

Westbrook Historical Society

A Society That Preserves The Past

Newsletter, Winter 2003-2004, Philip E. Curran, Editor, 17B Dunn Street, Westbrook, Maine 04092

The members of this Society are the stewards of the heritage of our city. Westbrook has an exceedingly rich and diverse history, richer than most. We don't want any of it to be lost or forgotten, and with these motives we have become central to its preservation. In fact, our motto is, "A Society That Preserves The Past." We do that as surrogates for everyone in Westbrook and, in a very true civic sense, for the city itself.

Westbrook Historical Society

The Westbrook Historical Society meets regularly at 1:30 o'clock on the first Wednesday of each month, with the exception of July and August.

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.

Officers

President, Betty Morabito
Secretary, Donna Conley - Treasurer, Jane Gordon
Immediate Past President, Nancy Curran

Directors

Philip LaViolet – Bette Bragdon
Diane Dyer – Ellie Saunders

who like to greet people, help them, and look through the collection themselves.

Winter meetings held downstairs

As a fuel conservation measure, regular monthly meetings of members will continue to be held in the main floor meeting room of the American Legion Hall until the temperatures moderate in the spring.

We need...

Keep in mind that the general collection and, especially, the effects of the children's tours would be handsomely enhanced by the addition of (1) **an old wash board**, (2) **an old hand-operated clothes wringer** and, (3) **other commonly used items of harder times**.

Bulletin board

Email address and web site

Email: wsbkhistsoc@ghi.net
Web site: westbrookhistoricalsociety.org

Tel: 854-5588

Friendship and sunshine cards

Anyone aware of the hospitalization, illness or grief of a member should call **Sylvia Sandora** at **854-5814**. She will see that the person is comforted with a sunshine card.

Saturday volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed to be in attendance during opened hours on Saturday mornings, nine o'clock to noon. This is an easy, pleasant contribution of time for those

December meeting



About thirty-five true-blue members braved this frigid day to hear guest speaker **Hattie Lucretia Shrimpclam**. She is shown here graphically represented by humorist **Rev. Harold Shepard**, as her photo appears on the Society's new Web site, revealing the island and off-island antics of she and the other members of the Ladies Social Club of Stonington, Maine.

January Meeting

More than forty members were present at the January meeting to hear an interesting and informative description of the services of her City Hall office by Westbrook City Clerk, **Barbara Hawkes**.

Next meeting - Feb 4

Historical Society keeping up in the computer age

New Web site

The Westbrook Historical Society finally has a Web site up and running. It's still "in process," according to the developer and Web master, **Colleen Burnham**, but is on-line and informative, with a relatively large amount of space and design capability.

In the present unfolding stages of development, we are already linked to the Maine Historical Society in Portland and all the extensions of its Web site, in addition to all the historical societies and museums of Maine that are on the Internet, with the prospect that each of them will be able to easily reach us through our Web pages. We are also linked to Walker Memorial Library and all the connecting links of the City of Westbrook's Web pages. The e-mail addresses of the president and secretary of the Society, and editor of the newsletter are electronically imbedded.



Colleen Burnham

Recent issues of the newsletter can be read or printed from the site, as well as a number of photographs, including one of Board of Directors member **Ellie Saunders**, caught on camera demonstrating the use of the chairlift. All content and pictures are interchangeable and will be exchanged regularly. So far, the design has been mostly to determine the structure and format, and provide some examples of possible content. Everyone is invited to click on it, use and enjoy it, and offer suggestions for its further design. Computer users can easily bring this up by clicking on www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org.

Ann's wedding dress

On a day in 1806, Ann Plummer was adding the last stitches to her wedding dress and thinking very pleasant thoughts. She was about to marry young Ebenezer Woodbury of Cape Elizabeth. To make her happiness complete, her father, Robert, had agreed to sell to Ebenezer his own 100-acre farm at Duck Pond Corner with its large two-story house and all of the farm buildings. To be sure \$3,000 seemed a high price to pay, but Ebenezer liked the thoughts of the farm being Woodbury property again.

