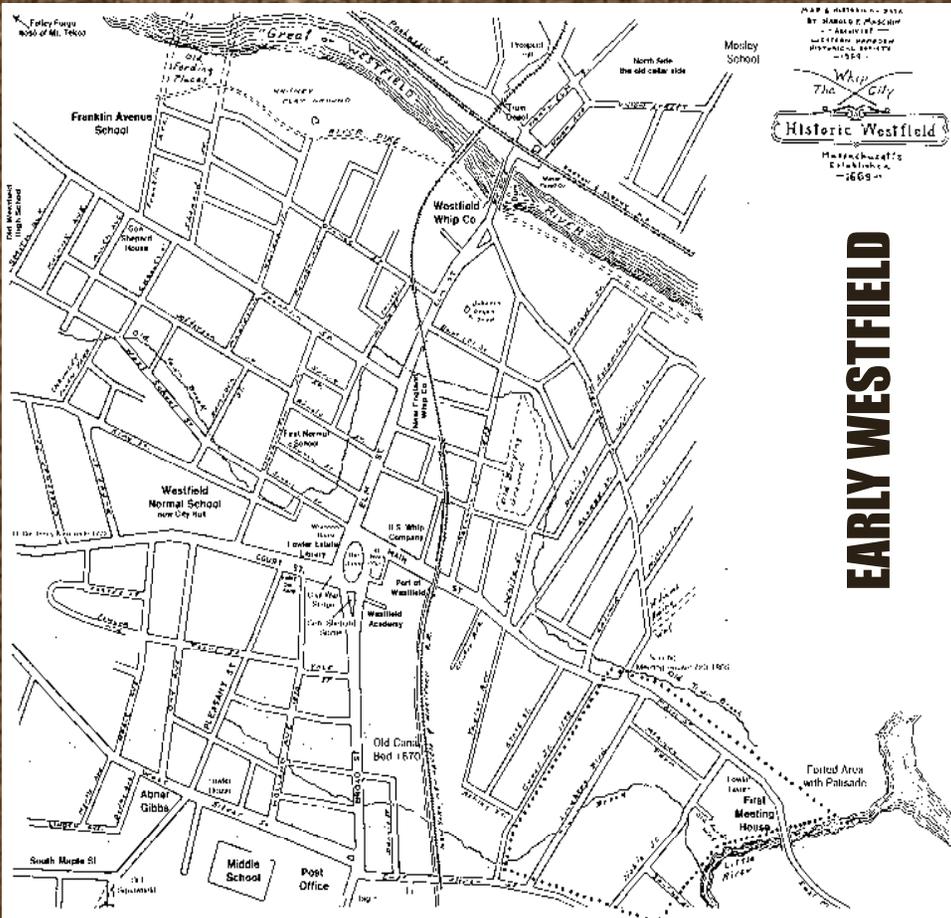


**THIS BOOK
BELONGS TO:** _____

The

WESTFIELD STORY



WRITTEN BY
VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
KAY DELLI BOVI • BARBARA TRANT

THIS PROJECT IS MADE POSSIBLE BY
THE VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FOR USE BY STUDENTS IN THE WESTFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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The many teachers and students of the Westfield Schools who have participated
in the Westfield Story Program
and continue to keep our local history alive.

Historical References:

Historic Westfield, Westfield Massachusetts 1669-1969, A History of The Connecticut Valley, Official Program 250th Anniversary Souvenir, A History of the Town of Westfield, Historical Sketch of Westfield, Westfield and Its Historic Influences, Westfield in Vintage Postcards, Images of America Vol. I & II, The Westfield Story Lesson plans: Early Westfield, landmarks and historic places, The Westfield Story, The Westfield Story: from frontier Village to Industrial City, Westfield Welcome Home Celebration 1946.

The Volunteers in Public Schools is an organization that is dedicated to assisting the students, teachers and schools of Westfield. If you would like to become a volunteer in the Westfield Story program or offer your services and expertise in other areas please call Barbara Trant at 572-6345.

Cover photo: Ross Conner, The Ross Conner Collection
Printed in the year 2006

Wild and Weird Westfield

When dinosaur footprints were first discovered in the Connecticut River Valley people thought they belonged to 10 foot tall chickens.

In 1826 the “Rough and Ready company” was the group of volunteer firemen.

Prisoners in Westfield had to ride the trolley handcuffed to a policeman until 1919 when the police finally purchased their first vehicle.

In 1910 the original water fountain on the green was donated by the National Humane Alliance to serve as a water place for horses and had a special trough for dogs.

April 1774 The town of Westfield was fortified against Indian attack.

On July 5th 1942 flight training began at Barnes airport for WWII fighter planes.

1912 Lewis B. Allyn writes the Pure Food Book and Westfield becomes the Pure Food City. Allyn is later murdered in his home and the killer is never identified!

The National Guard “Ducks” were called out to assist in the flood of 1955 when Westfield was under 10 feet of water.

The BankNorth building on Main Street was once a gas station.

The Westfield whip companies used a total of 100 tons of glue a year!

To read about Westfield in the library look for the books; “Grist Mill Secret”, “Hannah’s Hessian”, “The Spinning Wheel Secret” and “Deborah Remembers”. These books were written by Lillie Albrecht and contain people and places in Westfield!



Swimwear Fashion for the 1920s.

Photo: Jane Donhouse Family



Hey! Who forgot to turn off the water?



Westfield Willie



Photo: Robert Delli Bovi

Civil War Statue



Tallest Guy in the world from Westfield



The Dewey House 1735. Reconstructed by the Western Hampden Historical Society.

View of Westfield Valley from Birch Bluffs.



Russell Mountain

Mt. Tekoa

Geology of Westfield

Millions of years ago Westfield was part of the first land to appear. The bending of the earth created the Berkshire Mountains including Mt. Tekoa and Russell Mountain. Volcanic activity in the area made the trap ridge of Mt. Tom, East Mountain and Provin Mountain.

Early Jurassic Dinosaurs roamed the valley and lived in a tropical climate, dinosaurs such as the plant eating Anchisaurus (an-KEY-sore-us), and the meat eating Podokesaurus (po-doh-KEY-sore-us). Samples of the dinosaur footprints can be seen at Stanley park. Later, Westfield was under a shallow inland sea and remained this way for millions of years.

As the earth became colder a glacier covered Westfield under a deep sheet of ice. When the glacier melted this valley became part of a giant lake known as Lake Hitchcock. The deepest part of this lake is the area that we now call

Hampton Ponds. As the lake drained away the rushing waters created the Granville Gorge and formed the shape of the valley as we know it today.

