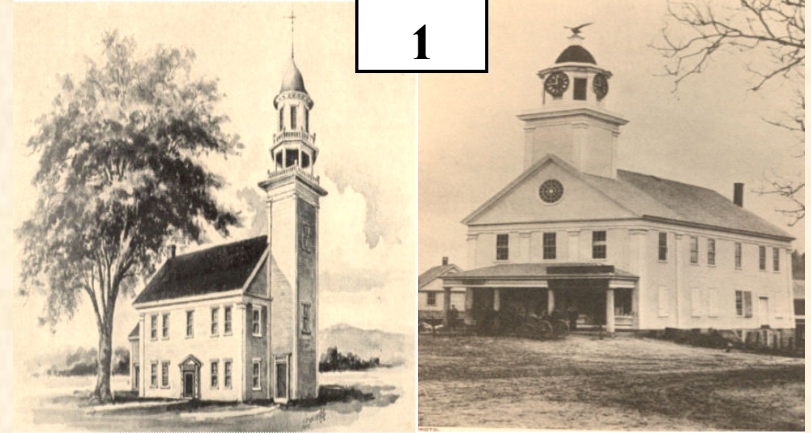
Face Detail for the Wilson Memorial
© Fern Cunningham

BICENTENNIAL PARK SOUTH STREET



Bicentennial Park was added to the list of Milford's parks in 1973. The Conservation Commission purchased the Woodward property and began beautification. Work was completed on the three acre park in 1975 in time to be dedicated on July 27 as part of Milford's Bicentennial celebrations. Bicentennial park is the home of the Harriet E. Wilson Memorial installed Fall 2006.

1

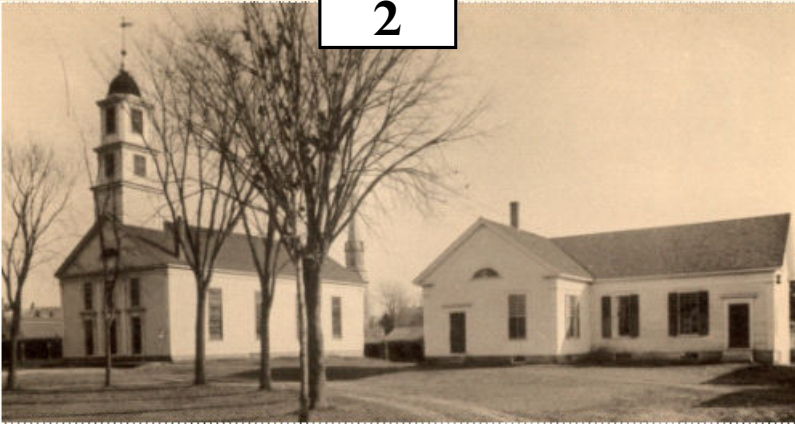


EAGLE HALL, UNION SQUARE



Eagle Hall was the first meetinghouse built in Milford. It was started in 1784 and completed in 1796. It was the goal of the town to establish a free form of government and to ingrain into the early life of the town, the Hebrew and Roman principles of justice and law. The meetinghouse was known as the Church of Amherst until Milford was incorporated in 1794. It then became the First Congregational Church of Milford. Reverend Moore served as the town pastor from 1802 to 1836. By 1832, the feeling was increasing that the legal relationship of town and church ought to come to an end. On August 25, 1832, Moore and his supporters became a separate religious society and took the name of the First Congregational Society of Milford. Other religious denominations continued to share the meetinghouse.

On January 4 and 5, 1843, Eagle Hall hosted an anti slavery convention that was attended by famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Parker Pillsbury, Nathan P. Rogers, C.L. Remond, Abby Kelley, Stephen S. Foster, George Latimer and Frederick Douglass.



