

SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS



NEIGHBORHOODS OF SEBAGO

EAST SEBAGO 2025

ON THE COVER:

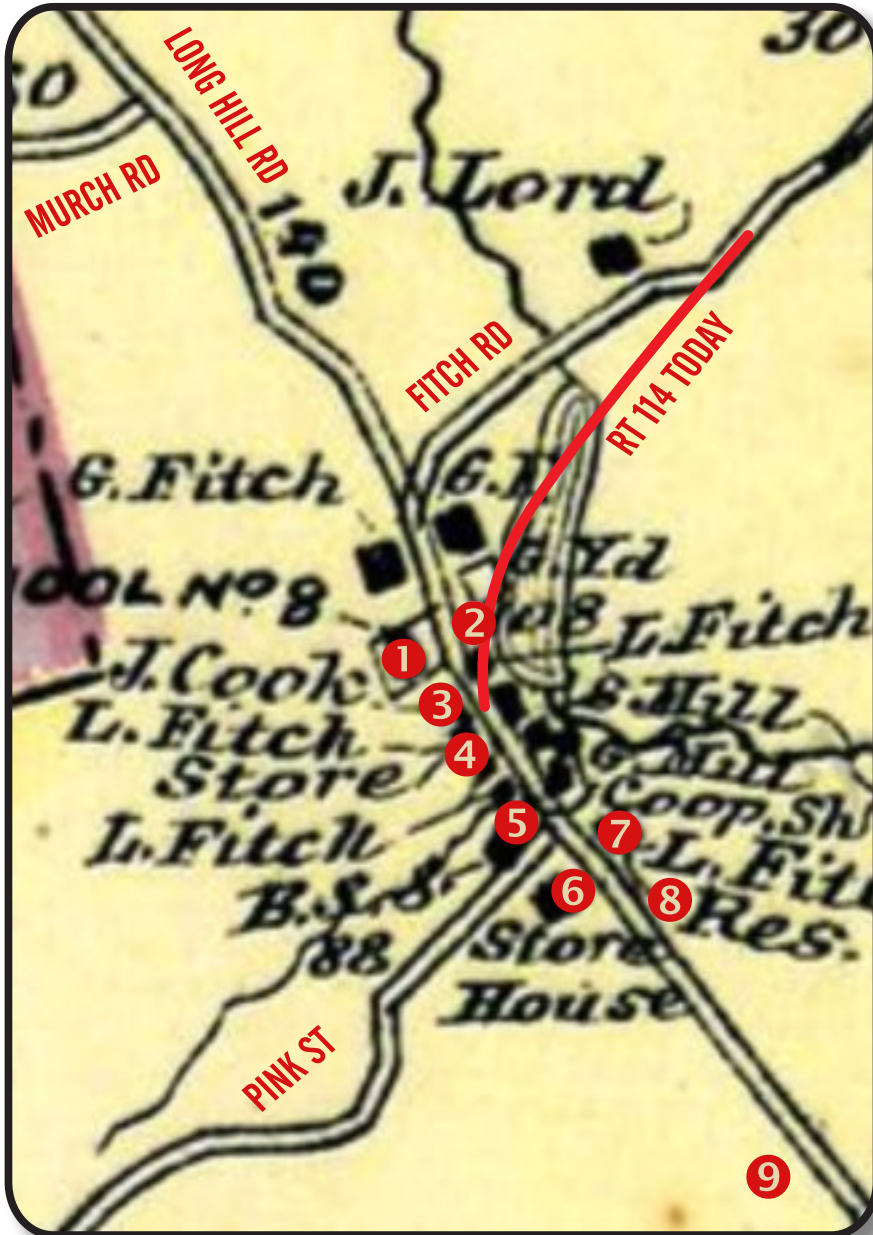
Photograph of Fitch's Store, taken around 1950.

January 2025

The history of East Sebago — the village lying along the present path of Rt 114, the bottom of Long Hill Rd and along Fitch Road to where it crosses the Northwest River — is entwined with the history of the Fitch family. The Fitches have been part of Sebago from the very beginning, starting in the 1780s with Captain Zachariah Fitch. He was one of the original proprietors of the Plantation of Flintstown, acquiring large tracts of land and building the first sawmill on the River in the 1790s. Although he sold the mill in 1802, his son William, "Squire Fitch" of Sebago Center, began purchasing shares in the 1820s, once more giving the Fitch family a connection to the mill that would later be run by William's grandsons. Much of the land stayed in the family for generations, gradually being sold off or donated to the town.

Approximate locations of the buildings described in this calendar are shown on an excerpt from the 1871 road map.