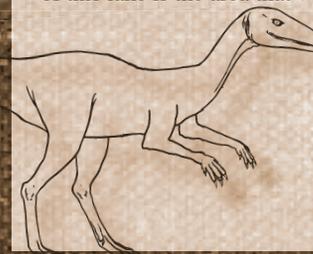
The Westfield valley is 110 miles long and 15-20 miles wide. The center of town is 140 feet above sea level. Papermill School is built on top of a volcanic ridge, Munger Hill School is built on a sand bar from Lake Hitchcock and Southampton Road School is on the flat plain created by the glacier.



Anchisaurus



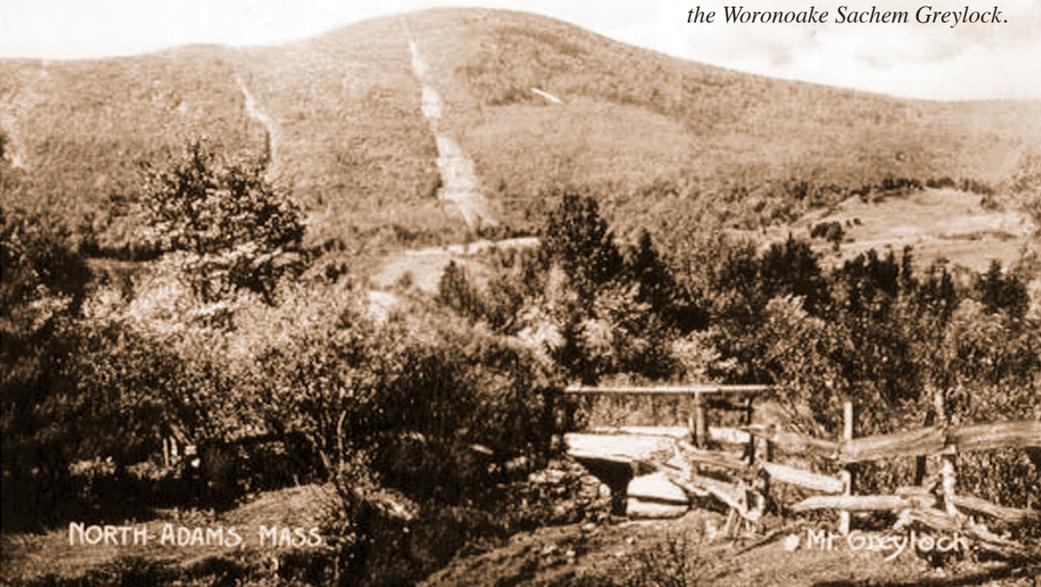
Podokesaurus 13 feet tall



Coelophysids

lived in Westfield during the Early Triassic age. It was a predator, grew to be 10 feet long and weighted up to 65 pounds.

Mt. Greylock in Western Massachusetts was named after the Woronoake Sachem Greylock.



The Woronoakes

(Native Americans)

The Native Americans who first lived in the Westfield area called themselves the Woronoakes. They named this valley and its river, the Woronoco, which means "the country with the windings". The Woronoakes were Algonquin and belonged to a woodland culture. They lived in bark covered huts called wigwams and they traveled by foot or canoe. They remained settled in one area. The women planted crops and the men hunted and fished in the valley.

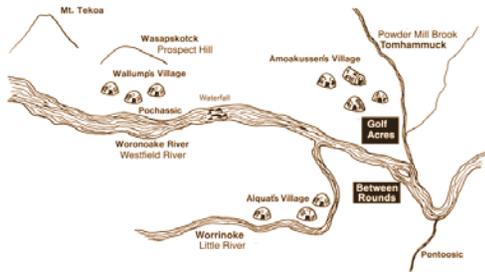
The Woronoakes (Westfield) joined together with the Agawam (Agawam and Springfield), the Norwottuck (Hadley, Hatfield and Northampton), the Squawkeags (Northfield) and the Pocumtucks of Deerfield. These loosely bound tribes were known as the "Great Indians" or the Pocumtuck Confederacy. They were enemies to the Mohawk (man-eaters) who lived in the west and the Pequot (the Destroyers) of the south.

The Woronoakes lived in three villages. Amoakussen's village was on the north side, between the river and Tomhaumucke (Powder Mill Brook). This land was given to Thomas Cooper in 1664 for payment of debts. Alquat was sagamore of the village in the bend of the Little River and his son, Wallump, had a village at Pochassic (Prospect Hill). In 1669 Alquat sold the land in Westfield to the settlers for 40 pounds of English silver.

There were 124 years of Indian wars in early Westfield. Most of the damage was caused in 1675-76. One of the most well-known Native Americans was a Chief (known as a sachem) called Greylock. As a young boy he lived in Woronoco and when the wars began in 1675 Greylock attacked most of the neighboring settlements, except Westfield. It was believed that

he protected the people of Westfield because they were always kind to him.

In 1675, at the end of the King Philip War, 200 Indians passed within a mile of Westfield as they retreated from the advancing militia. They continued to the Housatonic River, where the militia trapped them and killed the majority of the Indians, but Greylock escaped and established a village near the Canadian border. The tallest mountain in Massachusetts, Mt. Greylock (3,491 ft) was named after this famous Woronoake



sachem.

There are many Native American names of places that we still use in Westfield today and even the name of our state, Massachusetts was named after 'the people on the hill'. Other Native American names that we use are: Agawam - 'fish curing place', Pochassic - 'where the narrows open', Pontoosic - 'winter deer kill place', Tomhaumucke (Powder Mill Brook) - 'canoe man goes down', Wassapskotck (Prospect Hill) - 'shining rock land', Connecticut River- Quonnenektacut - 'long river'.

Westfield Today...





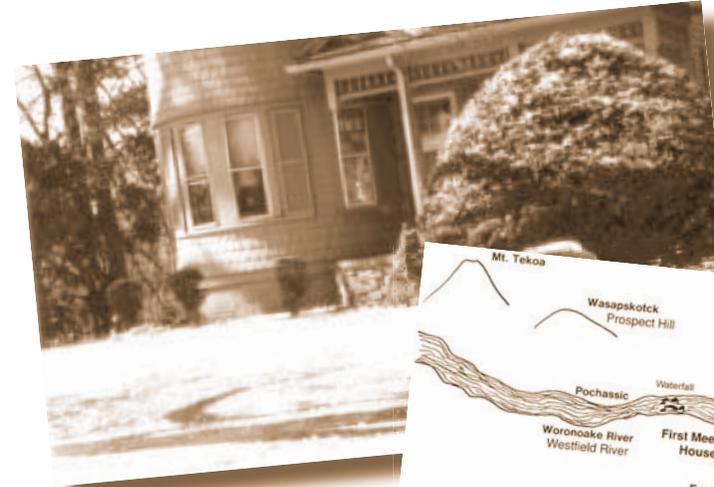
The Black Squirrels

Squirrels are nothing new to Westfield. They've been here since the end of the last Ice Age, but in 1948 a strange phenomena hit Westfield. Now there are many myths about how they got here and when exactly they got here, but there is no question that the black squirrels have thrived here in Westfield.

