

Background: In 2015, Jeff Robbins conducted research on commercial enterprises that shaped the growth and development of Warren and West Brookfield during the late 1800s. His work resulted in the following research paper, which was completed as part of his Worcester State University MA in History degree. Mr. Robbins teaches social studies and history at the Quaboag Regional Middle High School.

**A HISTORY OF LOCAL CAPITALISM IN WARREN AND WEST BROOKFIELD,**  
**MASSACHUSETTS (1870-1900)**

Throughout our history in New England, there have been eras that appear to lend themselves to prosperity and marked improvements in the lives of many. Economic success can be measured in a myriad of ways, but it must be noted that such growth would not be possible without the necessary socio-political environment, and perhaps most importantly, technological advancement. These extrinsic and intrinsic conditions allowed for a progressive atmosphere of capitalism to flourish in Massachusetts in the late 1800s. During this time, two western Worcester County towns, Warren and West Brookfield enjoyed a period of sustained success characterized by a multiplicity of commercial enterprises, as opposed to one sole industry such as textiles. Admittedly, the manufacture of textiles would become the focal industry in Warren by the end of the century, but during the late 1800s, a robust manufacturing roster, anchored by textiles, and supplemented by dependable agrarian endeavors, was in full swing.

Several factors account for this economic flourishing in the late 1800s. The Civil War had boosted production of military supplies in the general Massachusetts area. Warren and West Brookfield specifically manufactured woolens, shoes and boots, and condensed milk for the war effort. Therefore, an established manufacturing framework was already in place, following the inevitable return to normalcy. This diversified small manufacturing allowed the economy to become less dependent on a single industry, which could leave it susceptible should slumps in the market occur. An established railroad framework had already been created, making Warren and West Brookfield attractive to investment outside the community. Capital was coming from the larger cities, creating opportunity for the local workforce and the railroad made it possible for the manufactured products to reach outside consumers and markets. This was the maturity of the Industrial Revolution coming into being. Mechanical innovation and technological knowledge spurred this growth, while western expansion and growing populations fueled the need for manufactured goods. An emphasis on agriculture also contributed to the overall success of the

region, in addition to manufacturing. Farmers were well organized through social organizations, and the increased population in the towns during this growth period helped sustain business. The pastoral, agrarian setting also attracted visitors from urban areas who appreciated its tranquil and simple charm. Tourism was gaining a foothold and the outdoor activities appealed to locals as well. This indicates that a leisure class was present and in turn, provides for additional economic benefit to the region. The relative high standard of living and quality of life can be inferred from all of these factors. As we will see, the period of time between 1870-1900 represents, in many ways, the prime of Warren and West Brookfield- a “golden era” that set the standard for the towns and shaped their appearance, structures, and composition for the families who resided there.

Approximately twenty miles west of Worcester are the towns of Warren and West Brookfield. They are connected by the 26 mile Quaboag River corridor which flows west-southwest from Quaboag Pond in Brookfield, eventually joining the Ware River in the Three Rivers village of Palmer (along with the Swift River). At that juncture, the waterway becomes the Chicopee River, a tributary to the Connecticut River. Although the towns are adjoining, each possess different characteristics that in turn, would shape their economic futures. In West Brookfield, in the upriver section of the Quaboag River, the meandering course of the water creates a wide valley. As it nears the center of the town, a broad meadow (developed as the town common) is situated near Lake Wickaboag which drains into the Quaboag River. In general terms, West Brookfield’s location provided excellent agricultural opportunities as well as a natural setting for the residential/commercial development that would grow in the vicinity of the lake, river, and common.

In contrast, the rugged and uneven topography of Warren gives the Quaboag River a more restricted water channel through Warren. There are numerous prominent hills throughout the town, such as Coy’s Hill and most notably, Marks Mountain. Marks Mountain has an elevation of almost 1,000 feet above sea level; over 400 feet above the adjacent downtown Warren Center. The rocky ledge and uplifted landscape provided the river corridor with multiple zones for waterpower sites that were well suited to early industry in the 1800s. Besides the Quaboag River linkage between the towns, an important transportation corridor known as the Boston Post Road was a connecting element. Much of this route even followed portions of the

Native American “Old Bay Path”. Thus, Warren and West Brookfield were inextricably linked by water and land routes. By 1839, they would be connected to a much larger region via the railroad. At first, the railroad was Western Railroad, which connected New York (state) to Worcester. Another rail line, the Boston and Worcester Railroad connected those two cities as well. In 1870, a merger of these two companies and additional spurs formed the larger Boston and Albany Railroad.<sup>1</sup>

The existence of the railroad would have great implications for the two towns. Constructed adjacent to the Quaboag River in what was the most accessible route from Worcester to Springfield, the railroad would become the lifeblood of Warren and West Brookfield as a means to make outlying markets available. In the early 1800s, the towns “made slow and somewhat uncertain growth until the introduction into them of manufactures and the advent of railways. These events set their resources and advantages in order...”<sup>2</sup> The change was slow at first. As the mid-century began to take shape, households found themselves more dependent on distant markets and less on the local exchanges and indebtedness that characterized the early decades of the 1800s.<sup>3</sup> Railway efficiency had been tested and fine-tuned during the Civil War. The organization and bureaucracy necessary to keep the railroad functioning at a high capacity had developed in part due to the war, which had served as a mobilization exercise. By the 1870s, the Boston and Albany line was well established; already the handsome depots in both towns were the central hub of their respective communities.

Warren and West Brookfield shared similarities with almost all modest New England towns in terms of common commercial enterprises that revolved around basic needs of the community. In the late nineteenth century, these included retail establishments for groceries and clothing, and pharmacies (or apothecaries in the vernacular of the time). Transportation enterprises consisted of liveries, stagecoaches, wheelwrights, harness makers and the like.

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<sup>1</sup> Karr, Ronald Dale. *The Rail Lines of Southern New England*. (Pepperell, MA: Branch Line Press, 1995) 279-280.

<sup>2</sup>International Publishing Company. *Leading Manufacturers and Merchants of Central and Western Massachusetts; Historical and Descriptive Review of the Industrial Enterprises of Worcester, Hampden, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Franklin Counties*. (Boston: International Publishing Company, 1886) 139.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Clark. *The Roots of Rural Capitalism; Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) 121-122.

Sawmills, shingle mills, grist mills and small-scale brickyards were also present; furniture and cabinet makers met local need. Beginning in the mid-century, however, two principal industries came to shape Warren and West Brookfield employment: millinery and footwear, respectively.

