

HIGHLAND LAKE (DUCK POND)

Tradition states that the area west of Pride's Corner was called Duck Pond because of the abundance of wild ducks there. In fact, one story tells about William Huston Jr. who saw a large flock of ducks flying overhead in the 1720's. He wondered where they were going so he followed them through the forest to a small but beautiful lake where the ducks quietly settled down. He called this "Duck Pond" and the area retained that name until 1901.

An early settler in the area was George Hale, a farmer. He built a house in 1775 in the area after being burned out by Mowatt's Marines in Falmouth. The Hale farm was at one time used as a tavern to accommodate teamsters enroute from Vermont and New Hampshire to Portland - a long, rough journey- but the Hales kept a special supply of rum on hand for these travelers. It was reported that on cold mornings teamsters would find Indians curled up around the fireplace for warmth.

Duck Pond's early settlers lived self-sustaining lives on their farms, for agriculture was the principle occupation for many of the early years. Soon the outlet of the pond, called Mill Brook Stream, began to provide power to operate several small industries. In the late 1800's mills produced shoo and lumber products such as pails and tubs. Many of the residents took on second occupations, such as sawmill operators, brick makers, tavern keepers, shoemakers and blacksmiths, as the community began to thrive. The *Daily Eastern Argus* of December 28, 1886 describes the Corner thus, "In the extreme north easterly portion of Westbrook, ... lies this pleasant hamlet containing about twenty-five families. There is a store, a church, a grange hall, and a wooden ware factory..."



The Highland Lake Church

The old Duck Pond Road was a part of the main route of travel from New Hampshire and Vermont, through Windham and Raymond, to Portland. The entire Duck Pond corner section was at one time Woodbury property and the once beautiful Woodbury/Phelps house at Duck Pond Corner was probably built by Peter Woodbury in the late 1700's. Peter was said to be the builder of the 1st sawmill in the area. The Woodbury store at the Corner served as the local meeting spot and also as the Post Office. The Woodbury name is still well known in this area.



The Woodbury Store and Post Office



The Gowen Store and Post Office

Soon after 1901 Duck Pond became known as Highland Lake. Some references say this occurred after that name appeared on the early U.S. Geographic Service maps of the area. Others say that as the community became more affluent and sophisticated, the residents reasoned that since the pond and surrounding area was so beautiful, the area should have a more dignified name, hence the name change from Duck Pond to Highland Lake. One long-time resident of the area recently stated that if you're new here, or on the upswing of society, you're from Highland Lake, "but if you're like me, you're from Duck Pond, AYAH!"

No matter what you call this area, it still contains a strong sense of community, with many of the old names, ...Gowen, Woodbury, Pride, Hale, Gordon... spoken of with pride. Five old family cemeteries here give a strong feel for the local history and many of the well-kept farm houses were built by early settlers...and some are still occupied by their descendents.

For further reading on Highland Lake/Duck Pond:

Spring 2006 Historical Society Newsletter, "How Highland Lake got its Name"

Westbrook Firefighters Prides Corner Hose Company, 1999 Yearbook, "History of Duck Pond Corner"