PRIDES CORNER NEIGHBORHOOD

Prides Corner consists of approximately four square miles on the northeast side of Westbrook. It is bounded by Portland, Falmouth and Windham. The Presumpscot River, which runs through Westbrook, creates the southern boundary line between the Corner and Portland. Bridgton Road (U.S. Route 302) runs through the center of Prides Corner from the Riverton Bridge at the Portland line, to the Windham line.

This area, only two or three miles from the Village of Cumberland Mills and three to four miles from the Village of Saccarappa, was a wilderness when it was first settled in the early 1700s. Transportation was slow and cumbersome and done mostly on foot or by boat on the river. The primitive roads that existed were not always passable during the long harsh winters or the wet muddy springs. With the 1816 construction of East Bridge Street, originally called the Saccarappa Road, and with today’s modern transportation, the distances to the “City” may have diminished but the residents of “The Corner” still like to think of it as a “place a part.”

Three of earliest setters in Pride’s Corner were the Proctors in 1718, the Prides in 1726 and the Winslows in 1728.

The Proctors were descendants of John Proctor of Ipswich, MA. Samuel Proctor, grandson of John, arrived in Falmouth in 1718 and received a grant of land from the Falmouth Proprietors. His son John later built a saw mill on this grant on what was referred to as Proctor’s Mill Stream, now called Mill Brook. The mill was in operation as early as 1753. The Proctors built their home near the stream on what is now East Bridge Street. The house is still standing and still has its secret passageway down into the cellar but all traces of the nearby family cemetery have disappeared.

The Prides came to Falmouth from Salem, Mass. in 1726 and had a 200 acre land grant north of the Presumpscot River in what is now Pride’s Corner. Many descendants of Joseph Pride, Sr. settled on this grant and gave the area its name. John R. Lewis wrote in his History of Pride’s Corner, “The ‘Pride’ in the Corner is an old family name and an old family tradition. Only a handful of the descendants of that hardy pioneer family are left today [1968], but you’d almost swear that every one of the 400 families there today claim themselves as ‘Prides’, so closely knit are they in their community spirit.”

James Winslow came to Falmouth 1728 and moved to the northerly side of the Presumpscot River in 1743. He built a home near the river in 1748 and that home is still standing just down the street from the Proctor home. This house, the site of early Quaker meetings, was also the site of the first recorded school in 1794; Mr. Robert Blair acted as teacher and Quaker minister. The house remained in family hands until the last member of the family died in 1909. Nathaniel Winslow, James' grandson, was a leading local businessman and was the first to preserve food products in a can. The first sweet corn ever canned was canned and marketed by him in a woodshed at Cumberland Mills.

[See Narraganset News chapters on Collections page for more information on these families.]

The Pride’s Corner area, although mostly agricultural, (at one time there were at least three dairy farms in the area) has had its share of varied businesses and industries. The earliest known store in the Corner was owned by Peter Pride and was next to his house on the corner of Pride Street and Bridgton Road. It was opened sometime between 1812 and 1822.
The three brooks in the Corner sustained several sawmills after Proctor established the first one in 1753. There were also several canning factories which sprang up after Nathaniel Winslow’s canning invention. The Riverton Packing Plant and the Corn Shop, near the Riverton Bridge, was in operation as late as 1872.

Two major quarries were active here in the mid-1800s, both located on the Bridgton Road. It is thought that stone obtained from these quarries was hauled into Portland for street curbing and to build Fort Gorges and other fortifications. The stone house at 296 Pride Street was built with local stone.

A post office was established at Pride’s Corner in 1883 in the store on the corner of Bridgton and Brook Roads. In those days a stage coach, running from Portland to South Casco, dropped the mail off to Post Master John Clark.

Clay soil in the area resulted in the development of a minimum of five brickyards in Pride’s Corner. [See Pride’s Corner map drawn by Bob Gowen showing some of the locations as he remembered them in the 1920s]

In 1909 the Prides Corner Union Bible School was organized in Clark Store at Bridgton and Brook Roads. It was the first church in the Corner. Three years later it was organized into the Pride’s Corner Union Church Society. Land was purchased with funds raised from community fairs, suppers and entertainments and a church building was erected on Elmwood Avenue in 1915. The Union Church became affiliated with the Congregational Christian Church in 1952. In 1958 a new church, the Pride’s Corner Congregational Church, was built on Pride Street. The church membership continues the tradition of community harmony and Saturday night public suppers.

The first school in the area was built at the intersection of Pride Street and Bridgton Road on land donated by Peter Pride. Each family in the Corner donated 50 cents towards its construction. The building served as a local meeting hall, with classes held on the second floor. The school was in use from 1869 until 1951.

Times have changed and modern transportation and conveniences have made the world more accessible, but the Pride’s Corner people continue to maintain their sense of pride in their community.

References: *An Early History of Pride’s Corner* by John R. Lewis
*A Brief History of Prides Corner*, Westbrook Firefighters 2000 Magazine, by Mike Sanphy