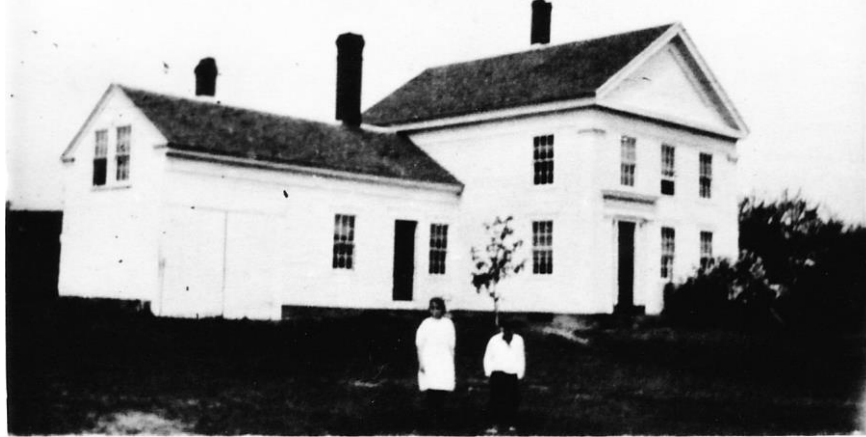


The Bemis / Lane / Jalbert Farm
South Spencer, Massachusetts



The Bemis / Lane Farm, about 1914

Bemis: 1852 – 1911

Lane: 1911 – 1949

Jalbert: 1949 – ...

According to Henry M. Tower in his *Historical Sketches Relating to South Spencer, Massachusetts*, Samuel Bemis Sr. in 1721 was the second settler and founder of Spencer. He owned a farm of 400 acres of land. Son Nathan Bemis inherited the homestead. Nathan Jr. ran a sawmill west of town. In 1856 he and his wife Lucy died of typhoid fever. George Bemis built his house in 1852. The timber for it was sawed at Nathan's mill.

George Bemis was a promising young farmer in 1852. He carefully groomed his beard and locks for he was courting the local school mistress. They were to be married and he had built a fine big house for her. It was a square frame New England farmhouse with wooden pilasters supporting the corners, well-built fireplaces with a baking oven and a kitchen ell.

But something happened between them; he never could understand the ways of "wimmen" and it took the heart right out of him. The house didn't matter much now. When the Lanes first knew him in 1909, he lived there alone, his beard white and flowing, a crotchety old man. He had never added the blinds or the lights at each side of the door. Stopped, just as it was when she had said, "George, I am not going to be married to you."

George Bemis died in May of 1910, aged 91 years. Walker Lane in later years reminisced about old Mr. Bemis somewhat in this manner. George had built the house in his early thirties. His father had left the property to

him. Having built the place for a schoolteacher who decided not to marry him, his father being dead, a slovenly sister kept house for him until she died.

The woman who had been keeping house for him when Walter and Annie Lane were considering moving there said, "You can't bring those children (Elinor, age 5, and Edward, age 2) here. In one of his bad moods he might hit one over the head with his cane."

But they moved to the farm and Mr. Craig, his lawyer, said that George lived more in those two years than he had in the other ninety. Walter urged him to get an earphone and would read magazine articles to him. This delighted Mr. Bemis so much that he would rest in the afternoon in order to sit up in the evening.

Papa fixed the old man to look nicely, white hair and long white beard trimmed. Persuaded him to take off his overalls, formerly worn over pants to keep his legs warm, and accidentally lost his nightcap.

He did not want windows opened at night. He would remonstrate, "I ain't a gonna do it. Thar's enough fresh air comes in through the sink spout." On many a cold blustery night, the Lane family has quoted that excuse to keep the windows tight shut.

Mr. Bemis had accumulated a sizeable amount of money by pinching pennies. He told how he would save until he had \$50 in his stocking, then walk to Leicester the nearest bank to deposit it. Papa advised him in making out his will. He had nephews and nieces, when they came to see him, he would send them home with a bag of shell beans from up in the attic. He left them each a small sum in his will. But he remonstrated all the way. "I ain't a gonna do it. I've been all these years a savin' this, and I ain't a gonna do it.

The bulk of his money he left to each of the churches in Spencer, three hospitals in Worcester and the George Bemis Annex, children's room, in the Spencer Public Library.

He grew fond of the children, dispelling the dire predictions. When Edward was learning to talk Mr. Bemis would have him bring the picture book to his knee and say, "Now, what is that?" Then Edward would shout up to him the name of the object. It is remembered that soon Edward, listing his dear ones, would say, "Me lova Momma. Me lova Papa. Me lova Bemmy."

Mr. Bemis sat at the dining room window to see people passing on the road and ask little Edward who it was. Edward would shout up to him, "I don't know!", or, "I think it is Mr. Flagg." Mr. Bemis said, "I wish I could live to see those children grow up."