Warren small scale manufacturing was established in the early nineteenth century. Scythes were produced in 1812 and by 1815 cotton cloth was spun (Western Cotton Manufacturing Company); in the next year woolen cloth and pig iron were being manufactured.<sup>4</sup> By the 1830s, textile operations were established in Warren and West Warren and expanded accordingly through the advent of power looms and the railroad.<sup>5</sup> The expansion was usually preceded by fires in the mills; two notable fires occurred in 1816 and 1847 and resulted in the rebuilding of a more up to date structures with larger operations.<sup>6</sup> West Warren would continue to grow through its position in the textile industry and the rise of its largest employer, the Warren Cotton Mills Company.

In many ways, the backbone of Warren economic prosperity can be attributed to the Warren Cotton Mills Company. The mills that the company built were named for their location away from West Warren and position alongside the Quaboag River. For example, Mill #1 and #2 were located in West Warren; they were built in 1854 (rebuilt in 1880) and 1866 respectively.<sup>7</sup> Mill #3 was built in 1875 approximately one mile west and Mill #4 was built in 1883 even farther upriver. As many as 900 jobs were provided by the company during its peak years.<sup>8</sup> Company housing was constructed for each of the mills which would lead to its existence, for all intents and purposes, as a “company town” after the turn of the century. The company was purchased in 1898 by Thorndike Mills of Palmer, Massachusetts who acquired more property, both residential and communal by 1928. The Great Depression would signal the end of this mill’s chapter in history before it would be transformed for specialty products for the textile industry. The Wm. E. Wright Company moved into the buildings in 1934 from their

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<sup>4</sup> Olney I. Darling. *History of Warren, Massachusetts*. (West Brookfield, MA: Thomas Morey, 1874), 15.

<sup>5</sup> Eunice P. Cutter. *History of Worcester County, Massachusetts, from Its First Settlement to the Present Time, with a History and Description of its Cities and Towns*. Vol. II. (Boston: C.F. Jewett and Company, 1879) 447.

<sup>6</sup> Darling, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Sylvia G. Buck. *Warren: a Town in the Making, 1741-1991*. (Warren Arts Council. Palmer, MA: Roberts and Sons Printing, Incorporated, 1994) 89.

<sup>8</sup> Buck, 90.

previous operations in Orange, New Jersey. The company assumed ownership of all mill and town property formerly owned by Thorndike Mills, steadily acquiring more as time went on, and began a remarkable history as the country's largest producer of products for home sewing in the twentieth century.

Two additional companies that operated in the downtown area of Warren are worth noting in relation to the textile industry. The firm of Sayles and Jenks was consolidated from two earlier operations to produce cassimeres, or woolen twill. By 1886, approximately 200 individuals were employed by this mill.<sup>9</sup> A smaller mill operated by M.K. Whipple employed 22 individuals who produced satinet warp, which has a satin appearance but is comprised of finely woven cotton and wool.<sup>10</sup> Both of these mills are depicted on an 1857 map amidst the modest small town enterprises such as sawmills, a tannery, and a tin shop.<sup>11</sup>

While textile production became critical to Warren, boot, shoe, and heel manufacturing did the same for West Brookfield. John Fales is credited with being the first shoemaker in the area, having a boot and shoe shop in the 1830s. The Fales and (Hammand) Brown partnership began in 1840 and started the manufacturing of footwear in earnest.<sup>12</sup> By 1865, numerous shops were in production and 327 men and 27 women were employed.<sup>13</sup> In 1870, at least six major operations were in business: Fales and Brown, Lemuel Fullam and Company, Smith and Dane, J.T. Wood and Company, Allen and Makepeace, and S.L. Barnes and Son (who made heels).<sup>14</sup> At this time, the shoe industry in the region was unparalleled. The Batcheller Company in North Brookfield was considered the largest shoemaker in the country by the 1880s and the Isaac Prouty Company in Spencer was almost as large.<sup>15</sup> Between North Brookfield, Spencer, and

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<sup>9</sup> International Publishing Company, 142.

<sup>10</sup> International Publishing Company, 140.

<sup>11</sup> Baker, Wm. E. and Company. *Map of Worcester County, Massachusetts*. (Boston: Wm. E. Baker and Company, 1857).

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey H. Fiske *A History of West Brookfield 1675-1990*. (West Brookfield Historical Commission. Belmont, MA: Belmont Printing, 2009) 104.

<sup>13</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission. *Reconnaissance Survey Report: West Brookfield*. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1984) 7.

<sup>14</sup> F.W Beers. *Atlas of Worcester County, Massachusetts*. (New York: F.W. Beers and Company, 1870).

<sup>15</sup> International Publishing Company, 128, 136.

West Brookfield, it can be conservatively estimated that 3,000 individuals were employed in the footwear business by 1885. It should be noted that Warren also had shoe and boot manufacturing at this time. Cutler Moore was a boot manufacturing business from 1857 to 1884: his three-story operation became a paper box making shop the next year, employing 40 workers.<sup>16</sup> Another Warren footwear manufacturer, William Ramsdell, began his boot and shoe manufacturing business in 1864 before developing real estate and opening the Hotel Ramsdell in 1886.<sup>17</sup>

The shoe trade employed an opportunistic feature that many workers took advantage of to boost their wages. The concept was “outwork” whereby raw materials would go out to workers who make or finish items at home. The textile industry famously used outwork to craft buttons, ribbons, and miscellaneous additives that supplemented the industry. Much of the work could be tedious and time-consuming; children often worked alongside their parents to boost the family income. In Massachusetts, it was common for families in the Connecticut River valley towns to use outwork to produce palm-leaf hats and brooms from broom-corn.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in West Brookfield, outwork was performed by women to sew straw into the newest “spring style of bonnets” that were marketed and sold by Eliza Gilbert.<sup>19</sup> A newspaper report of this story estimated that 80 women were involved in sewing the bonnets. For the shoe industry, the tasks were more skilled and required dedicated space. Small workshops were constructed in backyards to facilitate boot and shoe outwork.

These structures are depicted in the 1870 Beer’s Atlas as “shoe shops” as opposed to “boot factories” that denote the actual manufacturer’s location. The outwork that was performed in them usually consisted of “bottoming”. This process involved sewing or “pegging” (with wooden pegs) the soles of shoes/boots to the leather uppers. The small sheds generally measured 15 by 15 foot in diameter although most were closer to 10 by 10 feet. Despite these small differences in size, they were referred to collectively as “ten-footers”.<sup>20</sup> In the region today, some ten-footers still stand, although they are commonly converted for use into chicken coops or

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<sup>16</sup> Buck, 32.

<sup>17</sup> Buck, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Clark, 179-196.

<sup>19</sup> Sun Publishing Company, February 21, 1873.

