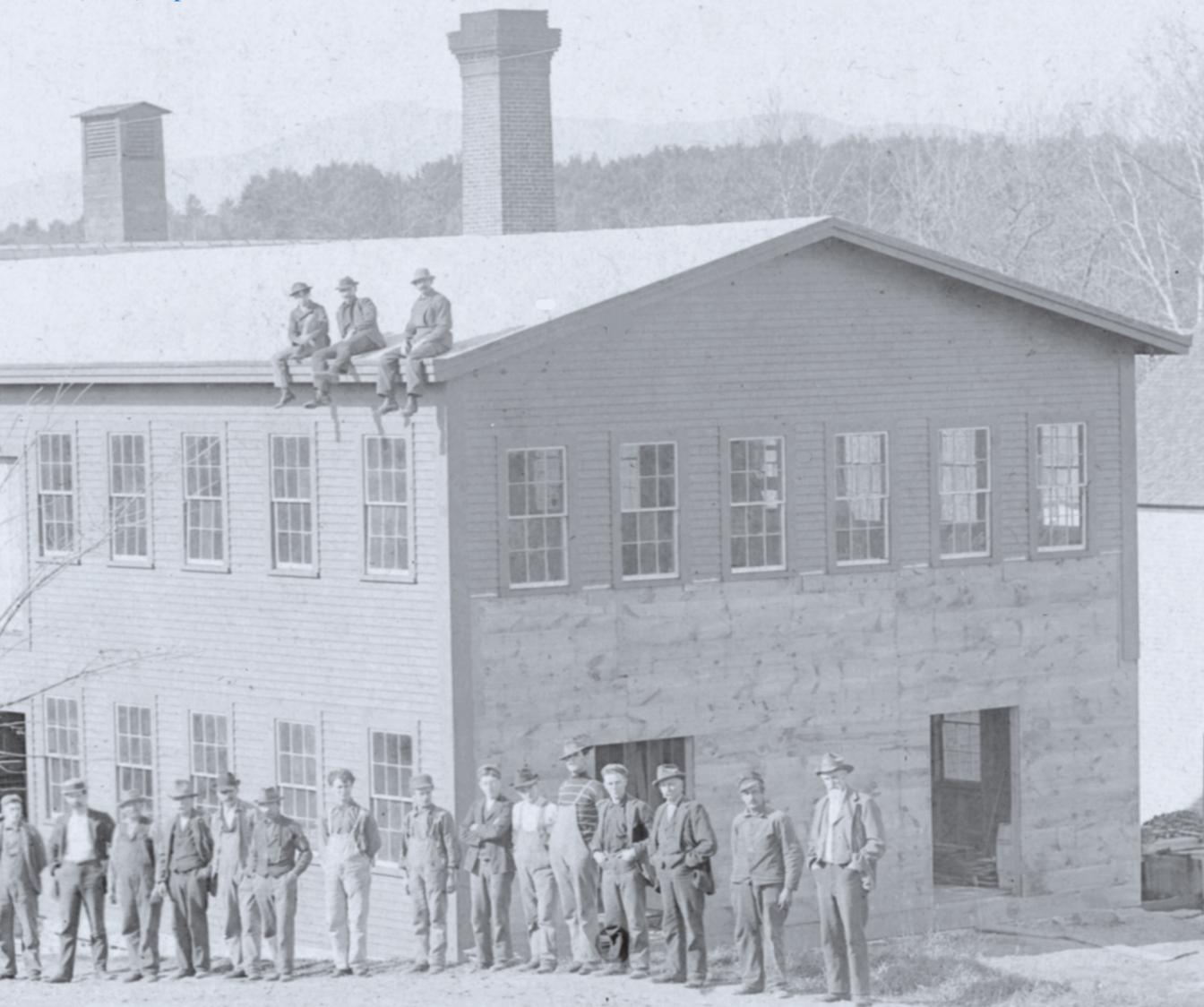


A self-guided walking tour highlighting some of the historical & architectural points of interest in the Jaffrey village of Squantum, New Hampshire.

## *A Walk around Squantum*

Reformatted for the [JaffreyHistory.org](http://JaffreyHistory.org) website, September 2012.



