

THE VILLAGE OF SACCARAPPA



The twenty-two mile long Presumpscot River runs through the center of Westbrook. For many years, before Westbrook became incorporated as a town, there were two villages about a mile apart, along its shores, both situated beside river falls. The falls were recognized by the early settlers as places where dams could be built and the power used to run mills. The village at the westerly falls was given the Indian name Saccarabigg, later changed to Saccarappa. [Saccrappa means “falling toward the rising sun” and Presumpscot means “many rough places river”. See “Ammocongion/Cumberland Mills” for information on the easterly village.]



The Falls at Bridge St. Bridge

Isabel T. Ray, in her booklet *Westbrook, Maine A History*, writes that probably the earliest settler in Saccarappa was Joseph Conant, who with his younger brother, Samuel came from Beverly, MA. They were the great grandsons of Roger Conant, first settler and Governor of Naumkeag, now Salem, MA. Tradition has it that Conant brought his family and all his worldly wealth up the Presumpscot River in a canoe. He supposedly built house, a saw mill and a grist mill at Saccarappa Falls and started farming. [A descendent of Samuel Conant still lives on Conant Street in Westbrook, a street named for them. See Newsletter - Winter 2009 for more Conant information.]



The old Conant Home on “Pork” Hill



Thus started the growth of mills along the Presumpscot River. John Phillips had a saw mill at the Falls by 1729 and entered into the lumber business. The lumber industry was the leading business in this vicinity for over a century. At one time Saccarappa was purported to have had 19 saw mills in operation day and night. [See Photo Archives for more information: 'Mills of Saccarappa' and Haskell Silk Mill at Saccarappa Falls.]

With the growth of the mills came the start of the village...shops, churches, buildings started to appear as families arrived and the settlement grew. The rapid growth of the town must have seemed overwhelming to the residents at times. H.G. Rocheleau, founder of Rocheleau's Clothes Shop which was a long time Main Street fixture, made this quote in 1914: "When I first came 30 years ago last May, in 1884, this little town of Saccarappa looked very dull. Especially in the evening, the stores were using oil lamps for lights. The sidewalks were made of wood and there was a sidewalk only on Main Street. The American Express Co. was then delivering packages with a wheelbarrow. But today this little city of Westbrook is up to date in every way."



Saccarappa, looking east

Saccarappa, looking west

