

BRANCH ESTABLISHED 2020



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Local Tidbits – 100 Years Ago

In the 1920s, Keene had a population of over 11,200 people and climbing. There were almost 100 miles of streets at that time with 12.08 miles paved. Roosevelt School was erected on Washington Street and the hospital was renamed Elliot Community Hospital.

Keene Rotary Club and Cheshire County Fish and Game Club were both organized in the early 1920s. On Main Street in Keene, The Colonial Theater Block was built and The Latchis Theater opened with a seating capacity of 1,070.

The Country Club purchased the Spaulding Farm to use as its new location and their Arch Street grounds were sold to the High School Athletic Association.

American composer Edwin Bagley – who was most famous for composing the march *National Emblem* – died in Keene in the 1920s.

Grace Richardson was elected to the Keene City Council, one of the first five women to hold this position after the 19th amendment – which guarantees American women the right to vote – was passed only months before. In 1922, Richardson was elected County Commissioner, beating two men in her own party (Democratic) and seven in the Republican Party.

By the 1920s, the automobile was relatively inexpensive and readily available, making it easier for large numbers of people to get to rural towns of southwest New Hampshire. Several farm towns had pretty much been abandoned during the second half of the 19th century due to a declining population. So, a return to these towns to raise families around nature and away from the city was a popular choice to make.

Another happening in 1920's Keene was the installation of streetlights around Central Square and cement concrete walkways were starting to be built. Street railways were removed from Main Street to the Marlborough town line and from the West Street Ashuelot River bridge to the end of the line at Wheelock Park.

During this decade, the airport in Keene opened and traffic signal lights were installed on Main Street. The old reservoir on Beech Hill was turned over to the city to be used for public swimming.

Later in the 1920s, a new Symonds School was built in West Keene (it was originally on Park Avenue). The Historical Society of Cheshire County was established and an armory on upper Washington Street was dedicated.

There was much hoopla when Charles Lindbergh flew his plane, The Spirit of St. Louis, over the region. Keene received the nickname "Elm City" because of the huge elm trees that lined the streets.

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