- ❶ East Sebago Schoolhouse (February)
- ❷ Coleman House (March)
- ❸ Cook House (April)
- ❹ Fitch's Store (May/June)
- ❺ Sanborn House (August)
- ❻ Spaulding Memorial Library (September)
- ❼ Harry Fitch House/Sebago Elementary School (October)
- ❽ George Fitch House (November)
- ❾ Gilman's Store (December)



February 2025

East Sebago School was built in 1854 to serve students in that area. A second classroom was added in 1925, making it the largest school in Sebago. Oil lamps were still being used in the schools until electricity was installed in 1937. A small sink and dry well weren't installed until a year or two before it closed.

In 1951, with the opening of the Sebago Elementary School, all the one-room schools in town were consolidated. The town sold the schoolhouse for \$750 to Dr Benjamin Ward, who was Montford Fitch's brother-in-law, and his wife Gertrude. The Wards converted the school to living space.

One other person owned it before Dave and Helen Twombly bought it in 1979. They added porches and a garage and made it a home for themselves and their two daughters.



Above: the original schoolhouse.

Left: the Twombly home

Coleman Home

March 2025

It is not known when the house was originally built on this property, which was at one time owned by various Fitch family members. Ellsworth McDonald sold the 50-acre parcel to Elizabeth Coleman in 1945. The portion on the east side of Long Hill Rd containing the house was sold to Cindy Hoard in 2003. The Murch Hill Cemetery is also on this land.



April 2025

Cook House



This house, across from the second Fitch's store, is known as the Cook house and said to be the second oldest house in Sebago. While that can't be proved, the original portion of the house probably dates to the early 1800s, and Jason Cook did at one time own it. He bought the 50 acre parcel with its buildings in 1865 for \$400 from John Hasty, who was at least the third owner. Cook sold it to the Fitch brothers in 1874.

This picture was taken around 1912, when Montford Fitch owned it. His wife Elaine is the woman in the doorstep. They lived here until they moved across the road into the house with the second store. Their son Laurence and his family lived here until they too moved to the big house across the road. It is now the home of Casey Sheehan and and her two children.

The Original Fitch Bros. Store

May 2025



Left: a postcard from 1907 showing the original Fitch store. Above: stagecoach and carriage outside the store.

In 1830, at the age of 26, Luther Fitch built a canal boat for the purpose of bringing goods from the coast up the Cumberland and Oxford Canal to East Sebago, where he opened a store. An article in the April 21, 1847, issue of the Eastern Argus newspaper describes the property: 250 acres of land, a store, a sawmill, a cooper shop, three dwellings, two barns and various outbuildings. That first general store burned sometime around 1850, when hot ashes were thrown into a wooden barrel, and it was rebuilt in 1851. In 1874, at age 67, Luther sold much of his land in East Sebago to his three sons, William, John and George. Included in the sale were the store, renamed Fitch Bros, the sawmill and a grist mill. William and John took over

running the mills and George ran the store. By 1900, George's son Montford worked in the store alongside his father. In November of 1909 the brothers sold the store to Montford.

The store burned again in October of 1919 when it was struck by lightning. Montford was on his way to his first-ever vacation, but was called back to find his beloved store a pile of ashes. His wife Elaine watched the store burn from her bedroom window. After that, Montford remodeled the stable attached to his homestead a few hundred feet north of the wreckage and reopened the store there on what is now Long Hill Road.

June 2025

The Later Fitch's Store



ranch house on the original store site and moved there in 1958. Laurence and wife Vera and their children then moved across the road to the old homestead with the store, and they continued to run it until Laurence's death in 1997, when the store closed for good.

In early 2000 the former store was sold to Ted Davis, who has made it his home ever since.

Left: the "new" store in 1922

Below: Laurence and Montford in the store, 1950s.

Montford and Elaine Fitch's son, Laurence, began working in the store as a teenager alongside his father. Then the war came, and Laurence enlisted in the Air Force in August of 1943. After his discharge in April 1946 he worked in the South Portland shipyard before returning to Sebago to work in the store. While in Portland, he met Vera Dresser, a young English-woman, at a dance, and they were married in 1948.

In February of 1957, shortly before Montford's death, Laurence bought the store contents from his parents. Elaine then built a





This is how the main road through East Sebago looked in 1918. The land around here was originally owned by the Fitches, but by this time other people had acquired parts of it. The first house on the left was John and Dolly Lord's home in 1918, and is now the Stoney Brook Lobster Pound. Next to it is the Thombs home. Henry Thombs was a teamster who worked for the Fitch's lumber mill. The large building beyond the Thombs' is the first Fitch Bros' Store, this being the year before it burned. In the center is Red Man's Hall, officially Sebago Tribe No. 90 of the Improved Order of Red Men, organized on Nov 17, 1904. The hall had a bird's eye maple floor, a kitchen and a basement with a furnace. The profits from many oyster stew suppers,

whist parties, and community socials were used to pay for improvements to the building. It was torn down in the late 1960s when Rt 114 was straightened and widened, by-passing Long Hill Road and Fitch Rd.

