

The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

Fall 1996

Volume 15, No. 3



WESTON'S POST OFFICE/GENERAL STORE

Photo above:

The Weston Improvement Association taken at the porch of the Charles Keene home on the corner of Weston Road and Broad Street, circa 1910. Mr. Keene was Weston's first mailman, going by horse and wagon to Westport for mail to deliver to Weston homes (and sometimes groceries and sundries requested by friends along the route). The Keene house also served as another town post office and general store. Charles Keene was the father of Harold and Anson Keene. Other notable Weston families are pictured here: Bradley, Budd, Faucher, Gifford, Coley, Adams, Amis, and Benedict. (Photo donated by Ethel Keene)



Above: Old photo of the Post Office
Left: The Post Office - General Store Museum today near Biscegie-Scribner Park.

town's people. The cost was to be \$20,000 which would be raised

by the Historical Society. It was hoped that each family in town would give something toward the project to preserve diaries, documents and other memorabilia.

The old Post Office and General Store was a gift from Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Scribner who owned the land on

which the building stood. The building (circa 1780) had served both as a Post Office from 1838 until 1910 and had also been a General Store. Charles Gregory, and later his son Ralph, ran the store for a time and then moved next to the Cannondale Railroad Station. Although money and interest were raised, the project never seemed to get off the ground. Apparently the additional costs of cutting down overhead wires and cables, in order to move the structure to the onion barn, made the expense too astronomical. So

the project was abandoned, although the building was later moved from the corner to its present location, just slightly north on Newtown Turnpike.

Later in 1963, the Society was fortunate to have Mr. James Coley offer his barn as a home for our museum.

Several years ago volunteers from the Society cleaned out the old post office building which was no small

undertaking as the raccoons had laid their claim to the building for years. The interior was restored to a combination store and Post Office. Many of the old boards on the exterior of the building have been replaced. The building is certainly one of Weston's oldest and most interesting landmarks.

The old Weston Post Office and General Store, located at the corner of Newtown Turnpike and Rt. 57, in 1963, was supposed to be moved to the site of the Onion Barn across from Weston Center. It was to become the newly formed Historical Society's first museum. A special town meeting overwhelmingly approved the plans and the property was to be leased at \$1.00 per year. (See photo on page 2) The building was to be renovated and extensive landscaping would make the entire site a beautiful park for the



1963 proposal from the Historical Society Trustee and architect Edward F. O'Dwyer. This shows his conception of the old post office connected to the onion barn to become the Weston Historical Museum.

SAYING GOODBYE TO OLD FRIENDS

EDWIN J. PHELPS

The Weston Historical Society was saddened this past year with the passing of two historically important people. Our first President, Edwin J. Phelps (pictured on this page) died Wednesday, June 5 in Allentown, Pa. Mr. Phelps was born in Texas and worked for many years in the insurance industry in New York City. While in Weston, "Ed" was a deacon and trustee of the Norfield Church, served on the Bd. of Directors of the Community Chest and was a founder and first President of the Weston Historical Society. The first secretary of the society, Susie Green, remembered Ed as a very devoted and hardworking man, and the driving force behind our society. Our sympathies to his family and friends.

The Westport Town Crier, Sunday, June 23, 1963:



First Selectman, Paul Coniglio, signs a ten-year lease which will rent town-owned land (site of the Onion Barn) to the Historical Society for \$1.00 a year with an option to renew. Looking on are Owen P. Jacobsen, Jr., (L) chairman of the ways and means committee and **Edwin J. Phelps (R)** President of the Society.



The late James B. Coley and his Dad, the Late James S. Coley posing at the Coley Homestead (circa 1965).

• JAMES "JIMMY" B. COLEY

We also lost in June of this year, James "Jimmy" B. Coley, son of James S. and Cleora Burr Coley whose land and buildings are the home of the Weston Historical Society. Jimmy resided in Weston his entire life until the death of his mother, at which time he moved to Stamford. Jimmy was always happy to meet you at the center and many of us will always remember Jimmy out mowing the grass at his home on Weston Road, and the visit he made four years ago to our Christmas Open House. We shall all miss Jimmy very much.

