

## Dean Wile, the Carding Man

The Wile family was one of the first families to settle in Bridgewater, near what was known as the Sebastopol area on Pleasant River Road (now Victoria Road). Dean Wile was born in 1833, the oldest son of John George Wile and Mary Anne Hirtle of Summerside (Dayspring). When only 27 years old, Dean used money he had earned by giving singing lessons to buy two acres of land off the Old Pleasant River Road, where he could build a carding mill. Sheep were important to the local economy, and carding the wool by hand was long and tedious. Farmers brought their wool to the mill to be carded, then to be taken home and spun into yarn and woven into cloth.

Ever the businessman, Dean charged cash, but was willing to barter for food such as mutton, butter or cranberries, or labour instead of cash. He would keep a barrel of tea in the mill to sell to customers while they waited for their wool to be carded. During the 1890s, Dean had three women working for him. He did not operate any of the machines himself but rather sat back in his rocking chair while he supervised the women and took care of the customers. Dean also had his workers gather the wool left on the machines after carding, and when business was slow, that wool was re-carded and sold for 20 cents per pound. He made a nice bit of profit from these leftovers. The annual income from the mill in the 1880's was about \$900, a handsome sum for sure!

Dean had married Mary Ann Everett in 1858, and they had five children, with the family living on Pearl Street (named after his daughter) on the hill above the Mill. As the years went on, Dean managed the mill and his farm and other interests, with help from son Arkanas who also managed a local shoe store in town. Son Otto had for a while run a business at Brookfield Mines during the gold mine boom, but moved back to Bridgewater in 1920 and took charge of the mill as his brother Arkanas was busy with his shoe store.

Community was important to Dean Wile. In 1879, he set apart land to be used for a cemetery on Victoria Road and planned and cared for it until he donated it to the Town of Bridgewater in 1902. Dean died on May 29, 1913 at the age of 79 years. His wife Mary Ann had passed away in 1898. His obituary in the Bridgewater Bulletin on June 3, 1913 read *“Mr. Wile was one of the originators of Brookside Cemetery and the town is indebted to him largely for this beautiful parklike home of the dead, where he was at last laid to rest.”*