

## **DR. GEORGE OSGOOD**

Rev. George Endicott Osgood, Rector of Grace Church of North Attleboro, contributes the following sketch

The writer of this sketch of one of Danvers' old physicians is a grandson, and unfortunately has not many data which can be given concerning his early life. Even the family Bible is missing, and dates must be given approximately. His residence in "Danvers Plains" as it was called in his day covered a period of fifty years and must have dated from about 1814, he having enlisted as a surgeon in the war of 1812. He was born in Andover, Mass., Nov. 25, 1784 and died in Danvers May 26, 1863. His home stood on the corner of the streets opposite the Eastern Railroad Station (Abbott house). When I was a boy it was a substantial colonial house. Two great hydrangeas stood in the recessed doorway and chains hung from gate to the door. An old fashioned flower garden with the spicy smelling box borders was at the side of the house, and there was a black curly willow and two mountain ash trees in which the doctor used to delight to watch the robins and other birds before the advent of the English sparrow.

The doctor was twice married, his first wife being Sally Webster, granddaughter of Dr. Samuel Holten, whom he married on Nov. 2nd, 1807, and who died Sept. 17, 1821, aged 36 years; his second wife was Nancy Endicott, whom he married March 12, 1822. Two children were born of this marriage, Sarah Ann Osgood, born Nov. 21, 1822, and Moses Endicott Osgood, born Nov. 26, 1824. He and his two wives are buried in the village cemetery at Tapleyville. He was the doctor for a large territory reaching far beyond the limits of Danvers proper, and was especially successful in his treatment of fevers. He differed from the doctors of his day in giving the patients the water they craved, while other physicians denied it to them. In this he gained quite a reputation. Whether the proverbial "shay" of the country doctor was his conveyance tradition saith not. but it does say that he was a great tramper and with his cane and "shanks mare" made many a distant call.

One night going along a wharf at the "port" on one of his calls he went over the end into the water. He kept himself afloat by treading water, meanwhile shouting for help. Presently a man with a lantern came in answer and holding the lantern out over the water asked, "What ye doing in there?" "Blankety blank ye." cried the old doctor, "Don't ask me what I'm doing. Go and get a rope and help me out." The doctor practiced not only medicine upon his patients but dentistry and the murderous looking implements of the day looked like a plumber's outfit, and the doctor being rather athletic something had to give when he got a good grip on those forceps.

Rut he was noted everywhere thereabouts for his knowledge of nature. An enthusiast in botanical researches he tramped through all the region and knew the haunts of every plant that grew. In the summer he would be off on some tramp as soon as it was daybreak, coming back soaked with the dew and water of bush and grass and meadow. Perhaps stopping in to show "Mary Page" a new find or an old friend. He could be a sarcastic fellow when he had a mind and once when a young man disputed him on a botanical point he crushed the opponent with the remark, "Young man, I've *forgotten* more than you will *ever know*." And his studies in entomology were almost as extensive as his botanical. At one time he presented a large collection of insects to the "East India Marine Rooms" in Salem. His good wife was rather a particular housekeeper and his habits of study were not always to her liking. On a hot night in summer he would go to his room (was it an "office"?), light his candles, whale oil lamp and cigar, and welcome all the "bugs" which came trooping buzzingly in, for screens there were none. The good wife would mildly remonstrate, "Oh, doctor, don't," but the doctor always *did*, in this as in most things he set out to do, for he had a will of his own in spite of the kindly heart that was his. Always ready he, was to play some practical joke upon an unsuspecting fellow, but just as ready to ask that man's pardon if he found he had hurt him by that joking.

He was rather a picturesque figure as I remember him, imprinted on my boy's memory, always a tall hat, where he kept his supply of cigars, held in the crown by his red bandanna, a long black coat, a stout cane with a white top, and a "good morning" for everybody, holding his grandson by the hand (when he had him) and singing the praises of that grandson as "the boy for you," stopping always at the grocery and postoffice to discuss the latest political question on which very likely he had some positive opinion, for a stiff Whig he was.

He was a rugged, original character, a face full of good nature, (he never grew a beard) one of those deeply wrinkled faces as he grew older with the story of his character written there by the graving tools of experience and his inner being. So far as I ever heard in spite of extended practice he had one of those first characteristics of the physician who works for the love of the work, he seems to have never acquired much more than enough to live upon. He was too good a friend to man to ever push anyone for pay and his good nature was taken advantage of.

He was in his religious belief a Unitarian, but because there was no Unitarian Church in Danvers he was a constant attendant at the Congregational Church. Often on a Sunday morning starting out soon after light that he might make important visits and be back in season for service, and when he grew a bit hard of hearing, and became interested in the sermon standing up with his hand behind his ear oblivious of the rest of the congregation. On the stone that marks his resting place there are cut the words, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and thus did many an one know him, going about to heal not alone the bodies of his fellow citizens but their souls as well, and when they were at strife seeking to heal differences and make the rough places of the world smooth again. When at length "work was over" for him at the age of seventy-nine it was a whole community that did honor to his memory, and filled the Church to overflowing: and one of the floral tributes that spoke in its fragrance and its simplicity most fittingly was a wreath of lilies of the valley within which were written the words, "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow, they toil not neither do they spin and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."