

Pepperell legend Trescott Abele dies

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the assistant assessor who learned her trade from Abele, an elected assessor for more than 40 years. "Like how the roads used to be in Pepperell, where you could catch trains in places not in existence anymore, places where he put his produce on trains. The olden days."

Twelve years ago, Abele sold his small antique Cape-style farmhouse to Michael Coffey, currently chairman of the Board of Assessors, who described the house as "typical Currier and Ives."

Abele then built a log cabin for himself and his wife on a nearby tract.

For a few years afterward, people would knock on Coffey's door and ask to cut a Christmas tree as they'd done before.

"They said they'd give me whatever they gave Trescott. I'd say to my wife, 'They'll pay in barter. I may be sorry to find 10 yards of manure,'" he said, adding that there never was a problem.

Coffey has custody of Abele's awards and other "memorabilia," including a hand-drawn pictorial personal diary.

"It would not be unusual to see him walking in the pastures, out bird-watching. He would jot it down and contribute to the Audubon count," said Coffey. He said Abele and his wife relished going to Salisbury each year to watch birds.

Coffey said he plans to propose that the town name a building after Abele.

"He liked to blaze trails. He used to walk the bounds with us until he was almost 80," said Smith, describing the tradition of visually inspecting town boundary lines every five years.

An elected assessor for many years, Abele single-handedly conducted state-mandated property revaluations every three years. Today, the work is shared by a number of people, including a consulting firm.

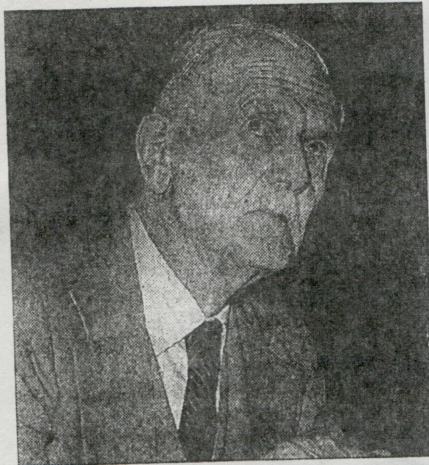
"Just his overt individualism. I wouldn't ever tell him he couldn't do something. He'd turn around and do it," said Smith.

Symonds recalls in the 1950s, when Abele was a math teacher and principal in the junior-senior high school in what is now the Peter Fitzpatrick School.

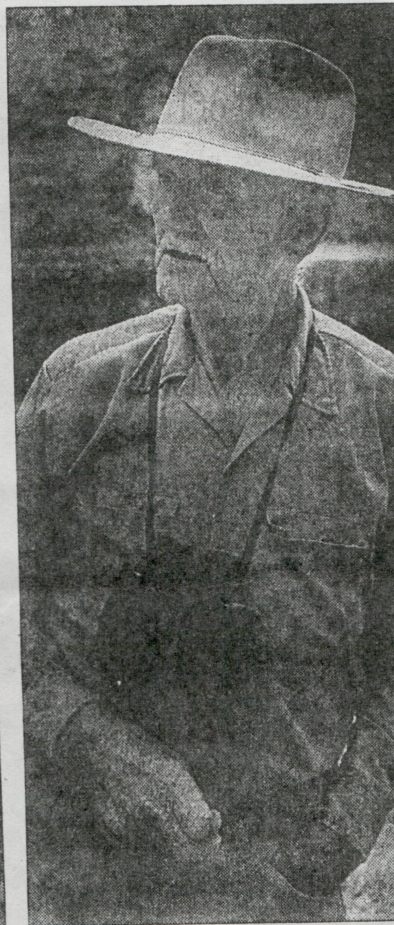
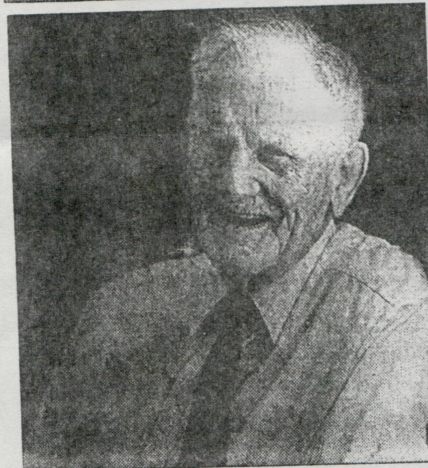
"The senior grades were in the morning and the junior grades in the afternoon to make use of the same building. Because of people like Trescott Abele, I thought we got a better education than some of the kids today," she said.

Abele also taught driver's education.

"He used to make the girls change tires



SUN FILE PHOTO



Confidence and a sense of hardy individualism carried Trescott Abele through his myriad roles as educator, farmer, bird-watcher and town moderator.

so they would know how. He was probably the worst driver in the world," said Symonds.

Last July 15, Abele attended a reunion of students who attended the old Pepperell School. "He kept wondering when it was. He was waiting for it. We only had three teachers and Mr. Abele, of course," said Symonds.

When Abele was moderator, for years town meetings were held on the top floor of Town Hall. When the town's population grew, the town meetings were moved to the new Varnum Brook Middle School.

"When he ran Town Meeting, there wasn't any excess deliberation. When the time was over, the gavel came down," Coffey said.

When town employees honored Abele at his retirement, they presented him with a print of Norman Rockwell's painting, participants at a New England Town Meeting.

"It symbolized him," said Coffey. Fascinated by the democratic process, Abele wrote and published the 1982 book, *Too Much Democracy?* an examination of America's government that he updated in an updated version of the work by Al Toqueville.

Abele is survived by his wife of 65, Margaret, known as Peg, and a daughter, Anne Swendig of Texas; also several children.

A memorial service is planned for Friday at the Community Church.