

Westbrook Historical Society

"A Society That Preserves the Past"

Fall 2014

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.



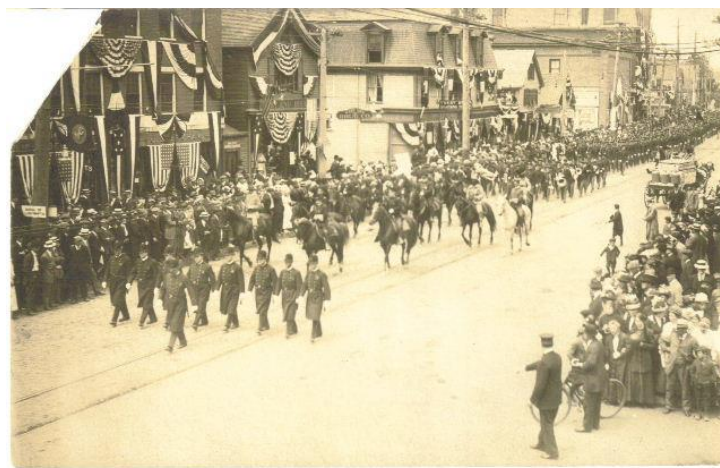
The **Daily Eastern Argus** newspaper featured **Westbrook's Centennial Celebrations** on the front page on June 9, 1914. Cost of paper was 2 cents.

Headlines: Westbrook's Big Time/Centennial City was Filled With Visitors Yesterday/
Successful Celebration of Event All Day Long/Elaborate Preparations for the Grand Climax Today

Story: A spectacle never to be forgotten in the future history of Westbrook was the demonstration of the school children yesterday, the second day of the centennial celebration, and the part of the celebration contributed by the 1500 school children will live long in the memories of those who witnessed it.

From the opening of the grand parade at 9 in the morning until the conclusion of the canoe pageant on the river in the evening, the events of the day and evening were run off without mishap and in perfect order.

Of course the parade of the 1500 school children in the morning was the really big feature of the day. The parade formed at Main and Bridge Streets and with the Westbrook City Band, Mayor Robinson and the members of the city government and school board at its head the column started down Main Street.



CONTENTS OF CENTENNIAL TIME CAPSULE

(listed in order as taken out of time capsule) All can be viewed at City of Westbrook Web Site

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Greetings from Centennial Committee
 *Newspaper article
 List of Committees (25 pages)
 Board of Trade By-laws 1910
 House Guide to the City of Westbrook (in envelope) Printed after the streets were numbered in 1903
 Committees' Expenses
 Vouchers for all bills of the Centennial Accounts
 List of Subscribers to the Centennial Fund
 *Centennial Executive Committee of 1914
 (biographies)</p> <p>Headquarters of Grand Marshal – Westbrook Centennial Parade (parade line-up)
 *Address at Dedication of Riverbank Park - Signed by John E. Warren on June 9, 1914
 Centennial Poster (part of newspaper)
 Portland Sunday Telegram – Westbrook Centenary Edition – June 7, 1914
 The Daily Eastern Argus – Tuesday morning, June 9, 1914
 Medals: Committee pin on a “customers wants” card. Leather strap with City Seal/Centennial Medallion
 (100th Anniversary Incorporation of Westbrook, Maine)
 Daily Eastern Argus – Wednesday morning, June 10, 1914 (medals were sitting on this newspaper which caused the rust hole in the paper)
 A Few Points of Interest about Westbrook – December 15, 1914 (with map)
 Parade picture – Presumpscot Electric Co.
 Parade pictures – S.D. Warren Co. and Military marching
 Parade picture 1 and 2
 Parade picture 3 and 4</p> | <p>Westbrook Congregational Church Book
 Westbrook Congregational Church Directory
 1914
 *Centennial Celebration Invitation
 Annual Banquet Program of Board of Trade
 12/16/1914
 Picture Post Cards (4)
 Picture Post Cards (3)
 Program
 Mass Meeting Program</p> <p>Parade picture 5
 The City Newsletter</p> |
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Main Street looking West