<sup>20</sup> Stephanie Jarvis. “Part-time resident offers town full-time reward”. *The New Leader*. Spencer, MA: September 19, 1995 (3).

garden sheds. In the *Warren and Brookfields Directory of 1893*, nineteen individuals have “bottomer” listed for their occupation; many more than that are listed separately as “shoemaker” and/or “bootmaker”.<sup>21</sup> It is probable that many of these would have had ten-footers on their property given their addresses which were in close proximity to the shoe factories and map locations of shoe shops. Warren also contained its own shoe and boot enterprises, but not to the extent of West Brookfield. A shoe pegging machine manufacturer advertised in 1872 gives references for customers. Among the list of manufacturers are two from Warren (Cutler Moore and H.B. Bosworth); thirteen of the remaining twenty are from Massachusetts with the remainder from as far away as Davenport, Iowa.<sup>22</sup>

As the shoe and textile industries became key components of West Brookfield and Warren, other industries were initiated. For Warren and its mechanical base as a mill town, various factory enterprises took root. Perhaps the most famous of all regional specialty businesses was the manufacturing of pumps started by L.J. Knowles in the 1850s. Knowles was a talented inventor with considerable mechanical skills that he developed from his early work in textiles. In 1862, he operated two factories in Warren, the L.J. Knowles and Brother Loom Works and the Knowles Steam Pump Company.<sup>23</sup> The loom business would move to Worcester within a few years but the pump business grew exponentially due to rapidly emerging markets. Initially the pumps were used for railroads, to extinguish fires, and to empty water from shafts in mining applications. Many more applications would be engineered as years progressed. By 1879, the pump business employed 130 men and was consolidated with a Boston interest as the Blake Knowles Steam Pump Company. The company’s emergence into world markets began in the next decade when the yearly manufacturing of 4,800 pumps were attained and their reputation was growing.<sup>24</sup> The company was sold in 1896 and moved to East Cambridge, Massachusetts but investors (mostly from Warren) and management (from Blake Knowles) formed the Warren Steam Pump Company the next year. That company would become one of

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<sup>21</sup> Fitzgerald and Company. *Warren and Brookfields Directory for 1893*. (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton Book and Job Printer, 1893), 113-123.

<sup>22</sup> Wentworth and Company. *Hampden and Hampshire Counties Business Directory and Register for 1871-1872*. (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son Printers, 1872), Advertising Department, 21.

<sup>23</sup> James David Moran. *The Story of Warren Pumps, 1897-1997*. (Warren, MA: Warren Pumps, 1997) 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> Moran, 8.



the leading manufacturers of industrial pumps worldwide over the next century, expanding numerous times, and becoming a primary contractor for the United States Navy since 1904.<sup>25</sup>

The national reputation for excellence from manufactured good from Warren was not limited only to Warren Pumps. The J. and I.E. Moore Company began in 1858 and grew steadily through the century as they developed specialized ink products. Their best known product was trademarked as the “Excelsior” brand school ink, commonly found throughout schoolhouses the United States. Other ink varieties that were marketed included “Moore’s Merchant’s and Banker’s Writing and Copying Ink”, “Zula Black Writing Ink”, as well as violet, blue, carmine, and red ink.<sup>26</sup> The company was also known for its laundry bluing product which was developed in 1865. Laundry bluing was a fine blue iron powder that was a customary addition to washings at the time because it improved the appearance of white fabrics. In her *History of Warren*, Olna Darling describes this blueing product, as “absolutely unequaled”.<sup>27</sup>

Other Warren manufacturers include A.W. Crossman, who began a tool business in 1853 in West Warren. The company was known as Crossman Edge Tools and it marked the advent of West Warren manufacturing; when the business began there were only approximately twenty dwellings.<sup>28</sup> Chisels, gouges, drawing knives, and shaves were made in this shop, which produced tools as late as the 1890s before being sold. The innovative designs and patented tools produced by Crossman, the “Father of West Warren”, were well known in their time and are prized by collectors today. Another specialized industry in Warren was the Torkelson Gun Manufacturing Company which employed 50 men from 1898 to 1905.<sup>29</sup> Reinhard Torkelson, owner of the company, produced both single barrel and double barrel shotguns before merging with another firearm company.<sup>30</sup> The Slater Engine Company, started in 1864 by Frank Slater, also contributed to the economic power of Warren manufacturing. The company prospered through the 1890s with street railway engines in its East Main Street location. In 1897, the company employed 100 men but declined in 1903 before being purchased by Perkins Machine

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<sup>25</sup> Moran, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Fitzgerald and Company, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Olney, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Olney, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Buck, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Peter R Hastings and Barbara J. Hastings. *The Village of West Warren, Massachusetts: a Small Historic Mill Town*. (Self-published four volume manuscript. On file at the Warren Public Library, 2012), Volume 2, 160.

Company of Boston.<sup>31</sup> The 1893 listing of vocations for the roughly 1,300 heads of households in Warren gives an indication of the high skilled workers employed by companies like Crossman Edge Tools and the Slater Engine Company. The directory lists 152 individuals as “machinists”, representing almost 12 percent of the town’s workforce. Companies like these helped Warren have its “wonderful growth” where population increased 89 percent between 1870 and 1890.<sup>32</sup>

The lack of readily available waterpower prevented any moderately sized manufacturing enterprise (other than shoes) to begin in West Brookfield in the mid-nineteenth century, as compared to Warren. That would change with the advent of steam power in an industrial setting during the 1870s. One such industry that developed in West Brookfield was the corset business. Corsets were worn by European women as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century but did not become common in America until the mid-1800s. Charles (C.H.) Jackson brought corset making to West Brookfield in 1869 after early operations in Worcester and Boston proved unsatisfactory.<sup>33</sup> Women were chiefly employed in the business as sewing was the primary task. In 1873, one of the largest businesses in West Brookfield was the Jackson’s Bay State Corset Factory. A column in *The Spencer Sun* described the 120 young women who were employed there and the 100 dozen corsets per day that were made. Interestingly, whalebone was used to stiffen the corsets (before being replaced by metal); the same column put the value of whalebone used by the company as 100 dollars per day (over 2,000 dollars in value today).<sup>34</sup> By 1880, 300 were employed and this figure would comprise the workforce for roughly the next thirty years, although there were periods of volatility. A fire in 1886 led to the reformation of the company as the Olmstead Quaboag Corset Company which built a large facility on Pleasant Street under the direction of Chauncey Olmstead.

Numerous newspaper accounts detail the orders for the corset industry throughout the late 1800s. Railroad shipments, new orders, additions/reductions in staff are all chronicled for this mainstay industry in the West Brookfield columns. The company even had its own football team in 1899 that played other towns and factory teams. The shoe business that had dominated West

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<sup>31</sup> Buck, 45, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Solomon B. Stebbins. *An Account of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of Warren*. (Boston: Press of Nathan Sawyer and Son, 1891) 35.

