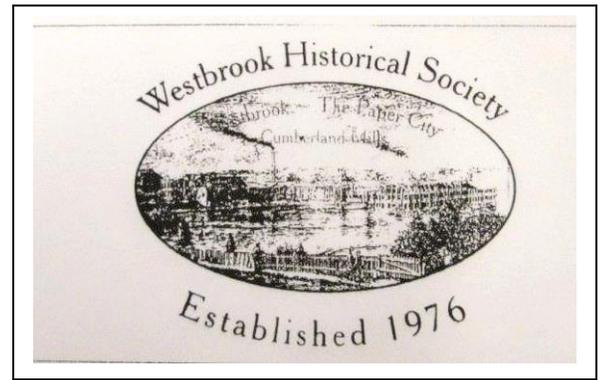


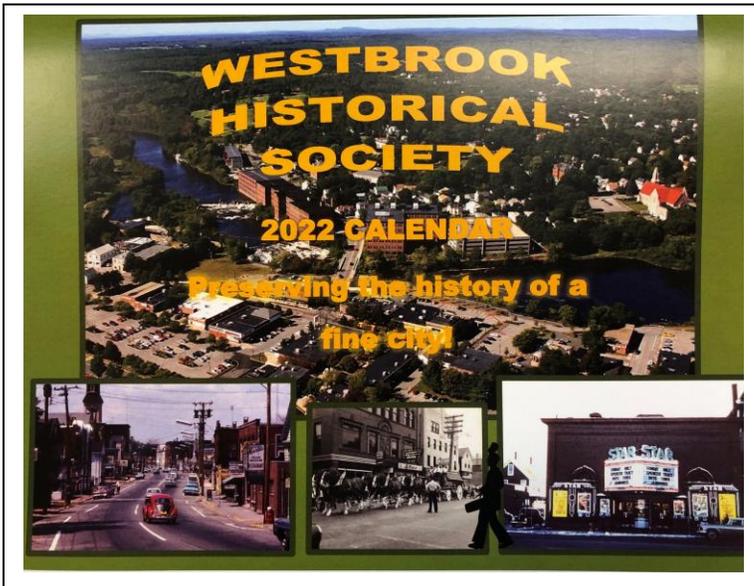
Westbrook Historical Society

"A Society That Preserves the Past"

Fall 2021 Newsletter



THEY'RE HERE! 2022 CALENDARS!!



The calendars feature the collections of the Westbrook Historical Society. Under the direction of Diane Dyer who selected the various exhibits to feature and set up backgrounds for our in-house photographer, Mark Swett. The design and artistic layout of the calendar were completed by one of our members, Georgia Gillette. Because of all the dedicated involvement of many people working together, an outstanding calendar has been completed and is ready for sale.

Exhibits that are featured with pictures and short explanations are varied from old costumes, Ellie Sanders scrapbook collection, old tools, milk bottles, horse drawn fire engines (full size), Rudy Vallee memorabilia and military uniforms. This is only a smattering of the treasured materials collected by the Society

The Calendars are on sale for \$10.00.

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42 Weavers from Scotland

Scotch Hill had a picturesque past. In 1881, 42 expert weavers came to Westbrook from Scotland, accompanying Scottish gingham machines bought by the Westbrook Manufacturing Company.

They were later followed by other native Scots who came in groups both large and small. These fine people lived in homes built for them by the company on a rise of land near the mills.

The homes were laid out to form a horseshoe around a field where rugby was played. Old-timers recall the Scottish soccer and rugby games when Westbrook teams played against crews of the English steamboats docked in Portland Harbor.

"Among the Scots there was a piper", writes E. R. Rowe in his "Highlights of Westbrook History". Often the people of Westbrook were treated to the "novel sight of this brawny Highlander in kilt, plaids, bonnet marching around the village playing stirring marches, lively jigs and reels, and some weird, doleful laments of his native land".

The Scottish Caledonia Flute Band "played for all the parades in town", and also at gatherings of their people on the hill when lovely old ballads were sung.

