

GEORGE WESTON



FAMILY FARMER & FRYEBURG FAIR'S LIVESTOCK LEADER

When you grow up in Fryeburg there are many landmarks that involve the Weston Family. There's Weston's Farm, Rivercroft, a beautiful large, yellow, New England style farmhouse, barn & outbuildings overlooking the western flow of the Saco River. Rivercroft is on the National Register of Historic Places. Weston's farmhouse is adjacent to Weston's Bridge, an important Maine landmark bordering the state line of Maine and New Hampshire. Most locals still refer to the route as "down by Weston's" although it's officially named River Street. Near Weston's Farm and Weston's Bridge is a large community public beach on the Saco River, simply referred to as Weston's Beach. Generations of barefooted youngsters have made the trek to Weston's Beach from downtown Fryeburg, dragging along their towels and inner tubes. It's part of growing up in this town. Then there's Weston's Farmstand with operations in both Fryeburg and Conway. In this writer's opinion, they have the most exceptional corn, Christmas trees, wreaths and boughs. But there's more - none better than the summer vegetables for sale that are grown in Weston's fields or the Weston's syrup made by Weston family hands. Besides vegetables of every kind, the farmstand offers fruits, yummy pies, breads, ciders, wines, and an incredible selection of handmade and special gifts of the most remarkable kind. A needful things shop to say the least. Almost impossible to go in for a dozen corn and not come out with a few potholders, a balsam pillow you can't stop smelling or handmade bells to enhance one's daily life! At the very least a homemade cookie for the drive home.

In 1799, George's Weston ancestors headed north to Fryeburg in an ox cart leaving behind the Lexington, Concord area of Massachusetts. George Weston, sixth generation Fryeburg family resident, was born November 3, 1941, the son of John (1910-1972) & Elizabeth Pipe "Betty" Weston (1911-2016). He had one sister, Grace Weston Gordon (1936-1995). This story is about George - one of the most outstanding citizens of Fryeburg. The similarities to Jimmy Stewart's small-town George Bailey are spot on.

George Weston was born into a Fryeburg farm family and he accepted his unwritten mission with enthusiasm and dedication. Weston's Farm had been a superior Holstein dairy farm for decades.

At age 4, George woke up one day and was having trouble walking. Dr. Boothby, of Fryeburg, was suspicious that he had



Photo circa 1950 - John Weston with son, George, and a few of their holsteins at Weston Farm, Fryeburg, Maine, circa 1950

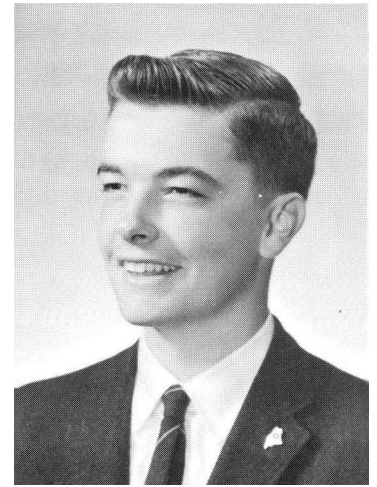
contracted polio and doctors in Portland confirmed it. George spent many months at Children's Hospital in Boston which was full of polio patients. To this day he continues to hold their doctors and hospital in the highest regard for their fine treatment and life saving care. He also had the loving and unwavering support of his family. Several surgeries during his growth years made it possible for George to "walk reasonably well."

In 1952, the Portland Press Herald wrote a story about 10 year old George Weston and two other Fryeburg boys, John Hill, age 14, and George's cousin, Carl Pipe,

age 9, when they started their own maple syruping business. The article was about their enthusiasm and teamwork.

By the time George reached high school, his otherwise unlucky health issues, left him with a determination and positive temperament that steers his life to this day.

George was not able to play sports in high school, instead participating as the enthusiastic manager of the football and basketball teams. He was a member of the student council, starred in school plays, a member of the Future Farmers of America, and the senior class president. At graduation, one of the awards he received was given in honor of his, “unselfish leadership and service to his fellows.” A true Fryeburg Academy Raider. George would go on to attend the University of New Hampshire. He graduated in 1964 with his bachelor’s degree in Animal Science.



1961 - George Weston, Fryeburg Academy Class President

In 1966, George would marry Conway resident Laurie Burnell after being introduced to her by his FA classmate, Arizona Zipper, of Fryeburg. George and Laurie built a house near the large farm on family property. Children Mary (1967), Julie (1969) and John (1975) would follow as seventh generation Westons.

In 1972, George’s father, John Weston, would pass of a heart attack. “I was talking to my father on the front lawn and he died right there.” As expected, George picked up where his father left off. “...Well I tried to,” he says modestly.

“I thought I was going to be doing exactly what my father did - buying and selling cows. For a while, I was going to Vermont once a week with dairy cattle but that got old. As life would have it, small dairy farms were folding left and right during the early 70’s. The demands on dairy farmers got bigger and more sophisticated. Milk used to be picked up in cans. Then milk companies started requiring milk tanks. Some farmers didn’t want to go that route. It was a tough

business. It costs a lot to bring in feed and the small guys went out of business. And new generations did not want to do it. They understood the negative economics of it. There’s no question that in the 50’s a person here in the valley could milk a few cows, have a small tractor, sell corn to the corn shops, and they could get by alright but that is no longer. The dairy farms that are left are very big and mechanized. It’s kind of too bad it had to go that way, but it did.”



