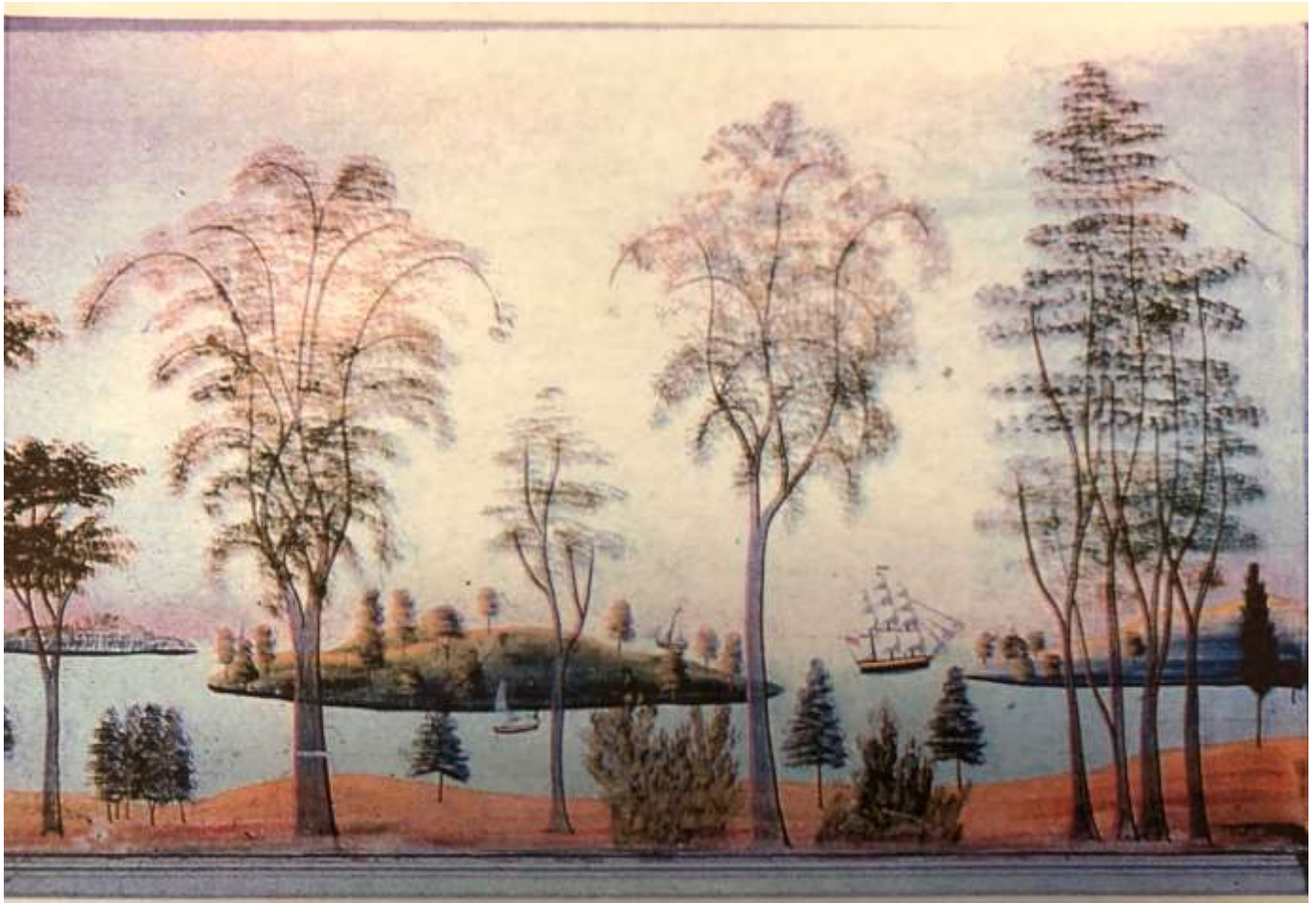
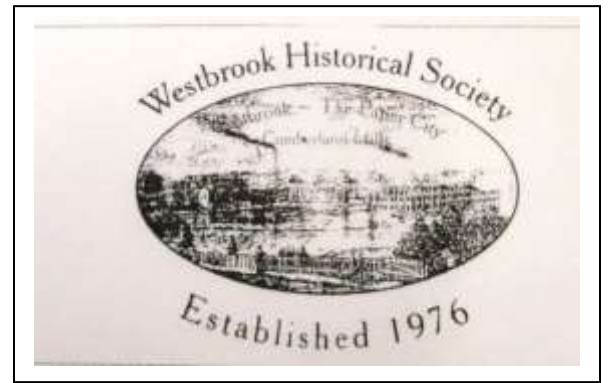


