

WAKEMAN TOWN FARM CHRONOLOGY

1629 Francis John Wakeman emigrates from England; the first of eleven generations of Wakeman family members who would live and work in Westport.

1835 Daniel Nash, armed with a petition signed by 145 other residents, travels to Hartford to formally request that the Connecticut General Assembly grant the formation of a new town. Stephen Wakeman and Hezekiah Wakeman are among those who signed the document that initiated the founding of the town of Westport.



1874 John Staples Wakeman (Isaac's Wakeman's father) is born in Westport.

1879 Mary F. Gould (Isaac Wakeman's mother) is born in Fairfield.

1888 House at 134 Cross Highway is built by the Meeker family.

1898 Mary Gould weds John Wakeman in Fairfield, CT.



1900's The Wakeman family begins farming in Westport on property near the Compo Beach area, across from what is now Longshore Country Club.



1905 John Wakeman buys the house and farmland located at 134 Cross Highway from the Meeker family, which is an operating farm with approximately 40 cows. Members of the Wakeman family deliver milk to many Westport homes.

1911 Isaac "Ike" Banks Wakeman is born at 134 Cross Highway, the seventh of ten children (5 boys and 5 girls), all of whom would live in the farmhouse and work the farm.

1932 Isaac Wakeman graduates Staples High School.

1936 Pearl Kirkpatrick (b.1918) weds Isaac Wakeman. They have 3 daughters: Barbara Jean (Reznar) b.1938, Jeanne Ellen (Mann) b.1941, Charlotte Eugenia (Constantino) b.1944.



“When I was a kid practically everyone around here farmed... Everyone had a piece of land. I got up at 5, milked and fed the cows and took the milk to the dairy in Norwalk before going to school. We had 40 head of cattle. I was responsible for 25.”

-Isaac Wakeman

The New York Times, September 6, 1992

1940's-60's Over time, Wakeman Farm expands from strictly a dairy operation to include poultry; they later add fruits and vegetables. Isaac and his brother Robert farm while their wives Pearl and Naimie run the store.

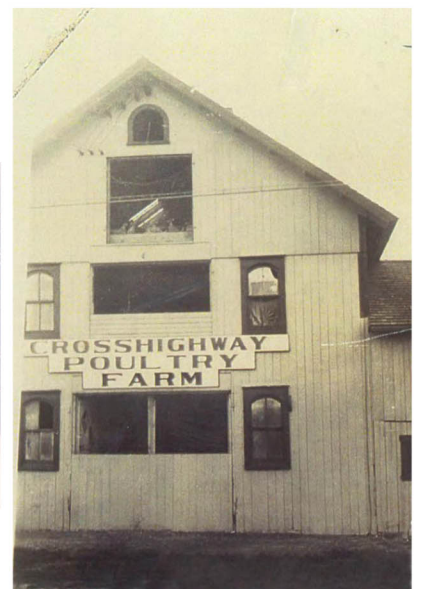


“They started selling eggs from the porch, but as produce increased, they included the garage, and finally the little out-room which gives them a store conveniently attached to the house.”

-Elise Thew (c. 1971)



At the height of the growing season, the Farm sells more than 5,000 ears of corn each weekend.



"This soil will grow just about anything. It's very fertile."

-Isaac Wakeman

The Norwalk Hour, June 26, 1992

1970 Isaac and Pearl Wakeman sell their 41 acre property to the town of Westport for \$350,000, retaining a lifetime lease on the house and surrounding three acres.



1981-91 Fairfield farmer Sylvester "Buster" Cocivi leases and farms 25 acres of the Wakeman farmland, growing pumpkins and corn, as part of the last commercial farming operation in town.

1982 Town puts forward a plan to build baseball and soccer fields on Wakeman farmland; appeals to then- First Selectman William Seiden defeat the proposal.