“In the long run the last thing I ever thought I’d be doing is selling vegetables. But we started and here we are!” The Westons grow 60 acres of fresh vegetables, and two acres are certified organic. George says, “Our daughter, Mary, has a great eye for running things at the farmstand in Fryeburg. My son, John, does all the farming and outdoor work. Our daughter, Julie, works at our West Side Road farmstand in Conway. Our niece, Heather Burnell, is fast becoming the manager here in Fryeburg as my wife, Laurie, looks to cut back on her many years in farming and long hours associated with this life. And I have two grandchildren, Serena, 16 and Tyler, 25, and they are great helpers.”

George is a very knowledgeable historian. His home office is lined with photos and important historical Weston family memorabilia including scenes of his father with President Eisenhower on a visit he made to Maine in 1955, a letter he received while a patient at Children’s Hospital in Boston dated 1954 from Maine senator Margaret Chase Smith; and, a framed photo and article about the surgeon who treated him at Children’s Hospital. He owns records

1966 - Mr. & Mrs. George (Laurie) Weston - June 25

of farmers detailing the cattle drives out of Fryeburg to the Brighton Stockyards near Boston back before the railroad came to town. “It would take 10 days to drive cattle to Somerville, Massachusetts. The first stop was in Freedom, NH, with designated stops all along the way to pasture the cattle. Farmers bought and sold all along the way,” George says. “My father was a well-known cattle dealer. He had a commission business in Somerville. There were all kinds of stories on those drives. The Fryeburg railroad changed all that around 1871.”

George loves Fryeburg Fair and has been involved all his life. He started showing the family’s Holsteins at the fair’s dairy shows while in grade school as a young 4-H’er. He would go on to work with the 4-H department for many years with Dick Andrews and then Henry Black. He helped Dr. Eugene Hussey, then the Livestock Chairman. When Dr. Hussey moved to the Finance Committee at the Fair, George was named to replace him as Livestock Chairman and has been in that role ever since. George’s grandfather, his namesake, George Weston (1870-1938) was instrumental in leadership at Fryeburg Fair as well as his father, John. He recalls his father and two other fair leaders going to the bank annually to sign a personal note to



2011-George & Laurie Weston, at the Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs Conference

guarantee they had funds to open the fair, personally underwriting their beloved agricultural event. George’s father was the chairman of the Maine Harness Racing Commission.

At 83 years old, George says he doesn’t see himself retiring. “Of course I’ve slowed down some. As far as the fair, I have a very able assistant, Dave Richardson, of Fryeburg. And as long as I can contribute and not get in the way, I’d like to keep going, probably reversing roles with Dave.”

Richardson says, “George is a wonderful role model, mentor and father figure to me. I have sought his sound guidance many times as a friend and as his livestock assistant. He has an inspirational amount of integrity along with a high degree of professionalism that we all respect and appreciate. When an issue needs to be resolved, he listens to everyone. With his calm manner, a smile on his face, and a twinkle in his eye, he resolves the issue with fairness and respect.”



2022-George Weston, Livestock Chairman, Fryeburg Fair

When asked about his favorite aspects of the fair, George seems to gravitate to areas his ancestors have been involved in. “I love the horse racing. To see them all running around the corner...so great. My father was instrumental in starting Woodsmen’s Field Day and I love that. A good day at the Fair is to be involved with the animals. My job is to go around and see that all is going smoothly in the livestock and agricultural areas. It’s a hectic week but I enjoy seeing our regular farmers and families that come every year. And all the happy fairgoers.”

Dave Hastings, President of Fryeburg Fair says, “George is a pillar of the Fryeburg Fair. He speaks quietly and with a lot of wisdom. When hard decisions need to be made, we all listen carefully to George.”



2023-George & Laurie Weston Memorial Day Parade & Ceremony, Fryeburg, ME

Besides the fair, George has long been the annual organizer of Fryeburg’s Memorial Day parade and ceremony. “My uncle, Dick Pipe, was the Commander of the American Legion in Fryeburg at one time. He was getting on in years and he decided I was going to help him. I’ve tried to do what I can. Uncle Dick served in WWII 1943-1945 in the China, Burma, India theater and was part of ‘Flying the Hump’, a dangerous navigation through the Himalayan Mountains near enemy territory.”

On the list of other contributions, George has been a selectmen for the town of Fryeburg as well as serving on town committees. He & son, John, have long maintained their family’s Stark’s Mountain for use by Fryeburg Academy sports teams and town residents for skiing, running & general recreation.



2024 - George with Dave Richardson-Asst Livestock Chairman & Supt Dairy Dept & Sarah Littlefield, Livestock Office & Dairy Dept & Executive Director of the Maine Dairy & Nutrition Council

George recently had his left knee replaced on his “good leg” and is doing well. He right leg has endured the lifelong effects of polio.

Roy Andrews, lifelong resident of Fryeburg and past president of Fryeburg Fair says, “George and I grew up together. I’m a few years older. Our families were both in the dairy business and we traded and sold cattle for many years. He is extremely respected in the town and very involved in the community. They just don’t come any better than George.”

George’s exceptional nature, ability to adapt and commitment to his fellow citizens is a model for all. He’s Fryeburg’s very own George Bailey.

Written by Rachel Andrews Damon

With thanks to David Crouse of Cold River Chronicle for historical assistance.



2025 - George Weston surrounded by family (l-r) - grandson-Tyler James, daughter Weston James, wife-Laurie, George Weston, son-John Weston, daughter-Mary Weston DiNucci & granddaughter, Serena DiNucci. Photo by son-in-law, Michael DiNucci