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Number 2

West Wharf- Frederick Lee to the Rescue



Ships under construction at West Wharf

"We the subscribers taking into consideration the embarrassed situation of the inhabitants of East Guilford on account of their not having any Harbour or Landing convenient, and thereby constantly exposed to loss and misfortune .

Believing that with the sum of One Thousand Dollars judiciously laid out by wharfing and other necessary means on the East Side of the Point called Reuben's Rocks, a wharf may be made where vessels may with safety and dispatch, lade, and unlade and not be exposed to the disasters of the sea."

On July 18, 1823 Frederick Lee gathered 12 distinguished men of Madison together at Curtis Wilcox's house to fill a need they all perceived was a source of deep concern to the inhabitants of Madison - they had no wharf of their own. There was no way to take advantage the growing coastal shipping trade.

They pledged a thousand dollars and set work to build a wharf known to us as West Wharf. A board of Directors was elected: Frederick Lee, President and largest stock holder, Samuel Robinson, Jun., Clerk, Curtis Wilcox, Treasurer, Jonathan Scranton, and Jonathan S. Wilcox, and work was begun. As is so often the case, their cost estimates were off and the stockholders were required ante up another \$37.50 per share to continue

the work. On October 18, 1823, they voted to sell at public auction land not needed for the wharf.

Wharfage rates were established including \$.05 per cord of wood, \$.03 per load of manure, \$.02 per barrel or Box of tea, and \$.02 per thousand shingles. Curtis Wilcox was appointed wharfmaster at a salary of 6% of all wharfage collected. Stock holders were allowed to store one tier of wood on the wharf so that "no wood be left on the Wharf to interrupt a free passage."

Work on the wharf commenced in June 1823 and continued through August, 1824, Even before the work was completed the first ship, the sloop "Albion", arrived at the wharf September 15, 1823 to unload 10 cords of wood and 5500 barrel staves. Wharfage Fee: \$1.05.

Oh yes, and the price for the land to build the wharf? \$67.50.

Directions to West Wharf: From the center of Madison travel west toward Guilford on Route One. Pass the intersection with Route 79, Island Avenue on the left, and the green on the right. Turn left onto West Wharf Road. The Madison Country Club will be on your right as you turn onto West Wharf Road. Continue on West Wharf Road to the parking lot at the end.