

# Westbrook History Quarterly

*The Newsletter of the Westbrook Historical Society:  
A Society That Preserves The Past*  
Summer, 2011 – Donna Cousens Conley, Editor

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Here comes summer, the time of the year when we can enjoy the warm weather and the fun times it brings with it.

This summer also brings with it the Westbrook Historical Society's much anticipated move into the new Westbrook Community Center that is located in the Fred Wescott Building at 426 Bridge Street. The City is still maintaining that this move will be in July, exact date has not been given at this time.



At the next Board of Directors Meeting (May 24) I will be asking Board Members to take on the responsibility of grouping volunteers in specific tasks, i.e., Organizing, Cataloging and Packing our Collection. Members of the Westbrook-Gorham Rotary, Community Center Staff and Public Services have indicated that they will help in the actual moving of our Collection to the Community Center.

Once we have our Collection at the Community Center we will have the task of unpacking, inventorying and setting up displays. At this time I am appealing to our membership for volunteers. Anyone available can contact me or any of the Board members listed on this newsletter.

This seems like a monumental task and for all intents and purposes it is; that being said, I am confident that our move will be done in a smooth and timely manner.

Once again I would like to express my gratitude to the Officers, Board of Directors, regular volunteers and everyone else that has been working hard to accomplish the mission of the Westbrook Historical Society.

Mike Sanphy

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

Arthur Brown, Westbrook  
Tom Clarke, Westbrook  
Jeanette Daly, Westbrook

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This is how Society meetings were announced in the good old days before computers – sent via United States Postal Services:

To members of the Westbrook Historical Society  
Save the evening of May 7 for a meeting,

Larry and others will give you a greeting.  
Please note that 7:30 is the time  
Come join us, please; it won't cost you a dime.  
At the Old High School come through the door  
We'll be in our headquarters on the second floor.

A short business meeting (hard to omit)  
A program will follow — I'll explain it a bit:  
Our friends at landmarks are helping us  
To build up our records with little fuss  
Of pictures and stories of homes in our City.  
If we don't get these now, what a pity!  
We'll ask proud owners for photos and facts of their own,  
Or we can do it for them if some facts are known.  
Records that will last forever are what we're striving for;  
Come help us build up more of Westbrook's history and lore.

Our guest in June will be, and I quote,  
"Richard Sweeney, a collector of note,  
Is a document buff and will share with us all  
His searchings and findings from attic to hall."

Vaun E. Born, Sec'y (A Poet Laureate I'm Not!!)

April 30, 1980

The above poem is taken from the Westbrook Historical Society's Secretary's book. People were very clever before the advent of the PC...or was it just Vaun?

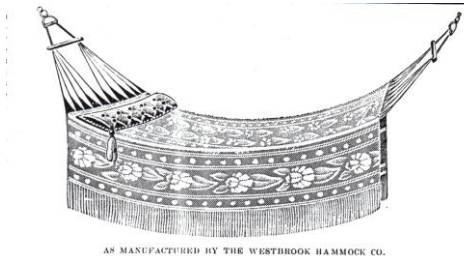
Summer is finally coming...

### WESTBROOK HAMMOCK COMPANY

Maine's Only Hammock Industry

*"Greatly augmenting Westbrook's diversified products and carrying its name throughout the entire United States, the Westbrook Hammock Co. is noted not only for its volume of business transacted, but by the superiority of its goods, which are famous the world over."* This quote comes from the 1906 Trade Journal.

