

Westbrook History Quarterly

The Newsletter of the Westbrook Historical Society
Winter 2009

President's Message

Well, I guess it's time for all the "snow birds" to start down the road toward warmer climates. I used to wonder why people went south for the winter. But now that I'm retired, the children are grown, and we have a motor home, I now know why: Because we can!

That got me thinking about staying in touch with friends. Since we first started wintering in warmer climates two years ago, I have become attached to the Internet and my e-mail. I may be sitting in the sunshine hundreds of miles away, but I still want to see and hear about the family and friends back home in the snow.

If you travel around a lot, it is sometimes difficult to have your mail arrive in a timely manner. E-mail becomes an immediate link to home. So if any of you members have an e-mail address and would like to have your newsletter and other Society information sent to you via that route, please e-mail the Society at: info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org.

- Donna Cousens Conley

Upcoming Events

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, December 2, 2009 – 1:30p

Richard Carey Jr. will talk about hunting for treasure in the Presumpscot River.

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, January 6, 2010 - 1:30p

Peter Murray will talk about the Halidon Tax Colony of Westbrook.

Monthly Meeting - 1:30p

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

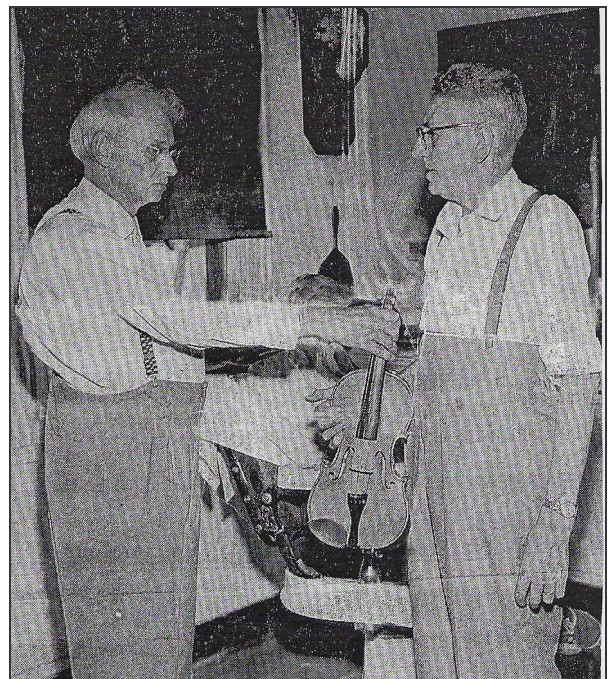
To Be Announced

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, March 3, 2010 - 1:30p

Dianne LeConte & Pat Larrabee discuss their new book
A Girl From the Past

Society Unveils Fiddler Exhibit



Frank F. Brown (left) returns a renovated fiddle to a customer in this August 1955 photo. Brown was known for fiddling in his Vallee Square barber shop.

The Westbrook Historical Society began displaying an exhibit devoted to Westbrook's fiddlers and violin makers in late October 2009.

Consisting of the raw materials used by the late fiddler-maker Harry L. Lowell and a supplementary program featuring an assortment of archived newspaper articles about Westbrook's fiddlers and fiddler-makers, the exhibit fleshes out a part of Westbrook's history heretofore neglected.

Ellie Saunders organized the exhibit.

- John C. L. Morgan

The Park Bench

Though the mere thought of standing atop the Penobscot Narrows Bridge moistens my palms, towering heights is not my greatest fear. Nor is it an unseen menace lurking below the water's surface, even if I can't climb into a bathtub without momentarily fretting about Jaws. No, my greatest fear is a bit more exotic than tumbling to a crown-splattering death or having a shark gorge my torso. My greatest fear is that I will forget whole chunks of my life when I am older.

Now, I'm not referring to forgetfulness due to an ailment such as Alzheimers. No matter how many crossword puzzles this twenty-six-year-old brain struggles to complete, I am perhaps ignorantly resigned to the possibility that such a memory thief might strike in the dusk of my life, regardless of how many bolts I screw into my figurative door.

Instead, I'm talking about the forgetfulness that happens because life just gets too busy for me to document its occurrences. I'm talking about the fact that I cannot recall off the top of my head what I did last Wednesday, let alone thirty—or fifty or ninety—Wednesdays ago.

Anyway, all this is a really long-winded way of requesting that you bequeath your diaries to the Society. I'm afraid of what'll happen if your memories are lost forever.

