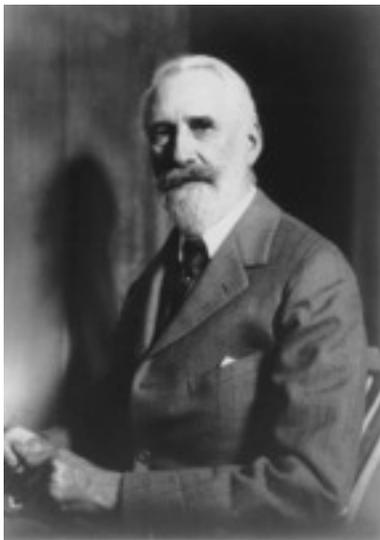


*Memoirs are an important source of local history. This example by Charles Wells Hubbard was originally published in the Fall 2005 issue of The Weston Historical Society Bulletin, with edits by Pamela W. Fox. Hubbard's father, Charles Townsend Hubbard, was one of the first wealthy manufacturers to buy large tracts of farmland in Weston for use as a summer estate.*

## **Selections from “Autobiographical Notes” by Charles W. Hubbard**



*Above: Charles Wells Hubbard (1856 - 1933), author of this memoir. Below, C. W. Hubbard as a boy, with his father, Charles Townsend Hubbard (1817 - 1887)*



In 1866 my father [Charles Townsend Hubbard] bought the old Slack farm where we first lived in the old farm house, close to the Mail Road just below my daughter Nancy's present home [Nancy was his nickname for Anne Swain Hubbard Jr., later Mrs. Edward Wheeler. The Wheeler home was at 100 Orchard Ave] And since that time the family's greatest interest has been in our family estates on or near this original purchase—my sisters originally having had homes here. My sister Louise's home stood where my daughter Mrs. Wheeler now has hers.

In 1880 the death of his father-in-law and more successful business results found my father so well off that he went to Europe for a year and built the house lived in by my father and myself for so many years—located above the Railroad.... [Ridgehurst at 80 Orchard Avenue, photo below]

In the early days when all my sisters were at home the old farm house was well filled with our guests – and we had at times 8 or 9 carriage and saddle horses. I believe the people passing on the R.R. thought we kept a boarding house and livery stable. In addition to our driving and riding we had boats on the river – which at that time could not have had more than 20 boats between our place and Waltham. In short we lived under ideal conditions for having a good time with our friends – one of my old friends in later years referring to these old times said he remembered sitting down with twenty at breakfast. One of the plagues of that time which recent science and care have almost driven away was the swarms of mosquitoes

and flies. As I now look back I see the conditions for freedom there were perfect – but of course no one realized that. And this leads me to remark on the immense advance in the sciences in sanitation hygiene during my life. In various ways how much easier it has made life.

One rather unique feature of our life was our little private theatre. When the place was bought there was an outbuilding – a large billiard room – It was used by us as a Laundry – One summer when I was about 14 I fitted up a rough stage, and we children gave a little play. My father was so much interested that he had the building enlarged putting in quite a complete little stage; - in the fitting of which I had a chance to exercise my love of carpentry.

Each summer of 1871 72 73 we gave several plays in this theatre and there are now in my library two bound volumes of these plays. I have always felt that this amateur acting had an educational value – our company consisted of Carrie and Mabel Case who lived about three miles away and Will and Walter Bush. Their older sister Fanny our acting manager – my sister Annie and myself – with now and then a guest at the house to help out. I remember one amusing incident. Old Mr. Sewall like other slightly deaf people sometimes made audible comments – and in a scene where I was playing the lover he remarked – “Does it pretty well does he not – looks as if he really meant it.”

*Editor's note: Hubbard goes on to describe his “tramping” trips to the White Mountains, Adirondacks and Maine woods, his experience at the great Boston fire, his social clubs, and various other residences. The memoir continues below.*

My sister Louise's home having been bought by our friend Livingston Cushing – and he and his wife being most congenial neighbors – I sold additional land to them including our original farm cottage – moving our other farm buildings to their present location – Years later after Mr. Cushing's death I bought back this property about 14 acres – including my sister's old home, the log cabin and the large stable and garage built by Mr. Cushing [now 140 Orchard Avenue] – the latter was later converted into the house in which I now live – under the following circumstances. At our entrance into the great war I offered our home Ridgehurst as a hospital – and in view of having to move out of this I decided to make the Cushing Stable into a home as we were able to design a very satisfactory plan – as it went on my wife and I became so interested that we elaborated it more than originally intended – and being satisfied that it would be a more comfortable and convenient house for our small family we decided to move in; and when able to dispose of Ridgehurst to do so – as I feared that none of my children could afford to support it, and I preferred to dispose of it myself rather than leave it as a White Elephant for my Estate.



*Ridgehurst was constructed in 1883 by Charles Townsend Hubbard and is Weston's finest example of Shingle Style architecture. 1904 photo with children of Charles Wells Hubbard.*

*Editor's note: Ridgehurst, which still stands at 80 Orchard Avenue, was never used by the Red Cross. After the Hubbards moved to Barnstable House at 140 Orchard Avenue, the main house was rented or left vacant until his son, Charles Wells Hubbard Jr., lived there for a time in the 1930s. The Hubbards owned the house until 1945 and were followed by George N. and Anna Chamberlain Jr. (1945-80) and Harold and Paula Schwenk (1980 to present). Further pages of the extensive autobiography discuss Hubbard's career as head of the Ludlow Manufacturing Company.*

**With special thanks to Stanley French Jr., grandson of Charles Wells Hubbard, for CWH's autobiographical notes and for these and other photographs of the Hubbard family and Hubbard estate.**

**For further information, see Hubbard Estate chapter in *Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts, 1830-1980* by Pamela W Fox (2002) p. 500 – 519.**