Pete's Diner, Knights Hardware, Kit's Smoke Shop

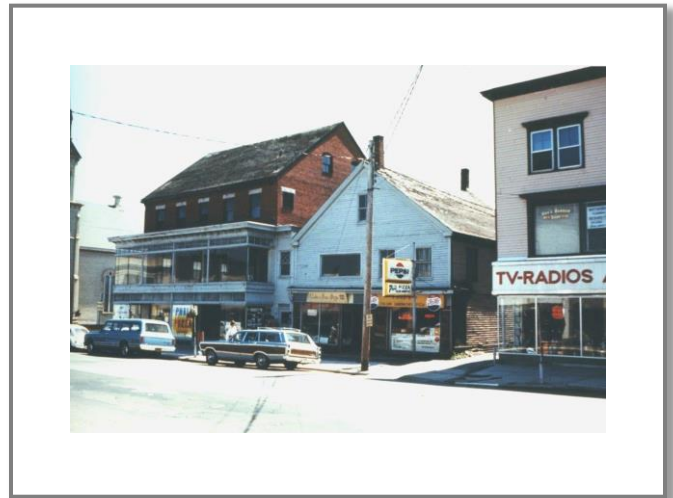
A Walk Downtown 50 Years Ago by Mike Sanphy

If you walked through Westbrook's downtown 50 years ago, here's what it would have been like. Many of the buildings mentioned in this article were demolished by urban renewal, and many of the businesses mentioned no longer exist.

Walking west on Main Street from Spring Street, starting in front of the newly constructed First National Bank of Portland at 790 Main St. (this building would later serve as Westbrook City Hall from 1967-1995 before once again becoming a bank), the next building was the Walker Memorial Library at 800 Main. Next was Deering Ice Cream at 808 Main, and next door was 820 Main, office space for Vin's Oil Service (Vincent Connors), Twombly Real Estate Agency (George Twombly), Knight Brothers Plumbing (John M. Knight), Dr. James Paras (podiatrist) and several apartments. Next was Bond Street (a short street that ran from Main to the rear of 18 Church St. and discontinued during urban renewal). The next building was 816 Main, home of Ruth Hills (believed to have been built in the 1840s).

At 820 Main St., Durgin-Snow Publishing Co., publishers of the Westbrook American, which later became the American Journal was on the second floor. The first floor was occupied by Cumberland Farms Grocery and Dairy Store. 824 Main was a private residence.

At this point, Church Street connected to Main Street. The next building at 830 Main was Peter's Fruit Store (Chris Peters), and then 834-840 Main, known as the Benoit Block. Tenants were A.H. Benoit Clothing, Nutter's Department Store, AFL-CIO Union Hall, Welch & Welch Attorneys (Grover and Roger Welch) and the Westbrook Chamber of Commerce. Next was the Main Street Associates



Building at 846 Main, occupied by Dr. J. Chase Rand, Dr. Harold Watson and offices of Public Finance Co. The Westbrook Congregational Church (built in 1834) was at 852 Main, with Brackett Street entering Main Street at this point. (Brackett Street between Main Street and Wayside Drive was discontinued during urban renewal.)

The next building at 854-856 Main was the Brackett/LaFond Block with Hub Furniture on the first floor. 858 Main was occupied by Russell K. Morse Watch Repair, and 860 Main was occupied by the Bicycle Shop. Joe's Pizza (Joseph Carbone) was located at 862 Main, and later became Phil's Pizza, operated by Phil Audet. The next building at 864 Main was Hood's Pharmacy on the first floor, Robert H. O'Gara Insurance Agency on the second floor and an apartment on the third floor. Day's Jewelry was at 866 Main with the Marshall Studio on the upper floors.

Carpenter Street was next, a small dead end street where the Westbrook Police Station and the Westbrook Star Laundry were located. (This street was discontinued during urban renewal.) Next door, the Scates Building, also known as the Masonic Building, was occupied by Westbrook City hall, LaChance Drug Store, Westbrook Municipal Court and Temple Lodge No. 86 A.F.&A.M. Porell's Westbrook Remnant Store was at 872-874 Main as were Porell Realty, the Men's Shop, Mrs. Marie Gallup (dressmaker) and several apartments. 876 Main was vacant. Fitch Street entered Main Street at this point. (Fitch Street between Main Street and Wayside Drive was discontinued during urban renewal.)