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNION STREET

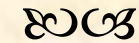


Unable to buy the meetinghouse from the town, the First Congregational Church Society decided to leave the town meetinghouse and build their own church on Union Street. The new church was dedicated in 1834. Rev Moore who had been the pastor for the town for thirty-four years , preached in the new house only 17 months before he retired.

The Church and society had from the beginning espoused the temperance cause, and supported the anti-slavery movement. Several of its pastors including Rev. Moore, Rev. Warner, and Rev. Hidden (who married Wilson), were vocal and actively working against the institution of slavery. In 1844 the Church published a series of resolutions denouncing slavery and invited all the churches in Hillsborough county to meet at a convention in Milford to discuss the anti-slavery question and to take some action against the subject.

“ All Congregational churches were not as advanced as the brethren at Milford, and not been willing to indorse the position of the denomination at large upon the slavery question, and because the church was not ready to cut loose from all pro-slavery churches, a score or more of respected and prominent members of the church here, withdrew, and were called “come-outers”

THE LEONARD CHASE HOUSE HIGH STREET



Leonard Chase was born in Millbury, Mass., August 7, 1811. He moved to Milford and built his house in 1834 after marrying a Milford woman, Mary Isabella Dickey .

Mr. Chase from his boyhood had been an anti-slavery man. He was a Garrisonian abolitionist, the vice president for New Hampshire’s antislavery society, and a subscriber to the *Liberator*. His home in Milford was one of the stations on the underground railroad.

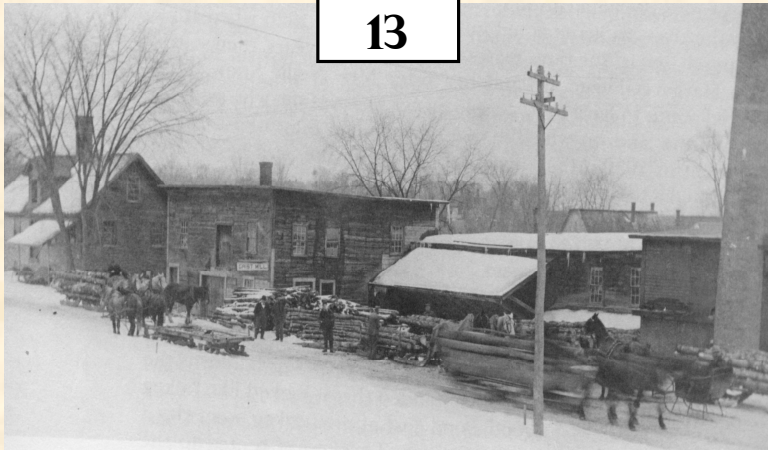
History has it from Chase’s daughter, Hannah L. Chase, that one stormy night word came to the house that the United States officers were on the track of a fugitive who was being harbored by the family. It was a time of intense anxiety to the household. Mr. Chas thinking that the fugitive might be safer outside of the village, harnessed his horse and carried the man to Luther Melendy’s farmhouse in Amherst.

In 1843 Chase partnered with Putnam to form the Putnam & Chase . Ramsdell writes:

“The enterprise of this firm, which was a powerful factor in the business of the town at a growing period in its history, has never been equaled in business in the town.”

Chase represented the town in the legislature in 1850 and 1851. He was a member of the state senate for two years and a member of the constitutional convention in 1852.

13



BLANCHARD'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

3



DISTRICT SCHOOLHOUSE # 3

UNION STREET



OTHER SITES



West Street Cemetery — Humphrey Moore owned the land where the West Street Cemetery is located. The town bought the land from him in 1851 for \$623.55. It is the resting place of Rev. Humphrey Moore and Samuel and Mary Boyles.

Schoolhouse District number 7 was located on the corner of Foster Road and Federal Hill Road. Built of stone in 1831, it was torn down in 1871 and a larger wooden building was constructed. On October 8, 1835, an anti-slavery meeting was held at the school house on Federal Hill. It was one of the first distinctively anti slavery meeting held in the town.

