

THE LODGE

Including a history of

The Mile Slip

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FOREWORD

This little booklet endeavors to tell the story of a now forgotten way of life which existed and thrived over one hundred years ago. For the past several years I have found a certain fascination in the rediscovery of old roads, farms and mill sites now buried in new forest growth. The speed with which this entire community in the Mile Slip simply vanished from the face of the world as we know it today gives cause for reflection and contemplation.

Restoration of the Lodge on the mill site of Edmund Green has taken some three years to complete, but now it is possible for one to recall a little of the nostalgia and stern, simple life these pioneers once lead.

To our many friends throughout this country and abroad, I extend a warm welcome to see The Lodge when visiting New England. To those of you who have already visited, or are presently enjoying our hospitality at The Lodge, may this booklet serve as a friendly remembrance of the time you spent with us.

Thurston V. Williams President
The O.K. Tool Company, Inc.

THE LODGE

including a history of the Mile Slip

The restoration of the old Edmund Green sawmill serves to re-awaken interest in the long neglected southern part of The Mile Slip, which played a key role in the settlement of this area of New Hampshire. During the last one hundred years, this section, known as The Mile Slip, has lapsed back into wilderness to the extent it has become completely unknown to most residents of the towns of Milford, Wilton, Mason and Brookline. Hardly a dim awareness even exists of this farming community which once flourished on the rolling hills between Osgood Pond and Spaulding Brook. Still less is there any general appreciation of how the origins of the Mile Slip go back to the earliest period of white penetration of central New England and how intimately they are connected with the most important event of the Puritan era; the rising of the Wampanoag Indian tribes under King Philip in what historians called "King Philip's War."

Forty years after the landing of the Pilgrim fathers at Plymouth and thirty years after the colonization of Boston and Salem by the Puritan emigration under Governor Winthrop, the tide of white settlement was already pushing up the Merrimack River Valley. A surveying party reached Lake Winnepesaukee in 1638 and a fur trading post already had been set up in 1655 on Pennichuck Brook in Merrimack. John Eliot was preaching to the "Praying Indians" in the valleys of what are now Littleton (Nashobah) and Groton, and there were farms in a continuous belt up as far as Billerica and Chelmsford, Massachusetts.

In the fall of 1659, the Massachusetts General Court, or legislature, which claimed jurisdiction over all of the Merrimack Valley... the New Hampshire colony being still confined to a small area around Dover, Hampton and Portsmouth... granted several tracts of land along the Souhegan River with the full expectation they would soon be occupied by settlers. The most extensive of these 1659 grants was one thousand acres along the Souhegan's south bank for the benefit of the schools of Charlestown, Massachusetts. It was the opinion of the General Court the schools could make money by dividing this grant into lots and selling these to prospective settlers. At the northwest corner of this Charlestown School Farm was Dram Cup Hill. This Hill later marked the northern limit of the Mile Slip and a monument has been erected on Old Wilton Road across from the Jones Farm to mark this historic spot.

There were enough settlers in the Nashua Valley in 1673 to necessitate the chartering of the township of Dunstable. This township was a vast rectangle of some two hundred square miles and comprised all of what is now Hollis, Merrimack, Nashua, Hudson, Tyngsboro, the present Dunstable and large sections of what is now Milford, Amherst, Brookline, Townsend, Pepperell, Westford and Litchfield. The western line of Old Dunstable ran due south from Dram Cup Hill and down by Potanipo Pond in Brookline, passing 1180 feet from the Pond's western end and on into the eastern part of Townsend. This line later formed the eastern boundry of the Mile Slip.

At the rate settlement had been proceeding during the first half century since the founding of the Bay Colony, it might have been anticipated that Old Dunstable, vast though it was, would, within a few years, be fully settled and the frontier move further up the Merrimack Valley. However, in 1675 the Wampanoags and the Narragansetts of southern New England, alarmed at the ever increasing tide of white encroachment, went on the warpath with King Philip to lead them. In their eventual defeat they dealt the white settlements a blow from which the settlers did not recover for almost three quarters of a century. It was the general feeling among the whites after King Philip's War, that they had barely escaped being driven back into the sea. Thus, to penetrate further into the interior without a greater consolidation of the Portsmouth-Boston-Plymouth beachhead, would be to invite a new and more serious Indian onslaught by other tribes. This attitude was reinforced by the outbreak of fresh wars after 1697 against the Abenakis of Maine and the St. Francis Indians of southern Quebec (also Abenakis), with whom the once friendly Penacook tribes of the Merrimack Valley had merged. (The Colonial historian, Hutchinson, writing about 1775, stated the loss of 5000 young men in battle with the Indians between 1675 and 1713 kept the white population at a standstill for fifty years.

