

# THE OLD MERRIAM HOUSE

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The old Merriam house, sometimes known as the Deacon Merriam place to distinguish from other Merriam houses in the neighborhood, is located about two miles east of Grafton Centre in a part of the town still known as the Merriam District, despite the fact that none of the name reside within its limits today, and the town has long since abandoned the district system.

Merriams have been associated with Grafton from earliest times. Among the forty proprietors, who in 1727 purchased the Indian plantation of Has-sanimisco, was Joseph Merriam of Concord, grandson of Joseph Merriam, the immigrant, and himself the first of a line of Josephs. This Joseph never came to live on his new land, but his son Joseph, 2d did; walking from Concord as tradition says, and marking trees through the unbroken forest, so he could find his way back. The first night, for protection from wild beasts, he slept in the cleft of a large rock still shown on the ancestral farm.

The house is believed to have been built in 1728, being the oldest in town. Originally a story and a half in front, running back to a low-studded kitchen it was raised to its present form in 1763.

It was occupied successively by Joseph 2d, Joseph 3d, and Joseph 4th, who lived to the respective ages of 88, 79 and 98, the last named dying in 1869. These men were worthy and respected citizens, and all were staunch supporters and deacons of the Grafton church, and of the Congregational church after the separation; their combined deaconship covering 124 years.

Joseph Merriam 4th left five sons and three daughters, but the home place came to the youngest son David E. Merriam. He lived in Leicester, but his love of home and kindred found expression in a provision of his will that the old house should always be the home of Merriam descendants as long as any may care to live there. The present occupants are Mrs. Bailey, daughter of David's oldest sister, and Charles M. Batchelder, son of another sister, and himself a veteran of the civil war.

Not only is the house itself a veritable relic of antiquity, but its contents have never been dispersed abroad through auction sales or successive divisions of property. From a curious hand-forged nail in the front room, still hangs the old-fashioned mirror which Sally Wadsworth, bride of the 3d Joseph placed there in 1762. In every room are seen the treasures of olden time, while the attic with its seemingly exhaustless accumulation of old utensils, fire arms, etc., is the delight of the antiquarian. One feels himself taken back to the atmosphere of a hundred years ago.