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Scotch Hill

MAINE FIRE DISASTER OF FALL 1947

A RECENT DONATION TO THE SOCIETY WAS A NEWSPAPER REVIEW OF THE FIRES OF OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 1947

Donated by Corey Cookson

This was a horrible disaster for the State and although Westbrook was not directly affected, it seems an appropriate time to remember the effects. Fortunately, this year the fires are on the west coast.

The special edition was full of pictures – mostly a mass of remaining chimneys standing alone among the ashes. The special Edition was printed and edited by the Guy Gannett Newspapers and printed by the Kennebec Journal, Augusta, Maine.

The Cost – In dollars and Heartache as follows:

16 dead – 2,500 homeless – 1,068 homes destroyed – 9 communities leveled or practically wiped out – 4 other communities which suffered extensive damage – 200,000 acres of timberland ravaged.



York County bore the brunt of the disaster, a number of its communities, including summer resort colonies, and tinder-dry undergrowth. Bar Harbor provided what was possibly the next spectacular drama, the fire there trapping thousands of citizens along the waterfront where Dunkerque-like scenes of evacuation were re-enacted. In other communities – Brownfield, Newfield, Waterboro, Fortune Rock, Lyman, Dayton – hardly a home was left standing after the flames had swept past. There remained only chimneys, foundations and ashes – and the long, arduous task of reconstruction.

Wind and Flame Held Full Sway on Oct. 23rd, A Day of Horror for Maine

The year that was to bring the worst forest fires in 300-odd years since the white man came to Maine started wet. In the Spring so much rain fell gardeners had trouble getting crops planted. But by mid-summer the daily drizzle had disappeared, and in its place came one of the most stubborn dry spells in memory. In the first 28 days of October, not enough moisture came out of the sky in Portland to be measured, and heat records fell. By the first week of October, wells were dry all over the state. Here and there a set of farm buildings burned down for lack of water to fight the fire.

In the Woods, the danger doubled, doubled again, and then doubled again with every passing day of drought. Woods that usually were ablaze with color in the Fall changed in one quick jump from summer's green to toasted brown. Fallen leaves were not just dry, they were powdery. Then in the middle of October reports of small woods fires began coming in from around the state.



On Monday, Oct. 20th, alarm spread through Biddeford as a fire south of that city suddenly began to move, leaping across U. S. Route One and heading for the coast. Tuesday the wind blowing strong at its back, it raced across the pine woods of Kennebunkport Township and swept down upon house after house. Before nightfall it had reached the coast, and it galloped through the summer colonies of Goose Rocks Beach and Cape Porpoise despite all that hundreds, even thousands of hastily gathered volunteers could do to halt it.

When they finally stopped it on the fringes of Kennebunkport Village, they found the same wind had lashed a small fire in northern York County into a rampaging monster. Wednesday was a calmer day with the wind dying down, but on the ground the Kennebunkport fire was far from dead; the Waterboro fire was completely unchecked; Brownfield south of Fryeburg, was in grave peril; and the beautiful forest of Acadia National Park around Bar Harbor was ablaze.

Day of Terror

Thursday, Oct. 23, was a day of terror all over Southern Maine. The wind rose to 25 miles an hour in the West, and nothing puny man could do would hold Maine's forest fires in check. Smoke turned the sun into a blood-red spot in the murky sky. The major fire fronts stretched for miles, with flames leaping through the treetops at frightening speed. With bulldozers, tank trucks converted to water wagons, back pumps, spades, and even wet brooms, men fell back to the very edge of towns and farmyards in the hope of saving their buildings. Usually, they failed.

At Bar Harbor, thousands stood on the dock awaiting rescue by sea as a circle of fire closed in on their town. Finally heroic crews rode bulldozers into the face of the fire to open a land path to safety for them. Red Cross reports estimated that between 5,000 and 6,000 people were homeless at the height of the fire danger. In Bar Harbor alone where the estimated damage was as high as \$10,000,000, about 3,000 people were evacuated on the first night of the fire. More than 475 homes were destroyed in the state.



Brownfield, Newfield, Waterboro, Lyman, Fortune Rock and a big part of Bar Harbor burned on that wild Thursday. It was the fire's big day. The whole state stood in horror as Friday revealed the rows of gaping cellar holes and lonesome chimney where once homes had stood.