# *Westbrook Historical Society*

**"A Society That Preserves the Past"**

**Summer 2020 Newsletter**



## *The traveling painted walls...*

### *Maine to Nantucket to California*

The beautiful painted walls in the living room of the circa 1750s Westbrook, Maine home of Zebulon Chick at 649 Saco Street had been carefully removed from their original home and carefully transported and installed in a new home on Nantucket where later the new owner decided against keeping them and was trying to find a buyer. A strange group of happenstances led to a Connecticut couple buying the panels and donating them to a museum in California.

Thanks to an astute residential contractor, the expert guidance of members of the Center for Painted Wall Preservation, the help of antiques dealer Allan Katz, and the generosity of collectors Karin and Jonathan

Fielding, a group of early nineteenth-century New England murals that might have ended up on a scrap pile have instead found a new home at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in California.



The latest chapter in the story of the murals began in July, 2018, when the contractor got in touch with the Center for Painted Wall Preservation (CPWP), a Hallowell, Maine-based nonprofit. He was renovating a house on Nantucket where the living room was fitted with seven hand-painted scenic panels of great age depicting trees and meadows. The homeowners had no interest in the murals, but allowed the contractor a chance to save them. In his research, he came across the CPWP website, and there he saw the very same painted walls he hoped to rescue.

David Ottinger, an historic architectural salvage expert, removed these murals from their original home in the Zebulon Trickey House, a residence on Saco Street in Westbrook, Maine dating to the late eighteenth century that was dismantled to make way for a new subdivision. The scenic paintings have been credited to Jonathan D. Poor (1807-1845), a nephew of the famed portraitist, muralist, inventor, and founder of *Scientific American* magazine Rufus Porter (1792-1884), who likely taught his nephew to paint.

Now at the Huntington in the care of conservators, the murals are being prepared for display in the Jonathan and Karin Fielding Wing of the institution's Virginia Steele Scott Galleries of American Art. (In a final irony, the same truck driver who brought the murals from Maine to Nantucket also drove them to Southern California.) When they go on view, Jonathan Poor's scenic paintings will become the first nineteenth-century New England murals ever exhibited in a Western museum.

### A Wall Story By Wayne Chick

This story starts in 1911 when Frank & Sara Chick, my Grand-parents, bought the property located at 649 Saco Street from the Trickey family. They started farming and raising dairy cattle and for many years operated a successful dairy business. There was a room in the house that was decorated with painted harbor scenes on the four walls. It was thought that they were painted by **Rufus Porter**, although no proof could be found. The Chick family lived there for almost fifty years before selling the property to the Boivin family in 1960. After the deaths of Mr. & Mrs. Boivin, the children sold the building to a local realtor. The house was dismantled and a private collector bought the painted walls. The Chick family never knew for certain what happened to the walls although Nantucket Island was rumored. It was by sheer accident that, in July 2017, while visiting the Rufus Porter Museum, I discovered that they were, in fact, in a residence on Nantucket Island. My father had taken photos of the "painted room" before the family sold the property. I had the photos with me on the visit to the museum. While showing these pictures to the staff, I was informed that a private collector in Nantucket had mural walls and wanted to donate them to the museum in Bridgeton. They were the walls from my Grand-parents farm on Saco Street.

I told Mike Sanphy, then Mayor, about the encounter and it was decided that Westbrook should pursue getting the walls back to the city. The problems with the plan were many; no place to store the walls, lack of co-

ordination between parties and the fact that the collector/owner would only deal with the Rufus Porter Museum and wanted to remain anonymous and other factors. The attempt failed !

Last fall (2019) I was given a web address for the Plaster Walls Preservation Organization, based here in Maine. I signed up for their newsletter and the first issue I received was about the mural walls from the Chick farm. I contacted the president of the PWP Organization and started a dialogue. We exchanged a lot of information back and forth. I discovered how very close the mural walls came to being discarded before a couple in Connecticut heard about them and acquired them. They in, turn donated, the walls to the Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California. I have been in contact with the museum and am supplying them with pictures and written material. The museum is in the process of restoring the walls to their original state, as best they can. The museum plans on re-creating the room as it was in the Chick farm. Plans are in the works for a gala opening event when the walls go on exhibit.