<sup>33</sup> Fiske, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Sun Publishing Company, February 7, 1873.

Brookfield manufacturing in the 1870s and the 1880s diminished greatly by the early 1890s due to fires, moving to other locations, and competition from the larger shoe factories that were present in Spencer and North Brookfield. The corset business, however, persevered. Production remained steady up until World War I when labor shortages were felt. The Olmstead Quaboag Corset Company ceased business in 1922 when operations were merged with a Springfield corset factory.<sup>35</sup>

Small manufacturing enterprises varied considerably in West Brookfield, ranging from box shops to fishing pole producers. Between 1870 and 1892, at least three box factories were present in town, operated by the Zeigler brothers (who had two of the businesses) and Henry Tower.<sup>36</sup> The boxes were constructed of wood or cardboard and would primarily be used for the boot and shoe industry. When the McIntosh shoe factory on Central Street closed, its location near the railroad and large five story facility attracted investors. The vacant facility was the subject of much speculation as to its future owner and what type of jobs would be performed. In 1899, the property was rumored to have a potential buyer from New York that would begin a quilt making business.<sup>37</sup> However, it was the Standard Fishing Rod Company that purchased the factory to produce its fishing poles beginning in 1900. Bamboo (the raw material) was transported by train to town, and completed fishing poles were sent out the same way. The company appears to have employed as many as fifty workers early on and would go to make fishing reels before disbanding in 1916.<sup>38</sup> The company that owned the fishing rod factory was based in Dover, Delaware and later Montague, Massachusetts, showing investment outside the Quaboag area.

Other specialty manufacturing in West Brookfield in the late 1800s consisted of the W.K. Lewis and Brothers Condensed Milk Manufactory that was located at the end of the aptly named Milk Street as it crossed the Quaboag River. Like the corset business and others in town, the W.K. Lewis operation began with investors from outside the community, actively seeking a rural location with access to rail transportation. W.K. Lewis and Brothers of Boston began the condensed milk business in West Brookfield in 1863, building an impressive three story

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<sup>35</sup> Fiske, 97.

<sup>36</sup> Fiske, 112.

<sup>37</sup> Brookfield Times, May 26, 1899.

<sup>38</sup> Fiske, 108-109.

“Manufactory” that processed milk from local farms as well as New Braintree dairies. The condensed milk was sent to troops during the Civil War and sold as Eagle Brand under agreement with Gail Borden.<sup>39</sup> Later it was sold under the Anchor Brand and used on the Cunard, Savannah, and Fruit Steamship lines.<sup>40</sup> The factory also produced cheese and butter, and most certainly would have prompted farms to expand their dairying operations at the time. In fact, the firm did have milk contracts and quotas with area farms. For over thirty years the company conducted steady business, but following a reorganization into the Boston Condensed Milk and Creamery Company in 1895, milk payment became an issue and supply by the farmers was curtailed in 1897.<sup>41</sup> The company never really recovered from this dispute and closed operations sometime in the early 1900s.

In addition to outside funding by capitalists, the corset and condensed milk businesses shared another interesting feature: the beginning of recreation investment in the area by key figures in both businesses. In the 1870s, steamboat excursions were advertised in the local papers. The first of these advertisements was in June, 1873 for “fishing parties” or “pleasure parties” on Lake Wickaboag on a boat owned by Charles Jackson (owner of the Bay State Corset operation in town). His boat could handle six to 30 passengers.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the superintendent of the milk factory, Charles Knowlton, used a dock at the plant for his river steamboat which took weekend picnic parties up and down the Quaboag River. He eventually added a second boat to this side business, which often used Brookfield or Podunk Grove as the settings for his picnic spots. A photograph of Knowlton’s passengers at another of these locations, “Lincoln Woods” at the base of the Long Hill area of West Brookfield, shows the hospitality and entertainment that was provided.<sup>43</sup> Two canvas tents, one canvas dining fly with kitchen, a hobby horse, oil lamps, wooden tables and chairs, and small brass band were at the stopover. The existence of these “side businesses” suggests that local population had the means (and leisure time) to afford recreation, and speaks favorably of the quality of life in the region. It also

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<sup>39</sup> Jay Papers, 1979.

<sup>40</sup> Brenda Metterville and William Jankins. *Images of America: West Brookfield*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2015) 57.

<sup>41</sup> Fiske, 74-75.

<sup>42</sup> Sun Publishing Company, June 11, 1873.

<sup>43</sup> William Jankins, photograph from private collection, interview with author. April 26, 2015.

indicates that economic opportunities were recognized and pursued by those possessing technical ability, such as Knowlton and Jackson.

Warren's most prominent citizens also fostered an encouraging business climate that benefitted the town. A.W. Crossman, in addition to his edged tool manufacturing business, developed commercial and residential real estate in West Warren. These buildings were usually built with bricks furnished from his own brickyard, located south of West Warren near the Brimfield/Palmer/Warren town borders. (This was most commonly known as the Brimfield Brick Company although seven separate owners, including Crossman, manufactured brick there from 1840 up to 1955 when the Massachusetts Turnpike was built in its location.)<sup>44</sup> Prominent individuals also contributed to the improvement of the towns' civic and cultural atmosphere by constructing libraries. The Warren Public Library was built in 1889 with a donation of 5,000 dollars from Nathan Richardson, a local real estate broker. L.J. Knowles, pump manufacturer and later state representative and senator, also contributed the same amount. The library was constructed in the Richardson Romanesque style and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. In West Brookfield, the Merriam Public Library was built in 1880. Like Warren, the town had modest library services before the dedicated public library was opened. Charles Merriam, of Merriam-Webster publishing fame, donated the land and building, valued at over 15,000 dollars. The building was constructed in a gothic style. This money was available because of the success that the publishing company Merriam and his brothers owned had the rights to publish the Noah Webster dictionary.<sup>45</sup> Although Merriam lived in Springfield, his connection to his birthplace and dedication to literacy resulted in the library. This manner of donation by prominent citizens and construction of buildings or edifices for municipal enjoyment was fairly common for this era. It indicates that tremendous profits were available to those entrepreneurs whose sense of "giving back" put money back into the community. Pride may have played some small role as well. Individuals who were successful could literally transform their towns through their donations, insuring recognition and respect. Financing any public building today is far more complex. Decisions must be reached by consensus in the community (not always easily achieved) and bonds and debt complicate the process. In the late 1800s, generosity and gratitude produced results. Citizens from both towns benefitted from their

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<sup>44</sup> Hastings, Volume 3, 241.