Thousands of men now lined the fire fronts, and Federal agencies rushed new help to the State. Better organized, the men got to each threatening spot quicker and for the first time the end of the tragedy seemed in sight. But the fire wasn't really licked yet. In a last splurge of power, it roared through sparsely settled Dayton Township Saturday, carrying more than 30 homes to the skies in ragging flames and smoke.

At the peak of the fires about 6,000 persons had been driven from their homes as refugees, and when the ashes cooled 2,500 of them found they had nothing to go back to but cold ashes.

Furniture Hunt Followed Evacuation

In the midst of smoke and flame-filled nights as fire threatened their homes, many families sent their household furniture off on volunteer trucks without knowing its final destination.

One Richmond man, who ripped the plumbing from his fire-threatened home, later found it stored in a nearby barn. Another man found his refrigerator, beds and mattresses in Richmond when he searched for it after the threat to his home had passed.

Many families were looking for furniture and other valuables weeks after the crisis had passed.

At the height of the forest fire disaster the Maine State Pier burst into flame and it required the combined forces of Portland firemen, the Coast Guard, Army and Harbor craft to quell the three-alarm blaze.

Mail in Brownfield, practically leveled by fire was delivered for a while from a bed in one of the few homes which still remained standing in the little village. Lyman Wells, Brownfield postmaster, was one of the first people to put in a bid for one of the prefabricated houses sent to Brownfield for temporary shelter. Mr. Wells thought it would make a good post office, as well as school and church.

Residents of Brownfield, which was virtually wiped out by the fire were able to laugh as they surveyed the ruins of their town. One woman, seeking advice on how to find furniture which had been taken to safety during the fire, said at a town meeting that "I'm not asking for myself; I haven't anything left but a cellar hole." After the fire, the town fathers, with the aid of the Maine Central Railroad, set up for business as usual, by converting a combination baggage and smoking car into a town hall.

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RAILROAD TRACKS GO IN AND EVENTUALLY ARE TAKEN OUT

Presently railroad tracks are being destroyed in a major resurfacing of Westbrook's roads.

The article below describes when they were being installed.

The Local Transportation System at Cumberland Mills

From Warren Monthly by C. H. Hallowell, Foreman of Transportation

All materials used at Cumberland Mills were at one time handled by horse-drawn cars from the Boston & Maine and Maine Central railroads. Three horses were required to haul coal for the boiler house; two for hauling poplar wood to the Soda Mill; two, for hauling lime and rags, and four horses for trucking the finished paper for shipments.

In 1896, Mr. John E. Warren, who was then agent of the Mills, conceived the idea of installing a track and operating a switching locomotive to take cars from interchange track of the Boston & Maine and Maine Central railroads to the Mill, to be unloaded and reloaded with paper, or returned to the interchange tracks empty. At the same time small locomotives were brought to replace the horses on the two-foot gauge railroad, which is called the tramway (the word "tramway" is a relic of the old days of horse-drawn cars).

At that time about 100 tons of coal were burned each day, 100 cords of poplar wood used, and the output of the Mill was about 100 pounds of paper. These amounts are now more than doubled, and our total trackage approximates five miles of broad gauge and six miles of narrow gauge.

As the Mill has grown the Transportation Department has developed, and as the middleman between the delivering railroads, the manufacturing and repair departments of the Mill, it is called upon to perform all kinds of duties, such as shifting cars, unloading freight of all kinds (package and bulk) and delivering supplies to the Mill as wanted.

The railroads deliver both raw materials (such as wood, pulp, lime, alum, bleach, alkali, rosin, chlorine, salt, clay, casein, glue, poplar and spruce wood) and material for repairs in carload lots of from one car to a whole train of thirty cars, which are set upon the interchange track as made up in the train. We receive regular notice of the arrival of cars from the railroad officials and send our switching locomotives for the goods wanted. Our plan is to unload all freight in order of receipt, but we are often obligated to give special services for some needed supplies, which necessitates a large amount of switching.