After the final victory over the Abenakis in 1725, it was felt that an extension of settlement boundaries could again be considered. A new factor of major importance had also entered the picture at this time. These were the hardy Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, who made their appearance in 1721 on the east side of the Merrimack River at Derry. They were called Scotch-Irish because they came from Ulster in northern Ireland, where their ancestors had been settled by King James I over a century before in an attempt to out-populate the native Catholics, but were actually full-blooded Lowland Scots. Stern, hardy, God-fearing Calvinists, they were looked upon as interlopers by the mellowed Puritans of Massachusetts and the easy going Episcopalians of Portsmouth, who feared they would poach on the areas both had long since set apart for colonization by themselves. Accordingly, they shunted the Scotch-Irish off to the then utmost frontier around Amoskeag Falls (now Manchester) in the hope they would wither away there.

By 1735, however, the Scotch-Irish were pushing a spearhead of settlement up the Contoocook to the Monadnock hills, threatening to outflank the Souhegan Valley which Massachusetts considered its inviolable territory, even though no actual settlement had ever been made on the grants of 1659. To forestall this threat, new grants were hastily made on the north side of the Souhegan for the benefit of the Duxbury School (this grant was opposite Jones' Crossing) and the descendants of veterans of the Narragansett War of 1675. From this latter grant in 1733, called "Narragansett Township No. 3", developed the town of Amherst, New Hampshire.

Though new hostilities broke out in 1743 with the French and Indians from Quebec, settlement of the Souhegan Valley grants began in earnest during the 1740's. By this date, Massachusetts had lost its title to the area. Forgetting religious and national differences, in a mutual greed for land, the older New Hampshire communities around Portsmouth and Hampton, joined up with the aggressive Scotch-Irish to lay claim to the entire Merrimack Valley and Monadnock Region. In 1741, King George II settled the controversy in New Hampshire's favor and the new boundary (the one now in use) was surveyed in the spring of that year by Richard Hazzen.

While the Groton residents never actually settled in the Gore, they drove cattle up each spring to pasture in the lush meadows on either side of Spaulding Brook. A Negro slave named Boad looked after these cattle and the site of his 225-year-old cabin is probably marked by a rude foundation on the Mason side of the Mile Slip's western line. Each fall, he stacked up hay which he cut from the meadows to provide immediate fodder for the cattle on their arrival come Spring.

The unexpected sight of these stacks, miles away from the nearest farms to the south, surprised Hazzen when he passed through with his surveying party in late March 1741. In the meantime, several families settled within Milford's present bounds during the 1740's. John Shepard of Concord, Massachusetts had a grist mill at the ford of the Souhegan below the present Milford stone bridge in 1741 (hence the "Mill-Ford", from which the town later derived its name.)

William Peabody of Boxford, Massachusetts built what is now the Dr. Law place on the north side of the Souhegan in 1742. Thomas Nevins, by way of Hollis, was already on Federal Hill, Milford, in 1738. John Burns, a Scotch-Irishman from Derry, came up Great Brook to settle in south-central Milford about 1746. In 1743, Benjamin Hopkins of Billerica settled in the old Charlestown School grant below Jones' Crossing.

Within ten years of the eviction of Massachusetts from the Souhegan Valley, the outlines of the present towns had started to emerge. From the western half of Old Dunstable, Hollis and Monson were set off in 1746. Monson comprised most of today's Milford, as well as a section of Amherst, while Hollis included what is now Brookline. The west lines of both of the new towns followed the former Dunstable west line from Dram Cup Hill past Potanipo Pond, leaving unclaimed a mile-wide ten mile long strip between this line and the new grants. This was soon to become part of the townships of Mason and Wilton, which New Hampshire had already laid out in the upper Souhegan Valley after dismembering the Groton Gore in 1749.

Just why the grants of Mason and Wilton were not brought up to the Old Dunstable line at Dram Cup Hill and Potanipo cannot be discovered from the old records. Perhaps the mainly Scotch-Irish settlers in the new grants (though Mason had many of Massachusetts Puritan stock) wanted a buffer zone between themselves and the older Dunstable area. Possibly some surveying error difficult to account for, since Dram Cup Hill provided an unmistakable base, may have been allowed to stand.

In any event, the Mile Slip was, in 1750, a recognized entity. Settlers were not slow to appreciate this, for since it had no corporate existence and was unclaimed by any town, no taxes could be levied on those living within its bounds. Among the earliest settlers who put their roots down in the Mile Slip were Caleb Jones of Wilmington, Massachusetts, who settled on what is now Savage Road, in 1745, and Humphrey Hobbs of Topsfield, Massachusetts, who, after brilliant service in the Old French War (1743-48), settled near where today's Mason Road crosses the line out of Milford. Hobbs died in 1756, but his widow remained on the place and in 1769, their daughter Susanna, married Aaron Peabody of Topsfield, who two years earlier had settled on what is now the Fred Conrey, Jr. farm on the Savage Road.

By 1776, there was a total population of 83 persons in the northern half of the Mile Slip and the Duxbury School grant, likewise unclaimed by any town, which was sufficient to warrant their being granted limited town privileges by the legislature to enable them to raise money needed for schools and roads. But not until after the end of the Revolutionary War, with its drain upon New England manpower, did settlement in the southern part of the Mile Slip really get under way.