<sup>45</sup> Fiske, 202.

respective libraries, which were “state of the art” for their time. Both libraries are still enjoyed by town residents to this day.

The towns were similar in many other respects concerning the manner in which homes and businesses were built. Tradesmen primarily worked locally, but specialists would be sought outside their own communities. Timber framers who constructed barns often travelled beyond their towns for their specialized craft. Another example would be individuals who were adept at moving structures or overseeing foundation work, as in the case of E.W. Combs, who frequently appeared in newspaper columns in the mid-1870s and 1880s that detailed such work. Other frequent names that appears in the newspapers were William Fullam of North Brookfield and Seth Allen of West Brookfield. Any boost in local economies resulted in increases in construction as well as additions/modifications to current structures. Summer newspaper reports were often full of accounts of this type of work. In August, 1873 *The Spencer Sun* describes events in West Brookfield in the following manner, “Our carpenters are full of business as many of our townspeople are making additions and improvements to their houses and grounds...” before going on to describe five such projects.<sup>46</sup> Despite the few formal listings for carpenters and builders that are listed in the trade section for town directories, an examination of the household vocations for Warren and West Brookfield gives a more comprehensive picture of the construction trade . The 1893 directory for Warren lists only two builders for the town but the record of vocations for households lists 29 individuals as “carpenters”.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, there are listings for painters, masons, and 134 “laborers”-which comprise over ten percent of the male population. Clearly, there was work to be done. For West Brookfield, a town with less than half of the population, only seven individuals were listed as “carpenter”. It would appear from this small number, that contracting for structures was done by the larger businesses in the area, who brought their own carpentry crews. For smaller repairs and additions, it can be inferred that “handyman” types performed the work. This seems to be the case for work completed at the behest of the town. Individuals who performed repairs and basic carpentry/labor tasks were detailed in the Town Report for West Brookfield for 1885; over 15 individuals are listed.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Sun Publishing Company, August 15, 1873.

<sup>47</sup> Fitzgerald and Company, 2-43.

<sup>48</sup> Town of West Brookfield. *Report of the Town Officers, of the Town of West Brookfield, Mass. For the Year 1885-1886*. (West Brookfield, MA: Thomas Morey, 1886) 4, 5.

As stated previously, numerous support businesses to residents and merchants rounded out the downtown business rosters. Almost all basic necessities would have been available from town stores and suppliers. Two additional businesses are worth mentioning for their uniqueness. Chinese laundries appear in the late 1800s for both towns. In Warren, a listing for a laundry business named Sing Hop shows up in the 1890s along South Pleasant Street. For West Warren, there is listing for Fong Du on North Street during the same period.<sup>49</sup> Curiously, a photograph of businesses near this time on West Brookfield's Main Street across from the library shows a laundry named Hop Sing.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the Sing Hop laundry of Warren and Hop Sing laundry of West Brookfield were related businesses. Another type of business involving woodworking was combination of services; both towns had similar vendors. Furniture and cabinets were made in both Warren and West Brookfield that sold locally. However, the woodworking skills in this industry were also used to construct coffins. In West Brookfield, John Tromblen ran this business, while in Warren, William Combs did the same. Combs was actually an undertaker too. It is believed that during his life he oversaw the burial of over 3,000 persons.<sup>51</sup>

The central Massachusetts region has always been noted for its quality farmland, particularly Warren and the "Brookfields" (West, North, and East Brookfield, as well Brookfield). The agricultural enterprises that were well established by the 1700s gave a rural charm to the towns that would later coexist harmoniously with industry and manufacturing. This rural setting allowed for unique enterprises to develop. Perhaps more specifically, the individual drawn to agriculture and the physical demands it required, was just the type to develop unique enterprises that took advantages of the resources available. The inherent off season and capricious nature of the work also demanded that side businesses were a necessity to round out income.

An inventory of occupations indicates the prevalence of agriculture in the area. Of the roughly 500 head of households in West Brookfield in the early 1890s, 77 individuals are listed with the occupation of "farmer", representing over 15 percent of the population. For the town of

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<sup>49</sup> Fitzgerald and Company, 45.

<sup>50</sup> Dennis LeBeau. *Images of the America: The Brookfields from the Collection of William Bullard*. (Dover, New Hampshire: Arcadia Publishing, 1996) 75.

<sup>51</sup> Buck, 132.

Warren, that figure is less than 7 percent.<sup>52</sup> In a simplified analysis, the higher percentage can be attributed to the landscape, which favored more of an agricultural setting in West Brookfield, and more of a riverine power setting in Warren that initially set in motion an early manufacturing sequence. However, in terms of farm totals, Warren actually had more farmers (approximately 90). The much larger total population for Warren skews the farming numbers because there are simply more workers engaged in manufacturing. The town of Warren is also larger in terms of land size: Warren is 27.6 square miles compared to West Brookfield's 21 square miles. The corollary of this statistical information is simply that farming was a significant element of both towns.

The dairying heritage of area farms, like that which is readily identified with typical New England farms, grew steadily following the Civil War.<sup>53</sup> It was during this time, in the 1860s and 1870s that the systems developed for processing and marketing milk came into being. At this time, a typical solid dairying operation generally contained 15 to 30 cows. Many of these farms are likely to have shifted production from sheep to dairy production in the mid-1800s. Wessels describes a "sheep fever" that swept New England farmers in the early 1800s as a demand for wool grew with the advent of textile mills.<sup>54</sup> By the 1840s, it was becoming clear that Central New England farms could not compete with Midwestern farms that were being developed on better soils. Our farmers also realized that they could supply milk to the towns that were growing because of manufacturing. The rise in dairying also gave growth to cheese making. By the 1870s, West Brookfield had one cheese factory on the road to North Brookfield, while Warren had at least two (one of them marketed under the Worcester County Creamery brand).<sup>55</sup> The Massachusetts Cheese Makers Association even had one of their early annual meetings in West Brookfield, but by the 1880s the cheese industry was no longer existent in the region.<sup>56</sup> On the topic of agriculture it should be noted that fruit, vegetables, and grains were also grown traditionally, but an emphasis on dairying by the late 1800s was the norm.

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<sup>52</sup> Fitzgerald and Company, 2-41, 113-123.

<sup>53</sup> Tom Wessels. *Reading the Forested Landscape, a Natural History of New England*. (Woodstock, VT: The Countryman Press, 1997) 60-61.

<sup>54</sup> Wessels, 55-61.

<sup>55</sup> Buck, 64.

<sup>56</sup> Fiske, 73.