A special feature of the Westbrook Hammock was the "Can't Slip" hook to which a rope could easily and quickly be fastened, released and adjusted. While the hammock was in use, the body weight tightened the grip. This feature was only used on the Westbrook Hammock and was manufactured by the Company. Only the best materials were used in the hammocks' manufacture and the colors and styles were reported as new and up-to-date. In brief, the Journal reported that it was the best hammock in the markets of the world. (*Woven hammocks had been in vogue since 1883.*)



The Westbrook Hammock Co. was incorporated October 19, 1902 with N.E. Brown as President and A.L. Hawkes as Treasurer. It was located in the rear of J.W. Morris Grist Mill on Main St, across from Central Street. The building was severely damaged by a fire in 1932 and was torn down. At the peak of its business years it sold some 15,000 hammocks annually, used 12,000 square feet of floor space on three floors and employed twenty skilled hands. The mill was equipped with all the latest and most improved machinery, all driven by electric motor power.

*[To learn about another little-known Westbrook business, visit the web page's Photo of the Month to read about **The Westbrook**, our very own Opera House]*

## THE MUSEUM CORNER

We are pleased to announce the acquisition of what we believe to be the only public (Westbrook) copy of:

### Letters of Colonel Thomas Westbrook and Others Relative to Indian Affairs in Maine 1722-1726

Wm Blake Trask, A.M. Editor; pub 1901

This first edition of Col. Westbrook's letters consisted of 100 numbered copies. The Society has acquired copy #30 of that printing. It is fitting that the Society provides a home for this book of letters by Westbrook's namesake. The original book will be protected and preserved but a copy of the book will be available for reading and research. Included in the book are muster rolls of Col. Westbrook's Company and of various sloops which were transports in His Majesties Services.

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#### ASSESSIONS:

Blue & White yearbook 1983 & 1984  
1947 class photo Bridge St. School  
Photos of OGK Robinson & Westbrook  
Copies of WHS Graduation programs  
Ephemera, photographs & scrapbooks belonging to  
Mrs. Foye of Forest Street School  
Fire Department scrapbook of George Daly, c.1950  
Genealogies: Duchaine, Francouer, Charland  
Captain Mac, a book by Mary Morton Cowan  
Bridger Street School group photo – 1947-48

#### FALL PROGRAMS BEING PLANNED:

Program Chairman, Suzan Norton, is planning an exciting list of programs for next year. They will include speakers on: the Boys of Summer 1951 (about the Little League team which included our own Jim Burrill), a re-try for Appraisal Day by Thomaston Galleries, Deeds & Genealogy research, and a presentation by Scott Dyer, Civil War Historian/re-enactor and Society member.

◆ **COMING IN THE FALL....** Announcement of a Society sponsored **Westbrook History Contest!** All you story tellers, stay on the watch!

## SCHOOL'S OUT

(Condensed from an original roster of 1838, Westbrook School District No. 13. To see a full list of students' names, see original roster which can be *found in Westbrook School ADMINISTRATION Notebook I*)

The roster is in a beautiful, flowing handwriting and the ink is still crisp.

<u>Scholar</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Studies</u>
Henry G. Lamb	13	Reading, writing, spelling, Geography, Arithmetic, grammar
William Larrabee	12	Reading, writing, spelling, Geography, Arithmetic, grammar
Charles Harris	10	Reading, writing, spelling, Geography, Arithmetic, grammar
Horace Winslow	8	Reading, writing, spelling, Arithmetic, Geography
Charles Adams	10	Reading, writing, spelling, Arithmetic, Geography
Caleb Kimball	9	Reading, writing, spelling, Arithmetic, Geography
John Adams	7	Reading, spelling
Benjamin Harris	4	Reading, spelling
John Kimball	5	Reading, spelling
Joseph Turner	7	Reading, spelling, writing, Arithmetic
Elvina Leighton	11	Reading, spelling, writing, Geography, Arithmetic, grammar
Louisa Turner	9	Reading, spelling, writing, Arithmetic
Emily Smith	8	Reading, spelling, writing, Arithmetic
Jane Lamb	8	Reading, spelling, Arithmetic, Geography
Elizabeth Lamb	6	Reading, spelling, Arithmetic
Mary L. Lamb	4	Reading, spelling
Hannah Larrabee	5	Reading, spelling, Arithmetic
Emiline L. Babb	4	Reading, spelling
Elizabeth Adams	4	Reading, spelling
		~Mary G. Mosher ~
		~ Teacher ~

