

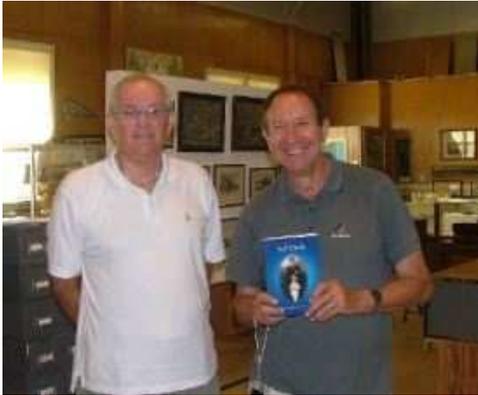
Westbrook Historical Society

Newsletter

A Society That Preserves The Past Fall 2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Since joining the Westbrook Historical Society in 2000 and becoming its President in 2006, it has been my pleasure to meet some wonderfully interesting and enjoyable people. But none can compare to my recent meeting with Dr. David Crockett from Mt. Eliza, Victoria, Australia!



About two years ago David set out on a quest to find his "American family". Because of distance, this necessitated the hiring of a professional genealogical researcher. The researcher came into the Society looking for information on the Nelson Crockett family of Westbrook, great-great grandparents of David. We directed her to the Saccarappa cemetery where Nelson and his wife Lucy are buried...and we thought the issue was over.

Within a couple of weeks I received an e-mail from David saying that the stones had been vandalized and asking if the Society could do anything to have them repaired. When my husband Norm and I went to investigate we found the stones off their bases and lying on the ground due to frost heaves. Norm notified the Department of Public Services and John Emerson, then Deputy Director, sent out a crew to upright the stones and cement them in place. John notified David that the problem had been corrected and we sent him a photo of the up-righted stones. This was last year.

On Aug 13, David Crockett (and yes, he does know the history of 'our' Davy Crockett), came to Westbrook to present the Society with a copy of his fresh-off-the-press Crockett genealogy: *Full Circle, The Ancestral Journey of a Crockett Family*. Norm and I spent a delightful day with

him: visiting the Society (he was very impressed by the size of our collection), going to Saccarappa Cemetery where he was united with his great-great grandparents, sharing a couple of good meals, reminiscing about our trip to Australia in 1991 and just getting to know each other.

By this time, the bug had bitten us and we decided he could not leave Maine until he had met his great-great-great grandparents. Off we drove to Durham and the Penley Corner Cemetery where we cleaned and visited the stones of David and Esther Crockett. Sad to say, we discovered that we hadn't come prepared with enough information to locate the Wagg Cemetery in Durham where his great-great-great-great grandfather, Ephraim is buried...but that gives David an excuse to return and bring his wife Cheryl.

David has been a member of our Society for two years now but who would ever have thought that we'd actually get to meet him. He is a retired Specialist in Forensic Dentistry and his wife has her Doctorate in History. David's father Chester, was in the military in WW II, ended up in Australia, married an Aussie and never left...but his son has finally made the 'U.S. connection'. My, but we had a bloody g'day, mate!



Nelson, Lucy, Oscar and David Crockett at Saccarappa Cemetery
(David is the one standing!)

CROCKETT, Nelson d. Sep 2, 1875 Age 64 yr
CROCKETT, Lucy w/o Nelson Apr 6, 1875 AE 63 yrs 10 mos
CROCKETT, Oscar S. 1853 – 1911
CROCKETT, Flora M. His wife (Oscar S.) 1855 - 1916

THE HOLSTON-MELCHER FAMILY

According to an article in the Westbrook Chronicle-Gazette of January 26, 1906, William H. Holston was born in Columbus, Ohio and his family moved to Wisconsin when he was a child. In 1862 he enlisted in the Union Army and served in the 7th Battery, Wisconsin Light Artillery, the same artillery company as John E. Warren of Westbrook. During William's time of service he twice became a prisoner of war, as did John. John and William became friends during their military service and, at John's urging, William came to Westbrook in April 1869 with his wife and son Leonard. He took a position in the stock department of S.D. Warren mill. William is believed to be the 1st Holston to live in this area.

William became a long-time employee of the mill and life-long Westbrook resident. William is cited as being "in the highest sense a worthy citizen." He was active in the affairs of the Grand Army of the Republic and served for 18 years as the Adjutant and 2 years as the Commander of Cloudman Post, #100. He was a well-known figure in the City...leading the Memorial Day parades atop a snow-white horse.