In the meantime, Monson had been unable to make a go of it as a town and in 1769, was split up between Hollis and Amherst, the major part going to the latter as its "Southwest Parish." When, in 1794, this section was set off as a new town by the name of Milford, the Duxbury School Farm and the northern half of the Mile Slip were annexed to it. A peculiar land grab no historian has yet satisfactorily explained was made of a one mile square in the southern half of the Mile Slip to which Brookline, under its original name of Raby, had held unquestioned title since its incorporation in 1769.

The Mile Slip's southern half, adjoining the west line of old Hollis and running from the Massachusetts line to Spaulding Brook, had become part of Raby on that town's being set off from Hollis. The north line of Brookline ran due west to the Mason line and cut off the peculiar mile square which now belongs to Milford. Today, this area of Milford does not have a single inhabitant.

In the Brookline part of the Mile Slip settlement spread gradually northward from the Potanipo, or Muscatanipus hills. Here the Russell brothers laid out their farm in 1757 and in 1782, Abel Spaulding Sr. of Pepperell built a cabin on the brook later named for him. The land then belonged to his older brother, William, a wounded veteran of Bunker Hill, residing near Brookline village. Two years later, Abel bought the land and erected the sawmill, whose impressive stone foundations and partially intact dam still survive amid the deep woods that have grown up around the site.

Samuel Gutterson of Andover, Massachusetts, was an early arrival in the Milford Mile Slip, settling in 1773 near the Hobbs place. The house he built came down through four generations of the Gutterson family and passed into other hands before being burned down by lightning in the summer of 1910.

The Gutterisons had a saw and cider mill on the upper stretch of the Tucker Brook, which flows into the Souhegan below Jones Crossing. Its foundations are still discernible. Tradition has it that in the time of Joel Gutterson (1813-34) the men of the family joined with neighbors to scout in pairs the northward sloping hill along Savage Road, clubbing to death the rattlesnakes infesting it until they were finally exterminated. This hill is still called Rattlesnake Hill by its older residents.

On the eastern fringe of the southern Mile Slip, Nathan Gutterson, grandson of Samuel, built in the 1820's the house later owned by Charles L. Kendall and now by P. F. Day. Nearby is the house of Amos Gutterson, Nathan's brother, owned a half-century ago by Cyrus Colby and now in the possession of George Gray.

These are the last of the old houses still standing which today's visitor passes as he enters the Mile Slip from the Mason (Osgood) Road. These houses on the north side of the road coming from Milford stand just before the Adams house, known in later times as the Kakas place. It was built about 1780 by Jacob Adams, a Revolutionary veteran from Wilton, who died in 1836 at the age of 96. His son, Nathan, was a shy solitary bachelor as well as a musical genius who made many improvements in musical instruments and served as bandmaster on "Old Ironsides," the U.S.S. Constitution, in the war of 1812. Nathan was the originator of the Kent Bugle, the first of its kind which could be played in seven keys. After many years as a dealer in musical and mathematical instruments in both Nantasket and Lowell, he returned to Milford where he died in 1863 at the age of 80; poor and largely forgotten by the musical world in which he had once been noted. The old Adams homestead had, in the meantime, passed to Royal Hutchinson, who died there in 1877.

Beyond the Nathan Gutterson place one enters an area where the houses built 100 to 175 years ago have crumbled into ruin, leaving only cellar holes and stonework whose very existence is unknown to most people. Lilacs still clustering around granite doorsills remain as mute testimony to the women's love of flowers who planted them there.

The Peabody family were the chief residents of this part of the Mile Slip, living north and west of The Lodge. Here can be seen the fire-blackened remains of the house originally built by Benjamin Wright of Dunstable, Massachusetts, who settled here about 1775 and died in it in 1819. Later, it was the home of Justus Peabody, grandson of the Aaron Peabody who lived on the Savage Road. Born in 1817, Justus married Elizabeth Spaulding, granddaughter of the builder of the mill on Spaulding Brook. In 1857, he gave up attempting to make a living from the Wright Farm and moved away to Massachusetts, selling the house to Simeon Gutterson, a brother of Nathan and Amos. Simeon Gutterson in turn moved to Weymouth, Massachusetts in 1863. The farm then passed through various hands including Amos Wright, grandson of the original builder, until it burned on June 8, 1908.

A short road, at the corner of which is the modern Goodrich house, runs northwest from near the Wright ruins to rejoin the Osgood road less than a mile off. Along this connecting road can be found the sites of the old Blanchard house and District No. 5 schoolhouse, which was moved to Crosby St. in Milford as a private home. The Blanchard house was named for George Blanchard, a colored veterinarian who came there from Wilton in 1804 with his 11 children. After his death in 1829, at the age of 84, it was lived in by Peter Shedd, also a veterinarian. In this century, the house was known as the Cobleigh place until it burned down about 1940.