*Photo: Annett Manufacturing Company, early 20th century. Courtesy of Jaffrey Historical Society.*

## *Introduction*

IN THE VERY southeast corner of Jaffrey may be found the mill village of Squantum, whose history goes back at least to 1743, the very infancy of what is now Jaffrey but then was called Rowley Canada. In that year two mills were erected, “a saw mill and a corn mill.” And there have been mills of one sort or another in Squantum ever since. It’s not a large settlement now, only about 15 houses plus an assortment of mostly modern industrial buildings. There is no church, no cemetery, no school, no inn, no store or gas station. It was a more active and busy place a hundred years ago than it is today. Squantum appears on the earliest map of Jaffrey (1850) but the origins of the name are lost in time.

Much of what there is of interest in the village may be viewed by standing on the grassy Common and surveying the surroundings. To the west were the mills and today their modern successors. To the south, the houses that originally were home to the mill workers. To the north, the residence of successive mill owners.

## *The Mills*

WITHOUT the number and variety of mills that have operated here from the earliest time to the present, Squantum would have little reason to exist. Mills sprang up in Squantum because of its location on MILL BROOK which flows from Hubbard Pond in Rindge, north then west through the village and then empties into Lake Contoocook. Today, the brook itself isn’t very impressive in size or flow. It was, however, the basis for two centuries of mill activity in Squantum, starting with that combination saw and grist mill. Who the builder and owner were at the outset is unclear. But by 1764, JONATHAN HOPKINSON owned it and then four years later sold it to his cousin, EPHRAIM HUNT of Concord, Massachusetts. This mill operated for about a hundred years and it’s safe to assume that most of the lumber contained in the

older houses and structures of Squantum came from this mill. It certainly provided the lumber for the Rindge Meetinghouse.

Ownership of the mills passed to JOHN EATON in 1774. He was an extraordinarily handy and versatile man. Not only did he greatly improve the mills—in part by introducing wood turning—but he made carts and sleds, flax wheels, plows, and sawed boards, ground corn, dug graves, worked as a millwright, wheelwright and housewright. He also helped to raise the Jaffrey Meetinghouse for which he turned the pew spindles. (Eaton’s granddaughter was HANNAH DAVIS, well known in Jaffrey and beyond for her bandboxes.) A long string of owners followed Eaton: JAMES CUTTER, DAVID SHERWIN, NATHANIAL INGALLS, BENJAMIN KINGSBURY, WILLIAM BUCKLEY, WILLIAM WALTON, SEWELL GOULD, MARK MARVLE and ISAAC WHITNEY.

Eventually, in 1825, the mills and additional Squantum properties were sold to JOHN A. PRESCOTT. This sale ushered in a new era for the village. Prescott had now assembled a large tract that included a saw/grist mill, blacksmith shop, homestead, store house, wood house and shop. He was only thirty-two years old and ambitious, becoming one of Jaffrey’s most successful entrepreneurs. For the next eleven years, he built up the village, including his own house, and six dwellings across the Common to accommodate workers at his mills. Prescott brought his two brothers, ELDAD and OLIVER, in to help build a starch factory in 1832. And Prescott’s nephew, ELDAD A., was a cabinetmaker in the village. Given the family’s influence, it is not surprising that the 1858 Cheshire County map identifies the village not as Squantum but as ‘Prescottville.’

On October 8, 1836, Prescott sold his mill property to BURLEIGH FRENCH and WILLIAM EMERSON of Wilton, described as experienced mill builders and operators who made immediate improvements upon their new holdings. When French sold his share, EMERSON HALE, a wealthy Rindge farmer, bought an interest in the business. Around 1842 he built a substantial new mill building which survived for more than a century until destroyed by fire in 1966.

Ownership changed yet again when in 1851 EPHRAIM MURDOCK and DENNIS HOWE purchased the mills and started to shift the focus of manufacturing from lumber, pail staves, clothespins and miscellaneous woodenware to nest boxes, already an important industry in Rindge and Winchendon. In 1858 they hired THOMAS ANNETT. By 1882, Annett had become the

sole owner, and in 1896 the mills were incorporated as the ANNETT MANUFACTURING COMPANY. Thomas brought his three sons into the business (including ALBERT who was co-author of the 1937 *History of Jaffrey*). By early in the 20th century the company employed fifty people, including nearly all of the village's residents.