(Recently the Historical Society was given William H. Holston's 7th Art'y, Wisconsin Volunteers discharge papers of June 7, 1865. They were donated by his granddaughter-in-law, Darlene Holston, wife of Lauriston Holston.)

In 1890 Leonard C. Holston, son of William, was a member of the 1st class to graduate from the 'new brick' Westbrook High School on Main St. He continued on to graduated from Westbrook Seminary and The Pennsylvania Military College.

(Darlene Holston has also given the Society a photograph of Leonard's WHS Class of 1890 and his Pennsylvania Military College diploma.)

Ella M. Melcher was also in the class of 1890. Her parents were Capt. George and Mary E. Melcher of Cumberland Mills. Capt. Melcher was a sea captain and on one of his trips he purchased a piece of silk material which was saved for daughter Ella's wedding. Mary, and later their children, always accompanied Capt. Melcher on his voyages. Family lore states that when the children got older Mary decided it was time for her to stay home. On that first trip without his family Capt. Melcher was taken ill with pneumonia, died and was buried at sea.

After high school Ella graduated from Gorham Normal School. In 1898 she and Leonard decided to marry. When Ella unpacked the wedding dress material she was very disappointed; it was an off-white silk speckled with black, which she didn't care for. But since it was chosen by her father she had the dressmaker add as much white as possible to the top and was married in it on June 30, 1898. *The Westbrook Chronicle* of July 1, 1898

stated:

"The bride was fetchingly costumed in mode silk with trimmings of duchess lace and chiffon and a bouquet of bride roses was carried. She also wore a star of pearls, presented by the best man. The gown was admirably set off by the contrasting costumes of the maid of honor and bridesmaids."

Leonard and Ella had 3 children: Leonard Jr., Frances & Lauriston Holston. Down through the years the wedding dress has been tenderly cared for and upon Ella's death, it passed into the hands of Ella's daughter Frances Holston Chamard of Tolman St. After Frances' death it passed on to Ella's grandson, John Chamard of Oneonta, NY.

On what would have been the 85th anniversary of Ella & Leonard's wedding (June 30, 1983), Ella's great grand daughter, Kristen Chamard, posed for photos in the gown. Items which had belonged to Ella were used as props in the picture: a glass bowl, a vase, and a vanity tray and dresser bowl. The photographs were done by well-known photographer Lady Ostapeck of NYC.



On August 9, 2008 John Chamard presented to the Westbrook Historical Society the wedding gown, the two photos of his daughter in the dress and the original, tattered newspaper announcement of the wedding.

Along with items found in our Scrapbook collection – weddings, anniversaries and obituary notices - the Society has accumulated a wonderful history of two of Westbrook's early families.

UP-COMING PROGRAMS:

[All programs are on the 1st Wednesday of the month following the business meeting at 1:30. They are without charge and open to the public.]

October 1, 2008 – Ralph Hatt of Westbrook will speak on **Collecting Old Bottles.**

November 5, 2008 – Lee Humiston explores the new **Maine Military Museum** in S.Portland.

December 3 - “**Story of the Underground Railroad Quilt**” by Betty Winslow

January 7, 2009 - Michael Connolly relates the history and plight of the **Irish Longshoreman.**



WESTBROOK'S HAUNTED HOUSES

Today we tend to look at Halloween as a nuisance! “Those pesky kids ringing my doorbell! They are probably going to get into mischief, break some windows, egg some cars...We didn't do that in our day!!” Well, my father used to tell my sister and me tales of long-ago Halloween pranks that would raise the hair on the head of today's policemen! Granted this was before hi-tech times...but there were certainly goblins out there...especially where Dad was! How about hanging someone's long underwear from the school flag pole? Or putting the outhouse on someone's porch (my Dad lived in a rural area, but then, weren't most areas rural 50 – 75 years ago?)

And for the treats...no pre-wrapped, store-bought candy! No, it was apples and home-made fudge and cookies.

So with Halloween in mind, it might be interesting to explore a few modern day, real-life Westbrook ghost stories.

There are many reasons why people come into the Historical Society but it seems that this past year we've had more than our share of people doing house research....because there is a “ghost” in their house.

One such person was the young man who had recently bought a home in town and he and his wife had done some renovations. In the attic there had been a small child's chair sitting beside a very small 'peek-hole' window. They gave the old chair to a relative and then replaced the old window with a new one and spruced up the loft area. The wife now complains of hearing someone upstairs, even when the husband is not home. So he was researching to find out anything about the families that had lived there before...was there a child, was a crime committed in the house...did anyone die there?