The A & P Store was at 880 Main. The Western Auto Store was at 884 and Kourapis Fruit Store at 888. Central Street enters Main Street at this point. (Central Street between Main Street and Wayside Drive was discontinued during urban renewal.)



The Westbrook Star Theatre was at 890, and then the American Legion Building at 900, occupied by American Legion Post No. 197 and the Maine State Liquor Store. 902 Main was an apartment house, and Cyr's Beauty Shop occupied 908 Main. Mechanic Street enters Main Street at this point. The next building is 910-914 Main with the first floor of 910 and 912 vacant and Jack's Spa

occupying 914. There were apartments on the second floor. Dell's Grill (Alma Lord) was at 916 Main; Main Street Barber Shop was next with The Main Way Café (Peter Profenno) occupying 920 Main. 922 was vacant and Herbert's West End Market (Gerald L. and Hubert H. Herbert) was at 934 Main. 942 Main was occupied by Yudy's Tire Co., Maine Industrial Rubber Products and the Westbrook Rubber Co. Saco Street enters Main at this point. The Westbrook Farmer's Union Inc. (farm supplies, owned and operated by the Jensen family) at 968 Main was the last building on the south side of Main Street. Main Street ended here with Conant Street entering on the right and Longfellow Street connected to Main Street.

Crossing Main 'street and walking east, the first building was an apartment house at 96, Wescott Real Estate and Insurance Agency at 967, an apartment house at 963-965 and Bill's Flying A Service Station (Wilfred D. Swenson) was at 959 Main, also this is where Park Hill entered Main Street. 951-953 was an apartment house, 945-947 was an apartment house with Bailey's Auto Supply (Joseph Pelletier Jr. manager) on the first floor of 945 Main. Stultz Auto Supply (Philip Stultz and Randolph Lane) was next at 937, then Whit's Shell Station (Walter A. Whitten) at 917. 907 Main was occupied by Sam Weisman & Son wholesale grocers, Main Line Fence Co. and Robins Engineering Co. Porell Apartments (Ernest O. Porell) was next at 901, then Lemieux' Texaco Station (Russ Lemieux) at 897 and then the Westbrook Municipal Parking Lot. Peck's Diner (Eugene Pecoraro) was at 885 Main, and Knight's Hardware (Leland and Robert Knight) was at 883, 881 Main had the Smoke Shop (Gerald H. Nedeau) and George's Barber Shop (George Belanger) on the first floor and the Margaret Shane Rooming House on the second floor. 873-877 Main was

next, then Busy Bee Baery (Leo W. Sabourin) at 877, Berson's Dress Shop (Jacob Berson) at 875, Larry's Jewelry Store (Larry Simensky) at 873 and Warren Furniture Co. (Newell Potter) at 869. Bridge Street entered Main Street at this point.



The next building was 867 Main, the Vallee Pharmacy (Elizabeth Moore was proprietor and Napoleon LaChance manager). Sherwin Williams Paint Store (Robert Larry) at 863 Main was next, with Rocheleau's Clothes Shop (William and Philip Rocheleau) at 861. Romonow Furniture Co. at 857 Main and 855 was occupied by McLellan's (Lawrence Graffam). Westbrook Trust Co. was at 849, and Portland Gas Light Co., at 845. The next building, 837-843, was the Springer Block with Parker's Dress Shop (Leon Leavitt) at 843, Boulter's Radio & Appliance (Clifton Boulter) at 841, first floor and WJAB radio station (Robert Michael) on the second floor.