The house was built for Peter Woodbury, a wealthy landowner of Cape Elizabeth. It contained two large chimneys, many fireplaces and closets. Many of our colonial houses did not contain closets because their owners didn't have enough good clothes to warrant them.

This is how it came about that he and Ann reared their nine sons and daughters in the house now owned by **Hayden and Sharon Phelps** on the corner of Route 302 and Duck Pond Road.

Visit the Woodbury Cemetery next to the church and you will find the headstones of Ebenezer, Ann and other family members.

*The late **Edna Gowen**, Duck Pond Road, a devoted genealogist and reservoir of local history in her lifetime, wrote "Ann's Wedding Dress" for the November 1967 issue of "The Duck Pond Quack," a publication of the Highland Lake Congregational Church.*



***Nancy Curran**, Duck Pond Road, now owns the wedding dress her great, great, great, great grandmother made so many years ago. It was recently delivered to the **Maine Historical Society** for further research and possible inclusion in its collection of items characteristic of an earlier time in our history.*

Genealogy corner

Woodbury (Woodberye)

Families in England often took the names of the lands they occupied, abandoning their Norman names. In and near the "Parish Woodbury" and "Parish of Plymtree" are the names "Dammerle de Wodebere," plain "de Wodebere," and all varieties of spelling on deeds and records.

The first John Woodbury in America was born about 1579 in Somersetshire, England, and died about 1642 in Beverly, Massachusetts. He came to Cape Ann in 1624 in the interest of the Dorchester Company, which was then located at the site of present-time Gloucester, Massachusetts. He was married to Joan Humphrey at Burlcombe, Devonshire, England, in 1596, and later, also in England, to **Agnes Napper**. Agnes produced at least three children for him, including two sons born after his 60th birthday in the last two years of his life. He and his companions, settlers of Salem, were called the "Old Planters" in the History of Salem. It is said he came to settle and raise cattle – the first brought here. He and Agnes were among the original members of the First Church of Salem at its formation in 1629, and continued to be members for the rest of their lives. The terms "father" and "brother" applied to John in the records show respect for his practical Christianity. The positions he

occupied in public affairs seem to have been gained by his capacity for business and his force of character. When John Woodbury died in 1642, Agnes became executrix of his estate. She raised his last three children, with the assistance of her stepson Humphrey Woodbury, who was then about 34 years of age.

John Woodbury was a member of the first council to assist Gov. Endicott when he arrived in the New World. He was one of the first officers elected to the Bay Corporation. All the town and county business devolved on him alone or with a local committee of his choosing. The continuous occupancy of posts of trust shows his integrity and usefulness, and his busy profession as surveyor shows his mathematical ability and sturdy health. He was a Deputy to the General Court (Legislature), from Salem, from 1635 to 1638, and the first constable of the Town of Salem.

The first John Woodbury's grandson, **Joshua Woodbury**, according to Parson Smith's Journal, came from Beverly, Massachusetts, established at Simonton's Cove, Cape Elizabeth, Maine and was admitted an inhabitant there Dec. 11, 1727. He was a man of great substance, built a handsome house and barn, and was listed for 7 years as a selectman at Cape Elizabeth, although he still owned his farm at Beverly at the time of his death. He died at Cape Elizabeth in 1749, leaving a widow, Sarah and, among his 8 children, sons **John, Joshua, Ebenezer and Peter**.

Joshua Woodbury's sons became prominent participants in the town of Cape Elizabeth. His son **Peter**, especially, became a large and wealthy landowner. He first bought 50 acres of land in the Duck Pond area about 1760, and later acquired larger tracts for development. He built the first sawmill there, and several fine houses, although he returned to live in Cape Elizabeth. He apparently left his Duck Pond business interests largely to the management of his only son, **Joshua**, after Joshua returned from army service in the Revolutionary War. Through a series of happy coincidences, one of the first of those houses was later to become the homestead of Peter's nephew, **Ebenezer Woodbury**, son of his brother **John**, and his bride **Ann Plummer**, and the place where their nine children would be born and raised.