Milford Poor Farm. In 1831 the town purchased Isaac Lund's property to house the poor farm, which it occupied for that purpose until 1868, when it was sold. The town has had no pauper's farm since then. Harriet Wilson and/or her son George Wilson, is listed on the Milford Poor List.

The schoolhouse for District No 3 stood at the corner of Old Wilton Rd and Phelan Road. In the 19th century it became known as the Howard School, after Jacob Howard. Pupils from the Wilton line to the old Hayward Farms Restaurant attended this school. After the Pine Valley mills were built in 1866, and a schoolhouse was built nearer the mills in 1872, the membership of No. 3 decreased until in 1891 it was closed. In 1910 the school house was moved to Union Street where it is part of the house at 54 Union Street.

A Colonial law of New Hampshire passed in 1719 made it mandatory for each Province having fifty or more house holders to provide a schoolmaster to teach children to read and write. The voluntary aspect of the law relating to school districts was amended in 1808 to make it imperative for town authorities to subdivide the town into school districts. By the early 1800's Milford had 7 school districts. Officers of the various districts expected their lines to be respected, and in the old records of District No. 1 , dated October 1804, we read: "voted that Master and Mistress be not allowed to teach any scholars who do not belong to this Class (district)."

Nehemiah Hayward is listed in a notebook of records dating from 1797 as one of the founders for this school. Harriet Wilson, who was indentured at the Hayward's, went to school at No. 3 from 1832 to 1834 for three months a year for three years.

4

ELM STREET CEMETERY



The custom which prevailed in the eastern part of the state of burying the dead in family yards on private estates, was never followed to any considerable extent in the southern part of the state. Public burying grounds were laid out in Milford before the town was incorporated. In 1788, William Crosby gave the town this acre of land to be used as a burying ground.

George Blanchard, his wife Elizabeth, his sons John and George W., his grandsons Samuel and William, are buried in this cemetery.

5

SITE OF THE BOYLES HOME COTTAGE STREET



Samuel Boyles, born in Beverly, Mass., Jan 22, 1806, came to Milford with his wife Mary Elizabeth in 1833 from Marshfield, Vt. He was a carpenter by trade. He built his home at this location in 1833. The Boyles took in boarders and paupers, as stated in the 1850 Federal Census return for Milford that shows "Harriet Adams," later Harriet Wilson, living at this address.

Foreman and Pitts in their 2005 edition of *Our Nig*, suggests that Wilson's character Mrs. Hoggs might be Mrs. Boyles. They also suggest that the Boyles may have been Spiritualists citing the inscription on Samuel Boyles's tombstone — "translated to the Spirit World." A number of tombstones marking the resting place of know spiritualists bears similar inscription.

The Boyles's home was torn down in 1969 when the American Legions house was built.

11

NORTH RIVER RD. CEMETERY

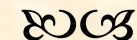


The North River Road Cemetery is the oldest burial ground in Milford. As soon as the first settlers arrived in town, land was set aside for the burial of the dead. The Hutchinsons along with other prominent first families are buried here.

The Hutchinsons were in the habit of having family reunions in Milford and always visited this cemetery to conduct a service honoring their dead.