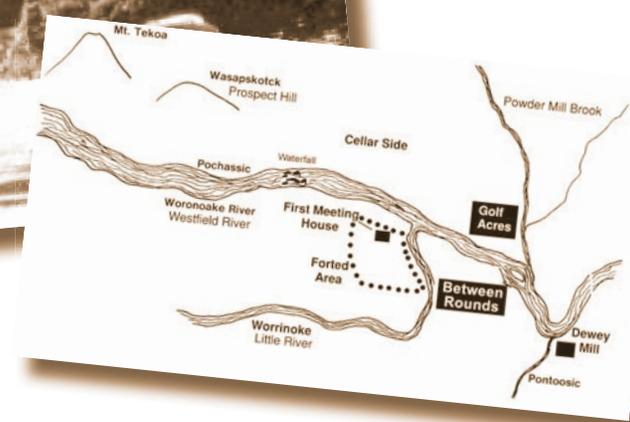
The real story is that the original black squirrels were a gift to Frank Stanley Beveridge, the founder of Stanley Park, from two of his sales managers. The squirrels were from

Michigan and there were 6 to begin with. Mr. Beveridge decided to let them roam free in Stanley Park. Over the years the original 6 grew to a health population. They can be found all over Westfield and even in the surrounding towns and cities.

Nobody really knows why they thrived so well in Westfield, and haven't spread much farther than the few towns around here.



Marker on Route 20 next to Little River showing the place of the first meeting house



Early Westfield

In 1640 three Dutch traders came to Woronoco and built a trading post. It was located where the Westfield shops are today. In the year 1669 Sachem Alquat sold the last bit of land in Woronoco to the English. The settlers divided up the land into farming plots and had to decide on a new name for their town.

At first they wanted to call this town "Streamfield" because there were so many small streams that poured into the river, but they finally chose the name Westfield. They decided on this name because Westfield was the "western-most settlement" of the new colony. Beyond Westfield lay rugged mountains, uncharted rivers and unfriendly Indians.

The new settlers lived in homes of wood, but while their homes were being built they lived in holes dug into the side of the hills near Pochassic. Today we still refer to this as the "cellar side" of town because of the many cellars dug into the cliffs by the founders of this town.

The first meeting house was built in 1672 where the Little River meets

the Westfield River. (see map above) There is a stone marker to show where this very important building once stood. Everyone had to attend church services on Sunday or they would have to pay a fine. In Stanley Park there is a replica of the first meeting house.

The three Dewey brothers came to Westfield and built a grist mill on 2-Mile Brook (now called the Great Brook). There were no bridges in town and to cross the river you had to get wet (see map to left).

In 1676 the government in Boston asked the people of Westfield to abandon their homes and return to Springfield because of the danger of Indian attack. The 150 people in Westfield refused to leave and instead they built a 2 mile square palisade wall made of wood to surround their settlement. Under the ground they made a cellar for hiding the women and children. Today we refer to this part of town as the "fort side" (see map to left).

The many rivers and streams of this area were used to power the grist mills and paper mills and tanneries. The farmers liked the rich soil for planting corn, flax and wheat.

Photo: Robert Delll Bovi
 Replica of the first meeting house at Stanley Park

Revolutionary War Hero



Photo: Robert Delli Bovi

General William Shepard

At the age of 17 William Shepard joined the military. He served with Captains Bancroft, Abercombe and Amherst during the French and Indian Wars. When he was 23 he married Sara Dewey and they settled in a little farm in Westfield (located at the vacant lot on Franklin and Allen Avenue near Franklin Street School).

In 1775, at the start of the American Revolution, William Shepard led the minutemen from Westfield (total 45 men) to fight in George Washington's army. William Shepard and the men from Westfield were in the battle of Long Island, NY. When the American troops retreated to Harlem Heights, Shepard remained behind with General Glovers to defend the retreating army against 4,000 British troops. With only 400 American men, Shepard and Glovers held back the advancing British, allowing George Washington's army time to escape.

General Shepard served under General Lafayette and received a sword of honor. After the war he commanded the militia at the Springfield armory during Shay's Rebellion. In 1796 he was sent to make a peace treaty with the Penobscot Indians and later he negotiated peace with the six nations of the Iroquois. He served as a member of congress and died at the age of 80 years old.

It is recorded that he was six feet tall, weighed 200 pounds and was the father of nine children. He is buried in the Mechanic Street cemetery and a statue of General Shepard stands on the green in the center of town. You may have notice that the statue is facing so that General Shepard has his back to town. This may seem pretty rude, but actually this was just bad luck. The creatures of the statue thought that the city would grow more up Broad Street, but tis turned out be wrong. As the city Industrialized, it grew more along the river behind the statue. So really the town was built behind the statue, instead of the statue having its back to the city.

Western Massachusetts Hospital



Having its 100 year anniversary in 2010, Western, Mass Hospital opened in 1910 originally to help protect Westfield from the outbreaks of Tuberculosis. Ever since Western Mass Hospital has severed many purposes.

In 1960 the hospital opened a Cancer division with a section devoted to teaching physicians. 11 years later the hospital opened a pediatric unit for handicapped infants and children. And after battling

throw problems in the 1980's and 1990's, the hospital was granted funds to continue to operate do to the fact the hospital treats special problems.

Currently the hospital focuses on terminal illness, neurological disorders, Alzheimer's disease and related disorders involving behavioral problems.



Noble Hospital

Nobel Hospital was founded in 1893 by Reuben Noble, a rich native Westfield man who made his wealth from the Whip manufacturing industry.

After suffering a serious injury, Noble decided Westfield needed a local hospital and used most of his estate to build the hospital. In 1897 the hospital opened, and ever since has been growing.