Area farmers were well organized, both socially and professionally. The organization of the West Brookfield Farmer's Club is mentioned frequently in the newspapers in the late 1800s. An 1895 account of one of their meetings discussed some of the history of the club. It was stated that the group was probably "the largest of the kind" in the state.<sup>57</sup> It formed around 1875 and Warren joined in 1887. Other members came from the following surrounding towns: New Braintree, Brimfield, and Brookfield. By the 1890s, an annual summer picnic and annual supper and entertainment evening were part of the area's biggest social attractions.<sup>58</sup> Both towns had their own Grange organizations, common for most farming communities of the late 1880s. A larger consolidation of groups formed the Quaboag Pamona Grange in 1896 that was concurrent with the town Granges. This larger group had members from all of the Brookfield towns, Warren, New Braintree, Spencer, Brimfield, and Oakham.<sup>59</sup> The West Brookfield Poultry and Pet Stock Association formed in 1899. (Pet stock included rabbits, guinea pigs, and pigeons). All of these organizations created a strong social network in the community for their members. What is more, the organizations served an educational purpose, allowing for sharing of best practices and new advancements and breeds at a time that the science of agriculture was making great strides.

Some of region's specialty products deserve mention. Select farms that had acreage along the Quaboag River grew cranberries. Unfortunately, some of the habitat was destroyed when the railroad was constructed and fill was brought in to traverse the cranberry meadows/bogs. Side orchards were common features of many farms, but some specialized entirely on fruits. In the late 1890s orchards were shipping apples via the railroad. Newspaper accounts detail the fall shipments of apples by rail in 1896 in particular. Some farms shipped between 30 and 50 barrels of apples, and in one instance, two railcars of apples were loaded in West Brookfield.<sup>60</sup> The Breezlands Orchard in Warren was planted in 1898 by the Archer Tuttle Family and is now run by the fourth generation of the Tuttle family.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The Warren Herald, January 18, 1895.

<sup>58</sup> Sumner H. Reed and Mary F. Holmes. *History of the West Brookfield Farmers' Club*. (Pamphlet on file at the Quaboag Historical Society, 1942).

<sup>59</sup> Fiske, 82.

<sup>60</sup> Fiske, 85.

<sup>61</sup> Buck, 74.

Two large scale greenhouse operations were located in West Brookfield. By 1870, George Jennings was in the business. His large facility is mapped on the Beer's Atlas from that year where he is described as "Vegetable Gardner, also Dealer in all kinds of Plants from Forcing Houses."<sup>62</sup> Jennings consistently improved his operations, and it was claimed by the newspaper that it was one of the best known rose growing establishments in the country".<sup>63</sup> After Jennings's untimely death in 1884, the greenhouses were operated by his wife, Ella Jennings. Three separate greenhouses are labeled on an 1885 map as *Rose Green House*, *Pink Green House*, and *Smilax Green House*.<sup>64</sup> The first two of these greenhouses were strictly for floral stock, while the third green house was used for ornamental shrubs and vines of the *Smilax* genus. The business closed in 1897 and was put up for sale. Two West Brookfield men in the nursery business, Samuel Wass and Herbert Brown tried to buy the Jennings property but negotiations failed. They built their own greenhouses under the name Meadow Brook Conservatory. During holiday periods, this business was often mentioned, as it appears that floral products were the specialty. In the spring of 1899 for example was the following: "Cut flowers of all kinds available at Meadow Brook Conservatories".<sup>65</sup> The business was short lived however; a series of fires eventually led to the removal of salvageable greenhouses and equipment in 1910. The size and scope of these businesses indicates that their markets lay beyond the local towns. The floral products grown by Wass and Brown would have most certainly been transported by rail like other agricultural commodities in the region.

One product that was consistently harvested but was generally delivered and used locally was ice. Because of the prevalence of ponds and lakes in the area, and fairly large customer bases, ice houses were quite common in Warren and West Brookfield. The harvesting of ice was conducted by farmers who generally had private icehouses near small farm ponds, but also by ice businesses, who ran year round operations in both towns. One such producer was Charles Rice in Warren who operated on the shores of Comins Pond in the late 1800s. He owned two ice houses that could be filled in three days; ice blocks would be pulled up ramps into storage by a

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<sup>62</sup> F.W. Beers.

<sup>63</sup> Fiske, 76.

<sup>64</sup> Geo. H. Walker and Son. *Atlas of Brookfield, West Brookfield, No. Brookfield*. (Boston: Geo. H. Walker and Son, 1885).

<sup>65</sup> The Brookfield Times, March 31, 1899.

two-horse system involving harnesses and pulleys. His operation was called “Comins Pond Ice Delivery and Trucking”.<sup>66</sup> Rice also had a wood business that supplemented his ice trade. It appears that at least two other companies ran or contracted ice businesses from Warren: C. Brigham and Company and the Boston Milk Company. The Boston Milk Company (likely associated with the C.K. Lewis and Brothers condensed milk business in West Brookfield) cut 1,000 tons of ice in Warren during the winter of 1876.<sup>67</sup> In West Brookfield, Benjamin Aiken had a similar business; his ice house was on Lake Wickaboag as early as the 1870s.<sup>68</sup> Charles Jackson (corset manufacturer) also had an ice house on the lake at this time. Aiken’s business seemed to be the largest in West Brookfield. His accounts would be sold and the business would be renamed the Wickaboag Ice Company after the 1900s. Other producers are mentioned by name, but the previous groups are listed as businesses, it appears they were the most prominent of the ice businesses in the respective towns. Although there were differences in the size and scale of ice operations, each would have required tremendous seasonal labor assistance due to the heavy physical nature of the work.

Because ice had to be at least ten inches thick to be cut, there was much discussion in the winter newspapers that focused on ice formation and measurements. In the winter of 1876 for example, the ice houses were filling rapidly with three ice houses busy putting up ice. All totaled together, this ice was estimated at 900 tons. Typical for the days and weeks leading up to harvest were detailed ice reports. Occasionally, the discussion of ice occurs in non-winter months such as the mention of an ice order to S.H. Mason for 100 tons from a Worcester company in August, 1899.<sup>69</sup> This ice would have most certainly been delivered by rail rather than an ice delivery wagon and team of horses. The occasional ice delivery mishaps and falling through the ice was also reported in the news as it occurred. Despite these inherent risks, the ice business was a staple in the economy of Warren and West Brookfield, as it was in other New England towns of this era. The abundance of news articles regarding this industry throughout the late 1800s seems to indicate the prominence and attention that was warranted by the type of business that would affect the majority of townspeople as well as the all-important milk trade.

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<sup>66</sup> Buck, 137.

<sup>67</sup> Sun Publishing Company, February 18, 1876.

<sup>68</sup> Fiske, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Sun Publishing Company, August 25, 1899.

