SIGN AT BRIDGE ON WASHINGTON ST. EXTENSION, SOUTH WALPOLE

Upstream Site of Ellbridge Smith Privilege *(also called the Timothy Gay Privilege)* on the Neponset River

This privilege dammed Smith's Pond ca. 1814

Timothy Gay had a grist mill at the privilege starting about 1814. Gay also collected tolls on the turnpike from Boston to Providence, which used to pass thorough South Walpole. The remains of that section of the Turnpike are the Washington Street Extension, which used to continue out onto Route 1, the modern iteration of the old turnpike.

William H. French ran a small cotton shoddy mill at the site starting in 1875; in later years rubber products were manufactured there. Bird Machine owned the privilege in the 20th century.

In the early 20th century an ice house was on the pond, at the privilege and ice was harvested by the Bushnell family of Foxborough.

Until the 1930s, most of Smith's Pond was in Foxborough. After a change in the town boundary line, about half of the pond came to be in Walpole. Today, the privilege and most of the pond are privately owned; the pond is much reduced in size due to sedimentation.

SIGN ON FENCE ENCLOSING THE POND ON SUMMER ST., NEAR COMMON, IN SOUTH WALPOLE

Clarke's Privilege and Pond on the Neponset River

The first privilege at this site was established by Theodore Mann ca.1720, where he operated a fulling mill that made felt out of wool. A descendant, Colonel Timothy Mann, had two privileges here, the upper one leased to a manufacturer of nails, James Richardson, and the lower used by himself for making nails and also fine woven cloths. (ca.1812). Mann was a veteran of the Revolutionary War.

Colonel Mann's son-in-law Truman Clarke took over the business at the upper mill. Boots and shoes and also stocking yarn were made there for a time. Both mills burned down and only the upper mill was rebuilt.

Truman Clarke's son Henry S. Clarke took over in 1851 with a partner, Naaman Wilmarth. They manufactured stocking yarn. Clarke's son continued the business until some time after 1881. Then the property was sold to the Norfolk and Bristol Street Railway Company and used as a car barn until 1919 when the railway company went out of business.

Nearby, but not directly associated with the privilege, Clarke and Mann also had a boot and shoe manufacturing business until the early 1870s.

SIGN ON NEPONSET ST. OUTSIDE OF OLD GATES INTO FORMER BIRD MACHINE

Rucaduc Privilege and Pond on a short tributary to the Neponset River

Rucaduc (sometimes spelled other ways such as Rucaduck) may be a play on words by Eliphalet Smith, one of the co-owners: 'rocky' and 'aqueduct' because it was difficult to dig an aqueduct (small canal) in the stone-filled area. Other origins are posited such as a combination of 'reservoir' and 'aqueduct'.

In 1812 the privilege ran a sawmill, shingle mill, and carding mill. The latter two were conveniently located as Great Cedar Swamp is close by and was used extensively for wood. The original mill owners were William Bacon, Horace Clap, and Horace and Eliphalet Smith. Later Daniel and Ellbridge Smith, who owned the Ellbridge Smith privilege upstream on the Foxborough border, bought Rucaduc and manufactured thread. A succession of owners made bonnet wire and also had a shoddy mill (for spinning waste wool.)

In the late 19th century Walpole Emery Mill (a maker of abrasive materials) was established on the site.

In 1920 Charles Bird bought the Emery Mill and began operating Bird Machine at the site to produce machinery for processing pulp and manufacturing paper.

SIGN AT WHITE BRIDGE IN WALPOLE TOWN FOREST;
USE TRAIL ENTRANCE AT ABOUT 221 SOUTH ST.

The First Sawmill
circa1660

Walpole was included as a part of Dedham in1635, along with Westwood, Medfield, Wrentham, Bellingham, Franklin, Dover, and Norfolk. The first English settlers in the Walpole area cut wood in the vast cedar swamp and processed that wood at nearby sawmills.

In 1659 the selectmen of Dedham granted to Joshua Fisher and Eleazar Lusher the right to build a sawmill a short distance upstream of this site, at the edge of Great Cedar Swamp to make use of the timber there. The sawmill was operated for about 100 years.

This first sawmill in Walpole is considered synonymous with the first steps in the founding of the town, which became independent of Dedham in 1724. It provides one of Walpole's epithets: "The Sawmill Settlement".

SIGN AT WHITE BRIDGE IN WALPOLE TOWN FOREST;
USE TRAIL ENTRANCE AT ABOUT 221 SOUTH ST.

Upper Blackburn Privilege on the Neponset River

Ebenezer Fales bought property with one or two sawmills at or near this site in 1742. He sold the property to Aaron Blake in 1756; Blake operated a sawmill here until about 1787; he also purchased additional land including a mill site downstream at "Lower Blackburn Privilege".

