

Westbrook Historical Society

"A Society That Preserves the Past"

Fall 2013

Purpose:

The Westbrook Historical Society meets regularly in its rooms at the Community Center at 426 Bridge Street, Westbrook at 1:30 pm on the first Wednesday of each month. The purpose of the Society is to bring together those people interested in the history of Westbrook, and to discover, collect, and preserve any materials and objects which establish and illustrate the history of the area.

Westbrook Bicentennial Celebration

The Westbrook Bicentennial Committee is planning a 200th anniversary celebration of Westbrook becoming a town. The 2014 civic birthday will feature the opening of a time capsule which was buried in Riverbank Park as part of a centennial celebration. The 1914 celebration ran on June 7, 8, and 9 and included a parade and the burial of the time capsule. A plaque on the rock marking the burial site says it should be opened on June 9, 1914 which falls on a Monday.

The Committee is hoping to extend Westbrook Together Days which will run on June 6 and 7, 2014 to include Sunday, the 8th in order to tie into the capsule opening events. This is a celebration of Westbrook becoming a town, separating from Falmouth. Westbrook became a city and incorporated in 1891. A celebration was held in 1991 to commemorate that centennial anniversary.

Historical displays will be part of Together Days in order to build up to the time capsule opening.

President's message

I hope everyone had a great summer, As I get older it seems that the seasons seem shorter and shorter.

Westbrook was incorporated in 1814 and next year, 2014 will mark the 200th Anniversary of that event. Mayor Hilton is putting together a Committee to organize some of the events which will include the opening of a time capsule placed in Riverbank Park during the Centennial Celebration in 1914.

City Clerk Linda Adams will be the chairperson for the Centennial Committee and I told her that the Westbrook Historical Society will help in any way that we can.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone back at the Society and I will be looking for volunteers to help me in putting together some projects that the Westbrook Historical Society can contribute to this event. We will also have some great programs for the upcoming monthly meetings, hope to see you there.

President – Mike Sanphy

FOUNDING OF A TOWN

"At the time of Falmouth's incorporation as a town in 1718 it included within its boundaries, besides several of the islands of Casco Bay, territory embracing what is now Portland, South Portland, Cape Elizabeth, Westbrook and Falmouth as we know it today. The Cape Elizabeth section withdrew from the original Falmouth and became incorporated in as a new town in 1765. The same procedure followed in 1786 when Portland became incorporated as a separate town. The boundaries of the original Falmouth were again changed when, on February 14, 1814, another new town was incorporated under the name of Stroudwater. This name did not meet with the approval of the majority of its citizens and, on June 9th of that same year, the name was changed to Westbrook to honor Colonel Thomas Westbrook.

When Westbrook became incorporated as a town, it included within its boundaries what we now know as the Woodfords and Morrill's Corner sections of greater Portland, as well as Stroudwater. The boundary line between Westbrook and Portland extended to a point on Forest Avenue near the brick power house of the old Portland Street Railroad Company across from the Forest Avenue entrance to Deering Oaks. Other boundaries were the towns of Gorham, Windham, Falmouth, South Portland and Scarborough."

From Highlights of Westbrook History

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOLS IN WESTBROOK



Brown Street School 1886

Believed from Old Deering News – Old School Houses in Sacarrappa, Westbrook.

Information used in article: Mr. Charles W. Munson Discusses Some of the Old Schoolhouses in and Near Saccarappa.

In 1776 there were at the head of Pierce St, so named now in 1950, and present Cumberland Street, 80 acres of land given by Joseph Bailey of Old Falmouth to his sons Daniel and Josiah. Daniel's 40 acres next to the corner mentioned above and the so-called Jonas Raymond house still stands there today a very old house with a fan door front. In 1776 Daniel sold to the Selectmen a small portion of land for the purpose of erecting a schoolhouse. The chances are that a school was set up there but old history of present Westbrook is in a vague shape for fire and careless handling of old records has brought about this condition.

From 1811 to 1848 there stood a school house at the corner of Bridge and Cumberland Streets. This was a small square building with a chimney in the center and a small door at the left side also a small window on each side of the house close up to the eaves and these windows it is said had shutters.

This building was partially clapboarded and it was called "old North School" but not to be confused with the one that stood later at the corner of Bridge and Pierce Streets and removed over 60 years ago.

(It was moved down Cumberland Street and became part of the house opposite the Joseph A. Warren house according to Mr. Munson.)

Among the teachers of the first old North on Cumberland Street was a Miss Blair probably a daughter of Robert Blair the some say "John" Blair and Jane Bixby a sister to the mother of former Mayor Rufus Jordan.

Other teachers were Betsey Quinby, Sarah Winslow, Calvin Stowe later to become the husband of Harriet Beecher, Nathan Harris of an old Windham family, who it is said designed the Seal of Westbrook, a John C. Baker, later an inn-keeper, Rev. George Quinby, later an editor, Leander Valentine, the first Mayor of Westbrook, Albus Ray, later a Doctor and descendant of Dr. Caleb Ray, a surgeon in Revolutionary War. Also Rev. Benj. Freeman, he later a Methodist minister.

(Note that most of these folks were later prominent in the parts where they lived and labored.) Oliver A. Cobb, a secretary of a Masonic Lodge was a pupil at the North School on Cumberland Street and years later was responsible for a reunion of the former pupils. This building was finally moved to a site opposite the house of Jos. A. Warren and is a part of the building now standing there . (1950)

There was a school years ago at the corner of Spring Street and Buxton Road called the Swamp school and Howard Parker of Longfellow Street said that his small shop is that old building and that only three families sent their children there for that section of the town was thinly settled.

Additional teachers in the town were W.W. Hall, Rebecca Harris, Abbie Webb, Mary Freeman, Caroline Bing, Abbie Cutter and Mary French. Miss Blair above taught three years at a salary of \$2.50 per week and was nearly fifteen years getting all that was owner her and finally took 1000 feet of "fencing boards" to clean the account. This lady was much loved by the pupils and at her decease there was a large funeral held for her.

Hezekiah Elwell born 1842 and died in 1924 said that as a boy he went to school on Saco Street (1848) or so and young and old went there and perhaps this was the second school built there on that site and that the first building was owned by the Universalist Church Society and provided the school building on that spot. (Then the Universalists first there in old time Sol Haskell drove them out with a shotgun and "old --son Bradley" was terribly upset about them coming into Westbrook.



Saco Street School 1868

Education came into its own about 1873 when three terms of high school were offered in a Main Street schoolhouse, and two more at Pride's Corner. Bridge Street School was built in 1882 at a total cost of \$9,423.33 and four years later,

the first Junior High was constructed for \$21, 165.79, and Brown Street School for \$7,406.89.



Valentine School in 1960

Bridge Street School

Forest Street School



******* WINNERS - 2nd Annual Westbrook History Contest *******

1st Place - Beth Paulsen-Olmstead "A Farm History"

2nd Place - Rose DiRenzo Prillaman "Going Back in Time"

This year's History Contest entries were sent in from ME, AZ and VA.

[There were no student entries.]

The subject matter included memories of growing up in Westbrook, a trip to the local library, Biographical sketches of Westbrook immigrants (Italian, Franco-Canadian and Danish) And a farm history.

Go to the [Westbrook Historical Society web site](#) under 'People' for interesting reading.

Martha Brackett - Newsletter Editor

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