## LEST WE FORGET THIS MEMORIAL DAY!

### A few examples of Westbrook's Military Contributions

#### Revolutionary War:

In 1975, in observance of the U.S. Bicentennial, Kendall W. Woods compiled a list of all the Westbrook-connected men who had fought in the Revolutionary War. Considering that Westbrook was then a part of Falmouth, this must have been a time consuming labor of love. His final list consisted of 25 names. Among them were:  
Peter Cobb – buried in “Rocky Hill Cemetery”  
Nathaniel Hatch – buried Saccarappa Cemetery  
Archelaus Lewis – buried Stroudwater Cemetery  
Daniel Lunt – buried in Lunt Cemetery, Lunt Dr.  
Jeremiah Small – in family cem., Highland Lake  
James Webb – buried in Conant Cemetery  
(For a full listing, visit our P. LaViolet Military Collection.)

#### Spanish-American War:

Pearl Bachelder's interview in the Spring Quarterly tells of the men of Co. M, Maine National Guard marching off to a war “they never found”.

#### Civil War:

According to the American Civil War Research Database (see copy at the Society) Westbrook had a total of 447 local soldiers in the war. Of these, 15 were killed or mortally wounded, 1 died as a POW and 17 died of disease.

#### WW I:

France 1918  
Dear Mrs. Doyle,

*It is with great pleasure that I take a moment in answering your letter which I received from you and, and which was indeed verry mutch appreciated, for a letter post marked Westbrook certingly do look good here. We are working verry hard and doing our best to defend Democracy and to bring forth peace to the whole world, as we enjoyed back to the good old*



*U.S.A. for so long.*

*Of course we all know that the people back home are doing all they can to help win this war, wich we will with the help of God and man forever. You say that trench life and no-man's land, was displayed at the morning pictures. Well what do you think of it? Was it taken in France or some training camp in the U.S.A.? It gives a person a little idea of what It is like anyway. Many times, a fellow wished he was home as you said, long to hide their faces in their mothers shoulders and let go all their pent up feelings, and I myself hope that this time soon came when I will be able to satisfy my feelings, and to sit at the family table once more and enjoy a good family's meal all together. Of course we are all learning something every one of us is, everyday I think some will lead a far better life than they did when they were living in the States. This war has brought a big lesson to some of us, one that will never be forgotten for I've had one thought to me I will never forget, is, Theres no place like home no mater where or what it be. Some fellows say well I am tired of staying home I want a change Well I will tell you right now that I have had all the changes that I ever want in this world, till the time comes for me to maneuver into the other. I must close now for it is geting late and have a few little things to do before long.*

*Sincerely, pvt george n. whitzell usa*

This letter, (copied as written) addressed to long-time principal of Brown Street School Miss Julia Doyle, was found in the collection of her papers. A note written by Miss Doyle was attached to the letter and stated that George had been killed in action before she received it.

His obituary stated that George Whitzell, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Whitzell, was killed in action in France on Oct 14, 1918. He was a member of Co. M 103 Infantry. He is buried in St. Hyacinth Cemetery with his parents.

#### **WW II:**

Brigadier General Joseph P. Vachon, a native of Westbrook, captured by the Japanese in the fall of the Philippines, was liberated from a Mukden, Manchuria prison camp in September of 1945. Brig. Gen. Vachon had been forced to surrender the 101st Division on Mindanao, May 10, 1942. While a prisoner of the Japs he was so physically

and mentally beaten that he couldn't even remember his wife's address, so he related to an Associated Press correspondent upon his release. Vachon said the Karenko prison camp in Formosa was the worst he was in. "I lost 35 pounds there which was the least anybody lost," he said. It was after several months in this camp that the Westbrook man couldn't remember his wife's address, he said. He was one of six American generals reaching Manila from Mukden, Manchuria, where they were released by the Russians.



