

## *Early Industrial Sites in Walpole, MA*

by Karl West (1997)

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1. About 10,000 years ago, when the glaciers started to melt, the large Lake Medfield broke through to Walpole and down the Neponset River to the sea. This was before the Charles River was established. Pot holes from the swirling water can be seen at the rivers edge at Water St. at the Norwood line.
2. Native Americans fished in the Neponset and ground corn and acorns in a bowl formed on the river's edge in East Walpole.
3. Remains of three grinding bowls are located at the Deacon Willard Lewis House, 33 West St. on the lawn.
4. The earliest industry was bog iron ore on Spring or Spice Brook and on Mine Brook. The appearance of oil on the water surface indicates the formation of bog ore.
5. The ore was refined at a sight on Stop River where the remains of a large mill may be seen on Campbell St.
6. In 1659 permission was granted (a privilege) to form a dam at White Bridge for a sawmill.
7. In 171 members of the Bird family bought the dam where Hollingsworth and Vose is today.
8. Where the Bird factory is today was a grist mill, but in 1835 Bird bought an existing paper mill at the sight and expanded it.
9. Joshua Stetson bought a privilege in 1796 and manufactured farm tools. Before he was done, there were about a dozen small industries along the dam on the Neponset River across from Kendall St. Kendall St. went over the top of the dam and joined with North St.
10. To get an idea of the size of some industries examine the cellar hole on North St. opposite to Spear Ave. . This was Ira Gill's hat factory before he moved to larger quarters on the Stetson Dam.
11. On Main St. opposite Kendall St. is Allied Auto Parts Co. and Hydralign, Inc. Later generations of the Stetson family lived in the house where Hydralign is and Stetson's grandson manufactured card clothing where Allied is now. Adjacent to Stetson's Dam is the cellar hole of the home of the Arcadian family by the name of D'Entremont who had been exiled here.

12. Henry Plimpton went downstream and developed a large industry making holes and rakes. He had two privileges. This was the start of Plimptonville.

13. The Lewis privilege on West St. has been in existence since 1794. Lewis made cotton products.

14. The lower Blackburn Dam in back of the high school still has a turbine used by the Blackburn factories which started in 1811.

15. The upper most privilege was run by Timothy Gay who has a grist mill in 1814. A large foundation is still there. More importantly, he was the toll collector for the Norfolk and Bristol Turnpike, which was along Washington St.. His toll house is still standing at 1920 Washington St. Both places was on the left side of Washington St. after crosses the Neponset River in South Walpole.

16. Associated with the Turnpike is the Fuller Tavern at 1885 Washington St. which, with the Polley Tavern across the street (now gone), fed and bedded travellers on the Toll Road. It was known as the Half Way House between Boston and Providence.

17. Speaking of taverns, the Hidden Tavern is probably the oldest tavern still in existence having served soldiers going to the Alarm on April 19, 1775. It is located at 492 Lincoln Road which was known as Back St. and was a Post Road to Franklin.

18. In the same area off Lincoln Rd. is a lime kiln and quarry that was operating around 1800.

19. The people who owned that kiln also owned a slate quarry which is still operating after 200 years. It is at the end of Forrest St.

20. Schools in those years were much differest. Young people were taught for a few weeks in houses, such as the house at 283 East St. Later they had their own buildings such as the one in the woods in North Walpole which was dragged over the fields in about 1860 to become the ell on the house at 186 Gould St.

21. On Robbins Road the Robbins family dammed up Mine Brook to make a pond for a factory to make axles. This pond was called Morey Pond before it becam know as Turner's Pond.