Another lady who is a fairly new homeowner of one of Westbrook's older homes, came in to do some house research. When asked if she had any ghosts....”why, yes, there is something in the house that wakes me and the cats up in the middle of the night.” There is an old Indian cellar in her home and she has recently been told that one of the realtors would not go near the fireplace where the cellar entrance is “because it made her feel funny.” The homeowner has had a Paranormal study done of her house and was told that “there were spirits there but they are not malevolent and will cause no harm.” Now she just wants to learn more history about the original occupants.

One young woman who lives in an 1870s house states that both she and her husband often hear a voice calling 'goodnight, George'. They have since discovered that a George Sewall lived in the house at one time. There was a small room with a shingled-over window over their front door. Recently, while renovating, they removed the shingles and opened the window. “George” does not like this!! He walks around the house hollering 'why did you do that?'

A woman who describes herself as a “Christian and a non-believer in ghosts”, has lived in her 1856 haunted house for 15 years. She had not lived there long when one day she sensed someone watching her and saw a tall, older man in period clothing, standing in the hallway watching her. He did not speak nor did she. She says she felt no fear and knew that he was not real. Since then he has appeared three more times in person. Her sister has seen him and so has a lady who came to their yard sale. This woman informed them that they had a ghost in their doorway, described him just as the homeowner did and told them that he said his name was Christopher. However, the homeowner and her husband had named him 'George' and continue to call him that. George likes to play tricks, like throwing items he doesn't like, putting the cat in the closet, having parties late at night with singing and dancing and calling to the owner's husband. The husband has not seen George but he has seen objects being moved around the room and heard him calling.

Strange? Maybe. But in all these cases, the homeowners do not appear to be afraid of the essence, just curious to learn more about it. But maybe we should all take a friend with us when we go out this Halloween!



Johnson - Pratt - DeWolfe House on Stroudwater St.

Built about 1764, eleven years before Paul Revere's ride, and demolished in 2008 to make way for the new junior high school. Oh, the ghosts this house would have held!



CONTEST WINNER

In a recent Newsletter there was an article about Phil Spiller and his brother winning a Tom Mix contest. It seems that Westbrook had another winner: in the 1950s 11-year old Robert Poirier of 160 Bridge Street won a Lone Ranger contest. He won a complete Lone Ranger outfit, - hat, mask, shirt, pants, boots, and gun-filled holster - for telling the firm sponsoring the Lone Ranger what he liked about their product.

How do we know this? A total of 74 scrapbooks have been donated to the Society over the years. This news article was saved in Scrapbook #54, the collection of Robert Levine, donated to us by his brother Mike Levine.



THE WARREN SLOYD SCHOOL

Around 1895 Mr. S.D. Warren, whose father established the S.D. Warren Co., provide the means and equipment for a manual training school to be held in the Warren School on Main Street. The training school was fashioned on the Swedish Sloyd System. The purpose of the Sloyd system was to make boys and girls skillful, both in the use of their hands and in the application of theories and principles. Along with regular school classes, the intermediate grade students spent two hours per week at the Sloyd school learning mathematical rules and applying them in the designing and manufacturing of household and decorative objects. [This later evolved into the 'manual training course'.]

The above photograph was printed from a glass negative that was purchased by the Society. The seller only knew that it was someone from Westbrook, ME; it took Suzan Norton to realize that the sign the boy is holding: 'W.S.S. - Westbrook, Me.', stood for the **Westbrook Sloyd School**.

There is a Taboret (table) on display at the Society which was made at the Warren Manual Training School by Adele Rothgeb Makowski. It is designed and decorated in the Sloyd manner. For anyone interested in learning more about this type of system, Suz Norton has compiled some articles which may be found at the Society.

- OFF TO THE MOVIES -

Lobby cards or small movie posters (usually 11" X 14" in a landscape format, printed on card stock) were produced mostly in sets of 8. They were designed to be displayed in the lobby or in the plate glass cases on the outside of the theater, in the hopes of luring patrons into the movie after glimpsing pictures of key scenes. The Lobby Card Set typically consists of a Title Card (a special card usually depicting all key stars, listing credits and designed to represent the entire film rather than a single scene) and seven Scene Cards depicting specific scenes from the movie. These cards had numbers in the lower corner depicting their order. Since they are no longer used in U.S. theaters, these cards have become collectibles, with the Title Card costing almost three times the price of the Scene Cards.

The Westbrook Historical Society is the proud owner of five of these Lobby Cards, including the Title Card, for *The Beautiful Blonde From Bashful Bend* starring Betty Grable and Rudy Vallée. All of these cards have been donated by John & Linda Chamard of Oneonta, NY. John is a Westbrook native and Linda is from South Portland.