Find of the Quarter

A cursory glance through the June 1911 pamphlet of *The Westbrook Board of Trade Enterprise* yielded a Nissen advertisement for the Swastika Brand's Lucky Bread Flour. Briefly forgetting the pamphlet's date (read: pre-Nazi Germany), I have to admit dropping my jaw before remembering the ad's benign use of that now-poisonous symbol.

- John C.L. Morgan

Purpose and Principle

The purposes of this Society are to bring together those people who are interested in the history of Westbrook, Maine, and to collect, discover, and preserve any materials and objects that establish and illustrate the history of the area.

The Society shall make all such materials and objects accessible for viewing or study on the premises. The Society shall arouse interest in the past by opening its meetings to the general public, by marking historic buildings and sites, and by using other media to gain public interest in Westbrook history.

The membership meets regularly for business and entertainment at 1:30p on the first Wednesday of each month, with the exception of July and August.

Officers

Donna Cousens Conley, President
Byron Dyer, Vice President
Rowana Walton, Secretary
Nancy Joy Curran, Treasurer

Directors

James Burrill, Beverly Marion, Mike Sanphy, and Alwyn Waite

Open Hours

The Westbrook Historical Society's doors are open to the general public every Saturday and Tuesday mornings, from 9a-12p. Capable volunteer staff is present at those times to help visitors with their interests and their needs.

Mailing Address

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I'm Dreaming of a French Christmas

A Personal History

In a 2002 American Journal article, the late Philip LaViolet reminisced about the Christmases of his childhood. Along with recalling the midnight Masses at St. Hyacinth's Church in the 1930s and reflecting on the traditional evolution of Christmas celebrations over his lifetime, LaViolet talked about his fondness for tourtiere, a long-standing holiday staple among French families in Westbrook and elsewhere:

"The ones you buy in the store are nothing like the ones you make at home," said LaViolet. "After World War II, all the French moved into the cities and suburbs, and they'd call home to get their meat pies. So somebody got the idea, 'why not make them and sell them in a store.'" LaViolet said French pies used to be made with the meat of passenger pigeons. The name "tourtiere" comes from the French name for passenger pigeons, "La Toutre Voyaguese."

Below are the ingredients and cooking instructions for the tourtiere LaViolet enjoyed throughout his life.

Filling

2 lbs ground lean pork
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 cup finely chopped celery
1 crushed clove garlic
1/4 cup chopped parsley
1 tsp crushed marjoram
1/4 tsp cloves
1/4 ground black pepper
1/8 tsp mace
2 tbsp flour
2 beef bouillon cubes
1 cup hot water

Pie Crust

2 cups unsifted flour
1 tsp salt
2/3 cup margarine
6-7 tsp ice water

Instructions

Saute pork, onion, celery, and garlic in large heavy skillet until pork is browned and vegetables are tender. Stir in parsley, marjoram, cloves, mace, and pepper.

Cover and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes. Drain excess fat from skillet. Blend flour into meat mixture. Add bouillon cubes and hot water. Return to heat and bring mixture to a boil, simmer for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and set aside.
Prepare crust: Put flour and salt into a bowl.

Mix in margarine until mixture resembles course meal. Stir in ice water, mix lightly. Roll out 1/2 dough to fit a 9-inch pie plate. Transfer to plate and trim off extra edge leaving 1/2 inch overhang. Pour meat Mixture into pie shell, cover pie with dough. Bake at 400 for 45 minutes.

Westbrook Streets

William Clarke Drive

Running parallel to Main Street, William Clarke Drive is named in honor of Westbrook's longest-serving City Clerk, the late William L. Clarke.

Clarke, who'd won nineteen consecutive elections en route to serving as City Clerk for thirty-eight years, became the namesake of the road in 1994. The road was formerly known as Wayside Drive.



William L. Clarke

The Rudy Vallee

Complement your holiday fixings with The Rudy Vallee, a festive cocktail made by The Frog and Turtle's Mark Ohlson in honor Westbrook's golden son.

1.5 ounces light rum
1/2 ounce dry vermouth
squeeze of fresh lime
splash of simple syrup
2-3 ounces cranberry juice
sugar the rim and pour



Snow plow, circa 1926



An undated photograph depicting a wintry scene on Brackett Street.

Bite-Sized Review

Maine Becomes a State: The Movement to Separate Maine from Massachusetts, 1785-1820

by Ronald F. Banks

(Wesleyan University Press, 1970)

425 pages

When exhibits celebrating Maine's Bicentennial begin popping up in about ten years, Ronald F. Banks's book will be the one curators tatter and dog-ear for guidance and enlightenment on how to explain the State of Maine's genesis.