We are now handling approximately 12,000 inward cars per year and 3,000 outwards. Included in the equipment of the Transportation Department are 2 standard gauge locomotive, 12 box cars, 9 flat cars, 2 tank cars, 4 narrow gauge locomotives, 25 narrow gauge coal cars and 115 narrow gauge flat cars.



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Cornelia Warren – A major benefactor of Westbrook

This year marks the 100th anniversary of her death

Compiled by Vaun E. Born

Although Cornelia never lived in Westbrook, because of her good works and foresight, the bequests she made to the City in 1921 are still at work in the continued efforts of the Cornelia Warren Community Association to benefit the cultural good of the City. Recently the fund supported the upgrades to the skating rink on Lincoln Street.

Following in the footsteps of her father, S. D. Warren who had the Warren Block at Cumberland Mills built to house businesses and a recreational hall. Other properties included the Warren School on Main Street, the Warren Congregational Church and parsonage on Cumberland Street and individual family homes on Brown Street and Cottage Place for workers at the Mill.

Cornelia followed her father's philanthropic spirit by furnishing manual training equipment for boys and girls at the Warren School. She donated equipment for the cooking and sewing classes at the high school in 1905, and equipment for the new Industrial Arts building that was built at the rear of the high school.

She gave funds in 1903 to convert the recreational hall in the Warren block into a gymnasium with lockers and dressing rooms. She made it possible for a swimming tank to be constructed along with a playground beside it.

Cornelia Lyman Warren was born at Cedar Hill in 1887. She attended private schools in Boston, but declined to go to college, but was associated with Wellesley College for several years as a Trustee.



Cornelia accompanied her parents to Europe several times where her father sought a market for certain quality rags to be shipped to the States for papermaking at the mill in Westbrook. She went to Europe with her mother and helped select items for her art collection.

The Cornelia Warren Community Association was established in 1925 to administer the legacies of cash and real estate to the City to provide educational, social and recreational resources for its citizens. She had owned property on Sebago Lake known as Camp Sippican which she made available for use of employees of the paper mill, but in 1927 it was sold and proceeds added to the Community Association funds.

In 1948 a new in-ground swimming pool was built next to the ball field and tennis courts behind the Warren library.

A Copy of the portrait was donated to the Society It was a painting completed in Paris in 1871 when she was 14 years old. The original hangs at Wellesley College.

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John E. Warren by Paul St. Cyr

He was a mill manager. He was a Civil War prisoner of war. He lived in Westbrook most of his adult life and was a dedicated, honest, reliable contributor to the social and economic conditions of this community. He was well known throughout Maine and as a leader in many areas. He had an engineering mind. He enjoyed the political arena becoming a state legislator for 2 terms, Westbrook city treasurer, and president of the city council. He was John Ebenezer Warren.

A nephew of the S. D. Warren paper mill owner Samuel Dennis Warren, John Warren was born in Grafton, Massachusetts on October 6, 1840 and shortly thereafter the family moved to Wauwatsoa, Michigan where he lived until he enlisted in the United States Army in May 1861 and one month after the war started.

His character

John Warren has been described as an “all around man”. From former workers, political friends and enemies, relatives, religious acquaintances, colleagues in the science world, business partners, and his own family come many fine comments that paint an outstanding picture of a much-loved man.

He was a man of sound judgement, wide interest, integrity, and knowledgeable in many areas. He was a constant student with an exceptional mind who held great respect for others, that being workers, men and women. He assisted his workers with grievances and or trouble. As mill agent (later to be called manager), he assisted workers with financial matters and as a state legislator from Westbrook, he was a respectful advocate for the city and its citizens. While a resident of the city and mill worker, he became a trustee for the Walker Library, a trustee of Bangor Theological Seminary, and Deacon of the Warren Congregational Church. One of his strongest attributes was his dedication and understanding of “What is Right”.

Therefore, it is no surprise or mistake that he survived the Civil War imprisonment at the notorious rebel internment camp.

