



LISBON AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MOMENTS IN HISTORY

FEBRUARY 2024

FRED PARKER'S STORE AND THE PARKER BLOCK

“Everything from an elephant to a toothpick, and a square deal for all.”

Fred Parker was born in Littleton, New Hampshire in 1872, the youngest of six children born to Guy and Georgiana Metcalf Parker. Fred went through the eighth grade and then on to a lifelong career in the general store business in Lisbon, first as a clerk and salesman at English's General Store in Lisbon Square and then the Cogswell & Oliver store on South Main Street. In 1896, he married Ida Moore, a teacher from Woodsville, New Hampshire. In 1899, Parker purchased the Wells & Woolson General Store with his father-in-law, William Moore, who left a long career as a railroad engineer to go into business with Parker. The building that housed the store was on South Main Street beside the School Street Bridge. The store was on the first floor, the Lisbon Town Hall on the second floor, and a Masonic Hall was in the attic. The building was erected in 1860 for \$1,200.



Fred Parker (1872-1947)



William Moore (1841-1913)



Wells & Woolson's store



Within two years, Parker's new store burned to the ground during the November 3, 1901 fire that wiped out the west side of Main Street from the School Street Bridge through Brigham's Hotel (now the site of the Lisbon Inn). Parker and Moore immediately stocked an old blacksmith shop across the river near the present Lisbon Public Library site where they continued their general store business.

Parker and Moore purchased the burned-out Wells & Woolson General Store lot from owners Arthur Wells and Augustus Woolson for \$2,400 in July of 1902 and hired Lisbon contractor, Lawrence Goudie, to build the Parker Block, a wood structure with brick veneer. The beginning of construction is pictured below.



The Parker Block was completed in 1902 at the intersection of School Street and South Main Street, reestablishing the south corner business lot in Lisbon Square. Fred Parker & Company filled one half of the first floor. Ida Parker worked alongside her husband in the store. Fred Parker and William Moore remained partners until Moore's death in 1913. In 1928, Fred and Ida Parker's only child, Roger, joined the business after graduating from Boston University. The store was remodeled as a department store and named Fred Parker & Son. In 1934, Roger Parker died of pneumonia. Ida passed away in 1939, and Fred continued operating the store until he died in 1947 after suffering a heart attack. A well-respected, leading Lisbon businessman, Fred Parker was a fixture in the Lisbon business community for over fifty years. He belonged to local organizations, served his town in many offices, and served as a County Commissioner and State Senator.



A photo of Fred Parker's store c. 1916 shows two sections. The south side, picturing Fred Parker, offered material and notions, and the north side of the store was a grocery and general store. In recent history, the store space was remodeled and divided into two separate rental units. The unit to the right was a temporary home for the Lisbon Area Historical Society Museum from 2012 until 2021 when it purchased the brick Parish House on Depot Street.

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With a general store such as Parker's and a string of other grocery and general stores and specialty shops up and down both sides of Lisbon's Main Street from the late 1880s into the 1960s, residents did not need to leave town. Everything was available in town or could be ordered. From May to August c. 1910, one Lisbon resident's account at Parker's store included the purchase of shoes, apples, garden seeds, lard, tea, a hat, underwear, salt, prunes, cookies, gingham, rice, cod, onions, pants, shawls, diapers and pins, sugar, cassia, matches, paper and envelopes, apricots, nails, molasses, a vest, a comb, saltines, cocoa, honey, oats, baking soda, hoisery, ink, lemons, cornstarch, and cheese. The same items could be purchased at other stores in Lisbon at the time.



The Boynton Block, Bank Block, and Parker Block (on right) are pictured in 1904. All three blocks were built in 1902 after the fire of 1901. Lisbon architect S. D. Morgan built the Boynton and Bank Blocks. Left-right: Standing is James Richardson, Judge of the Lisbon Police Court, Charlie Sanborn and his dump cart, Myron and Nettie Northy (Myron Northy died in 1949 at age 104), and Arthur Weston driving the delivery team for Arthur

Sherman's general store, which was across the street from the Parker Block. A third general store, English's, was also in the Square, where the present gazebo and park are located.