1983 Westport Community Gardens, a cooperative of individually farmed plots, moves from behind Staples High School to Wakeman Farm. Established in 1973 under the aegis of Westport's Young Adult Council (YAC),

"...the Cooperative Community Farm was designed to be intergenerational, for families and students... YAC wanted to encourage townspeople to work together in a community venture."

-Charlotte Rice

The Norwalk Hour, June 26, 1992



“I gave this land to the town because I thought they would keep it as it is. I didn’t want to see houses built on it or have it cut up. It belongs to all citizens of Westport.”

-Isaac Wakeman
The Westport News Feb. 27, 1991

1990 Wakeman Farm is briefly considered as a site for a proposed town recycling and composting facility.

1991 Westport Planning & Zoning votes to approve First Selectman Douglas Wood’s request to sell five acres of Wakeman farmland adjoining Whippoorwill Lane to partially fund the purchase of the the property that would later become Winslow Park. The decision sparks a public debate as to whether the “handshake agreement” accompanying the 1970 purchase of the Wakeman property constitutes a contract that the entire parcel remain undeveloped.



1992-94 Isaac Wakeman, along with other Wakeman family members and neighbors, vigorously objects to the town’s plan to develop playing fields on what was formerly Wakeman farmland. Opponents are eventually mollified by the approved design plan, which calls for no bleachers, restrooms, or other visual obstructions, thereby leaving the acreage as unaffected as possible.

1996 Wakeman Park athletic fields are dedicated.



“We were looking for a farm.”

- Dan Levinson

Westport Green Village Initiative Chairman

“The timing was perfect. In the spring of 2009 the Town of Westport came into possession of the Wakeman farmhouse and homestead upon the passing of Pearl Wakeman, and at that time Westport GVI was looking for a site for a demonstration farm.”

-Eileen Flug

Westport Green Village Initiative Board Member



12/11/2009

Westport Green Village Initiative (GVI) signs the lease for Wakeman Farm and receives unanimous approvals from the Westport Planning & Zoning Commission, Historic District Commission, and Board of Finance. Also supporting the Initiative are the daughters of Ike and Pearl Wakeman, State Senator Toni Boucher, and Westporters of all ages.

3/10/2010

GVI Chairman Dan Levinson enlists a volunteer team to renovate the Wakeman farmhouse and barn. Under the guidance of local architect Peter Wormser, builder Ted Auer joins the team, while GVI CFO Cathy Tallmadge jumps in to oversee construction expenses and solicit donations from local businesses such as Aitoro Appliances, Gault, Suntech, Pro-Logic, and others.



4/19/2010

A team of energetic student interns starts planting the Wakeman gardens. Michael Birkenhead leads the charge and the students dig thirty garden beds in five days.

“It’s almost impossible to believe that it was just one year ago that I stood before P+Z , and then the Board of Finance, to request permission for a lease between the Town and GVI to turn the Wakeman property into a town farm. The property and the house have truly been transformed from what Dan and I first saw back in April 2009.”

-Shelly Kassen
Westport Second Selectman



6/4/2010

GVI’s CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program begins using the Wakeman Farm as its pick-up location, soon followed by the RSA (Restaurant Supported Agriculture) program.



8/23/2010

Michael and Carrie Aitkenhead move into the farmhouse. A week later, Carrie gives birth to a daughter, Cora.



9/10/2010

Sal Gilbertie drops off chickens and roosters for the farm and interns build a chicken coop with Mike Aitkenhead.

9/23/2010

With the farmhouse renovated and the farm and demonstration gardens fully functioning, the official Dedication and Ribbon Cutting takes place.



Wakeman Farm Development Team

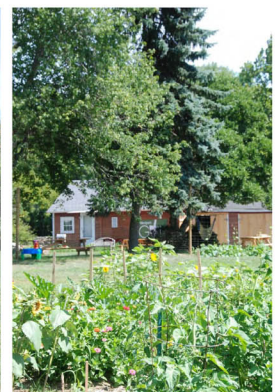


Dan Levinson, Chairman of the Westport GVI, was raised in New York City and has lived in Westport, CT for the last twenty years. After attending Brown University as an undergraduate and Stanford Business School, he has spent twenty years working in private equities. He founded and runs Main Street Resources, a firm that invests in management teams of smaller local businesses. Two years ago Dan co-founded the Westport Green Village Initiative (GVI), a non-profit organization aimed at helping Westport become a model environmentally sustainable community.