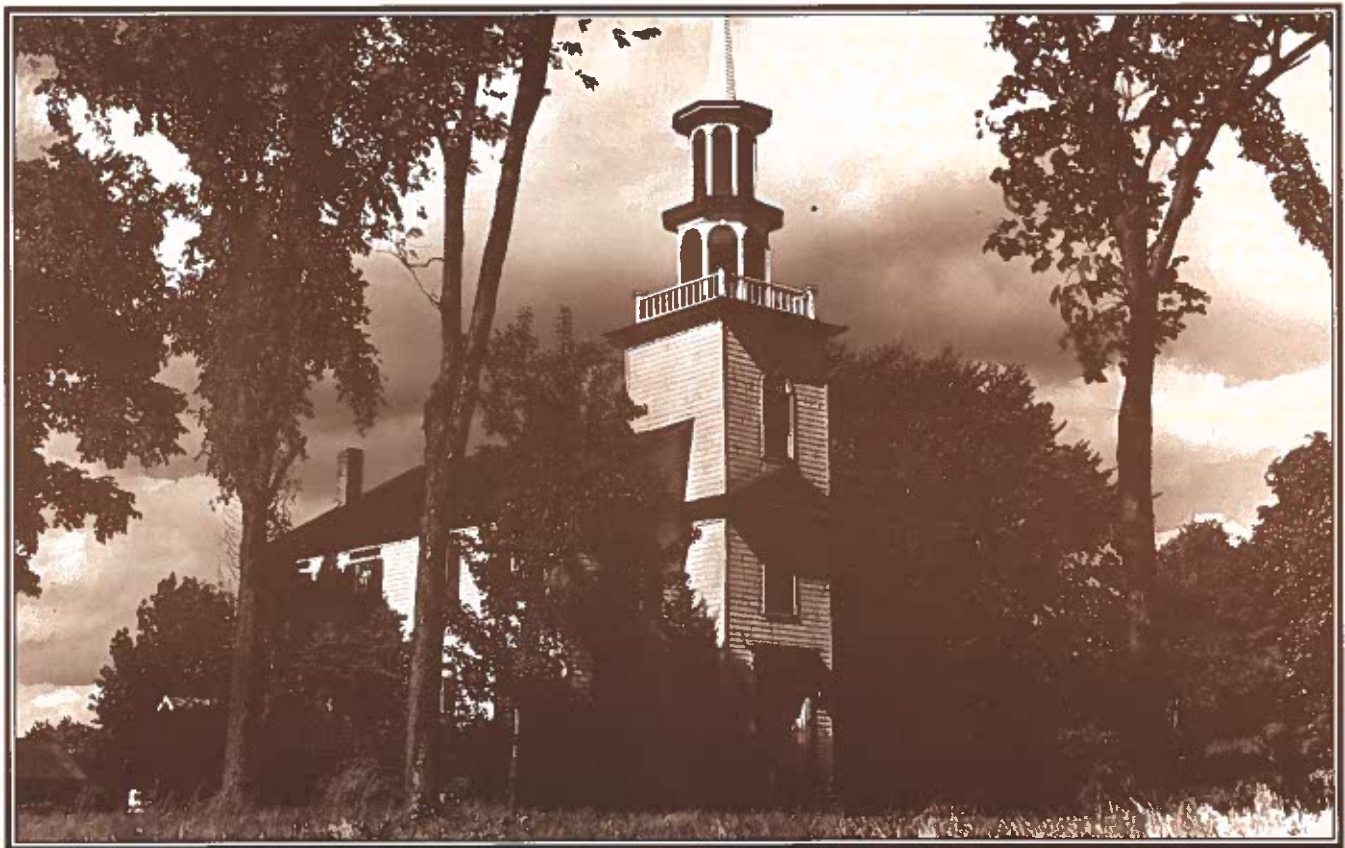


WEST BRANCH OF THE SAUGATUCK RIVER, 1913



West Branch of the Saugatuck River looking North to bridge at junction of Rts. 53 & 57 (circa 1913) from the second edition of Weston, The Forging of a Connecticut Town that will be available before the Christmas Holidays. The first edition is completely sold out and the new book will be updated through the 1990's. The date will be announced, so please look for future publicity.