12

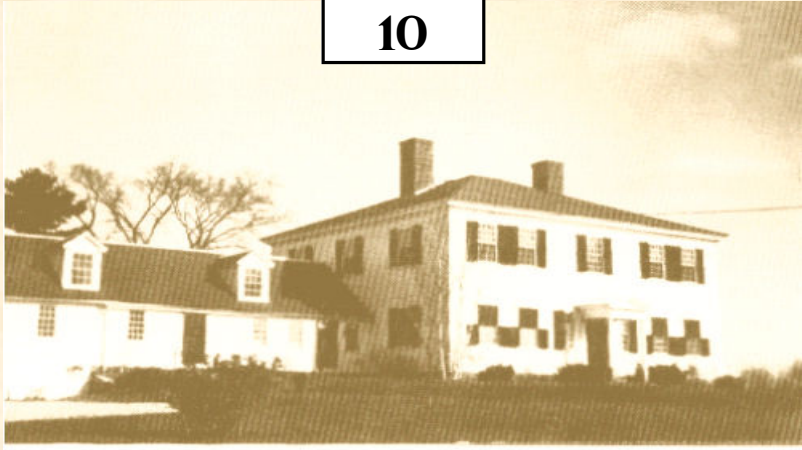
BAPTIST CHURCH



The Baptist church was organized in 1809 with 29 members. By 1813 the membership had increased, and the church was incorporated. In 1816 a meetinghouse was built on Granite Street. It was moved in 1836 to the corner of Mont Vernon and Grove streets. It was sold to the Methodists in 1877 and the Baptists moved their worship center to South Street.

In 1839, the Baptist Church was the site of the Hutchinson Family Singers first public concert.

10



HUTCHINSON FAMILY HOMESTEAD
RIVER RD



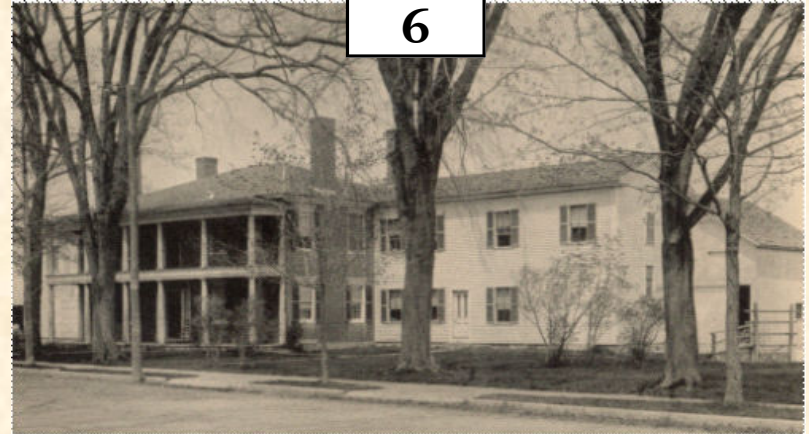
Just exactly when this house was built is not certain, The main house was built by Joshua Burnham after his return from the Revolutionary War. The house was built to be an inn . There was a store in the ell of the house and a sign outside that read: Rum Sold Here.

In 1824 Burnham sold the house and property to Jesse and Polly Hutchinson. Thirteen of their sixteen children were raised here, some of whom became famous as the Hutchinson Family Singers. The Hutchinson Singers were known as not just “performers,” as the most famous antislavery newspaper put it, “but as abolitionists.”

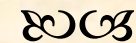
There is a long documented history of the Hutchinsons antislavery activities and relationship with Frederic Douglass. He undoubtedly stayed at this house on his many visits to Milford.

Linked to the antislavery front line through the Hutchinsons and others, Milford was no isolated outpost in the struggle for abolition.

6



REV. HUMPHREY MOORE HOME
ELM STREET



Rev. Humphrey Moore was born in Princeton, Mass., Oct 19, 1778. He came to Milford in 1802, and was the first settled clergyman in the town. On April 5, 1803 the Rev. married Hannah Peabody, third daughter of William Peabody, the son of one of the original settlers of the town. In 1804 he bought the tavern and 104 acre farm from Thaddeus Grime upon which he settled and remained the rest of his life. He would later add more than 300 acres of non taxed (ministerial property was not taxed) land to his holdings. Parishioners feared that he would extend his boundaries until all the land in town would be non-taxable.

His house on Elm street was built in 1820. There was once an underground passageway leading from the cellar towards the river. Tradition is that it was used as an Underground Railroad station.

Rev. Moore, a strong abolitionist, was elected by antislavery men to the House of Representatives in 1840 and to the New Hampshire State Senate in 1841; in both places he “gave stirring orations against slavery.”