Figure 2 Main Street at Brackett Street

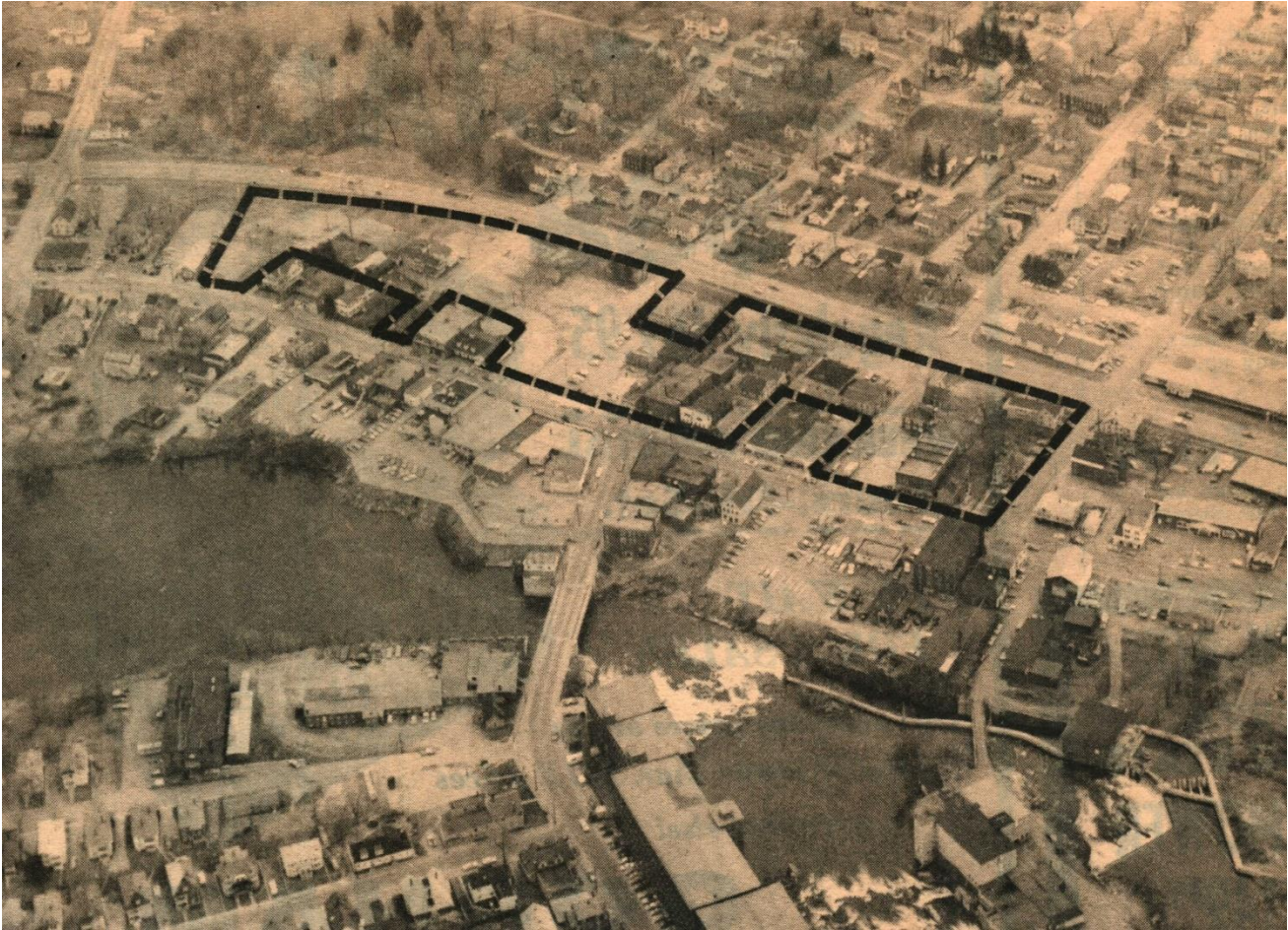
The Riverside Apartments occupied the second floor of 839 Main and Westbrook Hardware (Maurice Gleckman) was at 837. A vacant lot was next, site of the former Green Block that had been occupied by Westbrook Hardware at one time. The building was later condemned and demolished in 1964. At 825 Main, the first floor was occupied by the Beauty Bar (Doris Peterson), at 825b and Dr. David Berlowitz (optometrist) on the first floor at 825a. The second floor was occupied by Philip Mailhot & Co. (accountants), Armand O. LeBlanc (attorney) and William Berman (attorney).

