COMPILATION OF BASIC INFORMATION & HISTORY OF WOLFEBORO BUILDINGS May 25, 2023
PLANNED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE RAILROAD MUSEUM DISPLAY (Compiled by Gene Denu, WHS)

PEAVEY BLOCK

The land under this building was part of Lake Winnipesaukee and filled in the mid-1800's. The three-story building construction began in 1889 under the ownership of John L. Peavey, a prominent local businessman. The site first had, in 1882, the Lewando & Madison Grocery and Hardware store there; that building, and one other building, were moved back toward the lake, where they remained until burned down in the great fire of 1899. The first tenants occupied the building in late 1889; construction was completed in 1890. The Peavey Block was the only building in the dockside area that was saved in the great fire.

Over the years, there were many businesses on the ground floor; the upper floors were devoted to offices and apartments. A long-term tenant in the left corner was the Wolfeboro Post Office. Located there from Jan. 8, 1894, until moving across the street to the newly built Post Office in 1937.

In 1944, the building was purchased by J. Clifton Avery, who had been an insurance agent sincej1899. The Avery Insurance Agency relocated to the corner office in 1951. Still there today, the business is the longest-established Wolfeboro insurance agency. Still under ownership of Avery family descendants, the building is commonly referred to as the Avery Block.

Size is about 66'W (along Main St.) x 59'D.

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Business, nos. 39, 50, 52-55, 60.

GOODWIN BLOCK

Also on land reclaimed from Lake Winnipesaukee, this impressive three-story building with a mansard roof and top floor dormers was build about 1868 by Joseph W. Goodwin and Levi T. Haley. They had previously been partners in the 1860's in a General Store and had numerous other business interests. They had also built the Mount Washington Wharf and the Wharf Building.

Various businesses occupied the ground floor. The second floor had offices, including the Wolfeborough Savings Bank, which began operations in 1871. The third floor was the Masonic Hall, and the building was sometimes referred to as the Mason Block. The building burned down completely in the great fire of May 28, 1899, along with many other nearby structures. A new, rather basic, one-story building was erected on the site later that year. This new building was severely damaged in a fire on Oct. 13, 1908. Reconstructed in 1909, the one-story building appears much the same today. The most interesting feature is the punched tin ceilings in the clothing store.

Size before fire is about 80'W (along Main St.) x 39'D.
Size after fire is about 80'W (along Main St.) x 56'D with a rear protrusion (see Sanford sketch).

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Business, nos. 46-49.

BANK BUILDING

The site of this building was originally the location of a general store, owned by Samuel and John L. Piper, in the mid-1800's. The building was so close to the waterfront that boats could pull up to a projection and load goods directly into the boat. When the waterfront was filled in, this location became the north side of South Main Street and businesses could be constructed on the south side. In 1855, the general store was torn down, and the new building was erected. The building was brick, originally left red, two stories high with a finished attic. The primary purpose was for a Boot & Shoe Factory, and the original name was the Boot & Shoe Factory Building. In 1857, The Brackett & Thomas Brogan Manufactory occupied the second floor, and the attic was the home of Morning Star Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. The Lake Bank, later the Lake National Bank, and other businesses were on the ground floor. Various shoe manufactures operated there until 1884, when the new factory on Factory Street, now Lehner Street, was built.

The building had many owners and names, but the best known remains the Bank Building. After the Lake Bank became insolvent in 1893, it was replaced by the Wolfeborough Loan and Banking Company, which closed in 1904. Then the Wolfeboro National Bank had offices in the building from its beginning in 1906 until relocating to Center Street in 1963. A number of business occupied the ground floor, the latest being a real estate business which has been there for many years.

The original building had standard rectangular windows. A remodeling in 1890 changed two windows on the left side and one front window (right front) to the present arched style. The left front window was changed at some later date. In the great fire of 1899, blazing embers flying throughout the area set the roof on fire. The building was saved from serious damage by the gallant actions of students from Brewster Academy, using small hoses and providing valued assistance to the fire departments which were fully engaged trying to save the Peavey Block and the rest of downtown.

Size is about 38'W (along Main St.) x 66'D.

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Business, nos.1-10.

GREAT FIRE

At 9:00 in the evening of May 28, 1899, fire was discovered in the waiting room of the Boston & Maine Railroad Wharf Building. The fire quickly spread, fanned by stiff winds coming off the lake. Flying embers endangered many downtown buildings, damaging the Bank Block across Main Street and landing on the Hobbs-Is-Inn and several residences. Completely destroyed were the B & M RR Wharf Building, the Goodwin Block, a building at the adjacent Lady of the Lake Steamship Wharf, a building behind the Peavey Block (the building was formerly the Lewando & Mattison grocery store), and lumber and other materials which had been stored in the dockside area. Firemen were only able to save the Peavey Block, aided by a critical wind shift. This was the most disastrous fire in Wolfeboro history.

