Glimpses into the Past

EDITOR: Betty White, Historian, Town of Westport **July 2008** **Vol 2. No. 3**

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THE WESTPORT INN

The Westport Inn stood at the top of the hill on the south corner of Washington and Main Streets. It was built on the site where John Halstead built the first frame house in the village in 1800. The Halstead House welcomed persons arriving on, or waiting for the ferry. From about 1825-1868 it was a private residence of the Halstead family. In 1868, it was purchased by the Lake Champlain Ore and Iron Company who owned it when the 1876 fire consumed the Lake House (also known as the Persons Hotel), the only hotel then in existance in Westport. The Halstead House was not significantly damaged by the fire. An entrepreneur, Gen. Marvin, of Troy built an addition on the old Halstead House and transformed it into a hotel named "The Marvin House". In 1887, it was purchased by Alice Lee and it became "The Westport Inn". It was managed by Mrs. H C Lyon in 1888 and later by Mrs O C Daniels. The Inn was only open during the summer months. It was during Miss Lee's ownership, that she purchased the property near the steamboat dock for $1575 that became the beach. Miss Lee sold the Inn to Harry P Smith in the early 1900's. He managed the hotel for several years. In 1927, Mr Smith, and Mr and Mrs John Wack partnered with Mrs. Ord and they bought all of the Inn properties. At this time, the Inn with its cottages and nine-hole golf course was valued at $300,000. After purchasing the Inn, the "back nine" was added at a cost of $100,000. They made extensive renovations to the buildings. Following the repeal of the Prohibition Act in 1933, a bar was added.

In the 1940's the property was sold to Mr and Mrs Mark Whitman, and in the 1950's it was sold to Mr and Mrs Kozak. As business declined, they in turn sold it to a group of businessmen: Stephen Radicks, Alton Bollinger, Edward O'Neill, and James Edson. Unfortunately, these men eventually closed the inn for the last time. In 1966, the Inn was demolished. Ballard Park now occupies the Inn's former location.

Picture courtesy of Judy Barton from the photo collection of Ralph and Helen Atwell

GENEALOGY

SOME DESCENDANTS OF HENRY AND MARY JACKSON LEE*

GENERATION 1

- Henry Lee, born in Massachusetts in 1782, d. 1867. married Mary Jackson on 16 June 1809. She was born in Massachusetts in 1783, d. 1860.

GENERATION 2

All children born in Massachusetts:

- Mary Cabot Lee b. 17 May 1810, d. 4 May 1811
- Mary Cabot Lee b. 16 Aug 1811, d. 16 Aug 1849
- Henry Lee b. 2 Sept 1817, d. 24 Nov 1898
- Elizabeth Cabot Lee b. 2 Apr 1819, d. 27 Sept 1898
- Francis L Lee b 10 Dec 1823, d. 2 Sept 1886 in Westport, NY. He married Sarah Mary Anne Wilson on 20 July 1848. She b. Feb 13, 1821 in Keene NH, the daughter of James and Elizabeth Little Wilson.
- Harriet Jackson Lee b. 16 Apr 1826. d. ?

FEATURED WEBSITE

www.familysearch.org

One website that every family researcher needs to be aware of is www.familysearch.org. This website has records that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) has filmed and uploaded to the internet. The records available on this site are: The Ancestral File, the International Genealogical Index, the Pedigree Resource File, the 1880 Census and the U S Social Security Death Index. The Pedigree Resource File is a database of records that have been submitted by individuals . This online index includes individual records with events, parent information and submitter information.

GENERATION 3

Children of Francis and Sarah Wilson Lee

- Francis Wilson Lee b. Jan 18 1852, d. Feb 10, 1923 married on Sept 4, 1890 to Marion Glidden Dove, b. May 6, 1867, d Oct 4, 1948.
- Robert Lee, d. young
- Thomas Lee b. Dec 21, 1858, d. Jan 24, 1936
- Alice Lee b. May 27, 1853, d. Feb 18 1943
- Anna Lee b. May 21, 1856, d. Aug 10 1919
- Mary Lee b. Aug 3 1849, d. 23 May 1902 m. Matthew Hale on 27 Dec 1877.