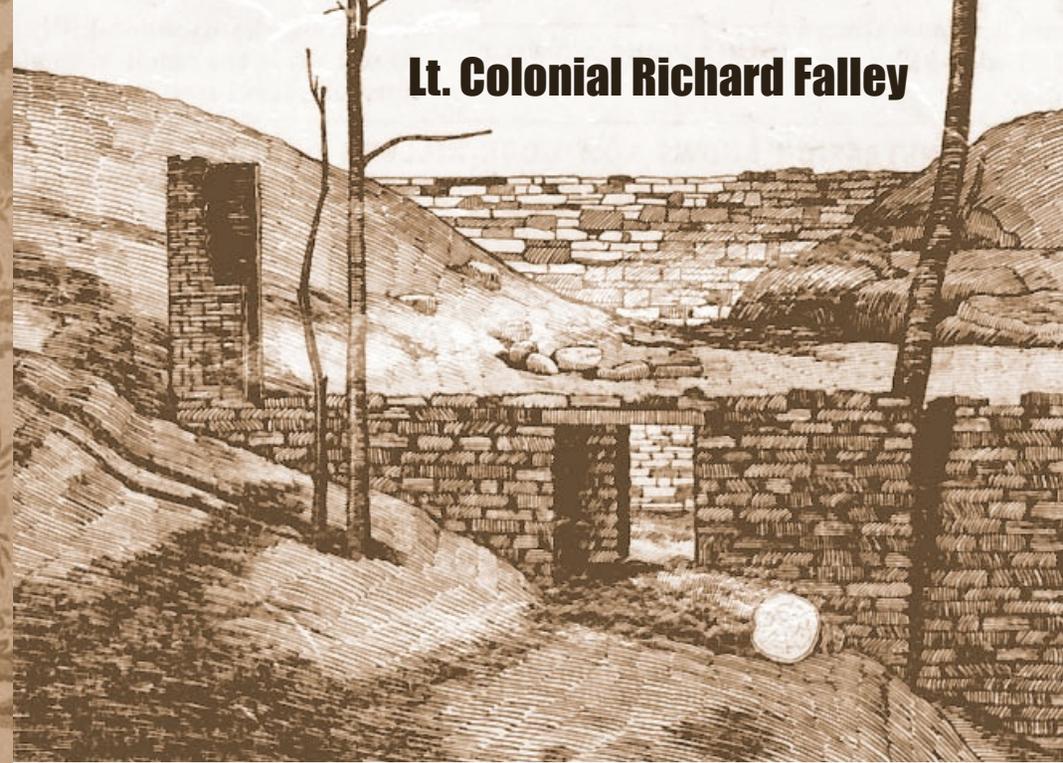
The original hospital only had 8 doctors and 8 beds. In 1903 the hospital expanded to serve patients with contagious diseases. The hospital also served as a nurses' training school starting in

1905 and graduated 144 nurses until it closed in 1936.

In 1955 the hospital underwent a major renovation. Enough money was raised for the hospital to demolish the old building and build a new building. Ever since the hospital continued to expand, including the Emergency Center, Bronson Rehabilitation Center, the Women's Center, and in 2004 the state-of-the-art Cardiac Center.

It is no question the Noble Hospital is an important part of Westfield community's health and won't be going anywhere anytime soon.

Lt. Colonial Richard Falley



Just like General Shepard, Richard Falley joined the military at the age of 17. Unfortunately for Falley his first years were not as easy as Shepard's. While fighting in the French and Indian War, Falley was captured by the Indians then sold to the French for 16 gallons of rum. The French then threw him in jail, and after awhile they sold him to a slave ship headed for Boston. On his journey home Falley caught the small pox virus, survived the deadly disease, then had to walk all the way home to Westfield from Boston. When he knocked on his mother's door, she fainted of surprise when she saw him.

During the American Revolution Richard Falley was an armorer for the volunteers from Westfield. An armorer is a man who is responsible for the making and servicing of the muskets used during the war. He fixed the guns when they broke, replaced the flint locks, and without him the men would be helpless against the British!

Richard Falley returned to Westfield and established a foundry for making muskets for the American army. He built a hidden place at the bottom of Mt. Tekoa on Moose Meadow Brook, which was behind his farm. Whenever the British troops passed by the farm, Richard Falley and his men looked like country farmers working in the fields, but when the enemy was gone, the men disappeared into the hidden foundry and made secret weapons for the Colonial army. The British never found his hiding place. The old Falley foundry can still be found at the base of Mt. Tekoa, but because it was so well hidden, it still remains difficult to find even today!

After the war Richard Falley set up a gun shop in town. A marker is placed at the site of the shop. Richard Falley is buried in the Mechanic Street Cemetery and he was the Great Grandfather of President Grover Cleveland.



Henry Knox

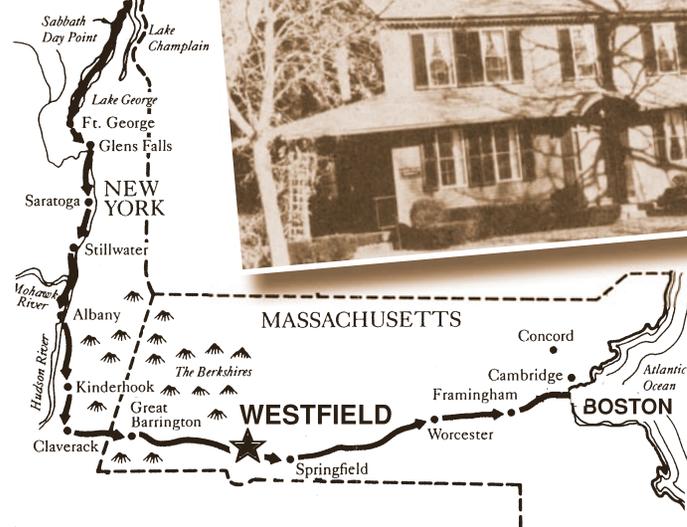
Lt. Colonel Henry Knox passed through Westfield in the winter of 1775-1776 delivering the weapons needed by General George Washington to save Boston from capture by the British. For this task, Washington honored Knox with the title of Brigadier General of Artillery in the army and later, Secretary of War. Fort Knox (with all the gold) was named after him.

Henry Knox brought 55 pieces of artillery from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston using horses and oxen. He followed rough mountain trails, crossed frozen lakes and rivers to cover 300 miles of wilderness. When he arrived in Westfield he was

welcomed by a celebration of the town and spent the night at the Clapp Tavern (on Court Street). A marker in front of the old Westfield Post Office marks the route that he followed through town.



FORT TICONDEROGIA



Floods

In 1927 a flood on the Westfield River caused extensive damage. 2 people were killed and a gas station was washed away. In 1949 there was another big flood and in 1955 when the last flood occurred there were dikes and dams built to protect the downtown area, but the Westfield River still overflowed.



Fire

The Professional Building fire happened in 1952. Two explosions were heard before it burst into flames. With freezing weather, the water covered the building in ice. The fire department could not put out the fire because the hoses were too short. Now, no building can be taller than the fire department's ladders and hoses can reach!