NORFIELD CHURCH IN THE 1930S



Photograph by Arthur Fredricks.

The following article, written by Mrs. Jeanne Howes of Weston, appeared in The Weston Forum December, 1987. A Special Corner of Weston

A SPECIAL CORNER OF WESTON

By Jeanne C. Howes

(PART THREE)

TELEPHONE PROBLEMS

Telephone service came early to the area with a 544 exchange to cover the Georgetown circle which included the top corner of Weston. Then, the rest of Weston was tied into the Westport-Norwalk line. Split between two exchanges, one side of Weston could not call the other without paying toll charges. Worse yet, residents with the 544 numbers were not listed in the same telephone book with the others.

As a result, Weston residents of Georgetown paid tolls each time they called our schools or town offices and were often ignored when Weston area calls were made. This annoying situation caused many individual complaints to the phone company, but nothing was changed.

Then in 1957 Ruth Keeler of Georgetown Road and Gertrude Walker gathered petitions and met with the company to present them and their arguments for change.

Gertie, as Town Clerk, was especially annoyed because this dichotomy interfered with official town business as well as the personal calls to her home on Whippoorwill Lane. Company representatives were very negative, and Gertie was feeling very downhearted as she discussed the situation next day with her husband Walter over their early morning coffee. She reported: "They said they couldn't do anything for us because there were about 70 other towns with a similar situation and they couldn't afford to change them all." Right away Walter saw the solution, "Tell the company you want the names of those other towns, and together you'll all get some action through the State Assembly."

When Gertie asked the telephone representative for those 70 other names and unfolded her plan, she was told that they would work out something better for Weston. Not long afterwards, the 544 exchange was hooked into the Weston exchange and all Weston numbers were listed in the same book.

THE POSTAL PROBLEM

Now that telephones re-united the two parts of Weston, separate postal districts still kept them apart. Residents in the north corner were assigned a Georgetown, not a Weston address. Many Weston residents here were disturbed that mail addressed to them in their proper town would shuttle back and forth between districts before coming to their homes. Invitations to Weston affairs and notices of town and committee meetings often arrived too late.

Again there were protests, petitions and meetings. This time feelings were divided. Some old-timers wanted to continue service from the neighborly and efficient first class Georgetown post office, but many other residents found it very awkward and inconvenient not to have a Weston address.

Postal authorities effected a semi-solution by admitting part of the area to Weston delivery. Eight streets however, would have to wait.

SECESSION?

Suddenly, in 1974, there came disturbing rumors from Hartford. Adventurous individuals in another section of Georgetown had advanced legislative proposals to pull together the four disparate pieces of Georgetown to create a new Connecticut township.

After all the valiant efforts to win full recognition of its legitimate Weston title,



Niles Hansen (standing), father of Helen Hansen Rosendahl, one of many Norwegian settlers in the Georgetown area.

was this little corner about to be snatched up and swallowed by a predominantly industrialize and commercial territory? No way!

Once again active forces were marshaled, protests and petitions filed with legislators and selectmen of Weston and other towns threatened with loss of their property.

Leonard Goldsen of Spruce Hill Road, a former president of the now disbanded Georgetown Association, voiced his concerns which reflected the views of most residents of that community. Citing the enormous legal, political and financial obstacles to such an undertaking, he concluded, "The current attempt to make Georgetown a separate municipality ... is now an idea whose time has passed." The secession idea went no further.

Publication and distribution of The Weston Forum in 1970 greatly improved communication to bind Weston together. Finally, in July 1981, the eight stranded streets were admitted into the Weston postal district and all of Weston, which had always been one political body, was now re-united in name as well.