GENERATION 4

Children of Francis Wilson Lee and Marion Glidden Dove:

- Mary Lee b. Dec 10 1891; d. Apr 28, 1982
- Guy Hunter Lee b. Jan 27, 1894; d. May 7, 1953, m. Simone Pailley in 1922
- Susan Dove Lee b. 27 Dec 1897; d. 1972; m. Thornton Kirkland Ware.
- Alice Lee b. June 6, 1899, d Jan 18 1988, m. J.Timothy Walker
- Isabella Lee, b.Oct 4, 1895, d. Mar. 6, 1970

Children of Matthew and Mary Lee Hale:

- Robert Lee Hale b. Mar 9 1884; d. Aug 1969, m. Dorothea Keep.
- Matthew Hale b. 1882; d. 1925; m. Anne Piper in 1907
- Ellen Lee b. Jan 15 1879 d. May 23 1951
- Dorothy Quincey Hale b. 8 July 1886; d Mar 8, 1942
- Mary Lee b. 1880, m. Thomas Reed Powell

*Sources: www.familysearch.org., Bessboro: A History of Westport, Essex Co., NY and newspapers on www.nnyln.org

SPOTLIGHT
OTHER EARLY HOTELS

The Lake House (Persons Hotel)

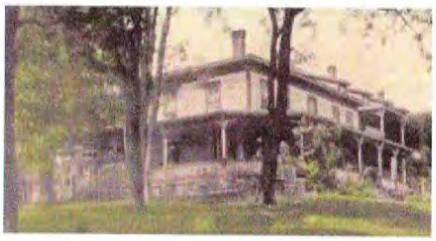
The Lake House is said to have been built by Aaron Felt. It stood on what is now the Library Lawn. It was here, in the stable, that a fire broke out on August 15, 1876. The fire soon spread, consuming the hotel, the Baptist Church and the dwelling of V C Spencer to the south, then jumping across the main street and destroying a block of three stores on Main Street. The hotel was never rebuilt.

The Richards House

The Richards House stood on what is now Champlain Avenue where Ernies Market and the old Masonic Hall now stand. It was built by William Richards in 1836. It burned in 1893.

NO PICTURE AVAILABLE

The Glenwood Inn



The Glenwood Inn stood on the hill at the intersection of what is now Champlain Ave. and Main St. It occupied the spot where Dr. Merrihew later built a home and Dentist office, and is now owned by Bruce and Carolyn Ware. In earlier times, it had also been known as "The Mansion House" and before that "Spencer's Hotel". It was operated by Charles Patten, and later John Sherman.

Pleasant View House

The Pleasant View House was on the northwest side of the bridge. Built in the late 1870's, it underwent extensive remodeling in the early 1890's and was renamed the "Westport House". It has operated under many names.including "The Country House" and "The Crooked Eye". It is now the Westport Hotel, and is the only one of the early hotels still entertaining guests after more than a century in operation. It is currently owned and operated by Wayne Deswert.

Aview of the Westport House from the Depot 1904

FEATURED BOOK

A View of Westport, NY on Lake Champlain 1902-1972

This book, written by Raymond C. Clark, serves as an update to Carolyn Halstead Royce's book, "Bessboro". It includes many pictures to illustrate life in Westport in the years 1902-1972. Mr. Clark was a lifelong resident of Westport, and an educator in our local school. This book offers a look at the community through his eyes during his lifetime here in Westport. This book was originally published in 1972 and reprinted in 2001. Copies of the reprint may still be available.

OBITUARIES

Miss Alice Lee

Former Owner of Westport Inn, Civic Leader in Community, Died Thursday at Cambridge, Mass.

"Miss Alice Lee, 89, former owner of the Westport Inn and a lifelong resident of Westport, died last Thursday in Cambridge, Mass., where she had been spending the winter. Throughout her full life, Miss Lee was actively interested in the business, social and civic betterment of her community. She made possible through her untiring initiative, the development of Westport as a summer resort, the building of the Westport Public Library, the installation of the town's water supply and the laying out of the town's golf links, park, public bathing beach and other civic improvements.