On the right side is an old cooper shop, which was later replaced by the Hoot Owl restaurant. Will Martin built the Hoot Owl in the 1920s as a bakery, and later added an ice cream parlor. Will's great-niece Diana Letellier remembers playing there after the restaurant closed and it became a home for her father and stepmother. Later it was rented to Henry Thombs' son Randall and wife Arlene Thombs.

August 2025

Sanborn's House and Store

In 1879, the Fitch brothers sold the lot on the corner of Rt 114 and Rt 11, beside what's now the Stony Brook Lobster Pound to LaGrove Sanborn. He and his wife Julia built a house and a store there. LaGrove was a carpenter by trade, building a steamboat that carried passengers from Sebago Lake Station at the foot of Sebago Lake to his pier in East Sebago. He was also a fisherman, and in the store's floor there was a hole so customers could drop a line into the brook below. The store served as the post office of East Sebago from 1915 until LaGrove's death in 1933.

After LaGrove passed, the store was torn down and the post office was moved to the Sanborn home, next door, where his daughter Eva became the postmistress. The home remains in the Sanborn family.



*Above:
Sanborn house*

*Left:
Sanborn's store,
circa 1930s.*

*Right: LaGrove
Sanborn on his
steamboat
Minnetta*



Spaulding Memorial Library

September 2025



This year is the Spaulding Memorial Library's 100th anniversary. The construction was started in 1923 on land donated by Harry Fitch, who owned the large house across the road. Money for the project was provided by Leon C. Spaulding, a prominent summer resident of the town. Mr. Spaulding passed away before the library was opened in 1925, but his widow Dorothy continued to support the library throughout the rest of her long life.

The walls were built from field stones gathered from stone walls in Sebago, Baldwin and Minot. The interior has a grand fieldstone fireplace on one end and a large ornate librarian's desk at the other end.

Many old history books have been donated over the years by patrons of the library. School children still walk across the road on Wednesdays to visit the library and choose books to take home.

October 2025

Harry Fitch House

In 1950 Dorothy Spaulding bought the former Fitch home from Harry H. Fitch's heirs. Early in 1951 she gave it to the town of Sebago for a new consolidated elementary school. The townspeople accepted the gift and began to renovate the house and build an addition for four classrooms at the back. The main house was turned into a music room, a teacher's lounge, and a small kitchen. The second floor was used for the town offices. The renovations were completed by that fall and the students moved into their new school



Above: the Fitch house as it appeared in early 1900s.

in November of 1951. There were 75 students enrolled at the time, and many years later, enrollment is still about the same. The difference is that the school only goes to the fifth grade now.

Left: the new school building in 1951



George Fitch House

Another house that sits on land originally owned by the Fitch brothers was the home of George Evans Fitch, son of Montford Fitch. In the 1890s Sebago's Lake View Trotting Park was built on the land directly behind this house by Arthur Dyer and a number of like-minded folks. The half-mile track sat where Sebago Days is now held. It had grandstands and fencing and hosted local fairs and races. Sebago residents who grew up here can remember riding their bikes on the track as children.

George Fitch was an ardent horseman who raised racehorses. For George this was a hobby, but to his youngest son, Leigh, it would become a profession. Popularly known in racing circles as "The Fox," Leigh racked up 7,500 wins in his harness racing career.

The property is now owned by Dana and Anne Batchelder, and their daughter Millie's S'More Firewood business is run from here.

Shaw House

The next house over in this picture belonged to George W Shaw, who bought this house and land from the Fitch brothers in 1891 and then passed it on to his son Curtis Shaw. Curtis, or Coots as he was known, was a carpenter and an electrician who also worked as a caretaker at a summer camp. The house was sold to the Libby family in the early '50s, and is now owned by Patty Schrader.

November 2025



*George Fitch's house and
stables on the left, the Shaw
house on the right*

December 2025

Gilmans' Store

This small neighborhood store has served Sebago in many guises over the years. It was first built by Bob and Gerard Gilman in the 1940s. In 1949 it was sold to Heinrich and Florence Jacobsen, who ran it as Jakes. Then it was the Deli House. For many years in more recent memory it was Four Seasons, owned by the Vacchiano family. Now it's Karen Nason's Grand Central Wine Bar, a seasonally popular spot that features live music along with the wines and charcuterie boards.