[On an interesting note, there is a post card of the Star Theater with this movie listed on the marquee. An enlargement of the postcard shows the Lobby Cards on the front of the theater.]



The Star Theater was built on the corner of Main and Central Streets in 1912. It hosted stage and minstrel shows until the advent of motion pictures when a large screen was built over the stage and movies were shown. The Star closed in the 1960s because it couldn't compete with the new multi-seated theaters such as Cinema City built at Bradlees Mall. After standing empty for several years and suffering a partial roof collapse, the building was torn down in 1974 to make way for Urban Renewal.

- HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS -

Thanks to the hard work of member John Morgan, the Society presented its first “Movies in the Park” night on August 22. The movie of the night was *The Palm Beach Story* starring Claudette Colbert, Joel McCray and Westbrook’s own Rudy Vallée. Everyone enjoyed the movie and the setting and it is the Society’s hope that next summer we can present a vintage movie each month. Thank you, John.

A few of the many recent **donations** to the Society are:

A Civil Defense 1st aide kit: found in some old discarded scouting materials. The kit is complete with sealed bandages. *[Found in our Collection, a photograph of Arthur Spiller and his Air Civil Spotters and a Civil Defense Adult Education Handbook.]*

A grand photograph of the Turgeon family... all decked out to watch the solar eclipse of August 23, 1932.

Three Merit Awards from Maine Automobile Association to Byron Dyer for his services in the School Safety Patrol at Forest Street School 1945 – 1947. *[Already in the Collection: some Safety Patrol Guard belts, badges and photos.]*

A digital projector, laptop and video camera donated by Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution. A WONDERFUL, much needed addition which will be of great use in preparing and presenting our programs.



Don Lauzier & Andrea Secord Ward (Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution) and Mike Sanphy – following Mike’s presentation on 9/2/2008 using our new video equipment.

Committees -Your members at work for you:

Friendship: Ellen Burrill

Finance: Phil Curran, Bruce Allen, Jim Burrill

Hospitality: Diane Dyer, Margaret Lowell

Library & Museum: Ellie Saunders, Donna Conley

Diane Dyer, Suz Norton

Membership: Nancy Curran

Necrology: Vaun Born

Program: Suz Norton, Mike Sanphy, Amanda Bridges

Telephone: Bob Barton, Polly Hodgkins,

Ellie Saunders, Virginia Wentworth, Lucille Waite,

Ruth Knight, Tillie Duchaineau

Two **Warren Congregational Church** items recently donated to the Collection:

A beautiful leaded glass window which was in the



Annex and a wall light fixture which contains three kerosene lamps...pre electricity.

Many thanks to all our donors!

Free time on your hands? Stop in and join the Society “workers” on Tuesday or Saturday mornings. You don’t need any skills...which is evident when you watch ‘Miss Diane’ (Dyer) try to learn the computer! You can peruse the Collection, talk, drink coffee, or help our own ‘Miss Ellie of the Golden Dustpan Award’ clean and polish! OR, better yet, just sit, watch the door and assist our ‘Supervisor-in-charge’, Mr. Byron (Dyer, that is!) But don’t disturb ‘Donna Dear’s’ pile of “stuff” or you may end up in ‘Miss Vaun’s’ necrology file!

HELP WANTED!

The Society is in need of a Newsletter Editor. The only requirement is that you have some computer experience. Newsletters come out four times a year. It is a really enjoyable, educational and rewarding job.

Looking for newsletter articles...or ideas for articles. Is there something about Westbrook that you’d like to know? By enlisting articles, the Editor’s job becomes simpler.

Westbrook Chronicle May 18, 1883

“By a law of the legislature, the legal school week is now five days instead of five and a half days as formerly. School teachers will cheerfully take notice.”

(Thanks to Bob Gordon for this interesting item.)

If you have not paid your dues for 2008-2009, please do so as soon as possible so that your name won’t be dropped from our mailing list.

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

Officers

- President- Donna Cousens Conley
- Vice President- Byron Dyer
- Secretary- Rowena Walton
- Treasurer- Nancy Joy Curran

Directors

- Diane Turgeon Dyer – Beverly Marion
- Alwyn Waite – James Burrill

Email address

info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org

Webpage

www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org

Tel: 207-854-5588

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

DUES FOR 2008-2009 ARE NOW PAYABLE!

Westbrook Historical Society
17B Dunn Street
Westbrook, ME 04092

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****Meeting: Wednesday November 5, 2008****
1:30 PM at 17B Dunn Street