Andersonville

(In the south known as Camp Sumter)

As John E. recalled some years later, it was Sunday June 1, 1864 near Memphis, Tennessee when the skirmish went wrong and many Yankee soldiers were captured by rebel forces, stripped of their weapons, hats, and boots, thus, becoming POWs. Eventually, the men were placed on railroad freight cars and with one stop in Macon, Georgia to separate officers from the enlisted, the train pulled into Andersonville. Writing many years later, Mr. Warren remembers feeling southern rebels would never be defeated and personally felt the war would “go on for some time”. He even developed great respect and understanding for Nathan B. Forrest as Mr. Warren felt he was fairly treated after his capture before the train left the Memphis area.

Upon arriving at the prison without any footwear, he was not surprised to see the commander of the prison mounted on his white horse. Captain Henry Wirz, a native of Switzerland, sat welcoming new residents to the gate. (Interestingly, Mr. Wirz was the only rebel officer from the Civil War to be tried, convicted, and hanged). Some years later when writing about the experience, John E. described his initial reaction, “the stockade was a dense mass of humanity”.

He quickly discovered that home was a filthy mess, scanty rations prevailed, “Bull Pen” by many, the 24 acres was 1/3 swamp with a stream running through the middle surrounded by a 15 foot wooden wall. By the late summer of 1864 over 100 inmates died daily. Food was horrible as meat was eaten raw, scurvy spread, and as guards looked the other way murder by gangs increased.

Over 13,000 union soldiers are buried at Andersonville. One is a confederate soldier.

However, after 162 days of imprisonment, John E. Warren, along with hundreds more, were exchanged and released. He was released from the army in 1865 and made his way to Maine the next year.

1866 – 1915

Mill Manager 1884 - 1912

Upon arriving in Westbrook in 1866, Mr. Warren’s initial job was that of a laborer as he worked hard on his way up to mill manager by 1884. One must remember the SDW firm was one of the largest importers of rags during the 1850x, 60s, and 70s. John even found time to interview a mill employee who was on duty the night of the landslide of 1868. His details of the information were vital to the reporting of the incident.

1880 – 1900s. With his engineering mind, he was always looking for ways to improve the business. He was instrumental in building hydroelectric stations at Eel Weir Falls, Dundee Falls, Saccarappa Falls, and the company power plant by the river by 1894. He even found time to work with W. K. Dana as they collaborated to build the Presumpscot Electric Company to light Saccarappa Falls and Cumberland Mills areas.

His mind never stopped as he helped devise plans for log drives from Sebago Lake to Cumberland Mills. One of the mills greatest accomplishments came when John and others in the engineering area changed production from rags to pulp in 1893 as he described it, “making paper from all wood fibers”. By 1895 paper production ratio was: rags 25%, sulphite 25%, and soda pulp was 50%. And by 1900, steam power was used on all paper machines.

With an outstanding history about life in general, a family man from the start, and stellar performance in many areas, in 1912 he turned the manager’s job over to his son Joseph A. Warren.

Final Moments

Failing physically and with major medical problems, on August 13, 1915, John E. Warren died at his home in Cape Elizabeth. He was 75 years old.

In 1921 in a tribute to this phenomenal man who was respected by all, loved by all, and made hundreds of contributions to the local area and the state of Maine, a fountain was constructed in his honor. At the ceremony the main speaker was the governor of Maine. Mr. Baxter said the following, “There was never a man more unselfish in his public service than Mr. Warren. He never deviated from the path of duty as he always showed consideration for others.”

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Reminder – If you haven’t paid your Westbrook Historical Society dues, we would appreciate your taking time to send them in - \$10.00

President's Message

Another Day that will live in infamy – the 20th anniversary of the World Trade Center Disaster

Hi everyone! Summer is coming to an end and we are ready to start back into our regular series of meetings and programs.

Honoring a Westbrook resident, on October 6th we are planning to have Paul St. Cyr speak on Johnny Cumberland, the baseball player from Westbrook who was on the Red Sox's, Yankees, Cardinals and Giants teams. Paul was a friend of his.

The new calendar is out and I am working on a new book – Westbrook Remembered – featuring many of the old-time businesses and buildings that are no longer in Westbrook.

We are still looking for ideas for future programs.

We recently received the Westbrook Police Dept. McGruff, the Crime Dog, costume which was worn by the late Mel O'Roak. The costume was donated by his family. It was worn with local groups and notables.

Mike Sanphy, President

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