These old houses

A large colonial house, long known as the "Phelps Place," stands at the Highland Lake Corner of Route 302 and the old Duck Pond Road. When these two roads were part of the main route of travel from Portland through Windham and Raymond, to points in New Hampshire and Vermont, this home became a stopping place for travelers and teamsters.

This fine old house was built by Peter Woodbury, large landowner, the first known settler, and the builder of the first sawmill in this area, located near the bridge where Duck Pond Road crosses Mill Brook, outlet of Highland Lake, formerly known as the Duck Pond.



On the other side of the stream, overlooking the mill site, Peter Woodbury had, earlier, built two smaller houses, the larger of which was his first dwelling here. This was located near a spring which provided drinking water for the people living and working in this vicinity.



The front room of Peter Woodbury's house was used as a store, although the dates of the store's existence are not now known. The present owner of Peter Woodbury's first house is Robert Gordon.

The smaller house originally stood on the other side of the road from where it is now, where the present Henry Gowen house was built. A "Mr. Jameson" bought it from Gowen in 1846 to replace his earlier one that had burned down. Sometime around 1857, when the



predecessor to the present Highland Lake Congregational Church was being moved by a team of oxen from the corner of Duck Pond Road and Mast Road to its final location at the top of the hill next to the schoolhouse, it slid down the hill into the corner of this house with enough force to knock it off its foundation.

The present owner of the smaller early Woodbury house today is Stephen Boothby.

No known research has been conducted to determine when, or from whom, Peter Woodbury acquired his large land holdings, or whether a "Woodbury" was the original grantee.

*The preceding description of some of the earliest development in the Duck Pond area of Westbrook is taken mostly from the papers of the late **Nellie Spiller**. She was a charter member of the Westbrook Historical Society, of enormous historical bent.*

The entire Highland Lake section was at one time Woodbury property and the beautiful home of the Phelps family at Highland Lake Corner was probably built by Peter Woodbury. Deeds of this property trace back to one

recorded in 1791 when Peter Woodbury sold well over one hundred acres to Robert Plummer who, in turn, sold it to Ebenezer Woodbury in 1806, at which time the latter married Ann Plummer. The purchase price of \$3,000 included "all the buildings on the whole of the premises." It is said that this house was once used as a tavern.

From "Highlights of Westbrook History



Living with old houses

Floors

By the mid-1700's many of the more pretentious houses had imported English or Oriental carpets, while the floors of more modest houses were usually painted, often in imitation of these imported carpets. Naturally finished floors were not typical of the 1700's and 1800's. Although early hardwood floors were often waxed and polished, the more prevalent softwood floors were usually left bare or painted.

The boards were usually fastened with hand-wrought iron nails from the local blacksmith. In less expensive houses where the nail heads were left exposed, wear on the floor was uneven, leaving humps near the nail heads and hollows in the more heavily traveled areas. Better-made floors had counter-bored nails, plugged with a circular piece of wood which then wore down evenly with the rest of the floor.

Club corner

Business Men To Banquet At Tavern

(Westbrook News, Dec. 23, 1925)

For a number of years there has been much talk of forming a business mens club in Westbrook but not until recently have any forward steps been taken. It is understood from reliable sources that a number of our prominent citizens will meet for luncheon at the Westbrook Tavern Thursday Dec. 24, at one o'clock not only to further discuss the matter but to take some definite action toward forming a business mens club that will best fit into the cities needs.

A well known Portland man who has had large experience in this work will address the meeting and give much valuable advice. The Westbrook Tavern is under the management of Mrs. H. F. Noyes and is one of our newest business enterprises.