She was born in Westport, March 27, 1853 the daughter of Colonel Francis L. Lee and Mrs. Lee at their home, "Stony Sides," two miles north of Westport village, where she spent all her summers. Her mother was Miss Sarah Mary Ann Wilson, originally from Keene, NH. Colonel Lee came from Boston to visit his cousin Francis H. Jackson, and then settled in Westport.

Miss Lee was educated in Boston where her family spent several winters. A pioneer in business for women, Miss Lee purchased the old "Marvin House" in 1887. She transformed and rebuilt the old hotel into what is now the Westport Inn. Miss Lee sold the hotel in 1927.

With the aid of her brother, Thomas, she purchased the spring of water on the mountain west of the village, organized the Westport Mountain Spring Company, and installed the water system which still

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Thomas Lee

Manager of Mountain Spring and Constructor of Westport Golf Course Passed Away Last Friday at Age of 78

"Thomas Lee, 78, manager of the Westport Mountain Spring for many years and supervisor of the construction of the Westport golf course, passed away last Friday at his home in Westport. he was well known throughout Essex County. He is survived by his sister Miss Alice Lee of SanDiego, Cal., and several nieces and nephews.

Mr Lee was born in Chestnut Hill, Mass., December 21, 1858, the son of Colonel and Mrs.Francis L. Lee. He attended private school in Boston and graduated from Harvard University, Class of 1879. After attending Harvard Law School for a time, Mr. Lee worked for several years in the banking firm of Lee, Higginson and Company of Boston.

Interested in scientific work, Mr. Lee then became a member of expeditions to South America and Alaska with the United States Fish Commission under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institute of Washington.

Shortly after, Mr. Lee went to Westport with his sister and there undertook the construction of the water supply system for Westport and also built the splendid golf course there.

For many years he spent his summers in Westport and his winters on the Sea Islands of South Carolina where he was much interested in the education of the colored race in practical work."

..The Ticonderoga Sentinel Jan. 30, 1936

brings a plentiful supply of spring water to the town. It was sold to the Town of Westport.
She also purchased the former William J. Cutting estate and developed a nine-hole golf course there. In 1887, Miss Lee led the formation of the Westport Library Association, which purchased the present library building. Later she interested General John Tyler Cutting in giving the addition to the library for recreational purposes. It was known as the John Tyler Cutting Memorial Hall.
Miss Lee purchased several dwellings which had remained from the mining era to improve housing conditions. She assisted families who lived in them to procure lots and build homes in more healthful surroundings. Miss Lee and her mother aided many Westport youths to obtain college educations through loans and gifts.
In 1902, Miss Lee made her winter home in San Diego, Calif., where she was active in civic development, also. Her final contribution to the Westport community was made in 1930, when she presented the village a tract of land along the lake front to be made into a bathing beach and park.
She is survived by seven nieces and nephews, nineteen great nieces and nephews, and three great-great nieces. Among the survivors who live in Essex County are Miss Ellen Hale and Mrs. Thomas Reed Powell of Westport, Professor Robert L. Hale of Elizabethtown, Miss Mary Lee, Lt. Guy H. Lee, Mrs Henry Jackson and Mrs. T.K. Ware of Westport, and Mrs. Matthew Hale, Matthew Hale, Jr., Miss Ann Hale and Mrs. Lyne S. Few, who reside at Stony Sides. Interment will be in Westport in the spring."

.....The Ticonderoga Sentinel Feb. 25, 1943.....

Alice Lee Gravestone
Hillside Cemetery

Thomas Lee Gravestone
Hillside Cemetery

DO YOU KNOW?

The present "Inn on the Library Lawn" was formerly a part of the Westport Inn property. It was called "Over the Way" or sometimes just "The Annex". Guests were lodged there when the Inn itself reached capacity. In 1930 the boiler exploded through the roof causing $50,000 worth of damage. At the time, there was a barber shop, an antique shop, and a brokerage office occupying the ground floor. No one was injured.