Ice houses were common in the region up until the 1930s-1940s when refrigeration was introduced.

A true entrepreneur's spirit coupled with veterinary knowledge was responsible for one of West Brookfield's most unique businesses: the Indian Rock Game Preserve. This game farm was started in 1898 by two brothers, Carlton and Herbert Richardson on 45 acres of land on Foster Hill. The types of animals that would be raised there is astounding. Deer and elk were staple breeds, but the farm also contained buffalo, geese, bear, wild boar, pheasants, pigeons, muskrats, foxes, raccoons, lynx, and swan.<sup>70</sup> The animals supplied zoos and nature parks in New York, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Chicago, St. Louis, and Denver.<sup>71</sup> International facilities that received the animals included those in New Zealand, Denmark, Germany, and Argentina. The Indian Rock Game Preserve was in operation until 1935, the year of Carlton Richardson's passing. Other trades involving animals in West Brookfield included a trout hatchery that was started by Lemuel Fullam (shoe factory owner). The operation initially began with 200 trout in 1873.<sup>72</sup> Like other business owners in the region, Fullam was broadening his commercial base with (presumably) an investment into a side business that functioned as an enjoyable respite from the manufacturing trade.

Seasonal recreational businesses also played a role in the economies of both towns. Summer businesses were initiated to take advantage of the picturesque setting of the area. For Warren, it was wealthier families that came to the South Warren area to stay in summer homes. A newspaper account in August, 1895 claims the area was becoming "a summer resort for Boston people" and that one of the more prominent homes had been renamed "Sunnyside".<sup>73</sup> Despite these types of reports, the economic benefit of such visitors was limited. A far more lucrative income was generated in West Brookfield, because the tourism base was considerably larger. As previously mentioned, the Quaboag River and Lake Wickaboag served as recreational settings for pleasure excursions on steamboats. During the late 1800s, the Lake Wickaboag area increased its recreational base. The more advantageous areas for people to gather at the lake were commonly referred to as "groves" because of the shade provided by trees that grew along

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<sup>70</sup> Fiske, 78-79.

<sup>71</sup> Jay Papers, 1979.

<sup>72</sup> Sun Publishing Company, October 31, 1873.

<sup>73</sup> The Warren Herald, August 2, 1895.

the shoreline. In time, these became picnic and camping locations, eventually being developed for cottages. Although the “cottage industry” would not truly take off until after 1910, the lake had many local and outside visitors enjoying its beauty. At least nine areas were called groves; three of these—Fairbank’s, Gilbert’s, and Blair’s groves were the first to be developed into summer camps.<sup>74</sup> Newspapers in the summer months typically listed the locations of these camps, and the goings on of the campers. The use of the areas for picnics was even more extensive. Numerous accounts of social gatherings indicate the fraternal and communal spirit that Lake Wickaboag instilled, such as the yearly Farmer’s Club picnics or the reports of young people at “Camp A-Laeum”. Fish fries were fairly common occasions, as were “corn roasts”. The latter began in August and continued through October. Comins Pond in Warren also saw similar activity; in September 1895, “30 young people enjoyed a corn roast” there.<sup>75</sup> Far more references for these activities occur in West Brookfield rather than Warren. Lake Wickaboag attracted more visitors because of its larger size and easier accessibility.

Lodging that took advantage of the views of the lake was began in 1899, when a couple from Boston, Henry and Clara Niles, started the Lake Wickaboag House. (This was the same home and property of the Jennings family who ran a greenhouse business). The hotel/boarding house was only open during the summer months and is not to be confused with the Wickaboag House, another West Brookfield hotel that was located across from the train station. The Lake Wickaboag House quickly became a successful business that would help to popularize the area. Warren had fine lodging as well; the Hotel Ramsdell was a stately structure in the downtown area. Its customer base differed from the recreational summer traveler that was starting to come to West Brookfield. Fishing, swimming (or “bathing” as it is commonly described) and canoe/boat excursions all increased usage and enjoyment of the lake that led to the development of cottages in the 1910s and 1920s. The fishing was excellent, with pickerel, perch, and black bass in particular. The lake area simply teemed with wildlife. Interestingly, frogs were gathered for restaurants at the lake in the 1880s. A newspaper account stated that people traveled to the area and stayed in the downtown hotel to net frogs. Another article announced that the “frog catcher” who was here for two months had left after netting as many as 300 dozen that season.

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<sup>74</sup> Fiske, 238.

<sup>75</sup> The Warren Herald, September 13, 1895.

He had been shipping them to Boston by express train all season; the same article stated that he received 25 cents for each dozen frogs collected.<sup>76</sup>

The tourist and amusement business that grew in the 1900s built on its solid beginnings that had occurred in the late 1800s. By 1902, Lakeside Park was developed on the southwest shore of the lake and was serviced by streetcar. Dances were held in a “capacious” dance hall, a 2,000 seat theatre and baseball field were built, and concessions for food, rowboats, and canoe rentals supplied the masses.<sup>77</sup> The park was visited by over 10,000 people on July 4, 1903, some coming from Worcester or Springfield via the train. Although the park was short lived, a few circumstances were apparent. The country setting attracted many, and future investment in the lake would focus on small scale camp and residential development of the shore, rather than the massive park development that was scaled too large to be profitable.

The community’s social organizations were numerous and demonstrated a strong social fabric and order. What is most significant is that many of the groups were charitable organizations. This indicates that in some ways, a general level of social services that were addressed inside the community by the memberships of the communities’ own groups. From 1870-1900, newspapers frequently report on the activities and meetings of the following groups or clubs: the Social and Charitable Society, the Benevolent Society, the Dorcas Society, the No Name Club, and the Traveling Club, just to name a few. Some of these societies were church organizations. Six separate churches are listed for Warren with seven formal/national branch societies or orders in 1894. For West Brookfield in the same year, three churches are listed as are four formal orders or societies. Religious and civic participation was a factor in both towns. Athletic events also served as a way to unite townspeople while providing camaraderie and competitiveness. In the late 1800s, the towns (and often businesses) sponsored teams in baseball, football, basketball, and even “ice polo”. Great pride, bragging rights, and sometimes wagers were elements of these games, while they provided a physical outlet for the younger generation. In many ways, these Massachusetts towns were “ahead of the curve”, as most of these team sports were in their infancy elsewhere in the United States.

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<sup>76</sup> Sun Publishing Company, September, November 4, 1881.

<sup>77</sup> The Ware River News, August 14, 1902.

