

# Westbrook Historical Society

*A Society That Preserves The Past*

Newsletter, Winter 2006, Philip E. Curran, Editor, 17B Dunn Street, Westbrook, Maine 04092

## Westbrook Historical Society Purpose and Principle

The purposes of this Society are to bring together those people interested in the history of Westbrook, Maine, and to discover, collect, 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 holding meetings open to the general public, by marking historic buildings, sites, etc. and by using other media to gain public interest in Westbrook history.

The Society shall work with other State historical societies and organizations in this field when called upon to do so.

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

## Officers

**President, Robert H. Smith**  
**Vice President, Mike Sanphy**  
**Secretary, Suzan Roberts Norton**  
**Treasurer, Nancy Joy Curran**

**Immediate Past President – Betty Morabito**

## Directors

**Diane Turgeon Dyer – Ellie Conant Saunders**  
**Jane Gordon – Donna Conley**

## Email address

Email: [wsbkhistsoc@awi.net](mailto:wsbkhistsoc@awi.net)

Tel: 854-5588

The doors of the Westbrook Historical Society are open to the general public every Saturday morning, 9:00 o'clock to noon. Capable volunteer staff is present at that time to help visitors with their interests and their needs.

The doors are invariably open again on Tuesday mornings while volunteer workers are doing their chores, at which time the general public is also free to visit.

## Friendship and sunshine cards

Anyone aware of the hospitalization, illness or grief of a member should call **Jane Gordon** at **797-5536**. She will see that the person is comforted with a sunshine card.

## Harlie N. Lord

Society members grieve the passing of faithful member **Harlie Lord**. He passed away October 12, 2005 at his home in Windham, at the age of 95. He was born in Westbrook, attended Westbrook schools, and retired from S. D. Warren Company after many years of service there. In June 2005 he was chosen to be an *Honorary Member* of Westbrook Historical Society for his substantial contributions to the organization.

## Nov. 2 meeting

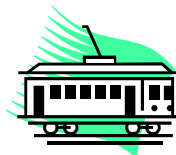
### Show and tell

There was a minimal amount of business. This meeting consisted primarily of audience participation with “**Things Remembered.**” Thirty-eight people were present. **Joan LaBrecque** showed some the old fashioned baseball equipment of her late grandfather, Maine Hall of Fame member **Pete Tetrault**. **Bob Gordon** aptly told stories of his old book collection; **Nancy Curran** showed a Shaker box handed down through her family, quickly authenticated by Anne Foote’s hand-carried catalogue. **Phil LaViolet** spoke about shortages of food and goods during World War II and how rationing of so many items was controlled by the government. **Anne Foote** showed an antique rose bowl and a prayer rug.

## Dec. 7 meeting

### Trolleys

Forty-one people attended the regular meeting of the Society Dec. 7. The presenter was the colorful **Donald Curry** of the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport. He spoke and presented a slide show about trolleys running in and out of Westbrook years ago, providing warm



recollections for some of the older members who were present. He provided a wealth of interesting information and showed many slides of Riverton Trolley Park, which opened in 1896.

### January 4 meeting



#### Fellow members bestow honorary membership on four of their own

On recommendation of the Board of Directors, the title of "Honorary Member" was awarded to the following members at the regular meeting in January:

##### Vaun Born

**Vaun Born** joined the Society prior to 1978 and was immediately put to work on the Library and Museum committee, where she remained active for over twenty-five years. She was elected to the Board of Directors in 1979, secretary in 1980 and 1981, served 5 years as vice president and held the office of president for 7 of the years between 1984 and 1994.

##### Ethelyn Chase

**Ethelyn Chase** is a charter member of Westbrook Historical Society. She served as secretary for the first two years, and again in each of the years 1984, 1985, 1991, 1992, 1993, 2001 and 2002. She was vice president for four years and served six years as president. She was active in many other ways, and was particularly instrumental in the stability and growth of the Society.

