

Just How Old is the so-called Ladd Building?

By John A. Hopper



The Meredith Historical Society building—often referred to as the Ladd building-- at 45 Main Street is obviously one of the oldest buildings in Meredith Village. Anyone who has visited the second floor of the museum can see the very old, hewed timbers that form the floor joists

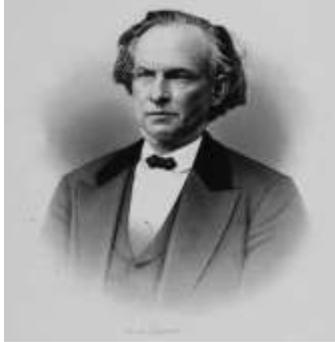
for the third floor. As with any number of other buildings in the Village, the beams beg the question of just how old the building is. The town tax cards suggest that it was built about 1900, although no one has any idea of how this date was arrived at. Somewhere else along the way, someone determined it was built in 1851. This date is nailed on the front of the building for all to see. Writing in 1912, Seneca Ladd's daughter, Fannie Ladd Coe, said it was built by Samuel Gilman who bought the property in 1814.

So, when was it built? Determination of something like this is always fraught with the unknown. Early buildings burned and were rebuilt, or they were moved to another lot and replaced by a newer building. With regard to the Ladd building, we are not aware of anything like either of the above happening. Assuming that to be true, the old deeds tell us of much earlier beginnings for the old house.

The lot was vacant land, of course, when town's leaders built a road (now Main Street) through it in 1774. This Village land, known in the early days as the 'mill lot' or Division 3, Lot 38, was acquired in the 1760s by Meredith's 'town father', Ebenezer Smith. It passed through several hands beginning in 1795. The lot that encompassed 45 Main Street was gradually whittled down in size as it was passed along. Ownership ran from Smith to John Jenness to Samuel Jenness (1792) to Peter Jenness (1799) to David Corliss (1805) to John Neal (1805) to Jonathan Cram (1807) back to John Neal (1818) to John Swasey (1809), a blacksmith and uncle of canal builder, John Bond Swasey. Finally in 1811, John Swasey sold it to Abel Kimball, a Meredith saddler. It was still a vacant lot at that point.

Kimball owned it for less than two years before selling it in February 1813. By then, it finally had a building on it. Deriving from the timing of these two transactions, the presumption is that the house was built during 1812.

Samuel Gilman bought the land and building in 1814. He lived upstairs and ran a store



Seneca Ladd

on the first floor into the 1840s. It was rented thereafter for several years to the Congregational minister, Giles Leach. In 1851, widowed Seneca Ladd rented rooms there. Ladd bought it in 1854. The house stayed in his family for decades thereafter. In 1856, Ladd bought the neighboring land between this building and the Congregational church on Highland Street and built a new residence there. He rented 45 Main Street to various tenants, but the two longest using it were the Meredith Village Savings Bank (2nd floor) and the post office (1st floor). The latter's presence led to the corner

becoming known as Post Office Square.