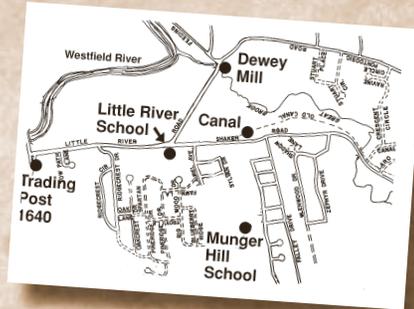


Munger Hill School

The Little River School District was one of the oldest in the history of the town. A one room school house built in 1863 on the corner of Little River Road and Shaker Road. This school was used until 1931. A mill for sawing lumber and grinding corn was built by the Dewey brothers on Two-Mile Brook (the Great Brook located near the Country Mart Store). This original mill was washed away during a flood in 1878.

The early settlement of Westfield was near this school district. Thomas Cooper came from Springfield and purchased the land near Golf Acres. Three traders from Connecticut established a trading post near the present site of the Westfield shops. During this time it was undecided if Westfield belonged to Connecticut or Massachusetts.

The bed of the old New Haven-Northampton Canal followed the trail of what people now drive on when they travel on Little River Road (at the base of Cardinal Lane). The earthen banks of this canal can be seen today and provide for some exciting bike trails.

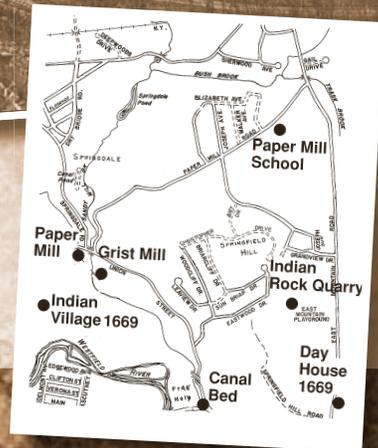
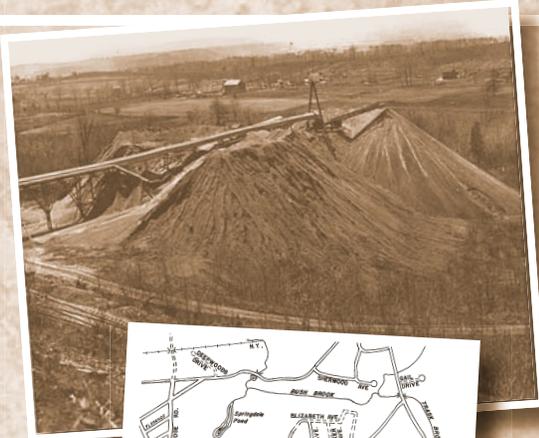


Paper Mill School

Rock quarrying at John S. Lane and Son, Inc. is familiar to those students attending the Paper Mill School.

The quarry is made up of the molten basalt (dark color rock) that welled up from below the earth as volcanic action took place during the prehistoric period.

At the bottom of Paper Mill Road was the location of the Springdale Paper Mills which is where this school gets its name. This area is often referred to as the "Day District", from the old school building on East Mountain Road once owned by the Day family.

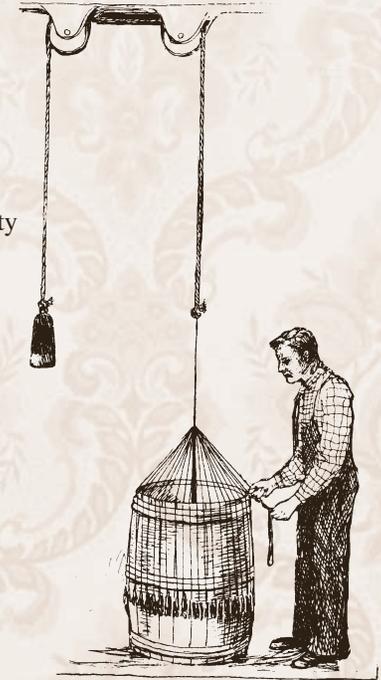


Whip City

Westfield became known as "Whip City" as early as 1808 when the first whips were being made here. The whips were made with a hickory stick and a leather lash held together by a "keeper". Within five years new methods were developed and by 1820 such materials as rattan, whalebone and animal hooves were being used to produce high quality whips.

Hirum Hull invented the barrel plaiting whip device which improved the quantity of whips made in Westfield. By 1855 there were 12 different small whip companies in town, totaling 20 million dollars being made a year! In one day 30,000 whips were produced. 99.9% of the world's whips were made in "Whip City".

Eventually the small companies merged into one big company, the U.S. Whip Company. But when the automobile was invented the need for whips declined. Today there is only one whip company remaining in Westfield. The Westfield Whip Manufacturing Company Inc. is the only remaining whip company left in Westfield.



THE OLD-FASHIONED PLAITING MACHINE.

The Barrel Plaiting Machine



New England Whip Company was located where the Mobil Gas station is on Elm Street.



Strathmore Paper Mill worker

The Paper Industry

While in the late 1800s the Whip Industry was still important in Westfield, other industries became stronger. Attracted by the rivers in this area the paper companies established mills here. The Crane Brothers began making paper on Mill Street in 1868. This building, the Mill at Crane Pond is used today for offices.

The Paper mills have changed ownerships within the years, but are presently owned by International Paper and remains a strong employer and contributor to this community.

Moseley School

There has been a school on the north side of the great river since 1737. In 1835 a Union Street School was built for primary and intermediate grades. It operated until 1931. The building still stands as a private home. The new school was built in 1915 to ease over crowding at the Prospect Hill School and Union Street School. Westfield's population grew tremendously in the years before World War I due to immigration from Europe at the time.

The Moseley name dates back to 1777, when a respectable Moseley family came to Westfield from Dorchester, Massachusetts. They owned the first store in Westfield on route 20. The old Moseley Homestead was torn down in 2005 and replaced with townhouses.

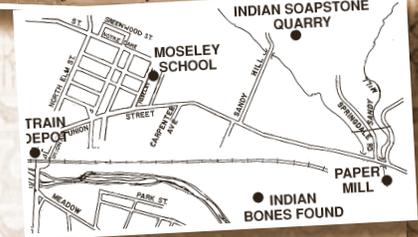
Col. David Moseley, born in 1793 was active in all social and political matters of his town. He was interested in education, was chairman of the school

committee for some years and was also one of the trustees for the Westfield Academy. Moseley School closed in 2009.