##### Katherine Sullivan

**Katherine Sullivan** was an early member of the Westbrook Historical Society. She was active on several by-law committees and nominating committees. She was elected treasurer in 1987 and worked with the president acquiring the 501.3c status for the Society. She served as auditor for several years in the 1990s, and was secretary in 1997. Although she has moved away to be near her family, she continues an active interest and keeps in touch with the Society.

##### Betty Morabito

Almost immediately after **Betty Morabito** joined the Westbrook Historical Society she was chosen to be vice president. She held that position for four years, 1997 through 2000. She worked notably with the collection

during that time, recording and putting it in order. She then served as president for three-and-a-half years, January 2001 through June 2004. The Society entered the computer age during her administration. She organized and directed the complex task of transferring the collection from its original home at the old high school to its present location on Dunn Street.

#### Allen Crabtree speaks

#### Hurricane Katrina volunteer brings it home to Westbrook Historical Society group



**Allen Crabtree** of Sebago is a Red Cross volunteer and journalist returned from relief and rescue work on site in New Orleans and other parts of Louisiana. At the regular January meeting of the Society, he presented a slideshow and vivid report of his experiences in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the suffering he observed there. He was accompanied in dramatic commentary by Deborah Dickinson who relocated to Westbrook with the help of local churches, after losing her home in New Orleans.

#### New Standing Rule

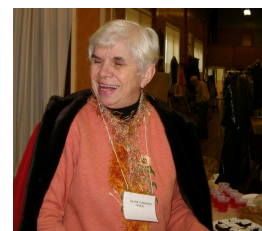
It was voted at the regular January meeting of the membership that, "In the absence of both the president and the vice president, the treasurer shall preside over the meeting. In the event of the treasurer's absence, the order of leadership shall fall to the secretary, then to the longest-term director who is present."

If unable to attend a meeting it is highly recommended that the president notify the other officers, in the order listed above, and provide them with an agenda."

#### Welcome new members

**Patricia Roberts - Rachel Wescott**  
**James Anderson - Priscilla Champagne**

**Diane Dyer**, member of the Board of Directors, manager of the 50/50 drawing, dedicated "worker in the vineyard" of Westbrook Historical Society, mans the refreshment table at our regular monthly meetings.



## Five years ago

### From the Westbrook Historical Society Newsletter, Winter Edition, 2001

The ladies of the Westbrook Historical Society Ensemble, accompanied on the piano by Jan Usher did it again with a stellar performance in the high school auditorium on Dec. 3 for the benefit of the Mission Possible teen center. One of the final acts of outgoing president Nancy Curran was to again heap praise and appreciation on this merry and talented choral group.



Vaun Born Nancy Curran Roberta Dutton  
Bunny Dyhrberg Mary Gagnon Joan LaBrecque  
Jean LeConte Evelyn Meserve Ann Peoples  
Georgia Therio Lucille Waite Marjorie Cutter

## Personality Corner

### My Grandfather by Joan LaBrecque

**My Grandfather, Pete Tetrault**, was born Feb. 6, 1888 and died April 6, 1988. When asked about becoming a centenarian, he said he never thought about being 100.

**When he was born, Grover Cleveland was the president** and the modern automobile was still merely a dream, and the country had only 39 states.

**Baseball was his life passion.** It was a subject that made his memories jump to life and the stories past roll off his tongue. He became a local legend by playing professional and organized league baseball for more than three decades until he was 51 years of age.

**I have a group picture of his team in 1907;** Fall River Baseball Team, New England League. Also a picture, 1913, Maine-New Brunswick League, and St. Croix Baseball Club. I also have his baseball uniform which I wear at the Festival of Trees at Westbrook-Warren Congregational Church each year, greeting people, representing the Westbrook Historical Society. I also have his old leather glove, a baseball, and scrapbooks of faded newspaper clippings recounting his ballpark feats.



