

Colebrook Store Owners

The original store that the Rockwells had constructed in Colebrook Center is the building that we know today as the Woodbine Cottage that stands directly behind the Colebrook Store on Connecticut Route 182-A. According to the original store ledger, now in the possession of John O. Newell, it was built and opened for business in 1803. The need for a larger store to serve the growing population resulted with Martin and Solomon Rockwell having master builder William Swift construct another building directly in front of the original one room, one story high store in 1812. The Colebrook tax lists for the year 1812 list only one store in town, which was the one just mentioned. The following year the tax lists record two stores, referred to as “the front store and the rear store”, belonging to the Rockwell brothers.

1825 Martin and Solomon sold the store on April 25 for \$775.00 to Jonathan Edwards Hoyt (a member of the Rockwell family). Both stores seem to have been operated by Thomas H. Marshall for the Rockwells. That same year Hoyt sold ½ interest in the two stores and the land they stood on to Giles H. Bass (another Rockwell family member) for \$387.50.

1828 Hoyt sold the remaining half of the two stores to Bass for \$500.00.

1838 Giles Bass dies. The property goes to his wife Louisa, who kept it until her death in 1886. Louisa was the sister of Reuben Rockwell, to whom she left the two stores.

1898 Reuben Rockwell dies. In his will he left the front store to Gertrude Smith, wife of Chester L. Smith, with the back store, so called, remaining with the property at 561 Colebrook Road. The situation remains the same to this day. The property lines at that time were established 4 feet out from the north and west walls of the building. This is the cause of the problem that arose later when the ten-foot wide addition was constructed which served as the Colebrook Post Office from 1943-1995. Years later the Rockwell descendants who owned 561 Colebrook Road granted the encroached-upon land to the store.

1900 Gertrude Smith sold to a partnership of seven persons headed by Hiram D. Northrup. All were Colebrook residents and consisted of Northrup, Luther Sparks, Horace North, Julia Phelps, Edward B. Hawksley, Joseph E. Turner and his son, Ralph H. Turner. The firm name was J. E. Turner and Son. Their land title refers to the property as “formerly known as the Rockwell Store”. The partnership did not last long, however, as Northrup bought out his partners shortly thereafter.

1923 Hiram D. Northrup sold ½ interest in the store to his clerk, Clarence F. Stotts, for \$1.00. There was one restriction placed upon the title deed. It reads: “This conveyance is made with this restriction and condition: that for 12 years from the date hereof [Dec. 6, 1923] no person by name of Cooper shall own any interest in the premises, nor occupy any part, nor be employed in the premises for any purpose or under any pretext whatever.” This reflects a feud that persisted for years between the two stores in the Center. Cooper’s store was located in what today is 474 Smith Hill Road.

1930 S. Ellen Northrup, widow of Hiram, sold the remaining half of the store to Stotts for “a valuable sum of money”.

1937 Clarence F. Stotts sold ½ interest in the store to his wife Mary.

1953 Clarence Stotts dies. His wife Mary sold the store to Keith and Alma Jackson on December 24.

1963 Keith and Alma Jackson sold the store to George and Mary Gray on November 18. (This was also the year the Colebrook Center Historic District was created).

1966 George and Mary Gray sold the store to Meuriell S. Roberts on April 27.

1969 Roberts sold to Fred and Phyllis Williams on Dec. 22. The name “Colebrook Store” was legally applied as a State requirement.

1971 Fred and Phyllis Williams sold to Elsie J. Ignace on April 26.

1973 Elsie Ignace sold to Frederick Weston, Jr. and his wife Anita on Nov. 15.

1976 The Westons sold to Karolyn H. Thurman on July 9.

1979 Thurman sold to Fred J. and Josephine A. Zebrowski on May 30. There was a \$40,000 mortgage at this time, which indicates the approximate value of the store.

1986 Fred and Josephine Zebrowski sold to Robert A. Fumire on April 30.

1990 Robert Fumire sold the store to Richard Blitz on March 5.

1997 Blitz places the store up for sale. Storekeeper and manager at the time was John Pfaefflin.

1999 Raymond and Joyce Winn, Jeffery Marshall and Timothy and Julia King purchased the store from Richard Blitz.

2002 The store was placed on the market.

2005 The Colebrook Store was purchased by Lora C. Murphy in April. The sale price was in the \$270,000 range.

2007 At the beginning of July, Lora Murphy, who has had the store on the market for several months, closes, and places signs reading “Closed for Vacation”. She had no apparent intent to reopen, as one of the display cases had been sold, the interior was dirty and in disrepair, the few remaining newspapers (dated July 6th) were on the counter. There were very few items of any category left on the shelves. A week or so before Murphy had written a caustic article in the *Winsted Journal* blaming the town and in particular the town government for not supporting her store. She implied that the town should supply some form of financial support to help keep the operation in business.

Until this time, The Colebrook Store had been the oldest continuously operated general store in the State of Connecticut, encompassing a span stretching from 1812 until 2007, 195 years.