### **Facts About the Painted Walls**

The walls were painted by Jonathan Poor between 1830 and 1835. Jonathan Poor was a nephew to Rufus Porter and was taught his painting skills by his uncle. Many of paintings by the two individuals are unsigned and styles are similar, but experts can distinguish between the two. The walls are extremely rare and in very good condition for their age. The person I speak with from the Huntington Museum tells me that the best thing the Chick family did to the walls, was "nothing". They are the only known such walls west of the Mississippi River. The museum is ecstatic about having acquired these walls.

### *Memorabilia from the Chick Family Donated to the Historical Society*

Although an attempt to keep the painted walls in Westbrook was unsuccessful, the Chick Family has donated several items from the old farm to the Society. They are now on view here at the Society.

A fascinating journal by Althea Chick has been transcribed and put into book form by Wilma Ross whose mother was a Chick and Stephen Welcome, also related to Chicks.

The daily entries date from 1912 – 1916, 1918, 1920, 1923 and take one back to a time before automobiles when horses, wagons and the trolley were the typical ways of travel and the way of getting to Portland and Gorham. Franklin Chick delivered milk in bulk to local stores downtown before it was delivered daily by a member of the family to individual homes. It was a hard life with lots of cooking being done before breakfast, cleaning, washing by hand, barn chores and then someone had to deliver the milk. Musical talent was treasured and the basis of much of the entertainment along with various organizations and church attendance. Althea did take a tour to Arizona in 1951 to visit her sister and her husband. She traveled by train stopping at various cities along the way and even ventured into Mexico and up to the Grand Canyon.

Other items in this collection are a colorful pieced embroidered quilt made by Almira Cutler, Frank Chick's mother. Urban Crest Farm (Chick Farm) artifacts complete the exhibit.

More Trickey Farm pictures are available at the Society in the Genealogy section under Trickey.

### *History of the House* in Highlights of Westbrook History (1952)

One of the oldest houses in Westbrook, according to records, is the farm at **649 Saco Street** belonging to Frank A. Chick since 1911. It was before that, except for the previous five years, owned and occupied by members of the Trickey family. A deed recorded in 1757 shows that Eleanor Trickey, widow of Zebulon Trickey, conveyed the eight-three acre farm, with buildings thereon, to their sons David and Zebulon, then minors. In 1783 the latter sold his share to his brother David. That this is the Saco Street Trickey farm is evident from the fact that David Trickey in 1794 sold to James Webb a piece of land, stated in the deed as having been bought from Zebulon Trickey, which later was sold to William Roberts. A deed of 1805 shows that

Daniel Trickey bought from Lucy Waldo "all of the 577 ½ acres not already sold, of the land laid out to Thomas Westbrook and Samuel Waldo".

A deed of 1818 shows that the Trickey property then comprised 160 acres. The original house had two stories, but no ell. It must be more than one hundred years ago that the house was enlarged for the ell was equipped with a fireplace and brick oven. These and six of the original eight fireplaces in the main part of the house were still intact at the time this was written. The Chick family still have in their possession the two arch kettles, one of copper and the other of iron, used in the brick oven. The old iron shovel, with a four foot handle, used for removing ashes from the fireplace, is also owned by the family.



When the house was enlarged, the original front became one end. An older type of front door leading into a central hall is located at what is now the right end of the house as it appears from the street. The shaved, hand done clapboards on the back of this part of the house are the early overlapped type and here the windows are smaller, with small panes of glass. **The walls in what is now a back room, but was originally the "front parlor" are entirely painted with the quaint landscapes and, unlike most decorations of this type found in the early houses, have a very light background so the room is not darkened. Below the painted wall is a two foot wide wainscoting of pumpkin pine. The brick hearth of the fireplace is made of eight inch square**

**hand made bricks.** In all there are fifteen finished rooms in this old house.

In 1979, the building was dismantled because the purchaser was going to put it back together in another location, but because of divorce this has never happened. The painted walls were preserved and went to a private residence in Nantucket. Hamlet Coach Park now stands on the property.