The Parker Block was a good spot for a photo op by coincidence or planned. The top left photo was taken in 1906 when nine white horses happened to be hitched at the same time in front of the Parker Block. Lisbon photographer Irving James took the picture. Front to back, the horses belonged to Rev. Raymond Felch of Landaff, Gray Santy's pair from Lyman, William Stephens Sr. of Lyman, Frank Dodge's pair from Lyman, Ira Dyke's pair from Lyman, and Fred Parker & Co.'s delivery horse. Top right is a gathering of automobiles in the 1930s.

Fred Parker's store was sold to the Morrells of Conway, New Hampshire after his death in 1947. Alice Parker, who Fred Parker married in 1940 after his first wife's passing, owned the Parker Block, lived there, and managed it. The Parker Block remained in the family until 1969, when it was sold to Catherine Stillman of Lyman. The Parker Block has had different owners since then. Apartments have always been in the top two stories. Many different businesses have been in the first level, a couple businesses in the second story, and different establishments have been in the basement space. Businesses over the years have included a shoe shop, variety stores, gift shops, hair salons, flag store, barber shops, millinery shop, paper store, insurance offices, meat markets, sandwich shops, coffee shop, clothing stores, upholstery shop, stitching company, historical society museum, bookkeeping office, contractor's office, consignment shop, food pantry, church services, American Express office, Odd Fellows Hall, antique shop, bank, and Lisbon Main Street Inc. office.



George Morgan stands in his store, S. D. Morgan & Son, which was located on the bridge side of the Parker Block from 1906-1948. The store was a variety store and local "paper store," and in the late 1930s handled the Railway Express that came into the Lisbon Depot.

The Parker Block apartments were very popular in the beginning. One could downsize later in life or move "out of the country" without need of horse and buggy, or later, an automobile. It was a mark of status to live in the Parker Block in an apartment with modern conveniences and within walking distance of the many retail shops, restaurants, movie theater, bank, post office, library, professional services, social, service and religious

organizations, town offices, entertainment and events at the new Lisbon Opera House, and in close proximity to the busy Lisbon B & M Depot.

Then Lisbon changed, especially “downtown.” The last passenger train came through Lisbon in the 1960s. Most residents owned an automobile before then and could easily go out of town to shop. Gone were the days when retailers such as Fred Parker’s store could thrive for half a century or more, and Parker’s wasn’t the only one. There was a general store on the English General Store site for over 100 years, the S. D. Morgan & Son store was in business for 42 years, Puglisi’s shoes and clothing for 51 years, Brummer’s tailor and clothing shop for 77 years, Jesseman’s Garage for 70 years, a pharmacy on the Family Drug Store site for 88 years, Clark’s Garage for 100 years, and a hardware store on the site of Goudie’s Hardware for over 60 years. Those businesses are now gone and never replaced, except for the very short-lived White Mountain Pharmacy. The record for retail is that there has been some type of grocery store on the site of today’s Riverview Market for 153 years. A Dollar General store came to Lisbon’s South Main Street in 2016, a modern trend which fills the loss of the convenience and variety provided by our many village stores of the past.

By the 1980s, the Parker Block was beginning to show its age, and the use was changing. Parker Block apartments were rented primarily by local laborers and occupants needing short-term housing, and the retail spaces had frequent turnovers and vacancies.



The Parker Block as it looks now, as the most recent owner has been completing heavy renovation and modernization of the building over the last year. The c. 1902 Lisbon Town Hall appears in the background. It was built there after the fire of 1901 to replace the town hall that was in the Wells & Woolson building. Lot preparation for a new town hall had already started when the Wells & Woolson building burned. Then the Town had to decide whether to build a new town hall on the burned-out store lot or continue the plans to build across the river. Lawrence Goudie was hired to build the Lisbon Town Hall at the corner of School and Water Streets. He was paid almost \$19,000, and the Town Hall cost \$30,700. Goudie managed to build the Parker Block at the same time.

We hope you appreciate receiving these monthly Moments in History. We welcome your comments as well as suggestions for topics for future Moments. Please feel free to share any of our Moments in History with relatives and friends, and have them email us if they would like to receive them in the future at lisbonareahistoricalociety@gmail.com. For more about us and to read past Moments in History, go to www.lisbonareahistory.org. We are also on Facebook. Thank you.