**He shared his birthday with Babe Ruth**, one of baseball's all-time greats. "Papa" was a Yankee fan and once played in an exhibition game in Portland with the immortal Ruth during the 1920's.

**In 1975 he was inducted into the Maine Baseball Hall of Fame.**

**When he wasn't playing baseball, he was working at the S. D. Warren paper mill.** He worked there for 53 years until he retired in 1966 at the age of 78. In the summertime he would play ball, and in the winter he'd work at the mill.

**He had two sons**, Robert, my father, and Roland whom he taught baseball at an early age. They were both outstanding players at Westbrook High School. In fact, he played on a team with his sons.

**I played softball in high school.** Roland's sons, Roland, Jr. and Peter also played excellent baseball in high school. So I guess baseball ran in the family.

## Festival of Trees

### Historical Society participates again in hugely successful gala event



This picture is of Historical Society members **George and Roberta Morrell**, two of several happy role-playing participants who represented Westbrook Historical Society at this year's Festival of Trees. It was indeed a gala event, with the substantial proceeds distributed to various worthy causes, as usual.

## Biography corner

History is the essence  
of innumerable biographies

### Duncan McIntosh

#### The McIntosh Broadsword

**Duncan MacIntosh and his wife Jane Ferguson** were born in the "Highlands of Scotland," he in 1737, as Covenanters were in danger of religious persecution. One night their home in Argyleshire was surrounded by an angry mob. His only weapon was a long two edged broadsword. He was a young powerfully built man and his wife Jane proved to be no weakling herself. He literally cut their way through the mob and they escaped to the coast. By good luck they secured passage on a vessel leaving for America. They arrived in this country with

little more than the broadsword which had saved their lives. The sword has been described as of superb temper with a curious iron hilt made to cover the entire hand, and could be used to cut or thrust with equal facility. A great great grandson of Duncan and Jane McIntosh in Portland was the last known owner of the cherished broadsword.

### The McIntosh Farm

**It is over two hundred years** since Duncan McIntosh and Jane fled to America from persecution in Scotland. Some time after arrival in Falmouth (Portland) they obtained 100 acres of land at the head of what is now Highland Lake. There was no road into the wilderness so they bought a boat at Falmouth, loaded it with necessaries and paddled from Casco Bay down the Presumpscot River (and no doubt enjoyed it) then up the Mill Brook. This narrow brook offered difficulties that taxed the strength of both Duncan and capable Jane. When they entered our lake we can imagine the scattering of flocks of ducks which gave it its early name of the Duck Pond. Paddling the last three miles there lay before them all the way their hundred acres, their forest, and finally their beach.

**Muscle building labor** cleared a plot of land for a garden and more labor produced their log cabin on the shore. The large two story house which they later built is still occupied; a historical landmark on Cottage Road.

**Around 1915** it was the summer home of Dr. John Thompson of Portland, then was sold and the shore property was divided into lots. From one farm and one home have come many homes.

### Jane and the bear



**Because of bears in the neighborhood** Duncan McIntosh built a log fence around his first garden. In the rich soil the vegetables grew fast and by midsummer the corn was head

high with ears filling out.

**On this particular day**, dinnertime was nearing so Jane picked up her basket and the knife Duncan had fashioned for her from a broken scythe blade sharpened to a fine edge. As she closed the garden gate behind her, she looked up and there to her wrath and dismay was a bear breaking and trampling the corn. He ran toward the hole he had made with Jane in pursuit. All would have been well for him had not his head caught in the fence. Jane seized him by his stub of a tail and, believe it or not, tradition tells us she killed him with the knife.

*The three biographical sketches of the Duncan McIntosh family are all from the journal of the late Edna Gowen.*

### The flood of 1896

**From a newspaper clipping in the archives**

**The citizens of Westbrook were treated to a sight** never seen before or since when the Presumpscot River flooded in 1896. On March first, when there was heavy snow on the ground and great blocks of ice in the river, it began to rain early in the morning. The momentum of the river behind great floes locked the ice at the base of the Maine Central Railroad bridge, and a pool fifty acres in size backed up there.