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## Hezekiah Elwell, 82, Writes His Memoirs of Old Saccarappa

Probably is Oldest Man, Now Living Who Was Born in Westbrook Before That City Changed Its Name

Under the Caption, My Boyhood Days in Old Saccarappa, Hezekiah Elwell of 26 Haskell Street, Westbrook, and who believes himself to be the oldest man now living to be born in Old Saccarappa, writes interestingly from Longwood, Florida, where he is now summering. Mr. Elwell, 82 Years of age, and the only one of nine now living who in a group gave up their employment in one of the Paper City mills and answered the call of Lincoln serving in the First Maine Regiment. He afterwards served in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> regiments.

His own story of Old Saccarappa follows:

*Longwood, Florida*

*Dec.9,1924*

I was born 82 years ago today in a two and a half story house on what is now called the Longfellow Road on the spot where the house of the late Albert Warren now stands, this side of the old Cumberland Canal. My father was engaged in the lumber business for the firm of Brigham, Clemens & Warren Company. The next house on the same side of the road was Abial Cutter's, next the Old Nat Clements place, then comes the old York and Cumberland Railroad, next the Montgomery Anderson house, which for years was the stopping

place for all the four and six ox teams from way back in the country. Most all these teams were loaded with long spars for shipbuilding. Anderson furnished lodging and meals. Next, on the same side of the street, commenced the large lumber yards of the mills, extending down to the old York and Cumberland Railroad. Next was the Fitch house, located where the Odd Fellows Hall now stands; next the stable of Dwinal Pride.

Now the business part of the village: First, was the store of Charles Paine, where was sold most

anything you wanted to drink. In front was the old watering place where you could wash it down. Next comes the store of Joe Small, who dealt in the small line goods; next the store of Joe Pratt where you could get most anything you wanted and set all day and play cards and dominoes; then the store of Cloudman and Stevens grocers; next the hotel. This place was run by the Pratts. Next comes the old Sewell Brackett tire shop and dance hall on the upper floor; next the church, on the same side where it now stands. There was nothing more on that side of the house of Dr. Marret and George Warren at the corner of Church Street.

Coming back to the other side of the street, at the junction of the new and old Road, the first was the old Stiles house, which is still standing. Stiles was the undertaker and coffin maker in those days. He also attended all the funerals at small expense. The next house was the Creg place, where lived Mrs. Doctor Creg, handy woman in sickness; next, the David Dyer house on the corner of the road leading to the old Pork Hill and the lumber mills; the old Tom Babb house, an uncle of mine; the old grist mill house and mill. This mill was run by Charles Bickford, and afterwards by the Pennells as a warp mill.

Coming down the same side until we come to the old Universalist Church, now used as a machine shop, next comes the business part of the village. The first store was George Goodridge's confectionery and barber shop. Leaving out some of the old landmarks, we'll cross Bridge Street and visit the store of Si and Rufus King, the place where everybody went to get the news. They were jolly good fellows and got rich. One of the most noted man in my time there in the village was Brice Edwards. He was a fine man and was noted for his many kind deeds.

Old Saccarappa was remembered by other things. One of these was the mud in the street. There were no sidewalks, so you had to walk in the middle of the street. There were no lights, no water supply, no telephones, no electric road, not much of a railroad, only the York and Cumberland, and that

only ran to Gorham, afterwards to Buxton. They had the old wood burning engines, and were so slow it was said a man on the train to Buxton got off the train and picked six quarts of berries and kept along with the train.

One thing I forgot to mention, which was the delight of the boys of my age. That was the old Saccarappa Light Infantry with Capt. Hiram Jordan, one of the finest of military men of that day; 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Thomas Smith; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Charles Prince as officers. This company was made up of the lumbermen, and it was a strong company. The music they had in those days could not be outdone, not even by old Dan Chandler of Portland.

We had no schools, only one on Saco Street where old and young attended. My father was obliged to take me from school at the age of 11 to help him in the mill. I worked in the mill until the breaking out of the Civil War. I was then 19 years old, working in the mill by night at only five shillings. The crew under my charge consisted of nine men. This was the time of the call of Lincoln for 75,000 men. After talking the matter over we all went to Portland and enlisted in the First Maine Regiment. I am the only one now living of the nine. I afterwards enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> Regiment, also the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment, serving four years and eight months.

One thing I forgot to mention was our protection from fire. We had only one hand tub called the Rough and Ready. There was no place to draw water from only the river; no fire alarm, only the church bells and those which could make the most noise.

