



WALKING TOUR, CUMBERLAND MILLS

Approx. 2 miles

Warren House 8

Lewis-Warren House (Greep House) 9

Old North School 10

Mill Houses 11

Sappie NA 2

The Elms 3

Mill Houses 4

Black Bridge 5

Bee hive 6

Mill Houses 7

Parking 1

Warren Library 16

Harris House 15

White House Inn 12

1st Catholic services 13

Warren Block 14

← Pte 25b to Gorham

← Windham

CUMBERLAND MILLS WALKING TOUR – Approx 2 m

Cumberland Mills, as the village of Ammonconglin came to be called, has been described as Maine's best surviving example of a 19th century planned industrial community", as you'll see as you take this tour.

[Parking is available on Cumberland St. on the road just beyond the parking lot for the medical building, and across from the Sappi gate.]

1. This is the site of Ammonconglin Falls, (on opposite side of bridge) which means "high fishing places" in the Aucoisco Indian language. Before white settlers arrived, this was the site of their planting and fishing grounds.

When white men arrived, they harnessed the power of the river to run their mills. On this site was the Davis & Baxter corn shop. In those days the corn was cut by hand, women being employed for this task. Across the river (now site of The Elms) was the J. Winslow Jones corn factory. Corn used to be a great Westbrook commodity in the early days, and the process of hermetically sealing cans was invented in Westbrook. In this connection it is worthy to mention that the first sweet corn ever canned for the market, was so canned in a woodshed at Cumberland Mills...

Also of note here are the cement foundations seen in the river in front of the parking area. These at one time supported the old community swimming pool.

2. As you out of the parking lot onto Cumberland Street, across the street you will see the mills of **Sappi Fine Paper NA**. In the early 1800s, there had been a few attempts at making paper in this area, but because of the wildness, remoteness, and problems with the natives, they did not survive.

There were only half a dozen houses here in 1847 when Grant & Lyons bought this land and erected the 1st paper mill. The mill consisted of one small wooden building, housing two paper machines and producing 3,000 pounds of paper per day.

In 1854 Samuel Dennis Warren of Boston purchased these Cumberland Mills and they became known as the S.D. Warren Company. S.D. Warren and his family were public-spirited and progressive people. Warren always paid fair wages for his time and he cared deeply for his workers and their families. He, or his company, was known to make loans to the workers so they could purchase homes, pay loans, or educate their children. His wife Susan and daughter Cornelia were also philanthropic and instrumental in providing a reading room for mill workers and a gym for women.

In the years after S.D.'s death (1888), his family and Company continued to be generous to the citizens of Westbrook: adding a public library, a Swimming pool, a high school, a gymnasium, and awarding college scholarships.

Over the years the company has been purchased by Scott Paper Co., then Kimberly Clarke, and finally, Sappi Fine Paper NA.

Unless a worker lived at home, Mr. Warren required them to live in company boarding houses; possibly to keep them from getting into mischief? S.D. chose John Calvin Stevens of Portland, to design his company houses. And, today it is acclaimed that Stevens designed 3 of Maine's most elaborate Queen Anne structures – all in Westbrook: the Warren Block, Wm. Longley House, John E. Warren house. (You will see all 3 on this tour)

[Turn left and continue along Cumberland, across the river to 102 Cumberland St.]

3. The Elms. This house was built in 1882 for Wm L. Longley, the Mill Agent; but due to the death of his wife, he never lived in the house. It has always been used as an S.D. Warren guest house. It was designed by John Calvin Stevens in the Queen Anne Style. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and cited as "one of the most elaborate Queen Anne style homes in Maine. There is a varied surface treatment of clabboarding and shingling as well as a picturesque arrangement of porches and gables. Over the main entrance and on the side chimney are richly detailed terra cotta panels, including one inscribed with the date 1882." The Elms was closed as the Mill guest house in 1999, and in the early 2000's Sappi sold the house. It is still named The Elms but is now a private B & B.

[Turn left onto Brown Street]

4. Mill houses – The duplexes on the right side of the street were some of the 1st mill houses built between 1871 – 1879, along with the houses on Cumberland St.

The bungalows, on the left and backed up to the river, are identical Queen Anne cottages and were built in 1881 as mill company homes. All are of wood construction and have 2 stories; the most distinctive feature of the cottages is their irregular rooflines.

