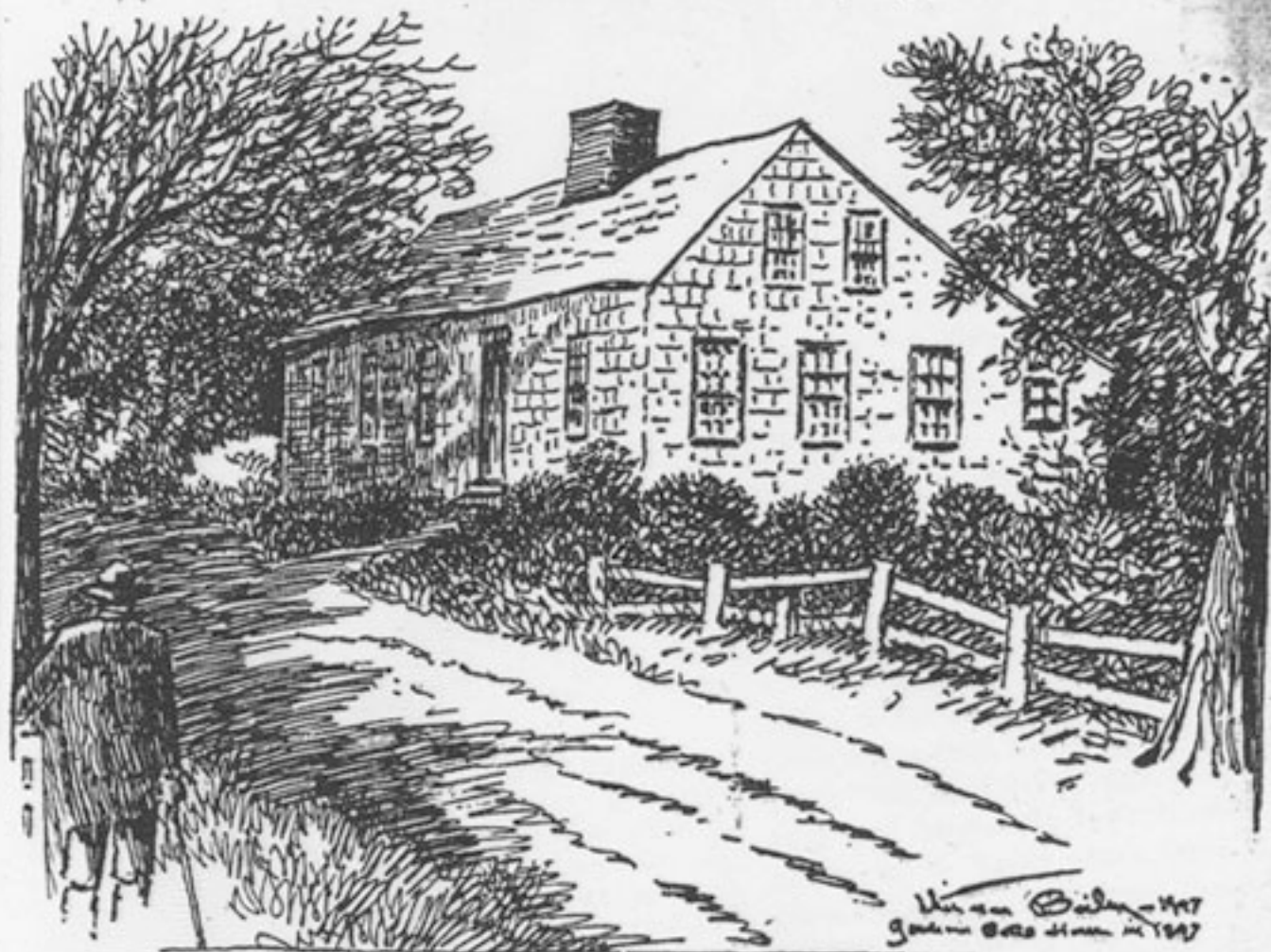


Town's First Blacksmith Lived In Springdale



It was during the Revolution that Gersham Bates, a blacksmith started his shop in what is today known as Springdale. Although there had been several small forges around Stamford, Bates had the first spacious blacksmith shop in town, and therefore received in later years most of the town's trade. The shop was situated on Hope St., directly opposite the old homestead where Gersham Bates lived.

It is said that the blacksmith shop was demolished a little over a century ago, but the old house where Bates lived still stands, and has seen so many changes in its architecture from its earlier days that few would ever believe it as the same homestead shown in the artist's drawing. The drawing is a copy from an old painting when Hope St. was nothing more than a rural highway.

In Gersham Bates' earlier days a passing horse and carriage was a scarcity, and it is said that before the town trade came in if Bates shod three horses a day he considered that business was at its height.

There are vivid accounts of how Bates used to stand in the open door of his blacksmith shop scanning the horizon for some possible customer, and when that customer arrived a bottle of ale was soon uncorked to make the

minutes not seem too long. At that time a hundred-acre farm surrounded both the house and blacksmith shop and the grape arbors were famous for their luscious fruit. Then too there are stories told about the extensive herd of cattle which Gersham Bates owned, many being full-bred Jerseys and a barn was one of the largest in the vicinity where this herd of cattle was housed.

For a long time the old homestead remained in the Bates family, and even up to recent years one finds that the home was owned by William H. Weed who was a grandson of Gersham Bates and who lived to a very old age. It was this fact which was undoubtedly the reason why the homestead in its later years became known as the "Billy" Weed house, few people recalling or ever having heard the name of Gersham Bates.

About 1928 the old homestead was caught in the path of progress as Springdale's Hope St. had become a busy highway, and many small houses had sprung up like mushrooms on what was once the old Bates Farm.

In fact little now remains of those simple years when hitching up "Old Dobbin" was about the only way one could get to town.

—Whitman Bailey.