

The Hamlet of Brookvale

By: Karen Ferguson, Town of Kirkwood Historian

As a reminder, the Town of Kirkwood consists of 5 different hamlets: Riverside, the Village of Kirkwood, Langdon, Kirkwood Center (5-Mile Point), and Brookvale.

Brookvale is situated in the northern part of the Town and encompasses West Colesville Road, Duell Road, Springer Road, and Kraft Road. A section of this area is also located in the Town of Colesville. This hamlet was previously known as Standley Hollow, named after one of the first settlers Benajah Standley who came to this area in 1805. (At some point, the Standley name was changed and became known as Stanley.) Other prominent settlers were Thomas Carroll, the Randalls, Pierces, and Sissons.

This area was predominantly used for farming; however, it did have a post office, a blacksmith shop, a schoolhouse, a church, a mill and a country store.

The country store was operated by Isaac Standley and his wife Catherine from 1845-1848. It was located in the front room of what I assume to be their house. Popular items sold were molasses, tea, snuff, tobacco, sugar and saleratus (baking soda). Most of the meat sold was mutton, cod fish and mackerel. Receipts reflect the following prices: butter 10 cents/pound; eggs 8 cents/dozen; potatoes 25 cents/bushel; washboards 34 cents each. Since candles were used for light, they were sold by the pound or 12 cents each. The store also carried thread, thimbles, gloves, combs, paper, and many other items. The store closed because Catherine passed away.

The Brookvale Cemetery was started by the first two settlers when Benajah Standley and Thomas Carroll each donated about a half an acre of their wheat fields as a family plot. A very large, old Oak tree still stands in the center marking the location of some of the earliest graves. Looking through epitaphs, Thomas Carroll's 9-year-old daughter, Phebe, might have been the first one buried here on March 2, 1841. Pine trees marked the perimeter of the original cemetery, first known as the Standley Cemetery. Burial permits in the late 1890s used the names Standley Cemetery and Brookvale Cemetery interchangeably. By the early 1900s, it was formally known as Brookvale. In 1926, additional land was purchased from the Standleys to enlarge the cemetery. About 200 graves rest on the hillside that was once covered in wheat.

The Brookvale School was School #5. It was mistakenly shown as #8 on the 1876 map. I don't know how early the school started but it was operating by 1855. The land was formally deeded to the school on November 5, 1879 by Hiram and Betsy Randall. School #5 remained in use until it joined the Windsor Central School District on August 20, 1942.

In 1945, Mrs. Ida (Frank) Gee and Mrs. Seward French decided to start the process of acquiring the vacated school building for a community association. A committee was formed and they drew up a constitution and held a vote. The majority of the community voted in favor of starting the Brookvale Community Association. The school was purchased from the Windsor Central School District for \$1.00 and the Association was official. It became a social center, a place for young people to have parties, as well as a thriving neighborhood association. By 1962, attendance and excitement had dwindled. The president called for a special meeting to abandon the association; however, none of the 10 members present were willing to do that. Instead, they made a motion to keep the association going and began a new member campaign. By the following week, there were 72 paid members and the Brookvale Community Association was revived. Unfortunately, about 10 years later, the old school was vacated and it was turned into a private residence in 1975.

Prior to the Brookvale Methodist Church being built, members and friends used to meet in the school. The time had come for them to have a place devoted to worship so they decided to build a church costing about \$1000. The site was donated by John Y. Darling. Thomas Carroll and Stephen Averts were the biggest contributors, each donating \$100. Those who donated \$50 were J.T. Carroll and Isaac Standley. Many other residents of this area, regardless of religious background, contributed to the new church fund. The new church was finished and dedicated as the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1894 with Rev. Charles Ashley Green as the first pastor. *(Pastor Green had been preaching at the school prior to the official house of worship.)* Behind the church building was an old mill dam and baptisms were held there. From 1915 to 1926, the church changed to a Union church because so many people from different denominations attended there. The Pastor of the Grace Baptist Church in Binghamton served as the minister during this time since the church didn't have a minister of their own. Then in 1926, the church converted back to a M.E. church. For about 90 years after that time, the Brookvale Methodist Church grew and the building was expanded. However, after many changes and a decline in membership, the church officially closed in 2018 and is now a private residence.

The Brookvale post office was established on January 30, 1873 with the first postmaster being Frank Coleman. It served approximately 350 people. The longest running postmaster was Mrs. Rosa Springer. She served from November 7, 1877 until the post office closed on June 30, 1902.