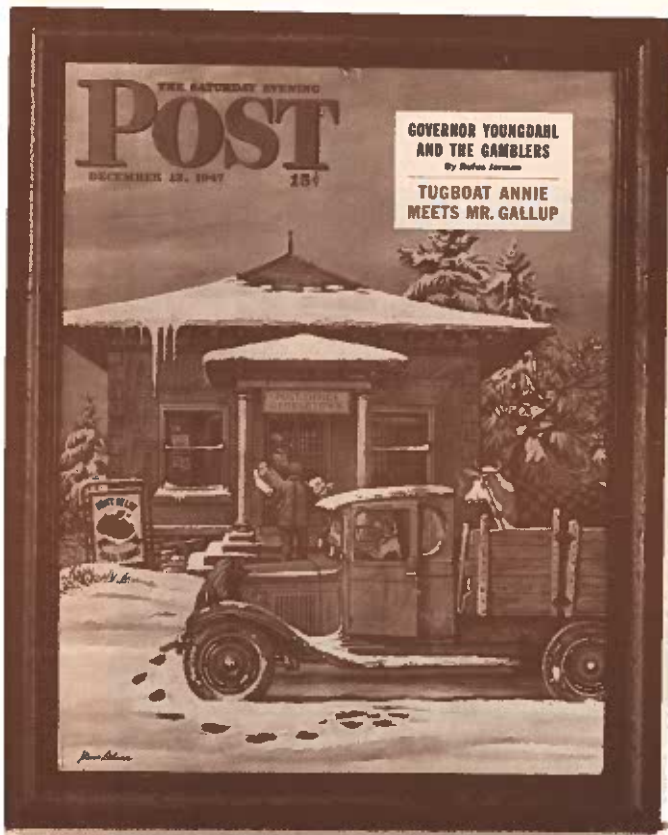
Helen Hansen Rosendahl, former Town Clerk and native of Georgetown.

CONCLUSION

This special corner of Weston is doubly blessed. Sharing Weston advantages of good schools and residential protections, it is proud of its unique history and glad to have the convenience of Georgetown shopping and varied neighborly services. Although mail is now delivered from Weston, the Georgetown post office is right at hand for stamps and mailings, and postal boxes for those who prefer the old address. Thankfully, too, the Georgetown fire station is very nearby and continues to provide quick and efficient service when needed.

Most thrilling is the Gilbert and Bennett legacy from the past, as the Edwin Gilbert Trust Fund, just revived after 80 long years, will continue to benefit school children of our special corner. This year's recipients of scholarship monies were Christian Henrichson, Annifer Abruzzi, Justin Cina and Dylan Keeler.

(FOR THIS REVIEW of Weston's Georgetown connection, I wish to express warm thanks to the following for their helpful contributions: Elisabeth Borgeson, Mary Fox, Jane Johnson, Bertil and Helen Rosendahl, Eva and Harry Samuelson, Louise Jacobson Stabell, Leonard and Violet Vidmark, and Gertrude Walker; so to the Gilbert and Bennett Manufacturing Company publishers of their 150th Anniversary Book in 1960. J.H.)



Georgetown Post Office on a 1947 Saturday Evening Post cover by famous illustrator Steven Dohanos. The truck pictured belonged to Levi Squire, as did the woman, and the gentleman going into the building was Charlie Squire. Coincidentally, the inset box shows an article by Rufus Jarman, also a resident of Weston.

TAD DILLON THE SOCIETY'S EXTRA ARM



Tad Dillon, better known to us at the Chronicle as Tad "at the keyboard" has been kind enough for the last three years to process our newsletter on his computer. This has not only saved us time and money, but he is a great person to work with.

Tad was born in San Francisco, but

moved to Los Angeles at the age of three. He spent most of his childhood there, so when his father got a promotion and moved to the East Coast, Tad was brought along "kicking and screaming." His first impression of the East was arriving at the airport in New York on a 38 degree, raining, February day. He managed to stick it out and after spending two weeks at the Plaza Hotel, the family moved to their new home in New Canaan. Tad's first impression was that he couldn't believe the towns on the East Coast closed in the early evening. He was used to having stores and recreation facilities open 24 hours a day. He also saw his first snow soon after arriving.

Tad finished New Canaan High School and went to college, then worked in New York City in the advertising business. He married and in 1971 moved to Weston. He and his wife, Nancy, wanted a place with property, so Nancy became a real estate broker in order to find a place for them to live. One day Tad picked up the newspaper on the off chance that there would be "Land for Sale" and found, instead, an ad for a Tag Sale which included a house and 4 1/2 acres of land. They bought the house and land and moved in to raise their family.