Tracking Mainers' topsy-turvy ambitions for independent statehood from a 1785 editorial in Maine's first newspaper (*The Falmouth Gazette*) through the U.S. Congress's adoption of the Missouri Compromise in 1820, *Maine Becomes a State* is the authoritative text on how the District of Maine severed its ties with Massachusetts to become the State of Maine.

So if the name William King (Maine's first governor) or the terms Coasting Law (an arcane trade law that tempered coastal Mainers' enthusiasm for separation from Massachusetts) and Brunswick Arithmetic (a snarky nod to the dubious math proponents of statehood employed at a Constitutional Convention in that town) are unfamiliar to you, I recommend you check out this book.

At the very least, you'll reassuringly learn that our ambivalence toward Massachusetts has deep roots and that our distaste for that state's pushy ways is practically in our DNA.

- John C.L. Morgan

Leavitt v. Dow

(Editor's Note: In his newly published book *Progress, Stability, and the Struggle for Equality*, Hugh G.E. MacMahon focuses on Maine law from 1820-1920. Among the various laws and court decisions MacMahon examines is *Leavitt v. Dow*, a 1908 case involving an incident that happened in Westbrook in 1906.)

Describing the case as a "civil-rights assault case," MacMahon rehashes the event that led to the eventual case: Joseph Dow approached Hyman Leavitt in front of Leavitt's dry goods store on Main Street, insulted Leavitt, tore a button off Leavitt's vest, and slapped Leavitt upside the head two or three times. Dow then left, only to return later to grab Leavitt by the coat and shake him, while saying, "Now you Jew, you can say to my face what you said behind my back." Dow then hit Leavitt in the face, and the two men wrestled on the sidewalk. When the scrum was over, Leavitt suffered injuries that required him to pay \$30.00 for medical expenses, so he sued Dow.

Though the jury sided with Leavitt in the lawsuit, they awarded him only a penny in damages. Leavitt subsequently appealed the jury's award, complaining the damages awarded were "manifestly and grossly inadequate." The appeals court not only agreed the jury should award Leavitt enough damages to cover the costs of his medical expenses, but they also judged Leavitt should be compensated for emotional distress. MacMahon argues that *Leavitt v. Dow* as a significant milestone in Maine law in protecting Maine citizens from discrimination.

- John C.L. Morgan

Four Questions

Mike Sanphy

(Editor's Note: Westbrook Historical Society member Mike Sanphy has been contributing historical photographs to the American Journal for about six years, including his Then and Now column for about the last three years. Below, the retired Westbrook Police officer talks about his photographs and his interest in local history.)

How long have you been a member of the Westbrook Historical Society?

About twelve years. I first joined when the Society was located in the old high school on Main Street.

How long have you collected photographs of Westbrook?

Thirty-five years.

How do you use the Westbrook Historical Society to help your research?

I actually don't use the Society that much. In fact, I probably have more stuff than they do. People who either know me or who've seen my stuff in the newspaper donate their material to me, which I then share with the Society or the library.

How would you improve the Society, at least from a researcher's perspective?

I'd make more data available through the computer. I think it would make the collection more accessible and would make the researcher's job easier.

- John C.L. Morgan

Police Log

1959

(Editor's Note: Below is an excerpt from the Westbrook Police Department's report published fifty years ago in the 1959 edition of the City of Westbrook's annual report.)

Total Arrests:	627
Speeding:	176
Intoxication:	106
Drunken Driving:	57
Driving Without a License:	51
Drunken Disturbance:	23
Noisy Muffler:	22
Larceny:	14
Driving after Suspension:	12
Driving an Unregistered Vehicle:	12
Passing Stop Sign:	12
Contributing to the Delinquency of a Minor:	9
Falsifying Documents:	8
Illegal Possession of Liquor:	8
Driving so as to Endanger:	6
Failure to Turn Seasonably to Right:	6
Breaking and Entering:	5
Failure to Stop for an Officer's Signal:	5
Total Complaints Investigated:	2,545
Open Doors, Merchandise Left Out, Etc.	582
Animals:	195
Miscellaneous:	194
Stolen Cars:	187
Accidents:	174
Automobiles:	174
Public Service:	127
Malice Mischief:	93
Lost and Found:	84
Ambulance Calls:	74
Hazards:	71
Property Damage:	59
Larceny:	53
Miscellaneous Information:	
Complaints via Phone:	6,759
Complaints via Radio:	1,245
Juvenile and Domestic Cases:	51

John C.L. Morgan, editor