Students of Moseley School

Photo: Ross Comer Collection



Bicycles

Albert Augustus Pope manufactured the first American bicycle in 1877. At the turn of the century he brought his company to Westfield and named it the Pope Manufacturing Company. Before World War I, the bicycles and motorcycles made in Westfield were used for pleasure. When America entered the war the army chose the Columbia Military model as the standard bicycle for the soldiers to carry messages, food, ammunition and help to wounded men.

Over the years the company became the Columbia Bike Company and made other products such as: cycle exercisers, mopeds, lawn mowers, gym equipment and school furniture. Columbia Manufacturing Inc. is still contributing to our community.



Southampton Road School

This school is located in the Hampton Plains section of town. It was opened in 1955 with an addition constructed in 1987. Before this school was built most of the children attended a small one room brick school house located on North Road.

Beyond the school was the location of the old brickyard. Millions of years ago the silt from the bottom of a glacial lake, Lake Hitchcock, filled this low lying area making the clay deposits. Many of the buildings in Westfield are made from this clay.

In 1905 Troop C 15th cavalry regiment trained with horses at a field owned by Vincent Barnes on Hampton Plains called, Camp Bartlett. Many of the horses for the cavalry had to be brought into town by the railroad. Vincent E. Barnes donated the land for training troops during World War II and now it is known as Barnes

Airport and home to the 104th National Guard.

Pequot Park was located in the Southampton Road School district. During the great depression in 1929, Pequot Park fell to ruin. The park became Hampton Ponds State Park and is once again available for the enjoyment of the people.



School on North Road in 1885 (left)



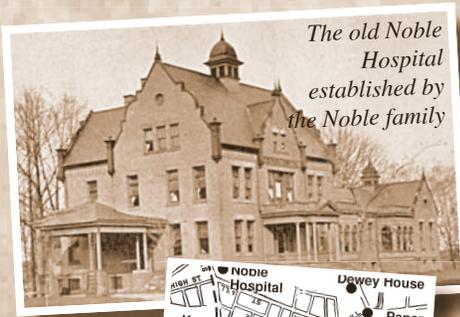
Highland School

Highland School was built in 1952 with an addition constructed in 1987. Two of Westfield's historic parks were located in this area of town. Wolf Pit Meadows was a recreational area located on the flats between the Steven Paper Mill and the Upper Crane Mill. A pageant celebrating Westfield's 250th anniversary was held here in 1919. More than 8,000 people attended. Crane Park was located where St. James and Highland Avenue are now. It was created by the Crane brothers and included a half mile horse track, a horse barn and a baseball diamond!

The land on which Highland School was built was once owned by the Gillette family. The name Gillette can still be recognized today, even on the library building!

Noble Hospital is located within the Highland School district.

The Noble family were among the first settlers in this area and have contributed to the establishment of the hospital as a service to this community. The old hospital was torn down to build the present day Noble hospital.



The old Noble Hospital established by the Noble family

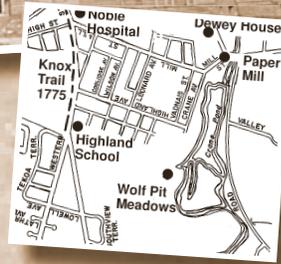
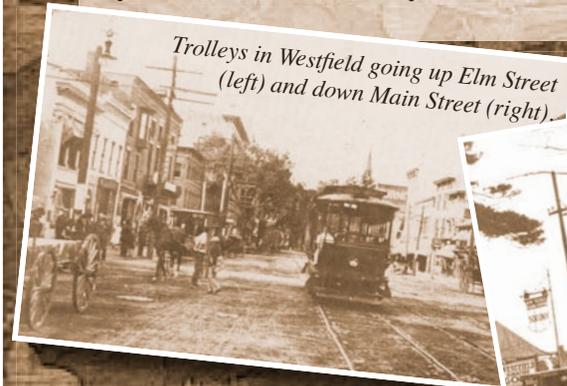


Photo: Ross Corner Collection

Trolley Cars

Trolley cars were the mode of transportation at the turn of the century. An early trolley was pulled by a horse, then changed to compressed air and finally the tracks were electrified in 1895. People used trolleys to get to work and also for pleasure outings. By 1930-40 all the trolleys in Westfield were gone.



Trolleys in Westfield going up Elm Street (left) and down Main Street (right).



Juniper Park School

Juniper Park was a wilderness park with horseback trails and picnic spots. In 1953 it was sold to the state for \$1.00 for building a larger Westfield State College. Juniper Park School was built to be a laboratory school for observation and experimentation of students training at the college.

When the boy's dorm was built they found bones of Revolutionary War soldiers. It is believed they were buried outside of town after a small pox epidemic.

At the turn of the century Woronoco Park was located across from the school (homes are there today). In 1894 this park had one of the best known horse racing tracks in Massachusetts. To get to Woronoco Park people would ride on trolley cars going up Western Avenue.

Henry Knox's historic trek of guns and artillery passed in front of this school on his way to Boston. The Westfield Town Farm (known as the Poor Farm) was built in 1841 and was located off the bluff behind the school.

Westfield marble was dug out of the side of Russell Mountain. This marble can be found in the old Westfield Post Office, the Empire State Building and the tomb of Abraham Lincoln.

Woronoco Park operated for 53 years.

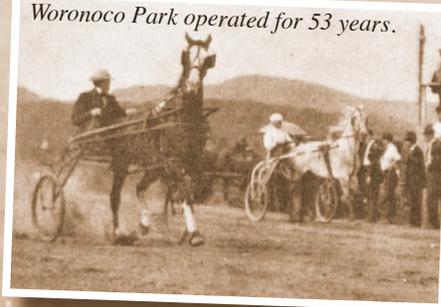


Photo: Ross Corner Collection

Railroads

Westfield's first railroad was called the Western Railroad. It was part of the Boston & Albany Railroad track that ran from Boston to Albany, NY. Its first train ran from Westfield to Chester in 1841. The railroad station was built in 1879. It still stands and is now being used as an office building, located just over the bridge on the North side of town. In 1896, an underpass was built on North Elm Street, where the dusty street formerly rose to meet the tracks. (see page 14)

In the 1960's all passenger service stopped in Westfield and the station was closed.

