



The West Falmouth windmill, built in 1787, with a turnstile at the end of the fence on the right, next to the gate.
Photo by Baldwin Coolidge, ca. 1895. Courtesy WHHC.

Letters

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Last time you were here you mentioned my writing an historical item and I got to thinking and I will title my letter:

Turnstiles In Falmouth

In my youth there were many turnstiles in Falmouth. Before my time and a little of my early growing up days cows were in great numbers in town and it was common practice for the farmers to drive a herd of cows down the road in all parts of the town to the nearest fenced-in field in the morning and chase them home again at night for milking time. Every house and yard was fenced to keep those cows out, but the path leading up to the door of the house would have a turnstile in it at the fence line. People could walk through the turnstile, but a cow could not. There were many turnstiles still in place when I was ten years old. They were not needed much even by that time, but the custom of using them was slow to die out. I remember them well. If a person had to go into someone's yard with a wheelbarrow or a horse and team or whatever, he would have to open the gate to the driveway to get

into the yard as nothing could go through the turnstile but a person walking. Even in my early days turnstiles were being replaced by gates; in later years gates and fences were torn down and done away with and the turnstiles too.

In an even earlier time when thousands of head of sheep were raised in the Falmouth area they were controlled somewhat by dogs. Cows could not be that well controlled by dogs as a cow takes off in any direction she feels like.

Falmouth in those days was not covered with trees and brush like it is today as they were kept cut down and burned off in order to raise hay in huge quantities to feed the animals in the winter time. The entire town was a huge open field and when a cow saw a nice green vegetable garden she would head for it.

Now the cows and sheep are all gone from this area. Also domestic animals do not roam free in any settled area any more. So that is the demise of the turnstile.

Clarence J. Anderson