**By midafternoon the houses on the flat** between Congin and Saccarappa and also the houses on Brown Street were flooding, and the inhabitants were moving to higher ground to watch the destruction with awe. Just after dark the force behind the bridge broke through, taking the bridge with it.

**Then the Cumberland Street Bridge was the next obstruction** and that went by the board like so much tissue paper. Then came the double-deck tramway bridge of the Warren mills, and then the whole outfit was smashed against the new No. 1 machine room, smashing in its walls and filling the mill with ice, wood, and filth to a depth of twenty feet.

**S. D. Warren Company took three weeks** to repair the damage and resume normal business, and the Maine Central bridge was out for months. The only pleasant footnote to this event was that no lives were lost in the flood. The mill soon constructed the present freshet channel along the north side of the original Cumberland Mill building, cutting off forty feet from the original rag storage and sorting building.

### The storm of 1936

**From a journal of the late Edna Gowen**

**The recent heavy April storm** reminded us of the more disastrous rain of March 12 and 13, 1936. At the time of that storm, snow covered the ground. Two days of torrential rain together with warmer air softened the snow causing rivers and streams to overflow their banks with frightening speed. The force of the flood loosened great chunks of ice adding another element of destruction. In the central and southern parts of the state bridges toppled like dominoes into the flooding waters. Governor Brann estimated the flood loss at ten million dollars. (It would be nearer ten billion now!)

**The Highland Lake community did not escape.** The mill dam which had held the lake water back for a hundred years or more was wrenched from its foundation. With the loss of the dam a wall of water from the lake came pouring through, taking out the bridge over the Mill

Brook on Duck Pond Road. The influx of water turned the brook into a river which went surging on its way toward the next bridge.

**Mill Brook, as all the trout fishermen well know**, crosses Route 302 near the Lyman Woodbury home. The bridge there was presumably built about 1836, the date when construction of the new road from Highland Lake Corner to Prides Corner was begun. Both supporting ends of the bridge were of granite masonry and the road bed is said to have been of granite too. The masonry was strong but the culvert was weak. The wall of water approached the bridge laden with debris and uprooted trees. The entire ravine was filled with water. No one had any doubt the bridge would go.

**Leon Babbidge, a special Police officer**, was sent to guard the approaches. The last man to cross the old bridge must have been **Augustus Brown**, who was the proprietor of the grocery store where the Hawkes Television Shop is now. He waded across to get his bundle of papers – the bridge went out with a roar leaving him on the other side talking with officer Babbidge.

**A couple of notes in closing** are from the Portland Press Herald of March 18; “Paper City employees under direction of **Elmer Randall** started to replace the bridge over Mill Brook on Duck Pond Road, one of the first bridges in Cumberland County to have been washed out.” And “**Harwood Stewart** of Prides Corner was injured while working on rebuilding the bridge on Roosevelt Trail (Rt. 302). A cave-in caused the staging to fall on him. He was taken to the Westbrook Hospital on Main Street for xrays.”

## World War II Ration Guide Jan. 26, 1943

### Women’s nylon stockings very scarce

*I’m very sorry,  
Ma’am, but  
we’re plumb out  
of bacon this  
week. Butter?  
Yes, we have  
some, but it’s  
scarce so we’re  
limiting each  
customer to a  
quarter-pound.*

Women’s nylon stockings were very scarce, creating long lines of buyers. Women painted their legs nylon color.

Sugar – Stamp No. 13 in War Ration Book One valid through Aug. 15 for five pounds of sugar. Stamps 15 and 16 remain valid for five pounds of sugar for canning purposes only. Persons needing more than the 10 pounds for

canning can apply to rationing boards for additional stamps.

Gasoline – Pleasure driving banned. No. 6 Stamp in A book for three gallons of gas valid through Nov. 21. B and C coupons valued at 2 ½ gallons.

