

# Westbrook Historical Society

"A Society That Preserves the Past"

Summer 2012

## 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.



SCHOOL HISTORY SECTION



CHINA COLLECTION

## *Early Westbrook...*

In the Argus of November 8, 1851, appears a poem. "The Wild and Immoral Saccarappa Village". The Editor says of it, that it is 25 years old and written by a native of Saccarappa. A truthful picture is drawn. "Saccarappa was once exceedingly immoral – not absolutely wicked – but low, loose and reckless. Its citizens were made up of all sorts, open, free and generous, but full of high life: drinking, swearing, wrestling, bragging and not unfrequently fighting. Oh, my! What a place it was for tobacco, rum and mud! Now the old saw mills have passed away for want of "raw material", and other manufacturing establishments have taken their places. Six months since I entered it from Portland in a beautiful car upon the newly constructed Y. and C. RR."

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## *Government Jobs in 1814*

In February of 1814, Westbrook was part of Falmouth and incorporated under the name of Stroudwater.

If you had lived in Westbrook in 1814, the year of its incorporation, any one of these elective offices might have been open to you. Elected at the first town meeting were 8 constables, 25 surveyors of highways, 25 surveyors of lumber, three cullors of hoops and staves, 25 fence

viewers, field drivers, hog reeves, and pound keepers, 4 tything men, and 5 sealers of leather. A total of 106 officials were elected, out of 520 eligible townsmen. What does a tything man do – a long pole with stout club on one end and a feather on the other was the tythingman's badge of office. He was to "preserve good order in church during the divine service and made complaint of any disorderly conduct and

enforced observance of the Sabbath". Cullors of hoops and staves inspected wooden hoops and staves used in manufacturing barrels. Leather "sealers" were kept on their toes with inspecting the five tanneries operating in 1814. Saccarappa boasted nine saw mills, two grist mills, two carding and fulling mills at this time. Congin Falls provided power for three saw mills and one grist mill. Two more saw mills and one grist mill operated within town limits on the Stroudwater River, long before the flow of that four mile river gradually diminished until its

mills fell into disuse. Out by Highland Lake (Duck Pond) another settlement revolved around the hub created by 5 saw mills and one grist mill. The rate of taxation was \$28 per \$1,000 and poll taxes were \$2. Total valuation of the town was \$19,576.36. "Incomes were taxed, money in possession of private citizens was directly taxed, and evasion of taxes was out of the question. Soon after Stroudwater's first town meeting, the name was changed to Westbrook on June 9, 1814.

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### *Weather in 1815*

In 1815, every month of the year heavy frosts were reported throughout the section. Frost was reported upon the window panes in July; crops of every kind were almost a failure; the people so dependent upon the local soil for sustenance were obliged to resort to meat game and fish; cereal food could only be purchased as a luxury. Provisions were so scarce that imported articles, even flour and bread, commanded extravagant prices. Without local harvests or imported foodstuffs, Westbrook must have suffered heavily. Black markets flourished. Provisions were so dear that port went for \$50 a barrel. Coffee, molasses, brandy and tea prices skyrocketed in 1813 doubling in price.

On June 9, 1914 Westbrook celebrated its Centennial – 100 years old with a grand program. Soon on June 9, 2014 Westbrook will celebrate its Bi-Centennial – 200 years old! How will we celebrate?

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### **APRIL ANTIQUES PROGRAM**

John Bottero from Thomaston Place Auction Galleries led an interesting and informative session on antiques for the members in April. Touches of humor made his program even more enjoyable.

The general guideline for classifying an item as an antique is that it is more than 100 years old. Important points in valuing your antiques are the story behind the item, rarity, and the provenance (a bed that George Washington slept in, for example). However, without proof of the background, the story is classified as "family folklore".

One reason things are worth more or less is based on the changes in our culture. Victorian glass and dinnerware is used rarely in current lifestyles and therefore, there is not much demand for these items making the value lower.

The internet has made it easier to find items for sale and this has changed the supply side of availability and decreased the value of items that used to be harder to find.

Folk art is defined as common people using common materials such as the painting on tree fungus that was at the program. This art has value depending on the quality of the work as people like to have "one of a kind" items – especially the well to do.

The program closed with Mr. Bottero describing and valuing the items brought in by the members.

## MAY PROGRAM

Bill Norbert gave an interesting history of the Quakers and Friends in Westbrook and the Presumpscot area. The Halls and Winslow families were early settlers with a man with the interesting name of Hatevil Hall deserving special mention as he lived in Windham and had 13 children. These children contributed lots of descendants and are ancestors of many of the present day Halls. Mr. Norbert generously contributed a genealogy book on the Halls to the Westbrook Historical Society collection.

