

THE GALA BARBECUE AND FIELD DAY

October 12, 1916

by Elizabeth M. Schnair
for the Maynard Historical Society

Robert Burns' famous philosophy "the well-laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglae" has proven true to most of us many, many times. It came to my mind when I uncovered this story of an event which took place in Maynard exactly 50 years ago.

The year 1915 was the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Civil War. Although there was no such town as "Maynard, Massachusetts" in 1861, the village of Assabet made up of parts of Sudbury and Stow sent thirty-six men into the war of rebellion. Several G.A.R. men settled here soon after the war. One of these was A. D. Holt, who became commander of the Isaac Davis Post, G.A.R. of Acton. His daughter, Anna, a talented musician and teacher of piano, conceived the idea of raising enough money to erect a memorial in honor of the men who served from this area in the Civil War and the Spanish-American War of 1898. She had given two concerts, one in 1915 and one in June 1916, and donated the proceeds to such a fund. A few public-spirited citizens became interested in her project and offered to help. A committee was organized under the chairmanship of the Rev. A. M. Osgood, minister of the Maynard Methodist Church. Others on this committee were H. J. Dwinells, Miss Anna Holt, Mr. A. D. Holt, Mr. Howard Wilson, and J. J. Hilferty. They petitioned the trustees of the Methodist Church to secure a portion of their lawn at Main and Summer Streets. This petition was approved in August 1916, when the church agreed to deed to the town a grass plot of about 20 feet at the lower end of their lawn.

By now the fund was about \$700.00. The cost of the monument

was estimated at \$2500.00.

At first it was suggested to canvas the whole town to raise the extra money. This was deleted by many prominent businessmen who came up with the idea of celebrating the October 12th holiday with a gala Field Day and Public Barbecue, the proceeds to be given to the Monument Fund. This idea was enthusiastically approved and a Barbecue Committee was formed: C. J. Lynch, P. J. Sullivan, Albert Batley, James Bent and William Naylor.

Everyone in town was urged to make this a successful affair. All Social, fraternal and labor organizations were contacted to get their ideas and suggestions.

A parade was planned to open the festivities. Then a ball game at Crowe Park, followed by a short speaking program, then the dinner, an afternoon of sports, and an evening of dancing. Mr. Osgood described it to be "a great historic and social occasion for the town."

Mr. Louis Arigoni, barbecue man from Canton was contacted and agreed to supervise the barbecue. Understand, this was to be no ordinary cook-out! Mr. Arigoni would roast an 800 pound steer! A few weeks prior to the appointed day, he met with committeemen and marked out a spot at Crowe Park near the baseball backstop suitable for a roasting pit. He directed the pit to be dug by these measurements: 9ft. x 7ft x 2ft. and lined with boulders. He also ordered these supplies:

- 15 bushels of corn
- 30 bags of charcoal
- 20 pounds salt
- 2 pounds pepper

5 barrels of potatoes

50 pounds of butter

120 loaves 10 cent bread!

October 12, 1916 was a beautiful warm fall day, ideal for an outdoor celebration. The steer was put on irons and the fire started at 7:00 the night before. A tent 120ft. X 30ft. with seating capacity of 500 was also erected the previous afternoon. The town was gaily decorated with flags and banners strung across the streets.

The parade started at 9:30 A.M. from Paper Mill Corner (Waltham and Parker Streets) up Main Street to Sudbury Street and thence to Crowe Park. James Mullin led the parade on horseback. Included in the line of march were the Police, the National Band Company 1 of Concord, Alice Newton as a soldier girl, Robert Jackson, as Uncle Sam, Francis Coughlin as a sailor, G.A.R. members, Miss Holt's music class with flags, school children, Maynard Fife and Drum Corps, Summer Hill Lodge, Holy Name Society, Eagles, Polish Society, Scouts from Maynard and Acton.

A ball-game was played at 10:00 A.M. followed by a short program of speakers. Mr. Osgood introduced the following:

Senator Nathan Tufts

Congressman John Jacob Rogers

Dr. John F. (Honey Fitz) Fitzgerald who was then a candidate for the U. S. Senate. He was well-known and liked in Maynard and received a tremendous ovation.

Ex-Senator Sherman Hoar was the final orator.

Then the dinner was announced. About 800 people were fed. Following the dinner was an afternoon of sports and games, and an

evening of dancing. Everyone enjoyed themselves but the affair was a social success only. After meeting expenses of \$900.00, only \$250.00 was realized. This gave the Monument Fund a treasury of \$1,029.00.

The committee again suggested a house to house canvas for funds, but it was decided that the townspeople were already burdened with too many expenses. They decided to enter an article on the warrant at the spring town meeting for an appropriation of \$1500.00. Before this was carried out, the United States entered the Great World War in Europe. All plans and ideas were temporarily dropped, the money deposited in the bank, and eventually applied to the expenses of the present monument in Memorial Park. We all hold great respect for these memorials. For me, knowing the story of Miss Anna Holt's patriotic endeavor, my respect goes even deeper. Her plan did not materialize as she expected, but she was responsible for one of the greatest celebrations ever held in Maynard.