All the Mill houses (these, and those on Cottage Place and Cumberland St) had running water by 1881; by 1883 the S.D. Warren Company owned 150 rental units, renting for \$75.00 to \$200/yr. Electricity was provided in some for \$35/year and running water for 10/year. In 1889 a sewerage system was started. All of these homes are now privately owned.

[\[Continue down Brown Street to the overpass\]](#)

5. "The Black Bridge", as locals call it, is seen overhead and it spans the Presumpscot River. It was used by the Mountain Division of the Maine Central Railroad. The tracks ran to Crawford Notch and were regularly used by summer touring trains. Granite blocks support the steel girders.

The first bridge at this site was built in 1870 as part of the first 17-mile stage of the Portland and Ogdensburg Railroad (completed to Vermont in 1875). That first bridge, built of wood, went out in 1896, victim of a raging ice-clogged river. It was replaced with a steel bridge standing on the stone piers of its predecessor.

There is a popular walking bridge attached to its side. Two things of interest: (1) there are two sets of tracks in this area, one for narrow-gauge (S.D. Warren transport) and one for wide-gauge trains and (2) there is a U.S. Geological Survey Marker on the bridge stating that the elevation is 69 feet above sea level.

[\[Walk under the overpass and note the large building, 78 Brown St., on the right\]](#)

6. This two and a half wooden structure dates from the 1850s and was a mill boarding house. It was also considered Westbrook's first apartment building. Local have always referred to it as "The Bee Hive".

[\[Turn back and take a left onto Cottage Place, on the left of Brown St.\]](#)

7. Cottage Place was laid out by S.D. Warren in 1886. He again hired John Calvin Stevens to design a street of shingle-style workers' cottages, therefore the name, Cottage Place. Twelve cottages were built

along the road, featuring two types of houses: a gambrel roof style and a gable roof style. This was considered 'planned company housing'. These were all single, mostly shingled style homes. They are now all privately owned.

[\[As you continue along the curve, heading back toward Cumberland St, you will see a large Victorian home on the left:\]](#)

8. 80 Cottage Place: the John E. Warren House used to sit at 157 Cumberland St., in the vacant lot across from Elms. It was built in 1882 for S.D. Warren's nephew, John E. Warren. It is supposedly a twin to The Elms. It is considered one of most sophisticated Queen Anne style houses in Maine. In 1968 it became the home of the Westbrook Senior Citizens, then was sold in 1981 and moved to this Cottage Place spot. It is a fitting setting for such a beautiful home, privately owned.

[\[Turn right onto Cumberland Street\]](#)

9. Across the street, at 175 Cumberland St. is the Lewis-Warren House (now called the Greep House) In 1804 Archelaus Lewis, prominent businessman, bought land and built this beautiful brick house. At the time it was built, it was the only house north of river, in Cumberland Mills. Lewis moved here and ran saw mills at both Congin and Saccarappa. The "Lewis Farm House" passed into SDW Co. ownership in 1871 and became the residence of mill agent John E. Warren. His son, Joseph A. Warren, a grand nephew of SDW, would become Mayor of Westbrook in 1902. It remained the home of the mill manager up until the 1990s. In the 1950s the mill agent, or manager, as it was then called, was Rudolph Greep; hence the name change to The

Greep House. It is now used as the Mill's meeting and education building. [There have been many changes made to the house, both inside and out, over the years.]

[\[On right side of Cumberland, opposite the Lewis-Warren House\]](#)

10. 182 Cumberland is now a private home but it began life as the old North School, situated at the corner of Cumberland and Bridge Streets. It was built in 1812-1813. After A. Lewis sold the large estate across the street, he purchased the North School building. In 1848 he moved it to this location, converted it into a private residence, and lived here in what he called, the "Lewis Cottage".

[\[Continue down Cumberland toward Parking lot\]](#)

11. Mill houses can be seen along the right side of Cumberland, all the way to Brown Street. These duplexes, along with the ones on Brown St., were built between 1871 – 1879. They are all now privately owned and some have been reported to be haunted ... maybe by long ago workers or their family.