After returning from the war I went to work for the S. D. Warren Company at what is now called Cumberland Mills. In my boyhood days it was Congin. There was nothing there, only a small mill run and owned by Day & Lyon, now one of the largest paper mills in the world. The East and West ends of the village were not connected, all farming lands. Now they are thickly settled.

I am the oldest man now living who was born in old Saccarappa. *HEZEKIAH ELWELL*

### **WESTBROOK INN**

Established in October 1905, the Westbrook Inn, in close proximity to the business center, is a most homelike hostelry, and has a good reputation for excellence of service and accommodations for traveling people. There are 30 nicely furnished sleeping rooms, with hot and cold water, electric light and steam heat. The dining room seats 60 people, and the table is supplied with the best viands that the market can provide. The rates are one dollar and a half per day, and the general public are especially catered to. Five people are employed. Joseph Barrett, the proprietor, was born in Canada and was there educated and in the public schools of

Vermont. He has had a lifetime of experience in the hotel business and is widely known throughout this vicinity. Mr. Barrett is known as a genial host and is highly esteemed in all circles of the community

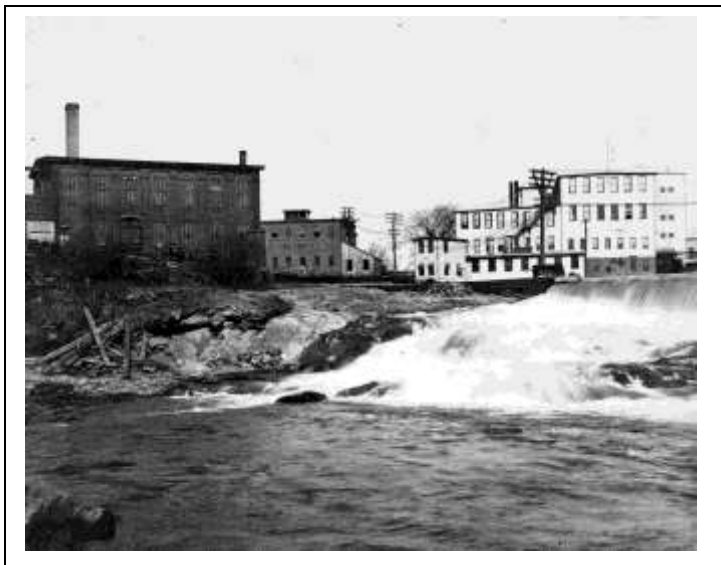


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### Mills of Saccarappa/Westbrook

The area north of the Presumpscot River was developed in response to a series of textile mills that were constructed to take advantage of the lower falls. Only Bridge and Brown streets were in place as major roads prior to 1879, with Winslow Lane running between the two for a depth of one block. The west side of Bridge Street as it runs along the east bank of the river was undeveloped except for a small mill opposite Winslow Lane that was the original **Dana Warp Mill** erected in 1866. The Dana Company moved to larger quarters on Main Street in 1873, then to a site on the island in the bend in the river in 1879. In 1901, the Dana Warp Mill would take over the entire west side of Bridge Street, from Dana Court to the point where today's extension of Bridge Street was intensely developed over a two block long stretch ending at Mitchell Street. The three block long Dana Warp Mill and the area along Bridge Street opposite is recommended as a possible national Register District

Knowlton Machine and remains of Island Mill after fire



Island Mill – part of Dana Warp Mill



. The **Westbrook Manufacturing Company**, whose buildings burned was the outgrowth of the first mills established in this area, the Portland Manufacturing Company, who had constructed a mill for the manufacture of duck material in 1830 along the north bank of the river, east of Bridge Street. The Westbrook Manufacturing Company purchased this mill and expanded it in 1858, added a second mill in the same area in 1865 to produce drilling (denim), and completed their expansion when they moved across Bridge Street in 1881 and built a gingham mill. This mill was incorporated into the Dana Warp Mill structure when it was sold in 1901. The third mill of importance in Saccarappa was the **Haskell Silk Company**, started in 1874 in a small building just north of the bridge along the west side of Bridge Street. Each of these mills contributed to the architectural character of this part of Saccarappa, with the entire area being developed over time to house the many mill workers, many of whom immigrated from Canada.