Justus Peabody's cousin, Luther Peabody, was a fifth son of the ancestral Aaron's fourth son Humphrey and lived in the house of which the massive foundations are located on the lefthand side of the main Mile Slip road, about half way to the left turn to The Lodge. Born in 1818, Luther brought his bride Maria Flinn of Milford, here in 1846. After the death of their son William, from wounds received in a Civil War skirmish in Virginia, they moved

away to Wilton in 1867. The property appears to have remained in Peabody's hands for a long time thereafter, as in a deed of 1881, conveying adjoining land, the place is still referred to as " Luther Peabody's farm. "

Just when it became deserted has not been determined, but it stood as a notable if decaying specimen of early American rural architecture until the early 1950's when it was then torn down board by board and part of it used as the State of New Hampshire's Booth at the annual Sportsmen's Show in Boston.

A little further down this road on the right-hand side, with lilacs growing thickly around, remains the foundation of the Samuel Peabody house, later called the O'Brien place. This was built by Samuel Peabody, second son of Aaron, around 1800. Here was born his oldest son Rodney, who went to sea when a young man and vanished in the West Indies. The second son Asher, who inherited the house on his father's death in 1851, lived there until 1860, when he moved to Mason to pursue his trade of shoemaking. He later moved to Ayer, Massachusetts, where he died in 1879.

There seems to have been a foreclosure of the farm after Asher Peabody left it, as in 1871 it was sold by the Peterborough Savings Bank to Joseph Nichols, who in turn conveyed it to the O'Brien's in 1877. Local tradition has it that after the house was no longer lived in some 40 years ago, it was torn down and carted away by parties unknown, who simply helped themselves to the lumber.

Turning now to The Lodge area, we find at the left of the entrance to the Lodge road the extensive ruins of the Edmund Green farm. It was built by his father, Jonas Green, who was numbered among the residents of the Mile Slip at the time of its incorporation into Milford in 1794 and the farm thus probably dates from the 1780's. The extremely large size of the granite slabs used for the cellar walls are of considerable interest and are illustrated in a photograph to show their dimensions. A brother of Edmund's, Azel, apparently lived in a separate structure on the property and died there in 1844 after his four sons moved away.

Edmund Green was born in the main house in 1802. He married Eliza Witney of Mason about 1827, the year of his father's death. Three sons were born to them here between 1829 and 1836 named Hartwell, Alonzo and Daniel. All moved out of the homestead after they grew up. Alonzo became a cooper or barrelmaker in Milford village, after helping his father with the saw mill for some years. Daniel became a farmer in Mont Vernon.

The saw mill, now restored as The Lodge probably was built in the 1840's by Edmund Green. He was seeking a more substantial source of income than what he could wrest from the farm, whose yields became yearly poorer as the then top soil became exhausted with use. Its location is on the upper reaches of the brook which some miles further down, passes through Osgood Pond and joins Great Brook, flowing into the Souhegan in Milford.

Together with its companion occupation of grist milling and often carried on in the same building, waterpowered sawmilling was the main economic endeavor of rural America from

the earliest Colonial times until the appearance of modern industry in the first quarter of the 19th Century. Even after this period, the small sawmills died hard and local needs continued to provide a market for their products for about another half century. It was finally a combination of the depletion of usable timber from most of New England around 1860-70 and the availability of limitless lumber at low cost by railroad from Northwestern forest soon thereafter that at long last ended the day of the thousands of mills like Green's and Spaulding's. It is interesting to note one such mill was still in active operation as late as 1937 in the town of Bow, New Hampshire. Students of the subject are not yet fully agreed on the origin of waterpowered sawmills in America, but there seems to be considerable evidence that it was a Scandinavian art first introduced here by eight Danish lumbermen and millers brought to Portsmouth in 1631 by John Mason, proprietor under charter from King James I of the costal settlements which formed the primal New Hampshire colony. The first mill in Massachusetts was built two years later and was apparently modeled on those built by the Danes in New Hampshire. In old England, waterpowered saw mills did not seem to have been known until about 1650, when they were probably copied from those already in use in the American colonies.

By 1647, only sixteen years after the arrival of Mason's Danes, the waterpowered saw mill had attained recognition as the most powerful tool by which to transform the great American forests into ready cash. In the same year, the town of Exeter, New Hampshire granted sawmill privileges to one Edward Gilman, in terms that clearly show this to have been the most valuable and important right the Town could give. Through the Colonial period, the saw mills advanced inland along every utilizable stream, turning the mighty pines, hemlocks, oaks and chestnuts of the virgin forest into lumber for farms, villages, towns and cities. In particular, the now vanished chestnut was a prime source of high-grade lumber. First-growth chestnut boards 200 years old are still so flinty-hard that saw blades become red-hot cutting through them. They came from trees of a size incredible here today and one of these giants, dead for 40 or 50 years and with a circumference of some twenty feet, still lies as a majestic wreck on the Mason side of the Mile Slip along the abandoned road to the Samuel Peabody place.

By 1793, saw milling had led to the development of wood-pulp mills for making paper and in this year the first such mill in New Hampshire was established by the Kingsbury brothers of Alstead.