[\[You can end your walk now, or continue past the parking lot and up to the Cumberland Mills rotary...straight ahead. If you do end now, you can turn right out of the lot and around the rotary to at least see sites 12, 13, and 14\]](#)

[\[Continue past the parking lot, up to Cumberland St. to the rotary.\]](#)

12. The Westbrook Inn or the "White House" at 36 Cumberland St., was once home to several generations of the Larrabee family and was only a one story building. It later became the Westbrook

inn, a "public resort of ill repute." There was a story that the Rev. Parson Bradley once stopped in and found a gambling game going on. He scooped up all the money and took it with him for his church. The life of this White House was short since the S.D. Warren Company bought it to rid the community of its bad influence. They moved the building from lower Main St. to its present location and converted it into a company boarding house. It later became a hotel and is now an apartment building. It still bears the Westbrook Inn sign.

There are no dates given of when the house was built, moved or expanded. S.D. Warren purchased the Mill in 1854 so maybe 1880's was when the Mill acquired it.

[\[Continue up the Rotary\]](#)

13. Early history has it that **Westbrook's 1st Catholic mass** was held at **24 Cumberland St.**, in this large brick building beside the Westbrook Inn. In 1880 there were few priest is the area and few French speaking Catholics. The original Catholics in the area had to go into Portland for Sunday Mass. They had to walk and usually carried their shoes so to keep them neat for the services. Westbrook's 1st Catholic family moved here, and held services in their home in the 1880s.

[\[Continue on\]](#)

14. **Cumberland Hall, or the Warren Block**, as it usually referred to, dominates the point of the rotary. Designed by J.C. Stevens in 1882, it is the third structure described as one of Maine's elaborate Queen Anne structures (along with the Wm. Longley House (3) and the John E. Warren house (8)).

Mrs. S.D. Warren (wife of the owner of the S.D. Warren Paper Co.) commissioned the construction of the Cumberland Hall. Mrs. Warren intended the building to be used for community services and activities, and to benefit the citizens of the area, many of whom were employed by her husband. In

1903 Cornelia Warren, daughter of S.D. Warren, paid for the construction of a gymnasium upstairs and paid for physical education classes for girls, a progressive idea at that time.

The building portrays the progressive trend in the late 19th century to let the inside use of the building dictate the outside design. Another factor in its design was the triangular piece of land on which it was designed and built. This three story building has an irregular hipped style with a small domed tower. The foundation is granite, while the building is a mixture of brick and frame construction. The first two stories are of brick and the third is wood covered with shingles. Exterior decorations are made of brownstone and terra cotta. Also reflecting the period style, the windows were designed with many small panes.

Over the years the block has housed a post office, pharmacy, dress alterations shop, cobbler shop, book binder, bakery, laundry, KFC, as well as restaurants, bars and, today, a tattoo parlor. The 'nose' (now holding the tattoo parlor) was added in the late 1940s.)

[\[Continue around the rotary and back down Main Street\]](#)

15. Nathan Harris House was built 1828 as a home for a local merchant. Its front hall has a beautiful curved, carved staircase. The wall surfaces in the hall and front parlor are entirely covered by murals. The murals are believed to have been done by a traveling artist to earn room and board. It is now a law office.

[\[Continue down Main Street toward Rite Aide\]](#)

16. Across the street, on the corner of Main and Harnois Ave. is what used to be the **Warren Memorial Library**, another gift from the Warren family. (It is now home to the Northern New England Conference for the Seventh Day Adventists.) The building began life as the three storied **Brown Block**. It was reputed to be the oldest building in Cumberland Mills.

In 1876 the S.D. Warren Mill established a library/reading room for its mill employees and their families. This Cumberland Mills Library, as it was then called, was housed in a single room above the Mill Agent's office. Because of its popularity and the increasing size of the book collection, the library was moved to the Brown Block, 479 Main Street, in 1908. It continued as a mill library until 1929 when it was opened to the general public. At that time its name was officially changed to the Warren Memorial Library.

Over the years the building has been changed and remodelled; the roof has been lowered, the third story eliminated, and, in the early 2000s, the building was lifted and moved back from Main Street, where it sits today.

The Warren Memorial Library has closed, but this building, well over 150 years old, still stands, and now serves as the home of the Northern New England Conference for the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

[\[Continue back to parking lot and end of tour\]](#)

For more information visit:

Westbrook Historical Society 426 Bridge St

www.westbrookhistoricalsociety.org

References: WHS web page, Photo Archives;

Highlights of Westbrook History. Development of Mill Worker Housing 1820-1890, Warren Standard Feb 1975; F.R's History of Westbrook; Fabius Raye's History of Westbrook; A Presence in the Community, the Warren Family; Historical Society scrapbook collection.