



# THE CHRONICLE QUARTERLY

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Weston Historical Society

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

### INDUSTRY

Webster defines Industry as Manufacturing, productive enterprises (collectively) especially distinguished from agriculture. In Weston, in the late 1700's, farmers found that their full time job of clearing land and farming left no time for making many of the things they could not grow or raise. They did not have the time to travel all the way to Fairfield or Norwalk to obtain lumber, farm tools, etc. So a few enterprising residents set up mills, foundries, forges, blacksmith shops and stores and the industry of Weston began. It lasted for about 150 years providing the needs of the farmers and residents—until there was no more farming and no need for the products of the industry. Westward expansion into Pennsylvania, Ohio and beyond found land better suited to farming and industry. So industry in Weston peaked and died—as in many towns and villages across America. A bit of history to be recorded and remembered. In this issue we touch on some of the old industries of Weston. In future issues we will explore some of the industries in more detail.

### A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

We need three to four people to help research several old houses in Weston. Please call Elda Bardsley 227-0203 if you would like to help.

### COLEY MUSEUM

The Weston Historical Society's Coley Museum is waiting for approvals by the ZBA and the P&Z. After two years of meetings with the ZBA concerning variances permitting the operation of a museum on the Coley property, approval is still pending. A second driveway and parking has been approved by the P&Z. We still have to go before the Historic District Commission. Only minor external structural changes are planned. We will detail this in the next issue.

### DUES TIME

March is the time to renew your dues. You will be receiving a letter from our membership chairman, Mrs. Vi Greenwood. Our expenses have gone up with the takeover of the Coley house and the increased costs associated with the publication of the Chronicle.

We hope you will consider moving up one classification of membership to help us meet our obligations.

Thank You.

### NATIVE WESTONESE

Ayuh—yes  
Backhouse—outhouse  
Cozen—copperhead snake  
Critter—bull  
Dinner—lunch  
Get hitched—marry  
Jimjams—grouch  
Loppard—curdled  
Off his rocker—crazy  
Rheumatiz—arthritis  
Tizzy—confused excitement  
Up a tree—perplexed  
Vittles—food

### PLEASE NOTE

Our lead story in the last issue of the Chronicle was missing the name of the author. We apologize to Miss Ruth Lockwood who wrote this fine story "Memories of Childhood Holidays."

# PICTURE QUIZ

Can You Name This?



If you can name the item in the picture, send your answer and your name and address to the Editor:

THE CHRONICLE  
P.O. Box 1092  
Weston, CT 06883

## LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ

The picture in the last issue of the Chronicle was of several molding planes. These were used by carpenters, cabinet makers and other craftsmen to make moldings for windows, doors, and furniture. They were usually made of birch wood carved in the shape of the molding desired.

We received two correct answers. One from Mrs. Alden O. Sherman and the other from Mrs. Natalie C. Endean who lives in Killingworth CT. Mrs. Endean, who used to live in Weston, wrote us a wonderful letter which we have printed to the right.

Thank you. The Editor

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## THE OLD POST OFFICE

There is a concerted effort being made by the First Selectman, the Weston Historical Society and several interested individuals to move and restore the old post office. Final plans and approvals still have to be worked out. We hope that all Weston residents will get behind this effort as one of several town projects planned in celebration of the 200th anniversary in 1987.

We will have more information on this worthwhile project in the next issue.



The Old Post Office and Store at the corner of Newtown Turnpike and Georgetown Road built about 1800. Used for about 100 years. Post Office run by John Gregory and Lizzie Adams.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

January 30, 1984

To the Editor:

I was very interested in your December Chronicle about the one room schools as I went to Upper Parish for eight years from 1923 to 1931. A classmate of Ruth Lockwood. There was a mistake in some of the names of teachers there. Miss Lefrowitz was my first teacher then Miss Carter—Mary Coley Zemmerli—Miss Rita O'Brien then Miss Lillian O'Dell. She came from Westport. She was my eighth grade teacher and took me down to Bedford Junior High to show me what the school would be like, when I would go there for ninth grade.

In order to go to Westport school we had to go to the corner of Godfrey Rd. and Route 53 where I got a car driven by Mr. Lawford. He also picked up Minerva Moorehouse, Fred Waterbury and two Canfield girls. By the time I got to 10th grade, the bus routes started, run by my father Lin

Corsa.

In Upper Parish we had a small attendance. I would say from 12 to 16 at the most.

Times were when the well would go dry and we would go with our pail 2 at a time up in the woods to a spring for water. By the time we got back, and we took our time, we would only have a half a pail of water and many leaves and twigs in it.

The items in the picture this month are molding planes.

Enjoy your paper so much and look forward to each new copy

I lived in Weston 24 years, now live in Killingworth, Connecticut, another rural town. Florence Banks was my Aunt and Willis my Uncle. You had a story written by Anna B. Corsa—she was my mother.