The mechanism of the old-time waterpowered sawmills was primitive and simple. A single up-and-down blade was pulled on the down-stroke by a crank activated directly by a 40-foot-high waterwheel, and yanked up again by an attached pole of springy wood. With only two men in attendance, up to 2000 feet of board lumber could be sawed in a day. When they were multiple saws--four or more in a single mill was not unknown--day's runs of from 10,000 to 15,000 board feet were not uncommon.

Since the mills could not operate in severe winter weather which froze the water supply, or without a sufficient water supply during the summer droughts, such production

could never be maintained on a year-round basis. However, the output was sufficient in the space of 200 years to result in the cutting down of almost all the virgin timber in this State.

The water was usually channeled from the stream, whose rapid flow gave it an impetus of energy, through a wooden sluice. From this sluice, the water either ran below the wheel, turning its pointed spoke-blades by the force of the flow, or dropped on the wheel from above, thus turning it by the weight and push of water falling onto gearlike wooden teeth. The first method was known as an Undershot Wheel. The second was called the overshot Wheel and was rated as two and one half times more efficient in terms of volume of work from the same amount of water. Green's mill had an Overshot Wheel and the restored wheel at the Lodge is of this type and now in operation. There was still a third type of wheel which was two-thirds submerged, its spokeblades turned by a stream of water released into the wheel-pit through a lock-gate. Known as the Breast Wheel, it was most effective in tidal waters where the force of the tide could be channeled in this way. According to tradition, Edmund Green installed an up-and-down saw about 1860. This enabled him to carry out a contract for supplying short poplar boards used as bottoms for chest drawers made by the Howard Manufacturing Company, a short-lived Wilton firm of that era.

Sometime after 1870, the loss of this market plus the depletion of the timber in the Mile Slip, which as we shall see also forced the abandonment of the Spaulding mill about the same period, made the mill a losing proposition for Edmund Green. It is with sadness that one reads the sheriff's writ of January 3, 1881, foreclosing the property and seizing it from Green, in favor of a John E. Bruce for non-payment of a \$314.00 debt. Then 80 years of age, old and broken in body and spirit, his long life of productive labor shadowed by the stigma of bankruptcy, Edmund Green moved into Milford village, where he died in 1888 at the age of 86, seven years after his wife's death.

The mill does not appear to have been used after its seizure by Bruce and gradually fell into ruin. Only the stone-lined water sluice, the stone foundations and wheel pit and the heavy cut granite blocks that supported the wheel shaft were left when the work of The Lodge restoration was begun in 1959.

Samuel Wadsworth, who was associated with Green in operating the mill, lived about half a mile further up Trask road. (The present Lodge road was previously named after Calvin Trask, who in 1892 as the heir of John Daniels, came into possession of much of the area south of the mill brook.) Screened by a thick growth of young pines, the Wadsworth cellar-hole is ringed by ancient lilacs and the cut stone of the door sills are still firmly in place with the cellar walls square and firm and the hearthstone now covered with rubble from the fallen chimney.

Wadsworth was a native of Winthrop, Maine. He came here in 1816 from Mason, being then about 30 years of age. Following the decline of the mill around 1870, he moved to Lexington, Massachusetts, where he died in 1874. The property was then for a while

in the hands of John Marvell, an Amherst lumber dealer, who probably used it as a timber source, but it does not seem to have been lived on after its abandonment by Wadsworth. All of his three sons had earlier moved away. Two of these, Horace and Milo, became printers in Lawrence and Boston, and the oldest, Harvey, an expressman in Ayer.

David O. Rich, a Vermonter, is also believed to have been active in sawmilling in the Wadsworth area between 1845 and 1881, but no definite information as to his operations has yet been uncovered.

Beyond the Wadsworth place about another half mile up the Trask road is the Asa Knight place. A farmer from Hancock, he came here in 1838 and also appears to have had a hand in milling on the brook. In 1857, he went to live with his son, Ephraim, a teacher in New London, New Hampshire. The house was never re-occupied and is described in the 1901 Milford history as abandoned for a long time. Today, the cellarhole is hidden in thick woods and difficult to locate.

Returning to the main Mile Slip road and proceeding beyond the Samuel Peabody site, one drives upwards to the ancient Caleb Brown house lived in by the Edward Blank family, who are the sole inhabitants of the whole area between the Goodrich place and the first houses in Brookline some three miles away. Caleb Brown, born in Brookline in 1758, bought the land in 1782 from General Blanchard of Dunstable, Massachusetts, paying him with shingles cut from the trees on the property. Here he brought his bride of a year, Elizabeth Bailey, and build this house in which their first child, Elizabeth, was born on September 23, 1782.

After Caleb's death in 1843 at the age of 85, the house passed to his sixth child, Jacob; his other children having all moved away. Jacob later moved to Nashua and the property then came into the hands of the Badger family. From the Badgers, it passed to John Daniels, a native of Brookline, who had come to Milford in 1844. It remained with Daniels and his heirs for about 50 years. During the first third of this century, the house became the summer home of Jud Hall, a somewhat eccentric personage from Lawrence, Massachusetts. Hall had a peg-leg replacing the natural one he lost in an accident at the Osgood Pond sawmill; ran a fish market where the People's Market is now situated in Milford, and was generally noted for his rough and boisterous appearance and deportment. The main Mile Slip road came to be called the Judd Hall Road during his time and it is still most familiarly known by this name.

