

# William T. Merrifield, 1807-1895

WCHS President 1876-1879

Artist: Bernard M. Keyes

- Born in Worcester, to Alpheus and Mary (Trowbridge) Merrifield
- Learned carpentry from his father at 15 and went on to become an industrial builder
- He had four children with his first wife Margaret Brigham and two children with his second wife Maria Caroline Brigham
- His first large contract was for \$300,000 to build the steam-powered Lancaster Mills in Clinton
- Family stories recount that he received the contract after impressing the company by travelling from Worcester to Clinton by horse during a snowstorm
- Many of Worcester's well-known 19th century industries began in Merrifield buildings
- In 1846 he bought 30 acres and built a large house designed by Elbridge Boyden (Mechanics Hall); known as 'Highland Place' it included a barn, multiple greenhouses, extensive gardens and an orchard
- His daughter Harriette recalls spending much time in the greenhouse with her father where he liked to smoke cigars -- and tell family stories
- Among many distinguished descendants, Merrifield's grandson, Will, became a well-known entomologist and his granddaughter, Esther Forbes, an award-winning author of books such as *Johnny Tremain*

*"...one of those choice spirits who.....were not selfishly satisfied to gather from their own orchards, or to consider the lilies in enclosed field or open meadow; but elected to lay broad and deep the foundations of a Society whereby to advance the science and encourage and promote the practice of horticulture in and throughout the County of Worcester."*