The entire property (both upper and lower privileges) changed hands a few times, ending up with John Blackburn in 1811; he manufactured machinery and his son George made yarn at the upper privilege. By 1832, the site was called "Blackburn's Cotton Factory." Then another son of John's, also called John had an iron foundry at the site, 1846-1854.

A walk north about half a mile along the rail trail will take you to the Lower Blackburn privilege.

SIGN A SHORT WALK OFF RAIL TRAIL ACCESSED BEHIND THE COA; WALK ON THE SHORT PATH TOWARD THE NEPONSET RIVER

Lower Blackburn Privilege on the Neponset River

Aaron Blake operated a sawmill upstream of this site at "Upper Blackburn Privilege" about 1787; he also purchased additional land including this mill site "Lower Blackburn Privilege".

The entire property (both upper and lower privileges) changed hands a few times, ending up with John Blackburn in 1811; the Blackburns leased this privilege to businesses making cotton batting, lamp wicks, and woodwork.

In the early 20th century the Massachusetts Chemical Company took over Lower Blackburn Privilege and built a hydroelectric plant there, to power their factory at Union Privilege. The building remains seen here are from that plant.

A walk about half a mile south along the rail trail will take you to the Upper Blackburn privilege at White Bridge; a walk on the rail trail to the Council on Aging will take you to the Union Privilege.

SIGN ON THE FENCE OVERLOOKING THE NEPONSET RIVER FROM THE COA PARKING LOT

Union Factory Privilege on the Neponset River

In 1812, Samuel Fales manufactured snuff at this privilege, which probably dates back to the mid 1700s. There was also a tannery and forge nearby. Then the Walpole Union Manufacturing Company operated by Oliver Clap manufactured cotton and woolen material. This was followed by Manning, Glover, and Co., which made curled hair mattresses and Jerome B. Cram who made mattress ticking.

In the late 19th century, the Union Carpet Lining Company was in business at the privilege. Around 1900 Massachusetts Chemical Company manufactured rubber products such as shoe soles and tires. That company took over the lower Blackburn Privilege (accessed along the rail trail behind the Council on Aging) and built a hydroelectric plant there, to power the factory. Standard Woven Fabric (later called Multibestos) began manufacturing asbestos brake linings, fire hoses and gaskets from 1915 until 1935. After that, various businesses used the site including a waste paper recycling plant, P. Shaffer, and Holiday Coffee Company. In 1957, a massive fire destroyed the Shaffer company and the site was not used again. The area was declared a superfund site and cleaned up sufficiently to have a police station and Council on Aging built on it.

FIND SIGN ON THE FENCE OPPOSITE 55 WEST ST.

Lewis Privilege
on the Neponset River

This privilege, which dams Lewis Pond was established around 1812 by Daniel Clap, who manufactured cotton felt and later cotton thread from "shoddy" which is waste cotton scraps. In 1863, Willard Lewis who had been manufacturing carpets, bought this privilege and used it for making carpet linings and cotton batting for many years. Willard Lewis's home overlooked his mill buildings. Currently, that house is occupied by the Walpole Historical Society at 33 West Street. Lewis built the first brick mill building in Walpole in 1863. It still stands at 75 West Street.

After Willard Lewis died in1892 the business went into decline; most of the wooden mill buildings were destroyed by fire in 1899, but were quickly rebuilt. A family member, George A. Plimpton, revived the business, operating it as the Lewis Batting Company. Plimpton's nephew Henry Plimpton Kendall was brought in, in 1903 to transform the business, which became Kendall Mills, makers of absorbent cotton and other hospital supplies. In the early 20th century Kendall was one of two major employers in Walpole, the other being Bird and Son, a paper mill in East Walpole.

SIGN AT ENTRANCE TO MBTA COMMUTER PARKING LOT OFF ELM ST., A LITTLE NORTH OF THE COMMUTER RAIL STATION

The Paper and Cotton Mill of Bradford Lewis
Site of the First Telephones and Electric Lighting in Walpole

The Bradford Lewis mill buildings were on this site (currently a parking lot) near the Neponset River and the railroad tracks The mill processed waste paper and waste cotton to make new products such as cardboard and wiping cloths.

The first telephones in Walpole were installed in Lewis's mill about 1880. Telegraph lines along the railroad tracks were used for telephones before there were dedicated telephone lines in town. The telephone exchange for about 36 initial subscribers in Walpole was at Lewis's mill until late 1882 when the Bay state Telephone Company took over the service. The telephone exchange remained at Lewis's mill until 1883 when it moved into a store located at present day 1 West Street.