We now enter the most remote and deserted area of the Mile Slip; the mile-square block taken away from Brookline in 1794 and which was, for a half-century afterward, mainly the domain of the Badgers, one of the most noted of the pioneer families of this region. Beyond the Edward Blank house the road is now closed to gates and bars. If some day it is restored and opened to the public, the area will be a wonderful open-air museum of scenic beauty and historical interest.

James Badger, one of the hardy Scotch-Irish from Ulster, was born in 1749. He was brought to America as a child by his parents, who settled in Brookline. (They were a generation later than the main Scotch-Irish emigration of the 1720's and thus had a choice of other localities besides Derry.) James Badger became one of the leading men in the early annals of Brookline, serving as moderator, town clerk, treasurer and selectman during the 1770's.

About 1785, the establishment of the saw mill on Spaulding Brook by Abel Spaulding Sr., had the effect of attracting several settlers into the area immediately north of it. Age cellar holes, now mere ill-defined pits after decades of erosion, mark the sites here these early pioneers built their primitive cabins. These men were Daniel Shedd, William Green, Phineas Holden and James Badger. They all gave up after a while and moved elsewhere, except Badger, who persevered and moved up almost a mile to a new site even deeper in the virgin upland hardwood and hemlock forest. Here, at the corner where a long unused road winds its way through the woods from Mason and joins the main Mile Slip road, Badger built a large farmhouse in about 1795. The granite foundations can still be seen by those who penetrate this far into the innermost recesses of the Mile Slip.

James Badger died in this house in 1841 at the age of 97, the then venerated patriarch of all the Mile Slip country. His lifetime had spanned the last of the French & Indian Wars in New England and the coming of industry and the railroad.

His son Leonard was born in Brookline in 1775 and lived with his father on this farm. To it he brought his bride, blooming 18-year-old Sally Barrett of Mason, along this forgotten road terminating at the ruins, on a beautiful June day in 1806. Four children were born to them, namely James, Leonard Jr., Sally and Benjamin. Then, in 1832, perhaps due to his failing health, Leonard Sr. and his wife moved back to Brookline, where he died in 1837. She survived him by 23 years, passing away in 1870 at the age of 83.

Leonard Jr., himself a mature man of 33 by the time his aged grandfather died, succeeded to the possession of the farm. He married Lephe, a daughter of Samuel Gutterson's youngest son Jacob. In 1857, Leonard Jr. died at the early age of 49 and his widow moved to Franklin, Massachusetts, after continuing some years on the old homestead, according to one record. The place was probably abandoned well before her death in Franklin in 1893.

James, the older brother of Leonard Jr., married the latter's wife's sister Lucy in 1831 and about a dozen years later set up residence on the Caleb Brown place. James apparently found it unproductive and in 1855, went to Milford village where he died in 1875 at the age of 68. His son, James Jr., took over the Brown place, but died within a year at the untimely age of 24, and the property then passed on to John Daniels.

A little to the north of the old Badger house foundations is the cellar hold of the District 8 schoolhouse which around 75 years ago when the road was still traversable, was carted to Brookline to serve as a house on the Moses Shattuck property. Tradition has it that in the 1850's, a young schoolgirl of a now unknown family was killed by lightning while watching a storm from the doorway of this schoolhouse.

To the northwest of the schoolhouse site rises Boynton Hill, guarding the junction of the Mason and Wilton town lines. Attaining a height of 810 feet, it is the highest point of land in Milford and was probably named after Richard Boynton. Boynton appeared as a Mile Slip resident in the 1794 list, but little else is known about him. He may have lived in a house of which the foundations are said to be hidden in the remote woods somewhere near the summit.

Southward from the Badger place the road drops steeply down towards Spaulding Brook. Even during the most habited period of the Mile Slip, this stretch of almost a mile was never really occupied except for some cattle pasturing and timber cutting. Today, it is the most thickly wooded part of the entire area. On the left, or east side, a steep cliff marks the edge of Badger Hill, which rises to 755 feet above sea level.

Spaulding Brook, racing through the deep forest and widening out into a shimmering pool behind the old Potanipo Pond dam that still partially holds it back, offers vistas only a handful of present-day people have so far been privileged to behold.

The road crosses the brook over a decaying bridge at the site of the old sawmill and then passes the foundations of the Spaulding homestead in which the operators of the mill lived for three generations. The house was built by the mill-builder, Abel Spaulding Sr. in the latter half of the 1780's. He was succeeded in the ownership of the mill and farm by his son, Abel Jr., born in Pepperell in 1782.