Shelly Kassen, Westport's Second Selectman, has been active in a variety of volunteer organizations since moving to Westport in 1989, including serving as president of The Conservative Synagogue and as a board member of the Achievement First Bridgeport Academy charter school. In town government, she served on the Board of Finance from 1997-2005. She has served on the Board of Selectmen since 2005, and has been deeply involved in the formation of the Westport Farmers Market and *Celebrate Westport*.



Eileen Lavigne Flug grew up on a farm in Massachusetts where her family produced much of its own food. She practiced corporate law for thirteen years in Washington, D.C. and New York City before moving to Westport in 2002 with her husband and two children. She is a member of the Westport Representative Town Meeting and is an officer and director of Westport Green Village Initiative.



Wakeman Farmhouse Construction Team



before



after



Peter Wormser is a local architect who splits his professional life between Westport and New York City. Since completing the New York Vietnam Veterans Memorial in 1985, Peter has built a diverse national practice. He recently completed the new nature center at Sherwood Island State Park and, along with his wife Liz Milwe, is actively involved in the Westport community. Peter has received Preservation Awards from the Westport Historic Commission in 2009 and 2010 for the renovation and expansion of two historic properties- one on Old Road, and the second a beach cottage in the Compo area.

Ted Auer, owner of Diversified Builders, has been building quality additions, renovations and cabinetry since 1990. Building "green" is a main objective for his business, as he implements techniques and products that are energy efficient and eco-friendly. Ted encourages all to visit his showroom at 748 Post Road East in Westport so you can see some of his beautiful work.



Cathy Talmadge, District 6 Representative Town Meeting member, Green Village Initiative CFO, and GVI board member, acted as the project manager for the farmhouse renovation. She also solicited charitable donations from local businesses in her efforts to enable the project's realization. She is a former executive of Time Warner Cable with extensive experience in financial and operational management and business.



before



after

Wakeman Farm Garden Team



Monique Bosch is one of the founders of GVI, starting her environmental focus as head of the Environmental Action Group at the Unitarian Church in Westport. There she started the first CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program in the area, achieving 'Green Sanctuary' status for the church. She has been a member of several environmental committees, including Westport Green Task Force, The Environmental Justice Network in Bridgeport, and the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network in Hartford. This past year she has been involved in starting edible gardens in Westport at Staples High School and the Senior Center, and has worked with interns planting the new gardens at Wakeman Town Farm.

Sal Gilbertie supplies parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme and every other herb under the sun (more than 400 varieties) to nurseries and greenhouses throughout the northeastern United States. He is a frequent lecturer on herb gardening and hosts year-round workshops held at his Westport retail shop. Gilbertie has appeared on numerous national radio and television programs, including "Martha Stewart Living", "Home Matters" on the Discovery Channel, the "Home Show" on the Lifetime Channel, and "Sara's Secrets" on the Food Network. In March 2006, *People Places Plants* Magazine named Gilbertie to their list of the 50 Most Influential Horticulturists in the Northeast. Gilbertie is also featured in "The Gardener's Life" by Laurence Sheehan (Clarkson Potter – 2005).



Dina Brewster's certified organic Ridgefield, Connecticut farm, the Hickories, has been in her family since her grandparents purchased it in 1936. Brewster spent summers at the farm as a kid and took it over at age 28 with a friend after spending time serving in the Peace Corps. Since taking charge of the farm, Brewster has made the transition to organic and built a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program that has shown significant growth, while in the meanwhile she remains actively involved in the education and training of young farmers.