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."

Edward W. Lincoln, WCHS Transactions, 1896