Abel Jr. married Anna Shattuck of Pepperell in 1815 and they had nine children all born on this now long-deserted homestead. The oldest, Elizabeth, married Justus Peabody and seven of the remaining eight moved away, some to locations as distant as San Francisco, Kansas and Oregon; a story of migration that epitomizes the depopulation of the Mile Slip by the irresistible pull of other, more promising areas.

The third of the Spaulding children, Alfred, remained on the old place and made a valiant effort to keep the mill in operation after his father's death in 1849. Continued cutting of timber on the Mile Slip hills virtually cleared them of trees by 1860 and thus deprived the mill of material for lumber. However, Alfred Spaulding installed machinery for making barrel heads and staves to utilize the scrap wood accumulated around the mill. By 1870, even this operation had petered out and there was no alternative but to shut down the mill after 88 years of continuous operation. It will be remembered that it was during this same period and for about the same reasons that Edmund Green's mill was also forced to close.

Alfred Spaulding appears to have stayed on, a bachelor and recluse, at the old farm which year by year became more isolated. About 1888 he finally left it to go to North Pepperell, where he died in 1905 at the age of 86. The house then fell into decay and now only the stonework and open well remain. As for the mill, the Brookline town history of 1914 says it was already in ruins then.

Across the road from the Spaulding site are the last foundations on the Milford side of the Brookline town line. These comprise the farm once owned by Joseph Duncklee, a native of the Federal Hill section of Milford, who lived here for a while in the 1850's. The writer has not been able to determine whether Duncklee built the place, moved into an already existing farm, or whether any one occupied it after him.

An examination of some interesting posts on the hillside back of the house site, seemingly set up to support a corn crib, indicates from the marks of the cutting tools they were probably cut before 1850. Thus, the Spauldings may have had an early neighbor in this corner of the Milford Mile Slip.

This is the end of that part of the Mile Slip within the bounds of Milford. The story is by no means exhausted, as both in the adjoining section of Brookline and across the western boundary in Mason, a numerous population flourished during the first half of the 19th century.

Mason, in particular, had many important local industries in its eastern part, which has now reverted to a wilderness as total as that of the Milford Mile Slip. There was a potato starch factory, said to be the first in this country, on the upper reaches of Spaulding Brook, as well as an elaborate saw and grist mill combination owned by the Elliott family in the same area and active until after the Civil War. On the road which comes out at the James Badger site, a factory for making lye-bleach from wood ashes thrived until about 1820, when the discovery of chemical bleaches cut off the market for this product sold to the cotton manufacturing centers in England.

Knowing such sites existed in the adjoining part of Mason helps to round out the picture of a once thriving rural community which had a strong sense of distinctness and individuality typical of the Mile Slip inhabitants. Its residents felt closer ties of common interest and association with each other than with the residents of the other sections of Milford, Brookline and Mason. Disregarding town lines, they considered themselves people of the Mile Slip rather than citizens of any particular town.

At its peak of settlement and prosperity about 1850, the Mile Slip presented an appearance far different from today. The general aspect then was one of lush, rolling meadows separated by neatly built stone walls with numerous cattle and sheep grazing on them. There were some small strips of old virgin timber stands still left around the Green and Spaulding sawmills, but most of them had been cut down. There were long stretches of cut slash, especially on Badger Hill. Northward of the Badger and Brown places were many cultivated fields of potatoes, flax, corn and other staple crops of the time.

The farm houses were substantially and spaciouly built, as can be seen from the size of their sturdy foundations. Made mainly of locally cut virgin lumber from trees hardened through centuries of growth, they were sound to a degree unattainable with today's second, or third-growth woods.