Photos: The Ross Corner Collection

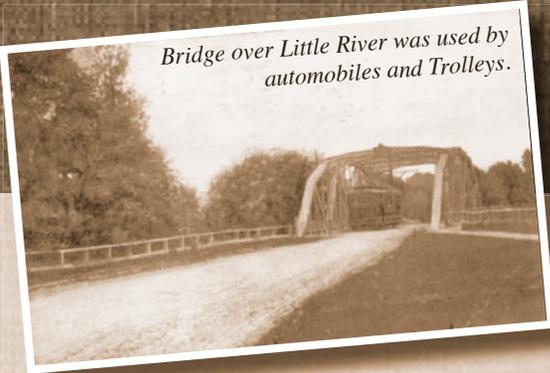


Bridges and Waterways

The early bridges built over the Westfield River were crude wooden structures. Every spring the floods would wash the bridges away. Finally the people of Westfield built a covered bridge over the river in 1840 and this bridge lasted for 40 years. The bridge was torn down and replaced with an iron bridge, but the strong currents of the river wore down the structure of the iron bridge. In 1939 The Great River Bridge was built over the Westfield River.

The bridge at Frogs Hole crosses the Westfield River. This bridge was always getting washed away in the floods. In 1932 the people built a strong steel bridge and they had to move the route of road to do it. In 2004 the county bridge was replaced with a new structure and, once again,

Bridge over Little River was used by automobiles and Trolleys.



they had to move the road to build it!

In 1830 a canal opened linking Westfield to the deep water port at New Haven, CT., called the New Haven and Northampton Canal. It was 80 miles long. The Westfield Harbor was located where Stop & Shop is today. It crossed Main Street west of Mechanic and Elm Street at Bartlett Street. The canal closed in 1847 due to high maintenance costs and the arrival of the railroads.

In the past there have been over 23 Major floods in Westfield. The town is surrounded by many small streams and there are bridges built over them that we cross everyday. It is interesting to think that once upon a time crossing these waterways was a very dangerous adventure

Franklin Avenue

Lumps Hollow district, as it was called in 1799, was given this name because the land it was built on originally belonged to Chief Wallump during the early days of the settlement. This school district has gone through several name changes. After Lump's Hollow, in 1818, it was called the Shepard Lane District and still later became the Franklin Avenue District. In 1866 a two story, four room brick school building was located at the present day site of the school and used until 1953 when the new building was built. In 1958 the school added a wing.

Located near this school district was the Hampden Toy Company, established in 1884. It

was located in a small building at 113 Franklin Street in the back kitchen of Myron Gilman's home. They manufactured toys and novelties for children.

The settlers crossed the river on foot above the waterfalls at the end of Franklin Avenue (near the school). Later a ferry and a dam were built and finally a bridge where the road crosses the river today.

Across the river at Pochassic is the homestead of John Bancroft, who was a spy for the British during the American Revolution.

The old Franklin Street School building

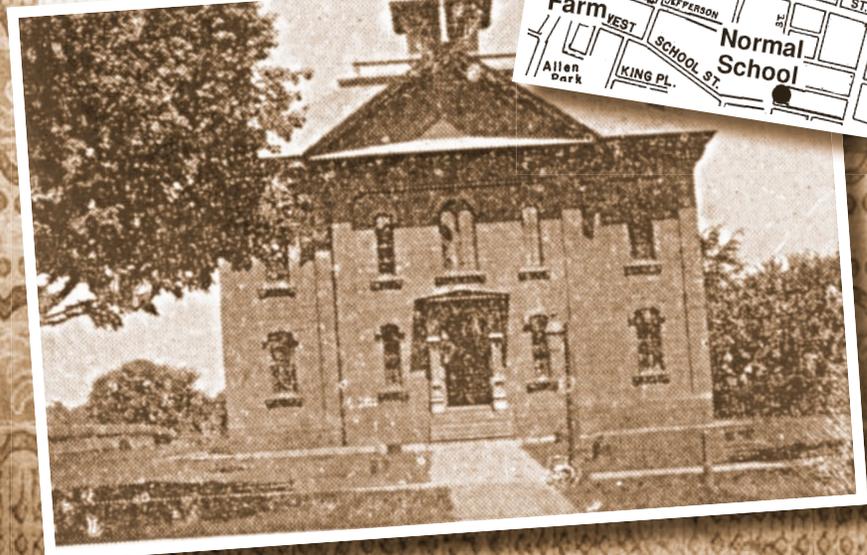


Photo: Ross Corner Collection



Horton's Bridge was a covered bridge over the Little River.



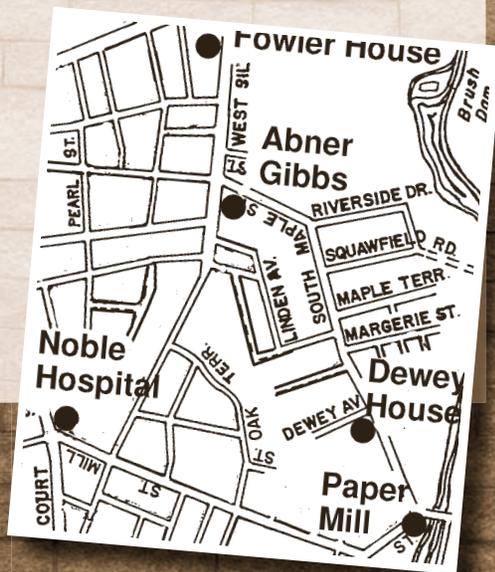
Abner Gibbs Graduation class

Abner Gibbs School

This district was around sometime before 1818. The first school building was located at the corner of West Silver and Pleasant Street on the opposite side of where it is now. This building burned in 1867 and was replaced with a 2 room brick building west of the spot it is now located. Again, this building was damaged by fire in 1904. The present school building was erected in 1914. It was named for Abner Gibbs as a memorial to his life and what he meant to Westfield.

Abner Gibbs was born in Blandford on February 8, 1835. After receiving a diploma from The

Normal School in 1863, he found teaching to be his life's work. He became the principal to the Westfield High School and Academy. He died suddenly at the start of his 17th year as principal in August 1883.



Troops from Camp Bartlett bringing supplies to the camp on Hampton Plains (Barnes Airfield).

Camp Bartlett and Barnes Airfield

The land on Hampton Plains (north side of Westfield) was used in 1905 as a training ground for the state militia. This training camp was called Camp Bartlett. It was named after General William Bartlett who was a Civil War Hero and became governor of Massachusetts.

Over 50,000 troops came to train for fighting in World War I. Troop C 15th Cavalry Regiment was the cavalry troop from Massachusetts at the camp. The men rode on horses and used horses to pull their artillery wagons. The Monument at Apremont Park is to honor the men who fought in the Battle of Apremont in France.

Vincent Barnes allowed the use of his fields on Hampdon Plains to land planes in 1923. A hanger for planes was built in 1936 and American Airlines began landing planes in Westfield in

1938. All commercial flights were stopped when the United States entered World War II on December 8, 1941. On the next day the first air raid was sounded in Westfield and all children were sent home from school.