From the records of the Westbrook Rotary Club

Just previous to Christmas in the year 1925, a small group of Business and Professional men decided that the one thing this city lacked, was a Service Club. Consequently, it was agreed that Rotary would be the solution of this problem, and on December 24, 1925 the Westbrook Rotary Club was organized.

The organization took place at the Westbrook Tavern, which had been recently purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Noyes and was located at 810 Main Street. At 12:30 on this said December 24, 1925 fifteen Business and Professional men with a spirit of friendliness toward organization met in the main dining room and laid plans for the first Service Club in the history of this city, The Westbrook Rotary Club. Those fifteen were: Paul Smith, Hardware; Nels F. Nelson, Clothier; Henry S. Cobb, Printer; Wade L. Bridgham, Attorney; Hale M. Dow, Florist; Harry F. G. Hay, Funeral Director; Frank A. Chase, Jr., Coal; Paul Fraser, Recreation; Harry Higgins, Electric Transportation; James A. Lewis, Public Schools; Richard G. Raymond, Drugs; Carroll M. Richardson, Postal Service; Arthur G., Worthington, News Paper; Edwin B. Carr, Boots and Shoes; and your humble historian Granville C. Shibles, Osteopathic Physician.

We were all very ill-informed as to the ideals and objects of International Rotary, but a group of men who were more willing to learn and more highly enthusiastic over this new venture would be hard to find. The Portland Rotary Club, as has been proved through the following years, was highly eager and sympathetic with us, sending to our midst three of its best, hand-picked Rotarians to educate us along Rotary ideals and steer us along the right paths, that we might become a solid cog in that great wheel of Rotary International. Those three men were, Daniel Hoegg, Secretary of the Portland Club, Fred Gordon, at that time President of the Portland Club and Ernest Decker, the Immediate Past President of the Portland Club.

Our first meeting was really one of organization; the idea of such a Service Club took the fancy of the Business and Professional men of the city. This is later born out by the fact that within two or three months, a Kiwanis Club was formed and a few years later a Lions Club was organized, and upon this writing nine years later, in the year 1934 all three clubs are prosperous, healthy and happy, with the most amiable associations, one with another, and over this period of nine years they have worked and play together on many occasions, which from my point of view is the proper way for groups of men who are banded together with ideals of Service as a key note.



Heroes of another time

Revolutionary War veterans

From an early 1900's "Westbrook Advertiser"

- On Brook Street beyond Pride's Corner in a pasture on the present Main Farm lies **Captain Daniel Lunt**. He served throughout the Revolutionary War, was a personal friend of General Washington, guarded the British spy the night before his execution and left to us a diary of his services. It is in the Maine History Rooms and can be read by anyone interested.
- In Saccarappa Cemetery there is buried **Joseph Quimby** and **Nathaniel Hatch**, the latter being the leader in establishing the Methodist Church in this city.
- **Captain John Starbird**, who is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, and has a government stone set by the late Edwin Lavery, former superintendent of the yard, was one of these men. His farm was a part of what is now the Woodlawn area. When the old cemetery was obliterated there were 17 graves found yet old residents say there were over 25 buried here. No doubt **Cushing Pratt**, a Revolutionary War soldier, was also laid away there for he was a neighbor of Captain John...
- **William Porterfield** lived nearby but he is buried in Stroudwater Yard along with several Revolutionary War men and we can claim them as ours since Stroudwater and Saccarappa were practically one town.
- **Major Mains** is located there and also **Major Archelaus Lewis**, who, by the way, built, in 1804, the house in which ex-Mayor Joseph A. Warren (later) lived and that was the only house in that region. In fact, it took 100 years to build six houses in Ammoncongin (Cumb. Mills).
- In the Woodbury yard at Highland Lake lies **Joshua Woodbury**.... In a wooded section of the Cornelius Small farm on the Duck Pond Road, lies **Jeremiah Small**. In a very neglected spot on the old Cobb Griggs place on Rocky Hill lies **Peter Cobb**, ancestor of all the Cobbs here about.
- **The Webb boys, James, John and Henry**, were in the service. There is a stone in the old Conant yard to the memory of one **Jonathan Webb**, though he was not a member of the same family. The brother, John, lies at the edge of a field on the Percy Knight farm on the Buxton Road. This area is now mostly woodlands.