The next building at 823 Main was Maria's Pizzeria and Restaurant (Anthony and Lawrence Napolitano), then Ash Street entered Main Street at this location. 821 Main is next with LeTarte's Cleaners on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. The next buildings at 817, 815, 813, 805 and 799 Main were private homes or apartment buildings. John W. Hay Funeral Home at 795 Main was next and 789 and 785 were apartment buildings. Spring Street was opposite 785 concluding the walk of Main Street 50 years ago.



Figure 3 Westbrook Hardware

CHANGES BY URBAN RENEWAL



More to Fall - The broken line encloses area between Main Street and Wayside Drive in which the Westbrook Urban Renewal Authority is continuing to demolish buildings. At least 27 buildings can be counted within the broken line in this photo that are to be demolished. After they're down, the Authority will turn its attention to the north side of Main Street where it plans to demolish 17 more. Bridge Street crosses the Presumpscot River in foreground. Spring Street is at left, with City Hall at its intersection with Main Street. Sebago, Inc. plant is at middle right. Among buildings waiting still to be demolished in the broken-line area are the Westbrook Police Station, Masonic Block and Memorial Post Legion Hall (with girders in right corner). *Air photo by Mike Sanphy*

Tidbits from the Urban Renewal Process: Scrapbook #9 at the Historical Society

1975: The Westbrook Congregational Church would have celebrated its 141st birthday on January 20, 1975 but, instead, it fell prey to the demolition contractor's ball-and-crane the Wednesday evening before. The

church was the first church established in the city then known as Saccarappa, until the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The church housed a Paul Revere bell and a unique weathervane.

Feb. 23, 1976: The Finard building (Westbrook Commons) was the first new full-scale building since urban renewal arrived on the scene. The mood of the average Westbrook citizen is one of disillusionment with the downtown experiment. Buildings still to come down are Westbrook Hardware, Parker's, Gas Company, Burns' Barber Shop, Sportsman's Hardware, Texaco-Humphrey's, American Legion, Men's Shop, Masonic Building.

July 25, 1976: "Westbrook Common" is the tentative name of the new pedestrian mall in the downtown renewal project area. New Birth to Downtown – Spring came in November to downtown Westbrook this year. The blossoming so long denied the city brought not one but four new businesses in the short space of 10 days. The whole city is proud of The Men's Shop in its new building, the new Colonial Shoe Store, the new Book Shop, and the new Fez Restaurant. (Lenny Graffam's)

Four streets between Main Street and the By-Pass were abandoned in the renewal area – Brackett Street, Carpenter Street, Fitch Street and Central Street.

Periodic newspaper articles list the demolition contracts throughout the Urban Renewal project and new buildings.



Demolition Westbrook Congregational Church Parish House

Scales Building Demolition

President's Message

I hope everyone had a Great Summer and I look forward to seeing you at the Historical Society. Several great programs are planned for the monthly meetings and the official close of the 2014 Bicentennial Celebration will be the sealing of the new Bicentennial Time Capsule at the Historical Society on Thursday evening, December 18, 2014. (The Centennial Capsule was sealed on December 18, 1914) Nancy Curran has announced that she is stepping down as Treasurer after many years of faithful and dedicated service and I want to thank her for her service and the many times she has gone above and beyond for the Historical Society. I also want to thank the members that open the Society to the Public every Tuesday and Saturday morning and the work they do in maintaining our collection, This is certainly no easy task and your faithful service is

much appreciated. Once again a big Thank You to Martha Brackett for the terrific newsletter she puts together for us with its interesting articles. I also want to mention that the Community Center will be closed from 4 PM Friday October 17, 2014 until 5 AM on Monday October 20, 2014. This will be for work on the electrical system and there will be NO ACCESS to the building during this time. Hope to see you at the Society soon!

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Reminder: Dues were due on June 1, 2014.

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Program on October 1, 2014 at 1:30 pm – Importance of Family Stories by Thatcher Freud.

Contact Information: info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org Telephone 207-854-5588
Officers: President- Mike Sanphy , Vice President- Roberta Wyer Dutton Morrill , Secretary- Ellen Burrill,
Treasurer- Nancy Joy Curran **Open Saturday and Tuesday mornings from 9 am to noon.**
Our website: www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org – gives a fascinating outline of the Collections, Research
Library and Exhibitions of the Society.

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