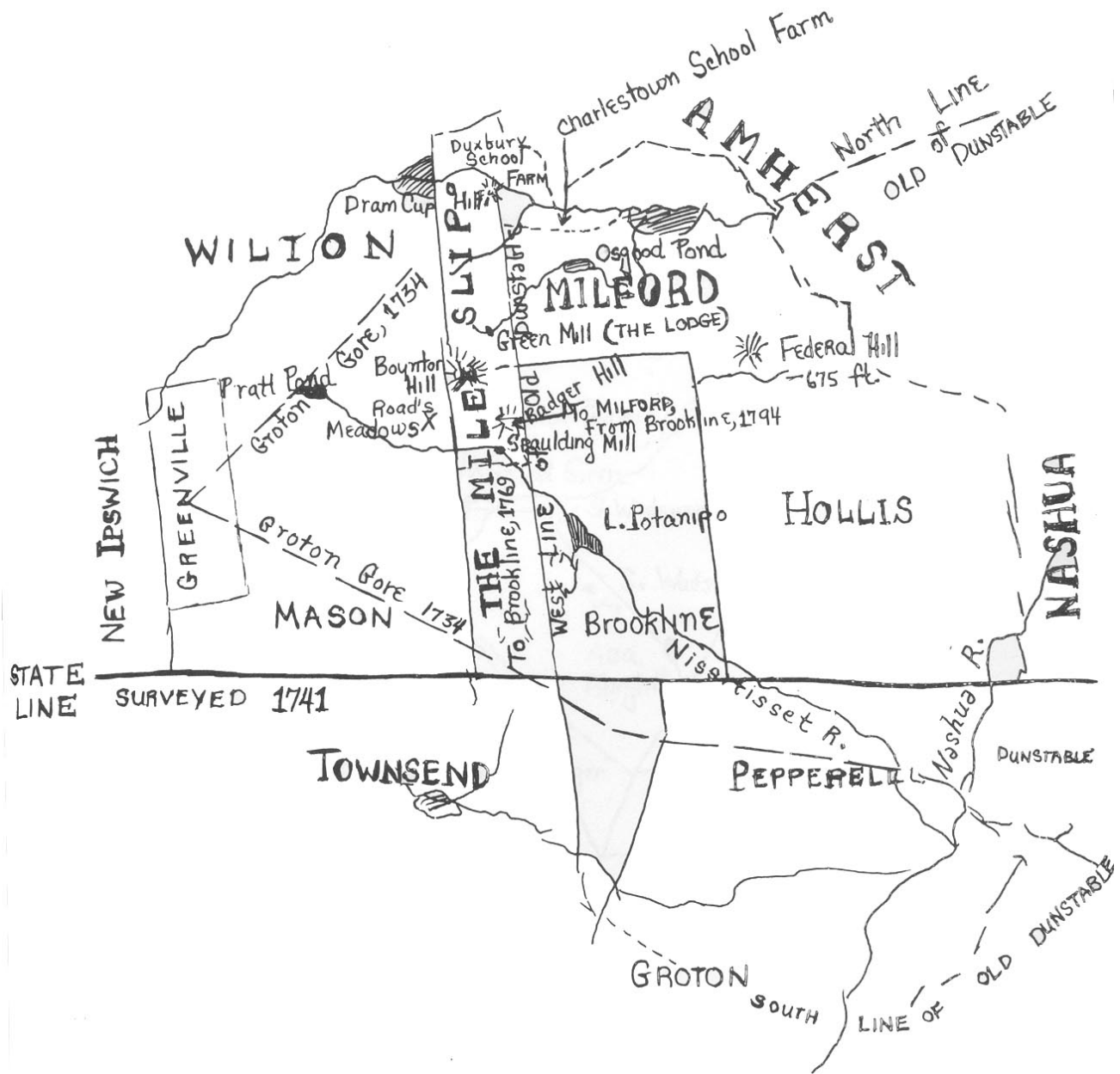
The architecture was chiefly the "Cape Cod" style with center chimney of which the Caleb Brown (now Blank) house still stands as a surviving example, although the numerous outbuildings, which made the old farms virtually self-contained colonies, have vanished.

What brought about the abandonment of this community, which in its time, was probably one of the most attractive in these parts? The depletion of the virgin timber on which the mills depended for raw material; the depletion of the thin upland top soil by overcropping and overgrazing and the urge of the younger generation to seek their fortunes elsewhere in the hustling, rapidly expanding America of the 19th century, are the major reasons. To all this may also be added the then growing sense of isolation as the railroads by-passed the area and left it far from the main path of industrial growth in the late 19th century.

Together, these causes and perhaps other less readily discernible, resulted in the virtual ruin and abandonment of the Mile Slip during the quarter-century from 1860 to 1885. On the northern edges and around the Peabody farms, settlement continued into the present century; but by the First World War the depopulation of the Mile Slip can be regarded as complete, except for the Jud Hall foothold. A road map of 1925 shows the road named after him as a wavy dotted line from the Mason (Osgood) Road to western Brookline, indicating that 40-odd years ago it was still considered a usable backroad, perhaps only barely passable, but available if needed.

Since then, the wilderness has only been slightly disturbed by intermittent lumbering and quarrying. Just how swiftly the forest can come back even in our northern climate, may be judged from some fields on the western edge of the Slip in Mason which were cultivated only twenty years ago and are now heavily wooded. Today the Mile Slip is well on the way to restoration of the upland forest that once covered these hills and if left substantially alone for another century or so, will have regained the aspect of two hundred years ago, when the first pioneers struck their axes into its mighty trees.

The ring of those axes in the hands of men seeking to carve out their own destiny in a place not beholden to any other jurisdiction, was prophetic and symbolic of the larger movement that carried the successors of these men to the unclaimed prairies and the Great Plains of the West. We may look back on the founders of the Mile Slip as the first real homesteaders, obtaining their title, not from any grant or deed, but from their labor and perseverance.



Map 1

The location and development of the Mile Slip from the original grant of Old Dunstable in 1673 and the Groton Gore of 1734. Note the 18 mile course of Spaulding Brook (also known as Black or Mitchell Brook in its upper stretches) from Pratt Pond through Potanipo Pond and as the Nissitisset, flowing into the Nashua River in the eastern part of Pepperell, Massachusetts.

Map 2

The Milford Mile Slip south of Tucker Brook.
Principal houses and buildings indicated are
as shown on the Map of Milford, from
surveys by E. M. Woodward and published
in Philadelphia by Richard Clark in 1854.

