

HON. JOSEPH ALFRED HARWOOD.

In Littleton the number of old families living on farms which have been handed down from sire to son for many generations is remarkable, and among the oldest is the Harwood family, of which Hon. Joseph A. Harwood is the head.

Nathaniel Harwood, of English origin, was living in Boston in 1655, whence he removed to Concord. From there his son Peter and grandson, Captain Joseph Harwood, moved to Littleton and bought in 1737 the estate upon which the family now live.

Their first residence was in a lot since grown up to woods near the new road to Newtown from Littleton depot, and some half-mile east of Mr. Harwood's house.

The cellar-hole may yet be seen and the old well filled with stones, while a short distance away is a finespring which comes up through a hollow log set in the ground no doubt some 150 years ago. About 1754 a house was built near the present one by Captain Joseph Harwood, and his son, Captain Joseph Harwood, Jr., then a young man, set out the elm trees, of which two large ones are still standing, and under which Mr. Harwood's grandchildren, the seventh generation on the place, to-day play.

The Harwoods have always been prominent in town affairs, and have been pioneers in all movements of reform and improvement.

Colonel Nahum Harwood, the father of the subject of this sketch, was one of the first Abolitionists, and a co-worker with Garrison and Phillips. He was also one of the projectors of the Fitchburgh Railroad. His wife, Mrs. Sophia Kimball Harwood, who lived to the advanced age of a few days less than ninety-four years, used to relate many incidents of the olden time, among them how she wore crape, when a girl, for the death of George Washington, reminiscences of the last slave owned by the Harwood family, etc.

The old house above referred to as built in 1754, was destroyed by fire in 1874, together with a great number of relics and heirlooms.

It was one of those substantial square white houses, with an immense chimney in the centre, standing under the broad elms on the sunny southern slope of a hill, the style of house which, though now becoming

scarce, has always been the typical New England farm-house.

From its windows were seen the smoke of the burning of Charlestown and the battle of Bunker Hill, and in its cellar the frightened inhabitants took refuge during the "dark day" of 1780. Many slaves were born and raised in the house, but the slavery was never like the Southern slavery, and the Harwoods were among the first Abolitionists.

Here was born Joseph Alfred Harwood, March 26, 1827. He attended the district school and afterward the academies at Westford, Groton, and Exeter, New Hampshire. It was intended to send him to college, but his father dying when he was fifteen years old, he came home to take charge of the farm.

Many old heads predicted failure for a boy with a large farm on his hands, and a fondness for fine horses and cattle, but the boy had a level head and managed well. He made many improvements on the farm "making two blades of grass grow where one grew before," draining old bogs and making them produce, heavy crops of fine English hay, plowing up huckleberry pastures and planting orchards, and similar things. Meantime he paid his bills, rent and interest on the portions of the farm belonging to the other heirs, and finally bought and paid for the whole. He found time to teach school for a number of winters, and was noted for his good discipline, and the ease with which he maintained it. A school in a neighboring town, containing a number of full-grown scholars, men in size, who had driven away two or three teachers, and vowed vengeance on the next who should come, was turned over to Mr. Harwood, when he was only seventeen years of age, to complete a term. He held his place without resorting to harsh measures, and left the school orderly, obedient and respectful.

The stock on Mr. Harwood's farm has always, since under his management, been of the best. He introduced among his cattle the first thoroughbred animals ever brought into Littleton, and by frequent additions of new blood has not only improved his own herd, but the stock on all the neighboring farms. He devoted himself almost exclusively to agriculture until 1868, when, in partnership with his younger brother, Na-