Vachon graduated from St. Hyacinth Parochial School, Bridge St. School and attended Westbrook High School. He entered the Army shortly after graduation and served 40 years in the service which included duty in two World Wars. He received the citation for Distinguished Service Medal for his performing "exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service to the Government in a duty of great responsibility from November 1941 to August 1945."

#### **VIETNAM CONFLICT:**

Pfc. Leroy W. Riggs, son of Mr. & Mrs. Elmer Riggs of Cottage Place, received the Silver Star from VP H.H. Humphrey. He received the honor in a Di An, South Vietnam hospital where he was recovering from battlefield wounds which earned him a Purple Heart.

#### **FIRST CEMETERY SERVICE**



This photo is captioned: First Cemetery Memorial Service – 1966. It was taken in the St. Hyacinth Cemetery.

*Lest We Forget.....*

**SOME WESTBROOK GRADUATES OF NOTE:**

(as listed in the 1955 Blue & White)

Hubert Prior Vallee, class 1920 – “Rudy”

Camile Huard (Larry Brooks), 1932, Broadway singing star

Dr. Winford Smith, 1895, Superintendent of The Johns Hopkins Hospital

Dr. Ruth Staples, class 1907; child development specialist; thesis on Response of Infants to Color (U of Minnesota). There is a Ruth Staples Child Development Lab at U of NE-Lincoln

Dr. Mortimer Warren, class 1896; Doctor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins; pathologist of the Maine General Hospital

Percy Leroy Ricker, class 1896, authority on flowers and birds; published many books on plants and published in National Geographic Magazine

Harry McCann, 1898, President of McCann Advertising (see Winter 2010 Quarterly)

Henry Hawes, 1905, VP of CA branch of McCann Advertising

Clifford Lowell, 1899, State Bank Examiner of CA

Anthony G.L. Brackett, 1928, Superintendent of Westbrook schools 1950s.

Carl Jensen, 1923, Head of WHS Industrial Arts, 1950s – 1960s

Joseph Warren, 1884, responsible for growth of S.D. Warren Co.

Dana family, of Dana Warp Mills, all graduated from WHS

*This is only a particle list of Westbrook’s “famous” people; just check out the **Westbrook Talents Cabinet** at the Society to see more on Westbrook people.*

Our library is missing Blue & White yearbooks from 1907, 1914, 1962, 1963, 1967, 1971 & 1980. Can you help?

\*\*\*2010-2011: The Web site e-mail was contacted by Westbrook natives in 15 states.

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Cut here, return with your dues for 2011 – 2012

**WESTBROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY DUES FOR JULY 1, 2011 – JUNE 30, 2012**

\$10.00 per member may be paid anytime by mail or at the June or September business meeting. Please put your name (and any address or phone number corrections) on the notice and attach to your payment.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Corrections to address or phone \_\_\_\_\_

(Check the label on this Quarterly to see if changes are needed)

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Check here \_\_\_\_\_ if you prefer to receive your newsletter by email.

**Nancy Curran  
Treasure and Membership Chair**

**Westbrook Historical Society  
17B Dunn Street  
Westbrook, ME 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 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- Mike Sanphy

Vice President- Roberta Wyer Dutton Morrill

Secretary- Andrea Vasquez

Treasurer- Nancy Joy Curran

Immediate Past President – Donna Cousens Conley

## Directors

Alwyn Waite - Diane Turgeon Dyer  
Nancy Crump – Suzan Roberts Norton

### Email address

[info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@westbrookhistoricalsociety.org)

### Webpage

[www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org](http://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.

Westbrook Historical Society  
17B Dunn Street  
Westbrook, ME 04092

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Wednesday June 1, 2011**  
**1:30 PM at 17B Dunn Street**

No program, but social time to follow