Tire – Motorists with A books denied replacements, but can get tires recapped without rationing certificates. Drivers with gasoline rations for more than 240 miles of driving per month eligible for tire replacements. A book holders must have tires inspected by Sept. 30 and holders of C books by Aug. 30.

Shoes – Stamp 18 valid through Oct. 31 It may be transferred among members of family.

Fuel Oil – Period 5 fuel oil coupons good for 10 or 100 gallons, depending on class of issuance, through Sept. 30.

All Rationing Boards are closed Wednesdays.

*The one-day “K Ration” for soldiers in the field, a brown box the size of crackerjack box contained 4 cigarettes, 2 sticks of gum, 1 small envelope of instant coffee, 2 nutritional thick fruit bars, and 2 large, thick, hard biscuits, nicknamed “dog biscuits.”*

**Old Westbrook High School Year Books available for purchase at \$5.00 each: 1925, 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1935, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1952, 1954 and 1957.**

### Club corner

#### Martha Washington Charitable Society of Saccarappa, Maine

**Finding of an old Bible brings to light** valuable information. Original members are all dead. Among them are many familiar names of women who were active in good work several years ago. Constitution not much unlike those in use by present day societies.

**An old, leather-covered Bible**, yellowed with age, but without a defaced or torn leaf. On the flyleaf is written, “The Martha Washington Charitable Society of Saccarappa.” On the title page is the date 1845. What was the Martha Washington Society? Who were its members? A long search disclosed little until one day the right person was asked. “Do you know anything or have you ever heard anything of the Martha Washington Society?” “Why, no, I don’t know much about it; but stop, I’m secretary of the Ladies` Sociable of the Westbrook Congregational Church and a number of books were given me when I was elected, and there’s an old one I haven’t looked at.”

**The secretary did look**, and, sure enough, the old book was none other than the record book of the old society. Some of the leaves are falling out, some are torn, all are colored by the artist, Time.

**There must have been an earlier society**, for on the first page one reads, "Constitution of The Saccarappa Martha Washington Society, as amended from the Constitution of the Female Charitable Society adopted Sept 6, 1842." Of this earlier society there is no record.

**It is most interesting to read of the meetings.** The society never meets at the home of Mrs. So and So, but always of Mr. So and So. The first officers recorded are first directress, Mrs. Henry Smith; second directress, Mrs. B. Roberts; secretary and treasurer, Ellen Mosher; managers, Mrs. Pierce, Mrs. Woodman, Mrs. Akers, Mrs. J. Roberts; examining committee, Mrs. Deacon Walker, Mrs. John Brown.

**They evidently had a way of meeting** and sewing on garments to be given away. If, however, a member wished to devote the afternoon to her own work, or not to sew, she paid three cents into the treasury and sometimes six cents. The list of articles to be given away is long and sounds rather strange. The list for 1851 includes quite a quantity of linsey Woolsey, factory cloth, shoes, cradle quilts, undergarments, sheets and pillow cases,

hose, shawls, calico, medicine, and last but not least, money.

**The last record is September, 1853.** Evidently the society was declining. Whereas in 1846 it numbered 58, it now has but 37. The articles given the last year were mostly money and barrels of flour. Flour was cheaper than it is today as \$4.75 is the price recorded. The society probably did not meet regularly again.

**In 1859 there is a record** of a well organized and evidently not new, church circle in the Congregational Church and probably the other churches also, for early in the Civil War all societies here had circles or mission bands which did much for the good of the cause.

**Pioneers in a worthy cause**, it seems but fitting that some record should be left of the Martha Washington Charitable Society of Saccarappa.

(Copied from the newspaper clipping pasted into the front of the Bible)

*The foregoing story about The Martha Washington Charitable Society of Saccarappa, Maine is condensed from "Fabius M. Ray's Story of Westbrook," compiled by Karen Sherman Ketover.*