7

REVEREND E. N. HIDDEN'S HOME

The 1854 map of Milford locates Hidden's home at this spot, #122 Elm Street. He was the minister for the Congregational Church from 1849—1857. Hidden married Harriet Adams and George Wilson on October 6, 1851.

8

GEORGE BLANCHARD'S HOME

MASON RD

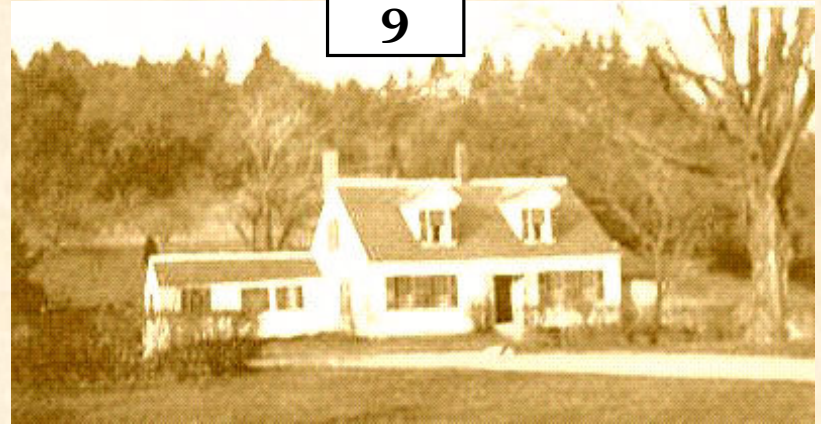
Revolutionary War vet George Blanchard, a colored man, so described in Ramsdell's *History of Milford*, was a veterinary surgeon who moved to Milford from Wilton in 1804 when he bought his farm in the Mile Slip area. Curiously, Wright's history of Milford, published 78 years after Ramsdell's, states "There were no veterinarians recorded in Milford before 1899."

In 1805 Blanchard bought the blacksmith shop on Union Square. Wright writes, "This building *seems* to have come under the ownership of George Blanchard at an early date." Even with the existence of a deed showing Blanchard's ownership of this property, Writes seems not to be sure if Blanchard owned the property.

George Blanchard had 10 children, all were born in Milford. His first wife Hannah died in 1779. His widow Elizabeth died in 1832. George Blanchard died in 1824 at the age of 84. According to a list of soldiers and sailors published by the Massachusetts Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Blanchard is buried in Milford in the "Old Burying ground." His son, Timothy Blanchard, succeeded him as a veterinary surgeon in the town. On the 1854 map of Milford, Blanchard's farm and the school that stood on his property (District Schoolhouse #4) is renamed the P.F. Shedd Farm and school.

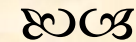
Foreman and Pitts in their 2005 edition of Harriet Wilson's novel, *Our Nig*, suggests that Harriet Wilson was born on Blanchard's farm.

9



HAYWARD'S HOMESTEAD

MAPLE STREET



In 1786 Nehemiah Hayward (The Sire) purchases 118 acres of land from Samuel Bridges in what was then Mile Slip, an unincorporated and thus untaxed bit of land lying between Milford and Wilton. In 1818 he deeded his property to his son Nehemiah Jr. (John Bellmont in *Our Nig*) and daughter Sally. Sally Hayward (Aunt Abby) would have "the right of occupying one undivided half of all buildings except the barn," during her lifetime.

Nehemiah Hayward married Rebecca S. Hutchinson (Mrs. B.) in 1806. When the family moved to Baltimore in 1849, the property passes to Nehemiah P Hayward and his wife Prudence. They then sold the property to his brother Charles. Charles sold the property to his sister Betsy and her husband David Hutchinson.

A photo taken in 1938 by Elizabeth Hayward Hutchinson Patterson, granddaughter of David, identifies this home as the Hayward Homestead, the home where Harriet Wilson would have been indentured.