In 1918, the company split into two components, ANNETT MANUFACTURING COMPANY, which dealt with forestland and other real estate, and the ANNETT BOX COMPANY. And in the 1940s the company shifted from manufacturing boxes and baby furniture to general lumber products and changed its name to ANNETT LUMBER COMPANY. A bitter blow befell the company when, on July 22, 1966, a fire destroyed the historic mid-19th century mill buildings. Not too long after the Annett Lumber Company closed down and MONADNOCK FOREST PRODUCTS took over the property. New facilities were built to produce pine paneling, and the company prospered for awhile, then for a variety of reasons shut down in the 1990s. However, the site continues today in wood-related industrial use, with NEW ENGLAND WOOD PELLET COMPANY occupying land and buildings on the north side of Squantum Road, and BELLETETES ANNEX, a warehouse for the local lumber and building supplies dealer, on the south side.

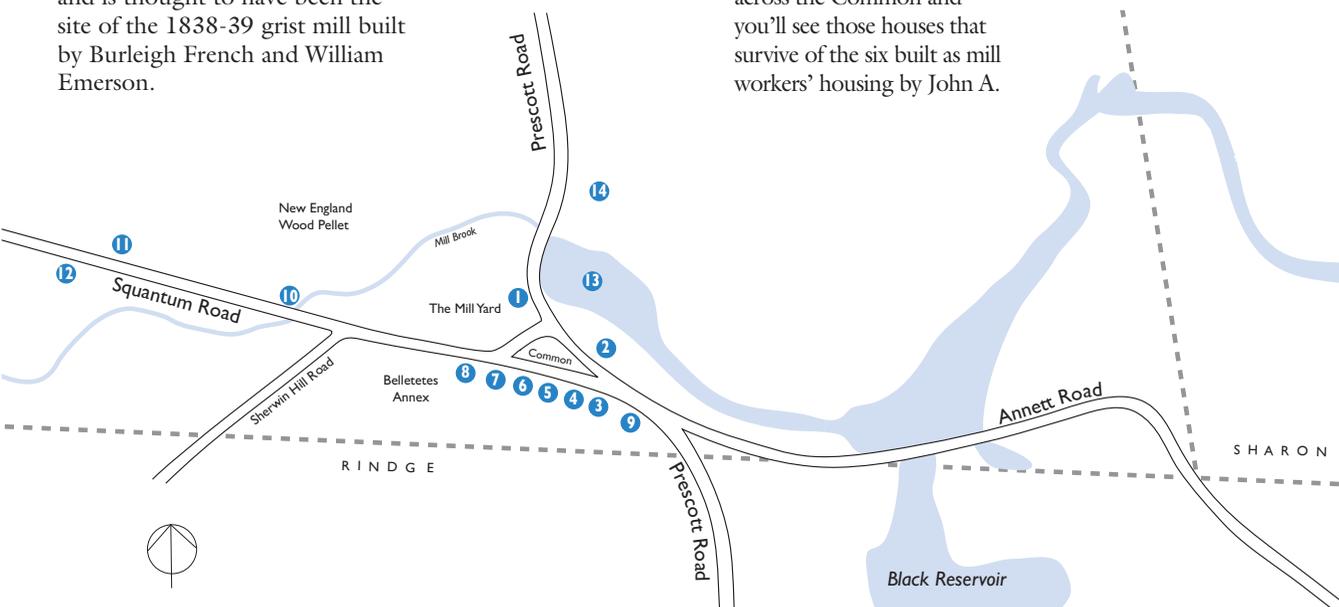
The only significant mill structure that remains from earlier times is the old brick BOILER AND ENGINE HOUSE [1] close aside Prescott Road. It dates to around 1904 and is thought to have been the site of the 1838-39 grist mill built by Burleigh French and William Emerson.

## A Walk around Squantum

THE ARCHITECTURAL centerpiece of the village is without question the PRESCOTT-ANNETT HOUSE [2] which overlooks the Common. It was built on the site of the 'Mansion House,' which was erected by Jonathan Hopkinson in 1763, making it one of the first houses to be built in Jaffrey. There are some stone foundations under the present house that may date to this original dwelling. John A. Prescott bought the house in 1825 and probably replaced it with the present structure in 1828 at the time of his marriage. Although he sold the mills in 1836, he appears to have continued to occupy the house, perhaps as late as the early 1850s, when Dennis Howe, who purchased a two-thirds interest in the mill yard, moved in. Howe likely stayed until 1869, when Thomas Annett bought out Howe's manufacturing interest and took up residency. He remained there until his death in 1903.

The primary feature of the facade is the highly sophisticated Federal entrance and Palladian window above, with elliptical fanlights, leaded glass sidelights, and paneled pilasters. A Federal-style portico shelters the front entry. Also distinctive are the five attached carriage bays to the south. The house interior has Rufus Porter murals which may have been painted at the same time as those that once graced the Prescott Tavern on Rt. 124 to the north. The house remained part of the Annett Manufacturing Company holdings until at least 1956.