The Historical Society has an extensive cataloged collection of obituaries of Westbrook residents and these are a marvelous source of information for genealogy research.

**The WESTBROOK HISTORY CONTEST is over. Many excellent entries were received. The winners will be announced at Westbrook Together Days. Good luck to all who entered!**



## STEVENS PLAINS PEWTER COLLECTION DONATION

Recently, four outstanding pieces of the Stevens Plains pewter have been donated by Ann Twombly Bonang. A 9" Dunham pot, a 10" Dunham pot, an 8" F. Porter No. 2 pot, and a 9" F. Porter No. 9 pot have been added to the Historical Society's collection. They are presently on view at the Society. Stevens Plain was an industry that flourished on Stevens avenue which was a part of Westbrook between 1830 and 1860. Allen Porter started the company and later his brother Freeman joined him. Rufus Dunham was born in Maine and worked with them as well. An extensive history of the company is in the Historical Society records.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's amazing how time flies, I have been President of the Westbrook Historical Society for two years and we are now approaching our annual meeting and the election of Officers for the next two years. I want to take this opportunity to thank the current Officers and Board of Directors for the support they have given me over the past two years. One of the biggest accomplishments

during my term was the Society's move from the Dunn Street Legion to the Westbrook Community Center in the Fred C. Wescott Building.

This was an enormous task and I am grateful to the many members and volunteers that stepped up and made our move successful.

I am excited that the entries are in for our first annual History Contest and the judges will be reviewing them. This was a great project and I want to thank Donna Conley for heading it up and the members that worked with her to make it a success.

In addition to a great Website we now have Facebook which will afford us much broader public access, thanks for this goes to Andrea Vasquez.

And Suzan Norton continues to work hard in bringing us interesting programs for our monthly meetings while also diligently working on our Immigrant programs.

Our Historical Society is getting bigger and better all the time and we can certainly be proud of our accomplishments and the service we provide.

I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting on June 6. *Mike Sanphy, President*

The Westbrook Historical Society wishes to than **Mike Sanphy** for his many hours above and beyond those needed as President to continuously keeping his ears open and finding many interesting and important items for the Collections.



## RESEARCH AREA

Resources at the Society in this area include Maine History, Westbrook History subdivided into many categories including the Westbrook Centennial, Business & Industries, Cemeteries, various Communities, Rescue Unit, District Nurses, Libraries, Organizations, Hospitals, Westbrook News Items, Westbrook People, City Reports, Police, Rivers and Bridges, floods, the Cumberland and Oxford Canal, Urban Renewal, House surveys, Streets & Developments, an extensive collections of photographs and Newsletters. Various families genealogies are here along with extensive genealogy research aids. Old voter cards may have your ancestors' actual signatures. Other interesting things include the 1880 Census and Council Records.

Please note the photographs of the School History Section and a partial look at the China Collection at the Historical Society. These areas are only a sample of the material available in our new quarters. Much information on the history of Professional Groups in Westbrook is on display. Please come and visit your new, larger location.

### WESTBROOK HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC ALUMNI REUNION

**Grab that old trumpet and trombone and start practicing! On August 4, 2012 WHS Alumni who participated in Concert Band, Wind Ensemble, Marching Band, Jazz/Stage Band, Color Guard or Chorus are having pot luck supper, band concert and socializing at an open house in the Band Room from 4 – 7pm. Check <http://whsbandalum.wordpress.com/> for details and contact information.**

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### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**June 6 – 1:30 pm ANNUAL MEETING and ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**June 26, July 24, Aug 28 – Directors Meetings – No programs during the summer months**

**September 5<sup>th</sup> – Programs resume**

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Contact Information: [info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org) Telephone 207-854-5588

Officers: President- Mike Sanphy , Vice President- Roberta Wyer Dutton Morrill , Secretary- Andrea Pacillo Vasquez, Treasurer- Nancy Joy Curran

**Open Saturday and Tuesday mornings from 9 am to noon.**

Our website: [www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org)

**Please cut off the enclosed Due Reminder and send in with your 2012 – 2013 dues.**

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**DUES REMINDER**

**WESTBROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY DUES FOR JULY 1, 2012– JUNE 30, 2013**

**\$10.00 per member may be paid anytime by mail or at the June or September business meeting. Please put your name (and any address or phone number corrections) on the notice and attach to your payment.**

**Name \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Corrections to address or telephone (Check the label on this Quarterly to see if changes are needed)**

**E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_**

**Check here \_\_\_\_\_ if you prefer to receive your newsletter by email.**

**Mail to: Nancy Curran, Treasurer and Membership Chair  
Westbrook Historical Society  
426 Bridge Street  
Westbrook, ME 04092**

Cut here, return with your dues for 2012 – 2013

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Westbrook Historical Society  
426 Bridge Street  
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