

May 5, 1992

COMMENTARY of Music from Early Westborough: Five Little Pieces

1. Jolly Young Swain (1721)
2. Love Triumphant (1721)
3. O Praise the Lord (1721)
4. Ranger's Trip to Westborough (1834k)
5. I Never Drink Behind the Bar (186?)

Background: The community of Westborough has a rich musical heritage dating back into the early 18th century. Enclosed are 5 brief musical examples to illustrate.

Ebenezer Parkman was the pastor of Westborough's First Congregational Church for over 50 years in the 18th century. He came there just after graduating at Harvard College. He began keeping a little manuscript music booklet (the original is in the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston) dated 1721. He kept neat manuscript musical copies of church tunes and secular music--all of it was the music he heard and enjoyed while at Harvard and later in Westborough. On this tape are three little pieces from his anthology: 1 "Jolly Young Swain" is a secular dance tune he evidently liked enough to copy. It is scored for the typical "Colonial Band" disposition available in late 18th century America. 2. "(Love Triumphant" was a love song he liked enough to copy out the song and its text. Actually it was written by Handel, (thought not with its "love" text Parkman utilizes. 3. "O Praise the Lord" was a psalm tune Parkman doubtless learned and utilized in his church.

In 1834 the railroad came to Westborough. And to celebrate the event the Rifle Rangers of Boston camp (with their band) to Westborough. A composition entitled "Rangers' Trip[to Westborough" was written by James Hooton for the occasion. The original music (in the American Antiquarian Society) has a handsome of downtown Westborough in 1834, just as the band came to town.

In the late 19th century there was a lad kept at the Westborough Correctional Institute for his very bad behavior. He escaped and eventually became a nationally famed singer of comic songs. His name was Hart and one of his funniest songs was "I Never Drink Behind the Bar."

D. McKay