

## GYPSIES IN MAYNARD

The Lincoln Library of Essential Information, 1928 Edit., says this about them: 'The name given in England to the wandering tribes that since the beginning of the 15th Century have been scattered over Europe. They were supposed by the English to be Egyptians. In France the Gypsies are called Bohemiens, from the belief that they were originally Hussites driven from Bohemia. Scholars now believe that the Gypsies are remnants of a tribe from India. Their language is undoubtedly derived from Sanskrit, though it is mixed with many words from other languages. They call themselves Roma, and their language Romany. For several centuries they were a source of trouble in Europe because of their wandering and thieving habits, though they were protected in Scotland by Royal authority.'

Maynard began to receive an annual visitation from Gypsies sometime in the 1890's, maybe earlier. Our first firm information about them is a short news note of Aug. 4, 1899, that 'a band of Gypsies are in camp just beyond the Catholic Cemetery'. May 11, 1906 news note tells us that 'Stanley's Gypsies are located in town'. Nov. 3, 1911 article relates that 'a band of Gypsies have been invading the town from their camp near St. Bridget's Cemetery during the week'. A longer piece in the paper of Aug. 4, 1916 tells of a 'group of Gypsies on Monday creating excitement in town. They were camped on Acton Road, near Parmenter's Crossing on the Acton side Sunday, and made their presence felt by many attempts at petty larceny'.

'They had permission to stay until Monday, then moving onto



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Parmenter's Land on the Maynard side. In the afternoon six of the women made a shopping tour of the town, helping themselves in some stores and in others trying to cheat the merchants. Chief Binks, Officers Sanford Swanson and Harlow Green visited them Monday night. The Chief of the Tribe produced a \$1.00 receipt for use of the land for three days. Judge Wilson said they had a right to stay. Chief Binks tried to scare them but they were wise and nothing could budge them. There were about 80 in the band. Many curious people visited the camp to see them. They left town on Tuesday'.

Our last newspaper note is dated June 4, 1920: 'Charles Stanley's roving band of Gypsies are making their annual visit to Maynard and are in camp just beyond the Catholic Cemetery'.

The over-all impression is left that the Gypsies had a circuit that was made during the warmer months of every year. The women wove baskets and made other things that they sold or bartered; the men were horse-traders. They came with their tents and belongings in wagons and usually set up shop by Old Mill Road adjoining St. Bridget's Cemetery. They were a colorful people and no doubt titillated the curiosity of the rustics no end. Thieving possibly to them was no sin, from stories told by old timers. They must have believed in sharing.

Recollections vary, but by the mid 1920's they are not remembered as coming into town. We have been told that a permanent colony of them existed near Fort Meadow between Hudson and Marlboro; also that the men were fiercely handsome. Less than a year ago a

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Boston paper printed an article about a Gypsy Tribe that has been settled in Boston for many years. Possibly civilization caught up with Stanley's Gypsies in the 20's and that is where they are.

Carnivals, circuses, Gypsies - in the old days they all brought a little bit of the outside world to Maynard, for good or bad.

All dates are from the Maynard News. Other general information we are indebted to William Salo, Ralph Sheridan and Mrs. Ralph Sheridan.

Read at the January, 1968 Meeting of the Maynard Historical Society.

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