

OTIS TOWN HISTORY

In 1805 Isaac Frazier and Nathaniel M. Jellison from Union River Plantation, now a part of Ellsworth, and James Gilpatrick and Allen Milliken, from Thorndike (the land now called Trenton) felt the call to explore inland and moved to Otis.

Over the next 28 to 30 years more and more people moved into the area. Some were drawn by the lumbering business. Others were drawn to the land and built farms and supported themselves off the land. A close-knit community was developed. The settlement was named Plantation 8 by the government and included the towns that are now called Dedham and Otis.

The town was named Otis after Joseph Otis. In 1835 the people met to draw up plans for an Act of Incorporation, which was approved on March 19, 1835. Otis became the 227th town in the State of Maine.

Once the town was incorporated, the citizens approached Joseph Otis, Justice of Peace, and asked him to petition for a Town Meeting to begin organization of the town. The warrant was granted and the first Town Meeting was held. That same Town Meeting form of government is still used today.

Otis had 8 sawmills over the years. At one time there were 5 mills running simultaneously. These mills made shingles, staves, clapboards, and long and short lumber. The mills were family owned and usually employed from 10-15 people. There was also a hoop maker shop run by Daniel C. Young. This shop made iron hoops for the barrels and stayed open until 1930.

There used to be several stores in Otis. O. C. Tibbetts ran a store on Rebel Hill from 1883 to 1889. F. W. Fogg opened a variety store from 1893 to 1901. Harold Salsbury ran a store on the Otis-Ellsworth line in the early 1900's and Roland Salsbury ran a store in the 1940's, which was across the street from the present Otis General Store.

Otis used to be divided into 2 school districts with 3 schools. One at the bottom of Big Hill on the Point Road, one on the flats of Rebel Hill (across the street from the big cemetery) and one in the area of Dick Dunn's property. This last school was closed and another was built where the Otis Civic Center now stands. The high school students had to find families to live with so they could attend Ellsworth High School.

In 1949 the school system changed drastically and all the schools were closed and students attended the Otis School (The Otis Civic Center) until the present school was erected.

Otis has a large lake, called Beech Hill Pond, which attracts many fishermen and boaters and is enjoyed by many, many campers. Some of these campers have enjoyed Otis so well that they have made it their year round residence.

