

IN CONCLUSION

It is almost impossible, after taking a backward glance over any considerable span of years, not to draw some conclusions from these observations. For example:

1. The frequency with which forward steps in many areas were initiated by one person or a small group - recalling Dr. Fred Varney's insistence on better sanitary conditions; Henry S. Perham's urging that the early records of the town be preserved in a safe and orderly way; George C. Moore's influence as a mill-owner and the impetus he gave to provision of better fire protection, leading also to establishment of the North Water District; Solomon Parkhurst and others who foresaw the existence of a single town wide water system, although it is not yet an actuality. To these names can be added many more, each contributing in some way to the slowly developing ideas and realities of that he believed to be the good life and good government. Women, few in number compared to the men but powerful in influence, also made their contribution as school nurses, school committee members, library trustees, teachers, etc.
2. From private individuals and from non-governmental groups like the VIA and the PTA, church organizations and others, the impetus for improvement has come. Later, when the experimental stages are passed or the initial investment made, town government takes over and carries on the responsibility as, for instance in street lighting or in school libraries.
3. Sometimes welcome, sometimes not, the power and authority of the State in local governmental affairs cannot be discounted. In nearly every department state standards have been set; acceptance of sections of state laws by the town meetings has given encouragement, financial support and a wider range of activity at the local level and, as in the case of the transfer of welfare functions to the State, for example, the local authority has become subordinate to the higher authority.
4. Finally, there is the growth of town government to meet the increasing demands placed upon it by a growing population that is no longer primarily agricultural but industrially -and scientifically- oriented. The once rural village has become the affluent suburb with all its new problems and advantages.

The years from 1900 and particularly from the 1950's and 1960's saw this transformation begin. It continues today and the years to come will bring still other adjustments in the strains that are bound to develop between what was and what is to be. The backward glance which is History can encourage us by showing what has already been done; by listing failures as well as successes, it points the way to new solutions of problems with old roots; by recording the accomplishments of individuals it gives us new faith in the power of human being and new respect for their abilities to work in the public interest as they see it.