With one's back to the Prescott-Annett House, look across the Common and you'll see those houses that survive of the six built as mill workers' housing by John A.



*The Squantum Road of today approximates the Jaffrey portion of the Boston Post Road that ran from Townsend, Massachusetts, to what is now Keene. It was also referred to as Great Road and County Road and dates back to the 1730s. So before the opening of the Third New Hampshire Turnpike (now Rt. 124) in 1801, all east-west traffic—horse, oxen and pedestrian—was through what became Squantum. The bulk of development in the village—historically and present-day—has been along Squantum Road.*

Prescott following his 1825 purchase of the mills. (All six are shown on Gibbs' 1850 map of Jaffrey.) In geometric terms, we have on each of the three sides of the triangular Common, a classic arrangement of the mills to the west, the workers' housing to the south, and the mill owner's house to the north. The first of the survivors, the long nine-bay white clapboarded house to the left [3], is sometimes called the ARAD ADAMS HOUSE. A man of great business shrewdness, Adams purchased the house in 1856. He was a trader and peddler all of his life and ultimately became quite prosperous. He conducted a store in his home—or more accurately he lived in his store. He later moved to East Jaffrey to a house near the present-day Post Office. Next in line is the small brown house [4] whose owners over the years all worked in the mills. Charles Robbins, a foreman at the Annett Box Company and married to John A. Prescott's niece, lived here until 1915. The yellow, two-chimney Cape [5] was the home of Burleigh French when he and William Emerson owned the mills, having purchased them from John A. Prescott in 1836. The exposed brick cellar on the west side was described in an early deed as a 'cellar kitchen.' The gray center chimney cottage [6] is the fourth of the workers' dwellings that still survive from the John A. Prescott's tenure as millowner. The next of the workers' housing along the south side of Squantum Road is the Moors House [7]. The name derives from an early owner, Abner Moors, and his two sons, who worked in the mills and lived many years in the house. Previously the 2-½ story house had been the home of William Emerson when he had an ownership interest in the mills. The eastern end of the house with its three-bay garage was added around 1960. At the opposite end stands a largely unchanged three-bay barn. The last of the early 19th century dwellings [8] in line along the Common is a 2-½ story, gable-front structure that was used as a boarding house well into the 20th century. It may have started out as a more modest structure in line with its neighbors. The towering elm to the left of the house is Squantum's last significant survivor. One of the six dwellings attributed to John A. Prescott's efforts

is absent. Where it once stood can only be guessed at. Quite possibly it was where ASAHIEL ANNETT built his large and imposing house [9] in 1896. This is the first structure one now comes upon when entering Squantum from Rindge. Asahel was the son of Thomas Annett and eventually, with his brothers Albert and Arthur, took over the operation of the mills from his father. (Albert lived in another impressive Queen Anne house, still standing on Stratton Road opposite the entrance to Conant Cemetery). Stylistically the house is the only example of Queen Anne to be found in Squantum; and few elsewhere in Jaffrey are more elaborate architecturally.

From the workers' housing along the Common, let's walk or drive west along Squantum Road. After passing BELLETETES ANNEX on the left, we cross over Mill Brook on a single-arch fieldstone bridge [10] built in 1935 by S. H. Austin at a cost of \$3,268. More typical at that time—today, too—would have been a concrete box culvert. So Jaffrey is lucky to have within the town four examples of this more traditional and elegant design.

On the right we come upon some open fields and then the large center-chimney farmhouse that is arguably the most historic structure in the village, the HUNT-STRAITTON FARM [11]. The property itself was settled in 1774 by Ephraim Hunt who passed it on to his nephew, Nathan Hunt, in 1791. It was Nathan, a veteran of the Revolution, who built the present house probably in the same year. He lived there until his death in 1853. He and his wife, Abigail, were not only farmers but also storekeepers and innkeepers. Until the Third New Hampshire Turnpike (Rt. 124) opened in 1801, the main east-west traffic went along this portion of Squantum Road, a section of the Boston Post Road. The original tavern sign hangs upstairs in the Jaffrey Library. Their son, Nathan, Jr., set up a fulling and carding mill across the road from the house. It was known as the 'Mutton Mill.' The site is now owned by the Town and has been recently developed as a water source. Lyman Stratton purchased the farm in 1866 and he and then his son, Frederick, lived there for the next 80 years. From the Strattons it passed to



the Grummon family who named the place the GRAY GOOSE FARM. They cultivated vegetables, plants and flowers, had a roadside farmstand, and raised Toulouse geese, hence the name of the farm.