Each town also maintained and operated their own town farms. These were common to many New England towns, many who still have their own “Town Farm Road”. These farms functioned as integral social service providers that were able to provide shelter to the poor in the community; these were often labeled or referred to as almshouses as well. The farms usually operated at some level of production to offset costs in an attempt to break even. The West Brookfield Town Report for 1885 itemizes the income from the town farm from the sale of the following: veal, pork, beef, chickens, turkeys, rye straw, produce, and milk (monthly sales to the condensed milk factory).<sup>78</sup> In addition to the individuals residing at the town farm, the towns also provided payment for a multitude of services for individuals within the community. These services included providing “goods”, “assistance”, “expenses”, cord wood, coal, payment for hearse and coffins, medical care, and money for “keeping tramp” or assisting the homeless. Additionally, area farmers, laborers, and businesses were compensated for expenses relating to services/goods provided in the “Support of Poor-At Almshouse” section of the town report. These economic relationships underscore the reality that local government had an active role in maintaining a functional social support system that had intrinsic value to the community. In fact, in the 1880s a list of town officers for Brookfield and North Brookfield has a three member “Overseers of the Poor” grouping. For West Brookfield, these duties are combined with those of selectmen, who are designated “Selectmen and Overseers of the Poor”.<sup>79</sup>

The development of transportation between Warren and West Brookfield would expand dramatically in the late 1890s. Discussion of an electric railway, or “electric road” begins to appear in 1895, with the idea of a proposed trolley between Warren and Spencer. By 1897, the Warren, Brookfield, and Spencer Electric Railway became a reality. The usage of this rail can be surmised by the daily schedule two years later: there were 27 daily runs every 40 minutes from 6:00 am to 11:40 pm between the six stations on the line (West Warren, Warren, West Brookfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, and Spencer).<sup>80</sup> Within a few years, transfers were available to North Brookfield, Springfield, and Worcester. State road projects were initiated: construction on portions of road that would later become Route 67 in Warren and Route 9 in West Brookfield occurred circa 1900. The central Massachusetts communities were now

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<sup>78</sup> Town of West Brookfield, 9-13.

<sup>79</sup> Fitzgerald and Company, 50-139.

<sup>80</sup> The Brookfield Times, September 1, 1899.

connected to larger cities with competing interests. Change was underway and employment was not limited to one's town. In many ways, the towns were growing up and linking more to regional economies, which were transitioning into larger and larger operations. These included enormous shoe manufacturing facilities in North Brookfield and Spencer, and huge textile mill complexes in West Warren and Ware. Of course, if one were to venture farther outside the community to cities like Worcester, Springfield, or even Boston, opportunities for work and urban stimulation were enhanced even more.

Increases in migration after 1900 resulted in shifting labor demographics. Warren and West Brookfield ethnic compositions were closely aligned during the 1800s. A Massachusetts Historic Commission inventory of Warren and West Brookfield was conducted in 1984. Similar findings characterize both town populations as initially "Protestant Yankees" with the later addition of Roman Catholic Irish and French Canadians. Some of the first Irish immigrants who moved to Central Massachusetts would have likely worked as railroad laborers in the 1830s. Polish immigrants were also in the region, some as early as the 1890s and many more after 1900. Class distinctions amongst workers in the towns does not appear to be a significant issue in the late 1800s. Research within available newspapers between 1873 and 1900 gave no indication of conflict or turmoil between classes, nor between labor and management. On the latter subject, labor/management relations appear to be categorically positive. The period of time between 1870 and the 1890s were so economically exceptional in Warren and West Brookfield, it appears that labor was coveted. This is unusual, given the fact that many American cities were experiencing labor unrest, unionization, and political organization in the 1880s. In the two towns however, unemployment was negligible, and it appears that anyone willing to work could have been employed. Time and time again, news accounts detail instances where employers and employees formed close relationships; after all, they usually lived and worked amongst each other. Employee gatherings and summer events were common and it appears that employers tried to keep their employees as content as possible. For example, when a chance snowstorm inconvenienced corset factory workers in West Brookfield one winter, Chauncey Olmstead provided food and hired sleighs to get workers, mostly women, home. With the solid profits that were being gained, no chance was risked in disrupting production.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> William Jankins, interview with author. April 26, 2015.



The solid emphasis on manufacturing supplemented by agriculture allowed the region to thrive in the late 1800s. The focus on manufacturing and the “peaking” in these years for Warren and West Brookfield is representative of the same economic trends that occurred throughout Massachusetts- especially for Worcester County. From 1870 to 1900 the value of products in manufacturing for the county rose 86 percent.<sup>82</sup> From 1900 to 1940 the value decreased 98 percent. In terms of Worcester County manufacturing establishments, there was a 70 percent increase from 1870 to 1900, followed by a 65 percent decrease from 1900 to 1940. Many factors account for these figures, chiefly among them is the fact that innovative type of manufacturing honed in towns like Warren and West Brookfield during the late 1800s could be copied and replicated in other locales, by larger scale operations and with less expensive labor. The “Queen of the Quaboag”, Warren, would still be able to specialize in pumps and the West Warren textile industry, but other manufacturing jobs would not return once the smaller factories closed or merged elsewhere. West Brookfield would fare even worse manufacturing wise. The wire and machining industries would bring new jobs, but far less than the peak years of the late 1800s.

In viewing conditions for the burgeoning economy of Warren and West Brookfield during the late 1800s, one must acknowledge several key factors. Railroads provided easy access to large eastern urban markets, which would in turn, attract investment outside the community. Manufacturing was diversified, characterized by a multitude of small operations and anchored by key industries (shoes, textiles). Technological expertise resulted in innovative products (such as pumps) that took root and grew in the community. Additional markets were realized with western expansion and growing populations. Agricultural potential was maximized with the dairying industry, allowing farms to expand. The picturesque setting would create a modest tourism industry used by locals and outsiders both that created jobs and enhanced the region. The period of time between 1870 and 1900 represents, truly, the prime of Warren and West Brookfield. It was an age when innovation, resources, and technology convened but it would not have been possible without a remarkable populace. From the accounts of their lives in

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<sup>82</sup> Historical Census Browser. Retrieved May 1, 2015 from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>. 2004.

newspapers, local histories, and town records, one begins to get a sense of the people here. There seems to be an earnestness and element of fortitude in their character. This was a unique time in American history. The Civil War had changed lives; perhaps the desire to move forward with greater urgency was a consequence. The cohesiveness of the towns is evident from the history available. A compassion for others less fortunate is inherent in town government and community infrastructure. Social leagues and fellowship are the norm. Although mobility outside the community was possible, it was unnecessary. For this time, virtually any needs could have been addressed from within, whether they be social, material, or spiritual. The community looked forward, asserting to others and to itself that “we are a live community, and everything looks lively and nourishing”.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Sun Publishing Company, September 26, 1873.

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