(Excerpt from Fabius M. Ray's Story of Westbrook)

Woodbury K. Dana first founded a business in Gray where is made cod lines, bags, and bunch yarn. He realized he needed to learn more to grow his business so came to Westbrook and got work at card grinding in the old brick mill of the Westbrook Manufacturing Company where duck and denim were made. He did not find the opportunity of learning the business so he left for Lewiston where he found employment in the Lincoln Cotton Mill, where he worked twelve hours a day. Later, until he enlisted in the Union Army, he worked at different positions in the Bates, Continental, and Lewiston Mills. He was there for a purpose. His pay was only \$1.25 a day; it was but a small part of what he was earning for himself. In this way Mr. Dana spent the important years from 1859-1863.

## **THE DANA WARP MILLS by Philip Dana** (Written for the Centennial booklet – Mill 50+ years old)

I have been asked to sketch briefly what the Dana Warp Mills are today and how they affect Westbrook.

Beginning in 1866 with a few spinning frames and gradually growing, the Dana Warp Mills has become a fair sized cotton mill of 56,000 spindles, employing over 600 people, consuming 4,500,000 pounds of cotton, and producing over 4,000,000 pounds of yarn per year.

Wages paid in a year are about \$650,000 and on a full time schedule would be over \$700,000.

The company pays taxes to the city amounting to over \$28,000 per year and considerably more to the United States. Taxes paid in 1922 amount to more than 7 per cent of its Capital Stock.

The Dana Warp Mills has the unique distinction of running fifty-six years under the management of one man, W. K. Dana as treasurer and general manager. It has always been Mr. Dana's policy to put a large part of the earnings back into the mill in the way of up keep and extensions. Any improvements in machinery, and labor saving devices have been adopted when possible.

The company insures the lives of all its employees who have been with them nine months or longer.

It has adopted a liberal policy in helping its employees own homes.

It has been said that a manufacturer, to succeed, needed to know three trades: 1<sup>st</sup>. Buying, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Skill

in manufacturing, 3<sup>rd</sup>. selling, and if he lacked any one of the three he could not succeed. There is considerable truth in this statement, but of late years buying right seems to be the most essential part of the business. In the last three years we have seen cotton at 44 cents a pound. Eight months later at 8 cents per pound and then have seen a gradual rise with some set backs to its present level of 24 cents per pound. One large purchase of cotton at the wrong price sometimes wipes out manufacturing profits of one or two years. There have been several years when the only profits made have been from the right buying of cotton.

This brings me to the present problem which all cotton mills in New England are facing, namely competition with southern mills. This competition is a very real menace to successful cotton manufacturing in new England at the present time and the situation is growing more acute as more mills are being built each year in the south.

You ask "Why do we fear the South?" There is only one reason in Maine at the present time, and that is wages. Recent statistics, prepared in July, 1922 show that we are paying from 50 per cent to 100 per cent more for the same work than is being paid in the south. Formerly the quality of the goods made in the south was poor, now it is nearly equal to northern goods and as their operatives acquire more skill and experience there is no reason why

southern cloth should not equal the product of northern mills. Southern wages are not high enough and should be advanced but while the present difference exists there is little prospect of the norther mills running steadily is little prospect of the northern mills running steadily.

Many northern mills are establishing mills in the south. This month the Treasurer and Agent of one of our largest Maine mills took a trip south with the intention of building there rather than in Maine.

State legislatures are constantly adding new taxes to burden industry and proposing legislation to cripple industry.

It is absurd for an industry in one state to have an eight hour day while its chief competitors in other states have a nine or ten hour day.

I have mentioned these matters to show that an industry in Maine, in competition with other states has many worries.

We have, on the other hand, many advantages in Maine and in Westbrook. Our climate is wonderful. Our people are practically all American citizens with a pride in their town, its growth and progress. More people own their homes in Westbrook than in most towns. Five thousand savings accounts in the Westbrook Trust Company indicates thrift.

We are glad to be a part of Westbrook and shall do our best to cooperate in all forward movements looking towards her future growth and prosperity.

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### *President's Message*

Hi to you all. I miss seeing you because of this coronavirus lock down. The Community Center and the Historical Society has been closed since February. I have no idea when the restrictions will be lifted as the City has not decided yet. I hope you have all been well and am looking forward to seeing you all again when we can start our monthly meeting this fall. We have postponed the Annual Meeting until September hoping that all will be back to normal by that time. Take care of yourselves!

*Mike Sanphy*

**Westbrook Historical Society's Annual Meeting will be postponed from June to the first Wednesday in September.**

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