Across the road and a little farther on stands the PRESCOTT-MORSE HOUSE [12]. It probably dates from the 1840s, perhaps a bit earlier. But the history of the site may go back as far as Jaffrey's first settler, John Grout. He built a 16 x 16 foot cabin on the "lowland at the foot of Squantum hill, as early as 1758. But the place did not suit him" and he moved to a spot south of Gilmore Pond. Who built the present house is uncertain, but it is known that Eldad A. Prescott was an early owner. He was the son of Eldad, Sr., the brother of John A. Prescott who had purchased and expanded the mill operation in 1825. Eldad, Jr., was a deaf-mute from birth. He learned the cabinetmaker's trade, and converted the Mutton Mill to a turning and woodworking shop. For many years he produced fine furniture and coffins. He married twice, both of his wives also being deaf mutes. By 1880, Jaffrey native Henry

Frederick Morse, who was employed in the Squantum mills for many years, and his wife, Elizabeth Hunt, owned the property. Thomas Annett purchased the homestead from Morse, turning it over to Annett Manufacturing Company with his industrial holdings when that firm was incorporated in 1896. It was likely occupied by an upper-level manager at the mills.

The two most prominent Squantum sites on Prescott Road are the MILL POND [13] and the GOULD-GARFIELD FARM [14]. The latter overlooks the former, on the right side of the road as you leave the village. When the mills were wholly water powered there were two mill ponds, the one to the west was directly beside the old wood mill building that burned in 1966. This was filled in sometime between 1924 and 1941, based on what is shown on insurance maps, probably because the mills were no longer completely dependent on water power. But the remaining pond, though no longer of any use for power, is nonetheless a picturesque element of the local villageescape and a reminder of Squantum's industrial heritage. A 1972 survey said of the Gould-Garfield Farm that the major portion of the house undoubtedly represents the oldest structure in Squantum, perhaps built by Ebenezer Stratton who had acquired the land in 1777. More likely it was built in 1780 by Oliver Gould who had bought the farm from Stratton the year before. Emily Gould, Oliver's granddaughter, married John Garfield thus associating his name with the property. Oliver was a soldier of the Revolution, in the prime of life with growing children, when he died of smallpox in 1782 after being vaccinated. He is one of the six buried in Jaffrey's Smallpox Cemetery a few miles away. The last Gould to live in the house died in 2000. This and the Hunt-Stratton Farm at the other end of the village are the only farms in Squantum to survive as such into the 20th century and happily they both retain their handsome barns.

NOW THAT you've had a taste of Squantum, why not retrieve your car and continue northwards to Rt. 124, take a left turn and drive by the old Schoolhouse No. 1, The Benjamin Prescott Inn and the old Prescott, now Sawyer farm? Soon you'll be in downtown Jaffrey, and if you're anxious for more history and architecture, you might wish to set out on *A Walk around Downtown Jaffrey*. 🍷

*The other defining road of Squantum is Prescott Road. Entering the village from Rindge, it passes by the Common and the Prescott-Annett House [2] and the surviving Boiler and Engine House [1], and continues north to Turnpike Road (Rt. 124), the successor to the Third New Hampshire Turnpike. Originally the road ran through the millyard and what is now the Common was used for storing logs awaiting sawing. In 1963 the Town voted to reconfigure the road to its present alignment to, in part, make the Common a more public space despite it still being privately owned. The road's name couldn't be more appropriate as it linked major interests of more than one generation of Jaffrey Prescotts. Although half a mile or so north of the village, this section of Jaffrey has such strong connections to Squantum that it's worth a detour. East along the Turnpike, opposite where Millipore is today, stood the brick Prescott Tavern with its Rufus Porter murals (now permanently displayed at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts). Along the road to the west stretched the Prescott farm (now Sawyer). Later there would come Eldad Prescott's house, now The Benjamin Prescott Inn. At the corner stood Schoolhouse No. 1, now a residence, first built by Benjamin Prescott, as school agent, in 1790 and rebuilt by Oliver Prescott after being destroyed by fire in 1816. In the early years it was Squantum Road that was the busy thoroughfare, but today it is Prescott Road that sees the greater traffic: those traveling between Rindge and Rt. 124.*

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