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History of Mount Vernon Maine

Town of Mount Vernon

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History of Mt. Vernon

Founding of the Town of Mount Vernon

The "Illustrated History of Kennebec County Maine" is available at the Dr. Shaw Memorial Library and tells of the town's founding.

Early settlers of the Town of Mount Vernon began to come in 1774, largely from New Hampshire. The area was first called Washington Plantation. The act of incorporation by which Mount Vernon was erected into the eightieth Township in the province of Maine, was completed June 28, 1792. Solomon Leighton, John Dudley and Paul Blake were the first selectmen. Area of the town was 15,000 acres and its population was about 600.

Note: It could be assumed that the name "Mount Vernon" was taken from George Washington's "Mount Vernon" in Virginia because of the area's previous name being "Washington Plantation".

Founding of Mount Vernon Village

Beverly Wight Smith, a local Mt. Vernon Playwright and Historian, published in 1985: "Turning Back, stories of the Mt. Vernon - Vienna Area". The following section of her book tells of the founding of Mt. Vernon.

Mt. Vernon Village was founded by Captain William Whittier, who was born in Salisbury, Mass., and lived for several years in New Hampshire. About 1765, he and two of his brother came to what is now Readfield and felled the trees on 20 acres to begin farming.

Captain Whittier was the first man to see the possibilities of water power in what is now Mount Vernon Village. Consequently he bought all the territory in and around what is now the village, from Bishop's Mill to the Vienna line, from the Parlin farm to the foot of Bean's (now Flewelling's). Before 1792 Captain Whittier built a dam at the village and the upper dam at the outlet of Flying Pond. He built a grist mill and a sawmill at the village. He brought the up-and-down saw on his back from Hallowell.

William and his wife, Elizabeth Hankerson Whittier, had 16 children. The oldest son was born in 1775, and the youngest in 1805.

Their house was the first frame house in the village and it remained in the Whittier family many years.

	
Whittier Grist Mill	Whittier House
Both are still standing today	

The Early Days of Mount Vernon

During the 1800s Mt. Vernon was typical of most small towns in New England with farming being the principal industry and many small businesses that supported the needs of the times.

Many wonderful and interesting stories by Beverly Wight Smith tell of the early days of farming, ice cutting, tanneries, shops and trades that supported Mt. Vernonites in the 1800s. Beverly's writings are available at Mt. Vernon's Dr. Shaw's Memorial Library.

Mount Vernon (late 1800 - mid 1900)

With better transportation and before air conditioning, city people began going to the country during the summer. This began the tourist - vacation era for the town of Mount Vernon. Cottages, a hotel, tourist homes and children's camps were built around the lakes.

Elizabeth Arden's "Maine Chance", a health spa on Long Pond, put Mt. Vernon on the map because of its rich and famous clientele. In its day Maine Chance and its farm, which produced much of the food for the spa, was one of the town's significant employers.

Klir Beck, an artist famous for his Maine wildlife scenes, lived in Vienna and had a studio in Mt. Vernon. His dioramas in the State House in Augusta have been viewed by many residents and tourists. Exhibitions throughout the Northeastern states promoted Maine's "Vacationland".



The Hippies Come to Town

The tourist - vacation era declined in the mid '50s because air conditioning and air travel became within reach for most city people. This left Mt. Vernon with many vacant buildings.

In the mid '60s, the quaintness of Mount Vernon attracted the Hippies of the period. They came from all over the country. Even some of the young locals joined as they set up communes in vacant buildings around town. The "Candle Makers" and "Leather Makers" had flourishing businesses going.

Some tell of one hippie rolling into town with a double decker VW bus and organizing musical/party blasts in the old hotel. The first one took the village by surprise. For three days and nights the village streets were one big parking lot as the

hotel "rocked and rolled".

Mt. Vernon's reputation became somewhat tarnished by the rowdiness of this period. To some of the town's residents, who had always been proud of their peaceful small town, these were very upsetting times. Others, experiencing no real harm, took it in stride. In the end, the town gained many bright and talented people who continue to contribute and add character to Mt. Vernon.

Mount Vernon Today

Seasonal lakeside cottages owned by families from all over Northeast, and even further, greatly increase the population during the summer. Around 400 youths from all over the U.S.A., as well as a few foreign countries, come to Mt. Vernon each year to enjoy their summer at Camp Laurel on Echo Lake. Five Seasons Family Resort offers camping and rooms for tourists at their restored early 1800s resort inn.

The most notable changes taking place in recent years is the growth of single family dwellings in town. Mt. Vernon is fast becoming a "bedroom community" for Maine's capital city of Augusta, but it retains the flavor of a small town with its woods, farms and logging trucks.