No stone or flag marks this place. **James Webb** carried the flag of his regiment at the battle of Monmouth, where history says General George Washington swore.

- **John Brackett** was captain of the company that marched for Lexington but at Wells, Maine, was ordered back home. They later went into the service and became part of **Colonel Edmund Phinney's** regiment. Captain Brackett died in Cambridge and was buried there. He is said to have lived on the old Gorham Road. **William Conant**, son of our first settler, was in this company on its first march.
- **John Warren** lies in the old Warren tomb here, having been moved there from the old-time yard on the Warren farm on Stroudwater Street. Warren's picture and that of his wife hang at the present time in the Otis Wyer home on Longfellow Street.

The Warren paintings still hung on the stairway of the Wyer house when Roberta Wyer Morrill was growing up there. She remembers how awed the other children were to find the eyes following them as they moved. The paintings have since been sold outside the family.

What The City of Westbrook Offers As a Place of Residence

(From the official program of the
Fourth of July Celebration of 1895)

Although a city in population and wealth, Westbrook is not a city in the density of her buildings. She is more like a large, overgrown country town. Each man has a good sized house lot with his home, many have more than one so that everybody has space sufficient to breathe in, and no one feels crowded. More than this, it may be said that the majority of the laboring men own their houses and the land on which the houses set, so that each one can truthfully say, "I am the monarch of all I survey." Probably, in no city in the U.S. do so many laboring people own their own homes in proportion to the population as in this city. And, as a consequence, everyone takes great pride in keeping the grounds about their buildings neat and well cared for, thus giving the city a tidy and attractive appearance. Then the majority of the working people of Westbrook are intelligent and well educated and appreciate the advantages of their position.

All historical information in this publication is derived from the archives of the Westbrook Historical Society.

Fair Presumpscot

Delightful trip on the steamer Sokokis

(July 1895)

The writer has often heard people speak in glowing terms of the scenery along the Presumpscot, but never had he fully realized it until a hot afternoon this week, when he and a party of friends made a trip up the river on the steamer "Sokokis", passing through five-and-a-half miles of natural beauty that only the same distance on the waters of the historic Hudson can rival.

The trip was full of unexpected pleasures and delightful surprises from the start. As the steamer glides easily and rapidly on the surface of the water, cool breezes fanned our heated faces and a feeling of exhilaration and refreshment was experienced causing us to forget all cares and enter into the enjoyment of the hour. But this delightful sensation was only a forecast of the real pleasures that awaited us at every bend of the river.

As the observer stands in the bow or looks out over the side of the boat, the scenery on each bank presents new and ever changing pictures. It reminds one of those lovely dissolving views that can be thrown upon canvas by a magic lantern, where one beautiful scene fades into another of even more beautiful and wonderful form.

Now we are moving along a straight part of the river, admiring the combination of colors and the luxuriant profusion of the scene on each bank; now almost without warning the way seems to be completely enclosed by some short curve in the river presenting to your astonished eye a beautiful landscape which almost seems to have been dropped from the canvas of some great artist for your special benefit. So many and so varied are these changes that you scarcely have time to view them before another of perhaps even rarer beauty is presented to your eye. One might easily think himself in fairy land and not be disturbed from his dreams until he reaches his destination, so wonderful and surprising are the changes that wait the eye of the excursionist.

Inside

Bulletin Board	1
Web Site	2
Ann's Wedding Dress	2
Genealogical Corner	2
These Old Houses	3
Living With Old Houses	4
Club Corner	4
Heroes of Another Time	5
What The City Offers	5
Fair Presumpscot	6