

— HISTORY —

South end of Lebanon Green a changed piece of land

Several weeks ago the *Chronicle* published a "Then and Now" supplement, which compared historical town views in the region with the same scene today.

One of the most changed landscapes was that of the southern end of the Lebanon Green. The "then" view, reproduced here, was originally published on a postcard in 1925, and is barely recognizable as the same place today. The picture was taken from the vantage point of an old baseball field, once located on the historic town green.

The first building on the left is the old Lebanon Town Hall, built in 1848. It was moved from its original site on the lower or "little green" across Route 207 to this location in 1921 to make way for the town's first high school, which would also house the Lebanon town library. Jutting out on the left of the 1848 town hall is the corner of a grocery store that stood on the site of the present-day Lebanon library.

Back across Route 207, the columned front of the new Lyman Memorial High School is visible on the little green. The next building, which stood opposite the high school back across Route 207 on the southern end of the Lebanon Green, is the Lebanon

Center School.

Two outhouses can be seen attached to the back, one for boys and one for girls. When Lebanon's new consolidated elementary school opened in 1936, the town library was moved from the high school into this center school building.

The most distinctive structure in the view is the First Congregational Church (organized in 1700) at the right of the picture, with graceful spire. It was designed by the artist John Trumbull in 1804 and built between 1804-07.

The high winds of the 1938 hurricane toppled the steeple into the nave; the church lay in ruins, but it was restored to the original Trumbull design between 1939 and 1954. A large fellowship house was constructed on the rear or north end in 1959-62, with a Memorial Room extending on the east side of the church building.

In 1959, when Lebanon's new combined junior-senior high school building opened, two miles west of the town center, the for-



Tom
Beardsley

mer Lyman Memorial High School building became the Lebanon Town Hall and a fireproof vault was installed.

A period of great change commenced in 1966 when the town of Lebanon purchased the grocery store just visible at the extreme left of the photograph. The store and the 1848 town hall were demolished, and the new Lebanon library was built on the site. This was opened to the public in February 1968, and the old center school building next door was demolished as soon as the books had been transferred into the new library.

Three months later, in May 1968, the Lebanon Town Hall, located in the former Lyman Memorial High School building on the little green, burned to the ground in a spectacular fire, and only the fireproof town vault surviving the conflagration. The present Lebanon Town Hall was built around the vault.

The year 1968 was an eventful one at Lebanon. Towards the end of the year, the town built a new community center on the corner



The southern end of the Lebanon Green, 1925

of routes 87 and 207, and some of the old beams and wallboards from the 1848 town hall were used to panel the new centre's meeting room.

A swimming pool was added to the new community center the following year.

The southern end of Lebanon's green may have changed dramatically, but overall the town center has changed little since colonial times. If you have a free after-

noon in the weekend, come and visit four historical buildings from the period, the Jonathan Trumbull Senior and Junior Houses, the Lebanon Congregational Church and the revolutionary-period War Office.

Thanks go to Lebanon town historian Alicia Wayland for her assistance in compiling this article.

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