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Fire & Town Services, Goodwin Block Fire, nos. 1-4, 7-16.

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BLACK'S PAPER STORE BUILDING

This building was first known as the Folsom Block, after Blake Folsom opened a Hardware Store in 1855 in a small two-story building on the corner of South Main Street and the street now called Railroad Avenue. Later, he built another similar build on the left side, which was eventually connected to form the wider building which remains there today. In addition to selling hardware and dry goods, the records indicate that tin, sheet iron, copper and brass products were manufactured on the premises. Sometime before 1906, the buildings were moved back from the street, and gasoline pumps and hay scales were placed in front (research in the Granite News might provide further information).

The business was operated by Folsom and some descendants until 1897, then had several short-term owners until bought by Orville E. Porter in 1929. The building then was known as the Porter Block until bought by George D. Black in 1956. The present name, with occasional varying, has been used since then.

For general information, the Paper Store had its roots in 1860 in the building to the left of Black's, adjacent to the bridge. That store was purchased by George D. Black in 1946 and the business continued at that location until moving to the present location in 1957.

Size is about 70'W (along Main St.) x 47'D in the early 1900's, with irregular depth. At some point, the rear was remodeled to the present depth of about 56'.

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Business, nos. 34, 62.

B & M Railroad Wharf Building

Located on the Town Dock adjacent to the Mount Washington steamship landing, this two-story building was built in the early 1870's when the railroad into Wolfeboro was built. The tracks ran directly in front of the building, ending on the Town Dock. Owned by the B & M Railroad, at various times, the first floor housed a pool hall, saloon, depot for freight storage and a waiting room. In the rear, on the Smith River outlet, was a fish market. The second floor was known as Dartmouth Hall, a roller-skating rink, dance hall, and general gathering spot for events, including political rallies. The Great Fire of 1899 began in the first floor waiting room, destroying this building, the wharf, and several other nearby structures.

Size is about 96'W (parallel to tracks) x 40'D with fish market protruding to the river.

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Transportation, Railroads, nos. 15, 16. Also see General Views, Waterfront and Dockside, nos. 14, 18.

Lakeside Station (after 1899)

Lakeside Station, also known as Dockside, was located at the Town Docks on the Mount Washington steamship wharf. The original two-story building burned down in 1899, and was quickly replaced by a much smaller simple one-story building.

Railroad usage began to diminish with the arrival of the automobile. While car travel was only a novelty in the early 1900's, the convenience of a train ride to or from Boston in 3 to 4 hours was clearly a better option for vacationers. But, a continuing decline in usage led to the last passenger service being discontinued in 1936. The Town of Wolfeboro acquired the Lakeside Station building at the end of 1933, and it was leased out as Scottie's Lunch in the mid-1930's. Later known as Dockside Restaurant and many other names, the building has been remodeled over the years.

The original size is about 39'W (parallel to the lakefront) x 21'D. Scaling the Sanborn maps indicates it was enlarged by 1917.

Reference photos in the WHS Photo Archives: Transportation, Railroads, no. 25. Also see General Views, Waterfront and Dockside, nos. 12, 23, 25, 31 and 40.

General History

In the mid-1800's, Wolfeboro had already become established as a tourist destination, with several large hotels and many boarding houses available for guests. Access to these facilities was dependent on steamships across Lake Winnipesaukee (where railroads were already in place) or the more difficult stagecoach runs from the east (over basic dirt roads which suffered from rutting and flooding at times). It was hoped that the Portsmouth, Great Falls, & Conway Railroad would run track south of Lake Wentworth into Wolfeboro, but their route was laid out 10 miles to the east. In 1869, the town voted to approve funds for a 12-mile branch into Wolfeboro, which was built by the Eastern Railroad and opened in 1872, which was later sold to the Boston & Maine Railroad in 1892.

This opened new vistas ----- (Insert here the second paragraph of Bowers, Vol. I, page 49).

The popularity of the railroad and the direct connection to the Mount Washington steamship (also owned by the B & M RR) continued in the early 1900's, with tourists continuing to enjoy excursions and good access from Boston. The one-way trips took between three & ¼ hours and four hours. Local products, such as excelsior, lumber, farm produce and blocks of ice were shipped to distant markets.

A downside to the RR's operation was the cavalier attitude of the B & M RR management, which had a record of raising costs and running erratic schedules. (Don't know if this should be included, but further details can be found in Bowers, Vol. I, pages 116 and 164.)

By the early 1920's, the use of automobiles was having an effect on the passenger business. The last regularly scheduled passenger train was on May 16, 1936. Freight hauling continued into the late 1960's. (Further details can be found in Bowers, Vol. I, pages 198 and 237.) Note that page 198 implies that the RR may have carried Circus trains.