*Above:
The first store, when
the Gilmans owned it.
Ed Ribas's garage on
the right.*

*Left:
The same building,
transformed into the
Four Seasons diner.*

*Right:
The Grand Central
Wine Bar today.*





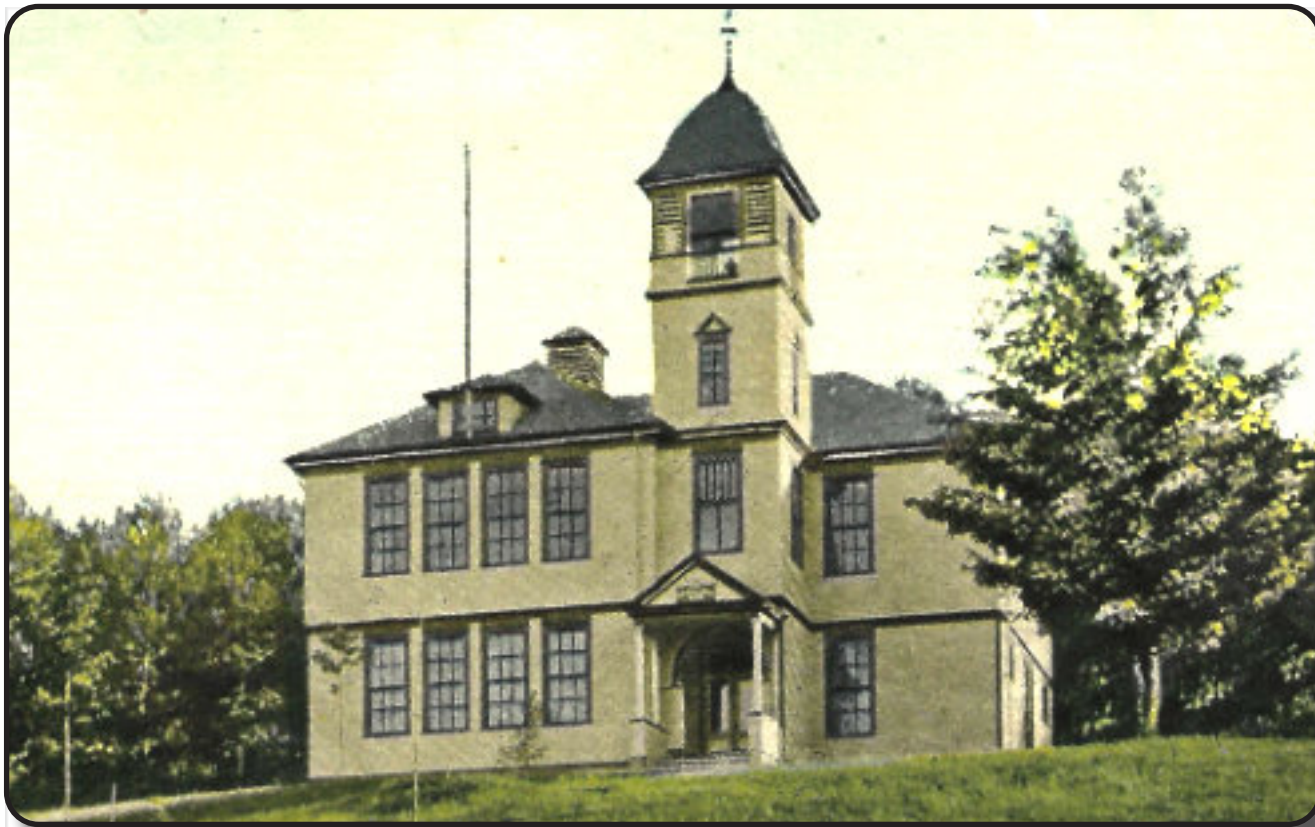
An aerial view from 1937 of the East Sebago "downtown." On the right side of the road at the very top you can just see Fitch's Store and the Cook house opposite it. The next big building on the right is Red Men's Hall. Next is the Fitch Lumber Company. The house sitting where Veterans Park is now was John P Fitch's home. The large house and barn was the Fitch

homestead, now the elementary school. Coming off the lower edge of the photo is George Fitch's house and stables; the road going past the barn led to the trotting track. On the other side of the road is the library. Hidden in the trees beyond Pink St are the Sanborn, Lord and Thombs houses. The large structure on Pink St is the Blake House.

Coming for 2026

Mud City

If you have pictures and stories to share of your family's home in the last century, please contact a member of the Sebago Historical Society, send a comment to our Facebook page or email us through the Contact page of our website www.sebagohistoricalsociety.org



The Calendar Committee, Sherrill Brown and Nancy Sosman, would like to thank all those who invited us into their homes and opened their photo albums, telling us the stories behind the pictures. A special thank you to Jil Fitch for her help with her family's history in this area and offering personal photos from her album.

All information is as accurate as can be determined at the time of printing.