Sincerely,

Natalie Corsa Endean

# WESTON'S HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK

## INDUSTRY IN WESTON

Industry began in Weston probably before 1700. It was born of necessity. The early settlers found forests where they wanted to farm. Saw mills were needed to make timbers and lumber from these trees they cleared out. A farmer with land along the Saugatuck or Aspetuck Rivers with a good dam site found an opportunity to earn extra income and help his fellow farmers (as well as himself). So he built a saw mill, or a grist mill to provide necessities which otherwise had to be brought in from the coast at great expense of time and money.

And so it was then that a grist mill was built about 1700 by a Mr. Thorp on property owned by Mrs. M. Coley on River Road. Soon after, it was taken over by David Coley 2nd. A foundry was added by David Coley 3rd, making flatiron, plow points and stove castings (he reportedly also made his own false teeth out of aluminum which he used until he died). David Coley 5th ran the grist mill and a saw mill.

In the north end of town along Godfrey Road West, Nathaniel Squires built a saw mill on property he bought from David Adams in 1767. This property changed hands about twenty times between 1700 and 1966. The site is known as Godfrey Pond and the foundations of the Godfrey mill are now part of Devil's Den. This



Foundation remains of Godfrey Mill in Devil's Den. Dam and pond are beyond the fence.



Coley foundry and gristmill—about 1900. Sawmill was on the other side of the dam to the right.

mill was first mentioned in Squires deed to Jonathan Godfrey in 1783. It was probably in existence for 20 to 30 years before that. The mill was last mentioned in the deed from Joseph Godfrey to John Gorham in 1878. While this covers a 95 year span of recorded existence of the mill, it was probably in operation for close to 150 years. This may be the only mill in Weston known to have been run using a water turbine for at least part of its time in operation.

Also in the north part of town was the cider, grist, and saw mill run by William Davis (a distillery was attached but run by Mr. S.S. Carver). This mill was begun before 1800. It was bought by Mrs. Cobb and is now the Cobb's Mill Inn. Weston had several other cider mills before 1800. One was on the Norfield Parsonage ground (the old parsonage at Norfield Rd. and Old Hyde).

By 1819 there were 19 grist mills, one iron foundry, 4 distilleries, 4 tanneries, 3 carding machines and 3 fulling mills (where fullers earth or clay was used to remove oils and grease from wool cloth to make felts). In 1850, the following industries were in town:

Wm. Bradley & Son—tannery—largest payroll \$270 per month—15 workers

Gershom Bradley—edged tools

Charles Crofut—portable mills (such as fanning mills)

Bradley & Sanford—forge

Oliver Sanford—foundry

Abraham Bradley—edged tools

Charles Whitlock—wagon axle trees

Gorham & Winton—spring makers

David L. Coley—planing mills

Also:

Ebenezer Coley—grist mill—fulling mill

John Perry—saw mill  
David Godfrey—saw mill  
Nichols & Hanford—saw and grist mills

And

Aaron and Nehemiah Buckley—blacksmiths  
Daniel Wheeler—blacksmith  
Nathan Gilbert—shoemaker

In 1860 five of the above industries were still owned by the same people: The Gershom Bradley Edge Tool Company was the largest business in town, employing 40 of the 53 workers in Weston. The value of all the goods they produced was \$45,000 whereas the value of all the goods of the other concerns was \$14,000. (We will report on the Bradley Axe Factory in a later issue of the Chronicle.)

In 1862 Benjamin Bradley ran a shingle and saw mill, tannery and shoe shop. They made shoes for the army during the Civil War. David Platt had a mill on Newtown Turnpike which was later run by E.O. Shipman to make tool handles. Bradley-Hull Foundry in the Forge (Valley Forge) made wagon hubs. (We have two in our museum.)

In 1870 Miles Bradley ran Gershom Bradley's Axe Factory. He employed 70 of the 85 workers in town. The total value of goods was \$70,000.

The value of goods might seem very low; however, the sales price of the goods produced was low. For example, the price for an axe was \$15.00 per dozen; a one inch framing chisel was \$16.00 per dozen (in 1896).

A.P. Sherwood ran the Hanford Nichols Plaster Mill and a few new businesses showed up—T.J. Bennett made cigars. M.W. Salmon made horn buttons and Bennett Bradley reestablished his father's tanning business and L.H. Shipman started his handle manufacturing.

In 1880 the Bradley Axe Factory was still in business but producing less. They were down to 40 workers and making only \$25,000 worth of products. Henry Wheeler took over Bradley-Hull Foundry



Water turbine used to drive sawmill at Godfrey Pond in the mid 1800's, now Devil's Den Nature Conservancy, Weston. The original mill dated from 1783.



Coley foundry site today. Note sycamore tree still standing.

in Valley Forge. Platt Keeler ran the Charles Crofut shingle machine and straw cutter. Amos Judson ran Bennett's cigar factory and Morris Salmon ran the button factory.