Lewis also had an electric generator as of 1890 and used it for electric lighting at the mill. In addition to operating the mill machinery, the generator provided power for the first electric street lighting in Walpole. The mill continued to provide electricity to Walpole residents, businesses, streets, and the Walpole Town Hall until 1900 when Medfield Electric took over supplying most of the electricity to Walpole.

SIGN IN THE SMALL TRIANGULAR PARK AT THE BASE OF RURAL CEMETERY ON PEMBERTON ST.

Upstream Site of Stetson's Privilege and Pond on the Neponset River

(The privilege and pond are on private property)

The Bradford Lewis mill buildings were on this site (currently a parking lot) near the Neponset River and the railroad tracks The mill processed waste paper and waste cotton to make new products such as cardboard and wiping cloths.

The first telephones in Walpole were installed in Lewis's mill about 1880. Telegraph lines along the railroad tracks were used for telephones before there were dedicated telephone lines in town. The telephone exchange for about 36 initial subscribers in Walpole was at Lewis's mill until late 1882 when the Bay state Telephone Company took over the service. The telephone exchange remained at Lewis's mill until 1883 when it moved into a store located at present day 1 West Street.

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SIGN AT THE DOG ROCK ENTRANCE TO THE ENDEAN TRAIL ON PLIMPTON ST.

Plimpton Privilege
(also called Plimpton Upper Privilege)
on the Neponset River

The bridge is the site of Plimpton Privilege, which dams upper Plimpton Pond, just to the south of the bridge. Henry Plimpton had apprenticed at Stetson's privilege upstream, learning to make farm tools such as hoes. In 1814 he bought this property "Plimpton Privilege" and built a shop to manufacture hoes. Nearby, Plimpton also had a foundry and a twine shop. After the death of Henry Plimpton in1860, his sons Calvin and Henry Junior were to carry on the business. Calvin died in 1864 and the Plimpton business was sold to the Linden Spring and Axle Company owned by the Tiltons. Henry Jr. went to Stetson's privilege upstream (where his father had apprenticed) and manufactured suitcases and trunks. Meanwhile the Tilton business failed in 1894 and the privilege was idle. The Plimpton family bought the property back although no more manufacturing occurred at this site.

Downstream is "Ellis Privilege" (also called "Plimpton lower privilege"), also owned by the Plimptons; it dammed Plimpton Lower Pond, just to the north of this bridge It may be viewed on a Town of Walpole trail, "Endean Trail". One (of three) trail heads is at Dog Rock; this section of trail can be wet but you can view the lower privilege across the pond by walking in a short distance.

SIGN ALONG TRAIL FROM THE DOG ROCK ENTRANCE TO THE ENDEAN TRAIL ON PLIMPTON ST.

Ellis Privilege
(also known as Plimpton Lower Privilege) which dams up Plimpton Lower Pond

In the early 19th century, axles were made at this privilege and then snuff and tacks. In 1818, Daniel Ellis bought the property and manufactured satinet (a satin-like cotton fabric.) As of 1830, the mill was using a new type of power loom. The mill changed hands a few times, but continued to manufacture cloth. Henry Plimpton bought the property in 1844 and continued to make cloth. Plimpton already owned the "Plimpton Upper Privilege" upstream.

When Henry Plimpton died in 1860, his sons Calvin and Henry Jr. were to carry on the business. However, Calvin died in 1864 and both the Plimpton Lower Privilege and the Upper Privilege were sold to Linden Spring and Axle Company owned by the Tiltons. When the Tilton's business failed in 1894, the Plimptons bought back the property.

Eventually, the property was owned by George Arthur Plimpton, Calvin's son. G.A. Plimpton was a gentleman farmer, living most of the year in New York City where he was a publisher. However, he also revived the old lower privilege to produce his own electric power around 1929; thus remains are seen here of an early 20th century hydroelectric plant.

SIGN AT THE ENDEAN TRAIL HEAD OFF MANSION DRIVE IN EAST WALPOLE

Bird Privilege
(also called Bird Upper Privilege)
which dams Bird Pond on the Neponset River

At first a gristmill operated by Eliphalet Rhoads was at this site and then the Neponset Manufacturing Company, a cotton mill. In 1835 the company was sold to the Neponset Paper Mill Company, which produced newsprint paper; it was sold again in 1838 to Francis W. Bird. F.W. Bird partnered with his father George and other family members to produce wrapping paper.

The Birds already owned a privilege (the lower Bird Privilege) and paper mill, further downstream at present day Hollingsworth and Vose. F.W. Birds's son Charles organized a paper company that combined activities of the upper and lower Bird Privileges. However, that entity soon dissolved and F.W. Bird and Son continued independently at the upper privilege. From those beginnings evolved the huge paper mill complex of Bird and Son, which employed thousands and had both a national and international presence. For decades it was the largest employer in Walpole. One of the mill buildings (153 Washington Street) still stands today, repurposed as commercial space. The Neponset River passes beneath the building.

