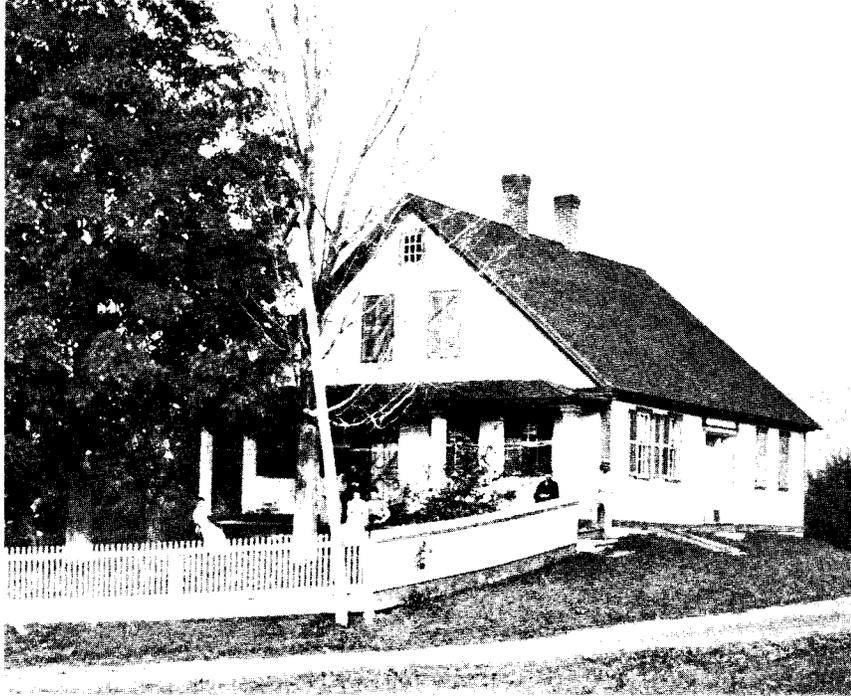

JOSEPH SMITH INN (PIERCE HOMESTEAD)

By MOLLIE PIERCE KING

Joseph Smith may have acquired his first piece of land in Clarendon under a Lydias title since records seem to confirm that he built upon it an inn, perhaps as early as 1773. He purchased several additional tracts of land later from Wentworth proprietors, one on September 11, 1779 from Jeremiah Whittemore who was an original proprietor of a Benning Wentworth grant though he never came to Clarendon to settle, and in fact may never have even seen his property there.

Joseph Smith's Inn in Durham, the name given the greater portion of Clarendon by Colonel Lydius, was very well known. Its location at the interesection of the Boston Road and the main route to Albany, New York made it accessible to travelers from both directions. The fact that Joseph



JOSEPH SMITH INN — BOWMAN TAVERN
(*Pierce Homestead*)

Smith was known to be a loyal New Hampshire man led his inn to become a headquarters of sorts for Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys. During those years before the Revolutionary War, they were acting against the New Yorkers who were granting land in Clarendon.

The story of Benjamin Spencer is well known. He lived in the south part of Durham, and "was active as a York justice and assistant judge" and was also an active agent of the New York speculators in their attempts to obtain the land and rid it of the Green Mountain Boys. To punish Mr. Spencer for his activities against the interests of the New Hampshire grantees, Ethan Allen and a group of his followers moved against him in the autumn of 1773. He was captured and taken to "the house of Joseph Smith of Durham, innkeeper." Here he was held until he chose to be tried in front of his own home. He was convicted and punished by having the roof of his house removed. As a result Mr. Spencer gave up the position of New York justice which he held. He gave and kept his word to never again spy upon the activities of the Green Mountain Boys or any others who had obtained their land grants from Benning Wentworth, governor of New Hampshire.

There are other stories, passed down by word of mouth and less well documented, of Ethan Allen at this inn. It is said that he requested that Mr. Smith have the road, running north and south past his home, laid out at double the normal width so that Allen and his men could make use of it for military training. This was done and when a survey was made in the 1920s prior to rebuilding, engineers wondered why this particular section was so much wider than any other part of the route through Clarendon.

Another story which was told by Arthur Holden, a Clarendon citizen, who had a keen interest in the history of the town, has Ethan and several of his men dining at the Inn. During the course of the meal Mr. Smith's daughter, Sarah Smith Bowman, who was serving the men asked if they would care for more tea. One of them hastily answered, "No, thank you." Ethan instantly struck the man with the back of his hand. "No man speaks for me", said Allen, "Yes, Mrs. Bowman I will have more tea."

In 1776 Joseph Smith sold his inn to his daughter and son-in-law Sarah and John Bowman. Since no town records were kept till 1778, this transfer is recorded in that year. The Bowmans ran the Bowman Tavern there for fifty-one years. It was a Clarendon landmark, where town meetings were held, officials chosen and the traveling public accommodated. As age crept upon the Bowmans they sold the property on July 3, 1827 to Edward Dyer for \$3000. He later sold to Harvey Hawkins who on July 17, 1835 sold this property to Christopher Pierce.

The Pierce family have lived at the Corner for four generations. Christopher Jr. the first Pierce owner, died in his thirties, and his widow Aletta Weeks Pierce and her two small sons John and Cornelius became the owners. When Cornelius married Clara Steward in 1858, and she came there to live, the house stood very much as Joseph Smith had built it in 1773. The fireplaces in every room had been removed though in some cases their framework and mantels were still there. In the front west room, which was believed to have been the inn's barroom, two large hooks still remained in the ceiling. From these the bar was hung. The story goes that this bar was hung high so if one was tall enough to look over it he was judged old enough to be served.

On October 22, 1959 the old building was destroyed by fire. About all that now remains to remind one of its long and colorful history are the two routes that still lead to Boston and to Albany and an occasional colonial coin of Spanish origin or a Vermont Constellation of 1785 both of which have been unearthed on the premises.