During World War II Barnes Airfield was a very busy place. 2,500 men trained to fly planes, 52 transport planes were at the field and 1,000 troops were living in tents.

After World War II Barnes Airfield was used for American Airlines flights, flight instructions, charter service and repairs and airplane sales. Today Barnes Airfield is used by the 104th Fighter Wing of the Massachusetts National Guard for training, troop transport and for assisting with the protection of our country.

Looking Backwards ...



The Ralto on Elm Street was once a movie theatre. Now it is the United Transmission building.



The Train Depot on North Elm is now used as office space and we use cars instead of horses.



The bank drive-thru on Main Street was once the location of a church. The trolley tracks are now buried beneath the road.



Education

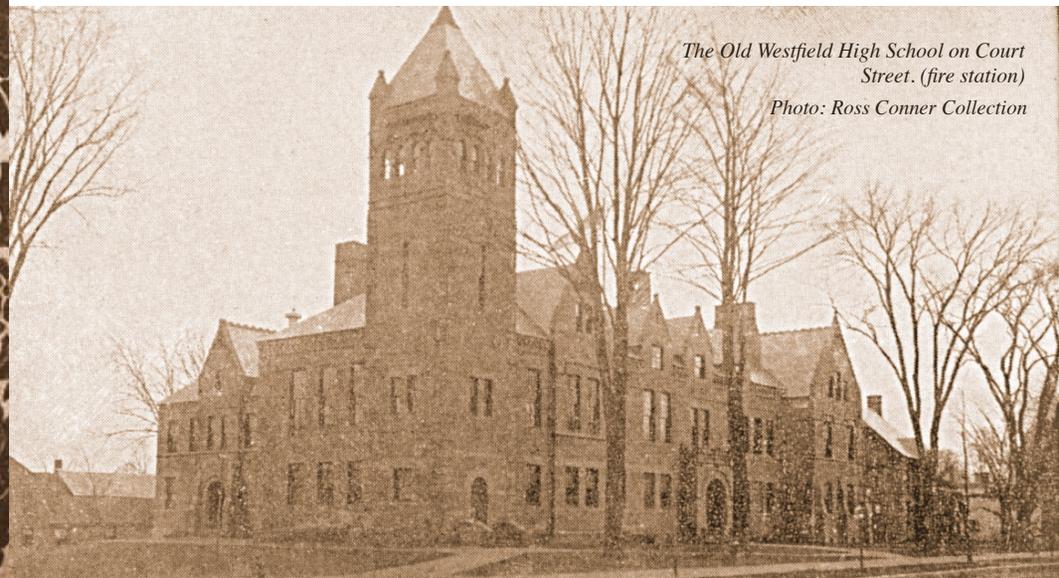
Education has always played an important part in the history of our town. As early as 1642 the Bay Colony set rules saying that any settlement of 50 people had to provide for the education of it's children. Parents or masters paid for their children's schooling. They paid about 3 pence a week for reading scholars and 4 pence for writing. If a family could not provide the fee for school, the parents would have to "barter" or trade something for services. Often, in the early days, schoolmasters were paid in grain instead of cash. The first teacher in history records was Mr. Dentre. The first female teacher was widow Catherine Noble who was hired in 1726.

The early schools were in homes called "dame schools". School buildings were added to the town as it grew and each section was divided into districts. The first building was built in 1700 and located "near the fort gate and the gully by John Noble's". In

1794 there were 16 districts and in 1878 there were 20 separate school buildings. Many of these rural schools were open until the late 1800s. Most of today's school districts date back to the early days of Westfield.



The Old Westfield Academy building. Present day location is the parking lot next to the fire station.



The Old Westfield High School on Court Street. (fire station)

Photo: Ross Conner Collection



Westfield State College - The Normal School

Reverend Davis helped create the Normal School in 1844. It was the second oldest teacher's college in America. In the beginning classes were held in a room on the upper floor of the old Westfield Academy. In 1846 the Normal School opened a new building on Washington Street. The women entered through the south door and the men entered through the north door. The first floor was used as an observation classroom where teachers practiced teaching the children of Westfield.

The Normal School was free to anyone who passed the qualification test and books for the year cost 50 cents. People studying to be teachers rented rooms in nearby homes or lived in the school boarding house on Washington Street.

The Normal School moved to a large building on Court Street in 1892 (City Hall). A model school was opened in 1899 on Washington Street to be used as a practice school for 400 children in grades 4-9. Today the words, Normal School, can still be read on both of these old the buildings.

The Normal School was a very important and respected college. President Roosevelt gave a speech at the commencement in 1902. In 1932 The Normal School became a state teaching college and today we know it as Westfield State College.

In 1956 Westfield State College moved to the location on Western Avenue. It is located on 307 acres of what was once known as a nature park, Juniper Park.



Looking down Court Street towards The First Congregational Church, before and now.



Looking up Elm Street towards the river, before and now.





The US Whip Company on Main Street then and now.



The Woronoco House and the Park Square Hotel were once located at the intersection of Main Street, Elm Street and School Street. This busy location has changed the look of downtown Westfield throughout the years



AN OLD WESTFIELD INDUSTRY



The present day location of Stop and Shop on Main Street was once The Port of Westfield (canal dock) and then the location of the HB Smith Boiler Company.

Parks and Playgrounds

The first place in town used as a community park was the green in the center of town. This area was used as a training ground for the militia and for cattle shows.

As the small town grew there was an interest in developing neighborhood playgrounds, playing fields, natural parks and wildlife reservations. There are many neighborhood playgrounds in Westfield: Chapman, Cross Street, East Mountain, Sadie Knox, Bullins and Whitney Fields.

In 1919 Tekoa Park was the first land reserved for the public use. It was created on land that was once used in the 1700s as the town rock quarry.

Wolf Pit Meadows and Crane Park was located behind the present location of Genesis Life Center. The park was used for recreation and many social events.

In the 1900s The Pequot Park (Hampton Ponds) was a favorite vacation spot. There was a dance pavilion, roller-skating rink, bowling alley and a stage for performers. One of the most exciting events was watching the two white diving horses, named King and Queen dive off a high platform into the lake below.

Stanley Park was created in 1949 by Frank Stanley Beveridge of Stanley Home Products. Stanley Park has 120 acres of flower gardens, trails, fountains, picnic areas, ponds, waterfalls, sports fields and a playground. There is a 95 foot Carillon Tower, a rustic colonial village and dinosaur footprints.

Westfield also has Grandmother's Garden, Parker Park, Holcomb Park and Robinson Park for people to visit for enjoyment.

Pequot Park was located where Hampton Ponds is today.