In addition to working and raising a family, Tad found time to be a member of the Fire Department from 1973, serving as a "Fire Policeman" for 10 years. He has done, and still does, much of the publicity for the Volunteer Fire Department and has done some PR work for the Police, the Explorer Post, First Night, and often for the Historical Society. Tad has also volunteered to help out at the High School Library and spent four years as Chairman of the Cub Scouts. This past year Tad took on what he thought was going to be a crazy project. Cynthia Williams asked him to come up with a way for the people of Weston to become part of the new Onion Barn project by selling rocks. At first Cynthia suggested selling rocks for \$5 each. Tad felt this a real challenge, not unlike selling ice to Eskimos. His advertising instincts told him nobody can resist a bargain and came up with a real "deal": 5 rocks for \$20. He is still astounded at the response to the project, as evidenced by the lovely new wall in front of the Onion Barn.

The Chronicle wishes to thank Tad for all his work - always at the last minute - and his smile. Nothing seems to be impossible and Weston is lucky to have his volunteer spirit so alive and well.



WESTON NATIVE RUTH LOCKWOOD

by Karin Giannitti

One afternoon when I was chatting with Ruth Lockwood, I told her the story of my three children discussing their future one morning at the breakfast table. My two sons, then 8 and 6 decided they would start a business, and the oldest boy would be the worker because he liked to be busy. They decided my other son

would like to be the boss because he liked to sit. They both then studied their little sister, age 3, and informed her that she could be the bookkeeper. The boys then left for school and an hour or so later my daughter came to me sobbing. I scooped her up and asked what was the matter. Still crying she told me, "I don't want to be a bookkeeper, I want to be a farmer." And so it was with Ruth Lockwood, one of Weston's most lively natives. She had been a secretary following high school, but always longed to be outside on the farm.

Ruth was born at the house in which she still resides on Georgetown Road. Her family, who date back in Weston to the

18th century, owned 70 acres of land east of the main road from Langer Lane down to Hillside North, including what is now September Lane. She was the eldest of four children, two sisters, and one brother. They grew up in a farm-like atmosphere with chickens, pigs, cows, horses, gardens, hay fields and fruit trees. This was a subsistence farm, however, as her father, uncle and grandfather all ran sawmills as a source of income. They owned 100 acres in Devils Den from which they cut Chestnut and Oak. These trees were made into ties for the railroad, lath for house construction, and surveyor stakes which were originally made of wood.



Ruth Lockwood at her home on Georgetown Road

Ruth's dad had a steam boiler and mill behind the house. There was a spring there that was used to make the steam, and she fondly remembers her Dad letting out some of the steam causing a whistling noise signaling time for his lunch.

As a child, Ruth said she was never bored. Her sisters and brother and friends always were busy playing croquet, hopscotch, monopoly, jump rope and checkers. At the end of Langner Lane, which was at the time two ruts with grass in the middle, there was a wonderful patch of sand they used especially for hopscotch.

Ruth also liked to read a lot. As a child her family did not want her to walk the mile each way to school, so Miss Lefkowitz, the teacher for Upper Parish School (who boarded at the corner of Rt. 57 and Godfrey Road West), brought materials to the house so that Ruth could be taught at home. When Ruth's sister turned 5 then they both were able to walk to school together. There were only three houses on the way and sometimes her dad, or Mr. Linsey Corsa (who lived in the big house across from Cannondale Rd.) would give them a ride on rainy days. There were about 13-15 students from grades 1-8 all together in the same room.

Ruth's father, at that time, used to

go to a shoe store in Norwalk where he heard rumors about the girls getting pregnant and drinking at area high schools, so Ruth was sent to Merrill Business School when she finished 8th grade. After the death of her father in 1931, she attended Staples, graduated, then went back to Merrill School for a year. Her first job was at Wearever Slipper Co. on Elizabeth Street in Norwalk. Ruth also worked for a time for lawyer Harry Sherwood and lastly for Norwalk Tire. However, all the time she was inside, she longed to be out on the farm with the fresh air and the animals.

At the start of WWII she began farming. She sold eggs and sometimes chickens, and had a couple of cows for milk. People would stop by her house for eggs, milk, butter and cream, especially the summer people. Ruth also delivered eggs on three different routes, and at one time was getting 60 dozen a day, which proved to be too many so she had to cut back.

