

ished for many years under the aegis of the Universalist Church. In an 1851 issue of the magazine, "Universalist Trumpet," there appeared the following advertisement: "Melrose Academy; the Spring Term of this institution will commence on Monday, March 4; Parents and Guardians may rest assured that nothing of a sectarian nature will be allowed in the school, and the morals of all pupils will be carefully guarded by the teachers."

The school was later abandoned, and the building moved to Main Street about 1854. During the sixteen years it stood on Main Street, the upper floor was the center for the town's social activities, musicales, lectures, religious services, the town offices, and for a few years was used in part for a post office.

The first drug store in Melrose was established on the street floor by Benjamin F. Abbott and Edward R. Knights in 1857. John Larrabee bought the business in 1867, and in 1889 Arlington C. Stearns became a partner, at which time the firm name was changed to Larrabee & Stearns. In 1899 Arthur Hill joined the firm, and when John Larrabee retired in 1913 the name was changed to Stearns & Hill. In 1925 the business was moved across the street to the Barrett Block at No. 503 Main Street, and remained there until dissolved in 1970.

In the old Lyceum building appeared lecturers such as George William Curtis, editor of Harper's Magazine, who was an opponent of slavery and favored woman suffrage; Wendell Phillips, an American abolitionist leader, political reformer and orator; and William Lloyd Garrison, American abolitionist and pacifist who lectured extensively and wrote a syndicated newspaper column under the pen name of Aristides.

#### **FIRE DESTROYS**

Lyceum Hall was nearly completely destroyed by a fire that swept the

west side of Main Street on August 20, 1870. On the foundation of the building, and the portion of the first floor remaining after the fire, rose a new three-story frame building known as Unity Hall Block, completed in the latter part of 1870. In 1880 John Larrabee purchased the property from Samuel A. Boardman, and extensively reconstructed the building. The first tenant on the ground floor was C.G. Harris, retailer of dry goods. Dr. Aaron Hill, Jr., occupied the second floor for the practice of dentistry. The building is now known as Nos. 500-504 Main Street, and is now occupied on the ground floor by Hill's Office Supplies Inc. and Marie T. Wood, Realtor, the latter being also the present building owner. The two upper floors contain five apartments.

After the fire John Larrabee built a new three-story frame building to the north of Unity Block where he continued his drug store business. The building was completed in late 1870, and is now known as Nos. 506-510 Main Street, although the two top stories were removed some years ago.

At a Town Meeting in Lyceum Hall on September 24, 1869, the citizens had been warned about the inadequacy of the water supply in Melrose for fire protection. A contract for improvement of the supply had been signed six months later. However, the work was not completed until August 25, 1870 just six days after the fire swept the Main Street block.

After the great fire destroyed the Lyceum Building, the Lyceum programs were temporarily suspended. When Unity Hall was completed on the same site about eight months later, intermittent programs were held there. On completion of the Town Hall in 1874, the third floor auditorium facilities were used for Lyceum programs.

The annual Lyceum courses usually ran for ten weeks, and presented lecturers such as Mark Twain, who ap-