The industrial revolution of the late 1800's and the railroad helped bring the end to industry in Weston. Steam engines increased the efficiency of mills and foundries which reduced the need for small mills and factories as found in Weston. Farming no longer became profitable (if it ever was) because the railroad brought grain, vegetables and meat from the good farming country of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and beyond. Roads improved somewhat and Weston's residents were able to get to the coastal towns easier.

Weston industry died after the disastrous fire that destroyed the Bradley Axe Factory in 1911.

Weston also had three other types of industry. One was a cottage industry run by the son of the second minister of the Norfield Church, William Noyes. He organized some of the women in town to make shirts. He would provide the material and they would make plain and fancy shirts—sometimes as many as 8 a month.

The second industry was the charcoal makers. They provided charcoal for the foundries in Weston and Bridgeport. The third industry was the carpenter who helped Weston become a town of homes. This is the only industry of those mentioned that has survived to present times.

We have missed some of the factories and mills and other industries that were present in Weston at one time or another. Some of these we will pick up in future issues. We would like to bring one final point to your attention: as Tom Farnham stated in his history of Weston, despite the seemingly large number of factories, mills, foundries, etc., in Weston, the majority of the residents were farmers. This is as it had to be for without a need for the goods of the industry (by the residents and farmers of Weston) there would not have been the industry. Necessity is the mother of invention but when the need is gone the invention and its fruits are soon forgotten.

## HISTORICAL BRIEF

### THE NORFIELD CHURCH FAIR

Before the next issue of the Chronicle is issued, the 1984 Annual Norfield Church Fair will be history. To recapture some history of Norfield fairs of the past, we reprint an article concerning the fair of July 28, 1932, as published in the Westporter Herald of July 29, 1932.

*Over one hundred enjoyed Norfield Congregational Church Fair. The annual chicken pie supper and fair held by the Norfield Congregational Church Thursday evening was very successful. Over one hundred persons enjoyed the delicious supper served by a committee composed of Mrs. Charles H. Benedict, Mrs. Frank Fitch, Mrs. Lindsay Corsa, Miss Thelma Fleming, Mrs. Charles Broch and Miss Ethel Lockwood.*

*A particularly attractive offering of fancy goods at extremely low prices were on sale at the fancy table under the chairmanship of Mrs. Sarah Beers. Assisting Mrs. Beers were Mrs. George Waterbury, Mrs. Frederick Bennett and Mrs. William McGrath. Over \$50.00 was taken in at this table. The food table was presided over by Mrs. John Wilson, assisted by Mrs. David MacBeth. Homemade breads, cakes, rolls, jellies, pies and other delicacies charmed money out of all pockets to the total of over \$15. Miss Helen McGrath, assisted by a group of friends, ran the grab bag which netted about \$24.00.*

*One of the most attractive offerings of the evening and an innovation this year was the book table which was managed by Mrs. Willis Banks and Mrs. Raymond Fitch. Three hundred books were donated for the unusual project and a large number sold. About \$18.00 was collected. Mrs. Oscar Budd and Mrs. John L. Breitwieser were in charge of the lucky numbers and awarded handsome braided rugs and quilts to the more fortunate members of the crowd, netting around \$18. The ice cream brought in another \$10, bringing the total up to nearly \$175.00*

*Miss Florence Banks was chairman of the waitresses who were the Misses Charlotte and Lillian Broch, Dorothy Bennett, Natalie Corsa, Mrs. Edward Budd, Mrs. Chester Coley, Miss Henrietta Canfield, Mrs. James S. Coley and Mrs. Frederick Fowler.*

*Many visitors from surrounding towns were present and the grounds of the historic green provided a charming background for the delightful party. The various committees wish to express sincere thanks to all who helped to make the supper and fair such a success.*



Norfield Congregational Church in the late 1800's.

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### DO WE HAVE RECIPES?

One of the books we inherited in the Coley house was a hand written recipe book used by Mrs. Coley. Some of the women on our Trustee board are looking it over to see if it can be used as a basis for a Society cook book. Meanwhile, your Editor managed to sneak out a few recipes which we will share with you in the Chronicle. This first is for great tasting pancakes. Here it is:

- 1½ cups flour
- 1½ tbsp. baking powder
- 1½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup sugar
- 1¼ cup milk
- 1 egg
- 1½ cups boiling water
- ½ cup corn meal

Add corn meal to boiling water and boil 5 min.  
Let cool and add to other ingredients.

Tastes mighty good with real maple syrup.

### NEXT ISSUE

- Plans for the barn
- Summer and fall schedules
- Post Office Plans update
- The mills in Weston
- Picture Quiz
- 50 years ago in Weston

THE

# CHRONICLE

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## **HIGHLIGHTS**

Industry in Weston  
The old Post Office  
Norfield Fair 1932 Style  
Annual dues are due  
Letters