Ruth remembers Georgetown Road (Rt. 57) being a dirt road when she was a child, but it was paved in 1931. In 1932 the school buses started coming up for the children. When actress Eva LeGalliene bought her home on Hillside North she did not want traffic going by her house so the town abandoned the road. Georgetown

Road already went around the ledge, but Eva didn't want anybody taking a shortcut past her house. Rt. 57 was originally called Hillside Road up to the Midtown Service Center where it changed to Bull Punk Hill. Ruth's mail used to come from Ridgefield, then from Georgetown, from Westport in the 1930's, and now from Weston.

Electricity came up her way in 1929. Until then she can remember her mother cleaning the chimneys on the kerosene lamps and trimming the wicks every day. Telephone service came earlier, her family having cut poles which they placed along the road from Cannondale Road down. Mrs. Corsa's phone was an early model with a crank, but Ruth's phone only had to be picked up to get an operator. The operator would then connect the parties. The usage was mostly for emergencies, ordering groceries, visiting and gossiping! And always a party line.

Ruth continues to be a very busy lady, although no longer in the farming industry. She is an active member of the Norfield Grange which just celebrated its 100th birthday, and she helps out at the Historical Society with our Open House, Scare Fair, painting, or just about anything we ask of her. We thank her for sharing her memories with us.



WESTON'S RECORD OF THE PAST

With the upcoming election being in the news and politics being on everyone's mind these days, we thought it would be fun to go back in some of the old records and see what things were like some years ago.

Weston's first Selectman was M. V. D. Rowland who served from 1879 - 1883. We went back to find minutes of any meetings but found that minutes for Selectmen's meetings were started in 1939.

These minutes were from January 9th, 1939 recorded by Sarah E. Treadwell, Town Clerk. At that time the meetings were held in the home of the selectmen and Chester



Chester G. Coley, First Selectman 1936 - 1944

G. Coley held this particular meeting at his house. Also present was Oscar Budd. Six resolutions were passed, including (1) using the Fairfield County Savings Bank in Norwalk for the Town funds, (2) all monies received from the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, except the amount necessary to pay counsel fees, be deposited in the "Stinking Fund" to pay the Town debt, (3) Tommy Messex be appointed as special constable at the school grounds of the Horace Hurlbutt, Jr. School, (4) approved an amount not to exceed \$200 to provide labor and material to build a driveway and parking space at Town Hall with approval of the Norfield Church, (5) the Clerk will provide a special book for the notes of Selectmen's meetings and will furnish each selectman with a copy of the minutes of each meeting, and (6) voted to pay Town Clerk the sum of \$4 each meeting for secretarial work in connection with the Selectmen's Meetings.

The meeting was then adjourned. Weston's Annual Reports do go back, however, to 1895 when James A. Smith was First Selectman. The report of the Selectman & Treasurer of the Town of

Weston from September 16th 1895 to September 14, 1896, showed that the balance in the treasury was \$705.35; \$2,896.88 was collected in taxes in 1894 and such receipts as \$78.20 for Dog Licenses, \$111.75 for the fund and a fine of \$1.25 against Platt Keeler for railing.

The Town Officers were paid as follows:

Selectman	\$65.00
Town Clerk	14.20
Treasurer	35.00
Assessors	36.00
Board of Relief	22.50
Board of Health	12.00
School Visitor	30.00
Auditors	4.00

The Chronicle Quarterly

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Custom Printing & Graphics, Design and Production

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Weston, CT 06883

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THE BULLETIN BOARD



CHRISTMAS AT THE COLEYS

Please join us this year for our annual Christmas celebration at the Coley House.

Our house has been newly decorated inside. The Aspetuck and the Weston Garden Clubs, The Weston Women's Club and members of the Historical Society will be adding festive touches for the season.

There will be a preview party for members on Friday, December 6 from 6-9 (details to follow) and the house will be open for visitors on Saturday, December 7, and Sunday, December 8 from 12-4. Refreshments will be served. Come see our new decorations and see old friends and new.

*VIDEOS
ON SALE FOR \$5.00
AT THE TOWN HALL*



narrated by
CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

A 1987 video presentation by, for and about
the people of Weston, Connecticut
in honor of the Bicentennial.