Francis William Bird Park, a gift of the Bird family, is nearby, operated by Trustees of Reservations.

SIGN ON THE FENCE ON MILL POND ROAD WHERE MINE BROOK CROSSES FROM TURNER'S POND

Morey's Privilege at Morey's Pond (later called Turner's Pond) on Mill Brook (also called Mine Brook)

About 1840, a privilege was established here and used by Lewis and Erastus Robbins to make axles.

In 1853, George Morey bought the privilege and leased it to the Robbins axle business. In 1868, Bradford Lewis leased the privilege for his waste cotton mill, by which scraps of cotton were repurposed into new materials. In 1873, B. Lewis's son E. Frank Lewis operated a wool scouring (cleaning) mill. E.F. Lewis left Walpole for Lawrence Massachusetts in 1890 due to complaints by downstream mill owners, of pollution coming from the scouring mill.

Meanwhile, E.F. Lewis established a commercial ice harvesting business on Morey's Pond in 1881. His large ice houses were between the pond and the railroad tracks. Large quantities of ice were shipped by rail. Horace Spear took over the ice business and in 1895 he brought in a partner, Jacob Arthur Turner from Milton Massachusetts. Soon Turner owned the entire pond and business. The last ice harvest was 1936, after which the ice houses burned down.

Turner's son Roger Turner, a champion figure skater, made the pond (then called Turner's Pond) famous for ice shows during the rest of the 20th century.

FIND THE SIGN ON THE FENCE ON OLD DIAMOND ST.

Diamond Privilege (originally called the Frank Morse Privilege) on Spring Brook

The area of Spring Brook (sometimes called Spice Brook) was a source of bog iron in the 18th century. The original use of the privilege was probably an iron forge. At that time Diamond Pond was called Forge Pond. The Diamond Manufacturing Company made cotton products there including thread, yarn, and lamp wicks. In 1881, the family of Bradford Lewis bought the privilege and used it for processing wool.

Diamond Pond (impounded by the privilege) was the site of the first commercial ice harvesting business in Walpole ca.1880, established by Frederick Hartshorn. Horace Spear operated the ice business until 1892 when it suddenly ceased. That was the year that the East Walpole branch railroad was finished. It crossed a tip of Diamond Pond, rendering it less diamond-shaped. Apparently soot and ashes from passing trains spoiled the ice and made it unsalable.

From this vantage point, only the tip of the much larger Diamond Pond may be seen along with the railroad causeway over the pond.

FIND THE SIGN AT THE CLARK'S POND PARKING LOT ON STONE ST.

Clark's Privilege and Pond on Spring Brook

At first a machine shop was operated here by Royal Smith ca.1840s. Most likely a sluiceway to operate the machinery stood here rather than a major dam.

In 1880, Nathan Clark bought the property and operated a sawmill with his son Alton Clark. They built a dam and impounded a pond; the location of that pond is the smaller upstream lobe of present day Clark's Pond.

In 1888, the Clarks built another dam and rerouted Spring Brook. This established the larger lobe of Clark's Pond, visible from this vantage point.

The Clarks also began an ice harvesting business, Spring Brook Ice Company, eventually owned by Phillip Allen and Charles Gilmore. Ice was harvested, stored in two large ice houses, and delivered locally. The last ice harvest was ca.1940 and by then the pond and ice business were owned by the Turner family who also harvested ice on Turner's Pond. In 1944, the old ice house burned to the ground. In 1961, this property was the first conservation land purchased by the newly formed Walpole Conservation Commission.

SIGN ON THE FRONT LAWN OF THE H and V OFFICE BUILDING ON WASHINGTON ST., EAST WALPOLE

Hollingsworth & Vose Privilege (also called Lower Bird Privilege) On the Neponset River

George Bird first used this site in 1812 to manufacture paper. In 1871, Zachery T. Hollingsworth purchased the mill. The Hollingsworth Family had been operating paper mills further downstream on the Neponset River in Milton that date back to 1728. From 1876 - 1892 the firm operated as a partnership by Zachery Hollingsworth, Charles Bird and Charles Vose. The Birds already owned a paper mill at Bird Upper, a short distance upstream.

In 1892, the Birds, as F. W. Bird and Son, focused on making paper at the upper privilege while Zachery Hollingsworth and Charles Vose incorporated the firm as Hollingsworth & Vose Co.

Hollingsworth & Vose thrives to this day with plants in several countries and is a leading global producer of advanced materials used in filtration and battery separator applications. This is the only privilege in Walpole with a mill business still operating and it is the longest operating business by the same families.
All parts of this property: The dam, the pond, shore, and the building are private. There is no public access.