

## VI. CULTURAL RESOURCES

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Cumberland is a special place whose community character and charm is derived from a unique combination of circumstances. The Town's hilly wooded uplands, numerous streams and broad fertile valleys, and the sharply defined Blackstone River Valley create a natural environmental setting overlaid by a rich record of human settlement. Historic mill villages, farms, scattered individual buildings, scenic roads, rural landscapes, stone walls, and sites chronicle the physical development of the Town. Yet more than simply a physical inventory, their form, location, and interrelationship with natural and manmade settings embody the story of Cumberland's residents and the events that shaped their lives, as well as creating a visually rich and aesthetically pleasing community character.

Cumberland's location in the Blackstone River Valley has strongly influenced the Town's character and cultural resources. The area is known as the Birthplace of America's Industrial Revolution, and many of the textile mills that used the River's power can still be found along the banks of the River. Although the Blackstone declined in importance as industry turned away from reliance on water power, in recent times great efforts have been made to restore the River and revitalize the surrounding area. The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Act was signed into law in 1996, creating a volunteer commission and leading to significant funds invested in the areas historic and cultural resources. Since the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was created, there has been growing interest in, and knowledge of, the areas unique cultural heritage.

#### **State Planning Act Requirements**

According to the R.I. Comprehensive Planning and Land Regulation Act, the Natural and Cultural Resource Element "shall provide an inventory of the significant natural resource areas such as water, soils, prime agricultural lands, natural vegetation systems, wildlife, wetlands, aquifers, coastal features, flood plains and other natural resources and the policies for the protection of and management of such areas. The policies and implementation techniques must be identified for inclusion in the implementation program element."

The Act also requires consistency with State Guide Plan Elements:

- 110 Goals & Policies
- 131 Cultural Heritage & Land Management Plan
- 140 Historic Preservation

## **B. INVENTORY**

The majority of Cumberland's cultural resources are associated with its origins as a series of industrial mill villages associated with the Blackstone River. Perhaps most obvious are the historic structures still in existence throughout the Town. However, additional resources also exist, these are inventoried in the following section of this Element.

### **1. Historic Sites and Districts**

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC) inventoried Cumberland's historic resources in 1990, their publication, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Cumberland, Rhode Island*, was updated 1998. This section summarizes the information contained in this document. In addition, the Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. prepared a *Historic Preservation Plan* for Cumberland's Historic District Commission in 1990. This plan provides technical information and sets forth goals, implementation strategies, and priorities to protect Cumberland's historical and cultural resources. For a more detail discussion on the historical resources and goals and implementation strategies for historical preservation for the Town of Cumberland the *Historical Preservation Plan* should be consulted. The locations of Cumberland's historic sites and districts are illustrated in Figure VI-1.

### **National and State Register Historical Property**

A total of four historic districts and six individual properties in Cumberland have been listed in the National Register and State Register of historical property. Listed resources include the Town's most well-preserved villages, four eighteenth and nineteenth century houses (including one farm), a nineteenth century church, and a prehistoric archaeological site. For the most part, nominations have been prepared by the RIHPC as staff time and

state-wide programming priorities have allowed. The Sassafras Archaeological Site was discovered by archaeologists conducting a study for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) on proposed replacement of the Albion Bridge. The following is a list of properties included in the National Register and State Register:

- Arnold Mills Historic District
- Ashton Historic District
- Berkeley Mill Village Historic District
- Lonsdale Historic District
- Furnace Carolina Site (RI-2045), on Abbott Run
- Tower-Flagg Barn Complex, 100 Abbott Run Valley Road
- Sassafras Archaeological Site, (RI-55), Albion Road
- Patterson Brothers House and Store, 159 Broad Street (Demolished 1998)
- Whipple-Jenkes House, 8 Fairhaven Rd. (Formerly 2500 Diamond Road)
- St. Joseph's Church Complex (c. 1872, 1888), 1301-1317 Mendon Road
- Lewis Tower House (1825), 2199 Mendon Road
- Luke Jillson House (c. 1752 et seq.), 2510 Mendon Road
- Burlingame/Noon House (c. 1800 et seq.), 3261 Mendon Road
- John Cole Farm (c.1775), Reservoir Road

### Local Historic Districts

The Cumberland Historic District Commission (HDC) was established in 1987 by the Town under Title 45, Chapter 24.1 of the General Laws of Rhode Island. The HDC is empowered with responsibilities to safeguard the Town's heritage. Cumberland is a State Certified Local Government, which allows the Town to apply for federal 50 percent matching grants to be used in survey and planning projects within local historic districts. The following are currently designated Local Historic Districts:

- Old West Wrentham Road Historic District
- Tower Hill Road Historic District
- Ashton Historic District
- Lonsdale Historic District
- Upper Scott Road
- Diamond Hill Road (single property)

## Eligible Historic Properties

In 1987 RIDOT conducted a state-wide inventory and evaluation of historic bridges under its jurisdiction. As a result, five nineteenth-century bridges and one twentieth-century highway bridge in Cumberland have been formally determined eligible for National Register listing:

- Arnold Mills Bridge, 1886, Sneece Pond Road (Arnold Mills Historic District)
- Church Street Bridge, 1881, Church Street
- Ashton Viaduct, 1934-1945, George Washington Highway (partially within the Ashton Historic District)
- Rawson Road Bridges, c. 1886, Rawson Road
- Howard Road Bridge, c. 1886, Howard Road

## Properties recommended for further study

Along with the historic properties currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register, a number of individual buildings and districts have been evaluated as eligible for listing. As new research is conducted, as the Town changes physically, and as perceptions of the community's history and what cultural properties are worth saving evolve, other potential candidates for the Register may be identified. The following is a list of districts, structures, and sites in the Town of Cumberland currently identified as deserving consideration for entry in the National Register and State Register.

- Abbott Run Early Industrial Sites Archaeological District
- Diamond Hill Village Historic District
- Rawson Road/ Abbot Run Historic District
- Tower Hill Road Historic District
- Valley Falls Historic District
- Follett/Carpenter House and Farm (c. 1800), 44 Angell Road
- Squire Senior Nicholson House/"Grayrock" (1920), 130 Angell Road
- Cumberland Town Hall (1894), 45 Broad Street
- John F. Clark House (1884), 91 Broad Street
- Commercial Building (Late 19<sup>th</sup> century), 159 Broad Street
- St. Patrick's Church, Rectory, Convent, and Parochial School (1861, et seq., 1936),

285 Broad Street

- G. Whipple Commercial Block (late 19<sup>th</sup> century), 3782 Diamond Hill Road
- Hixon Homestead/Maple Shade Farm (17<sup>th</sup> century, et seq.), 109 Hines Road
- Dormition of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church (1908), 55 Fountain Street
- Former Post Office (late 19<sup>th</sup> century, 12-16 Mill Street
- Miller House (c. 1797), Tower Hill Road

### Historic Cemeteries

As recommended by the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, Cumberland's historic cemeteries have been located and identified. While some of these properties are located on private property, others are Town owned and are maintained by the Department of Public Works. These cemeteries not only contain the graves of Cumberland's earliest citizens, but also contain examples of funerary art from different periods, and are an important historical record of the Town's past. The following cemeteries have been identified in Cumberland:

- St. Patrick's Cemetery - High Street
- St. John's Ukrainian Cemetery - Hewes Street
- Cumberland Cemetery - Dexter Street
- Old Indian Cemetery - Dexter Street
- St. Basil's Cemetery - Curran Road
- Mt. Calvary Cemetery - Curran Road
- Blackstone Lot - Broad Street
- St. Joseph's Cemetery - Mendon Road
- Ballou Cemetery - Mendon Road
- St. John's Episcopal Cemetery (Cemetery Ashton) - Mendon Road
- Our Lady of Atonement - Diamond Hill Road
- Nine Mens Misery Cemetery - Diamond Hill Road
- Brown-Bartlett Cemetery - Mendon Road
- Bartlett Cemetery - Mendon Road
- Carpenter Lot - Mendon Road
- Weeden Cemetery - Nate Whipple Highway
- Staples Family Lot - Nate Whipple Highway
- Pickering & Staples Lot - Nate Whipple Highway
- Peck Cemetery (Cemetery Near Arnolds Mills) - Abbott Run Valley Road
- Metcalf Cemetery - Abbott Run Valley Road

- Quaker Cemetery - Abbot Run Valley Road
- Evergreen Cemetery - Nate Whipple Highway
- Arnolds Mills Cemetery - Nate Whipple Highway
- Old Diamond Hill Cemetery - Reservoir Road
- New Diamond Hill Cemetery - Reservoir Road
- Weatherhead Family Lot - Mayflower Drive
- Elder Ballou Meeting House Cemetery - Elder Ballou Meeting House Road
- Whipple Cemetery - Elder Ballou Meeting Hose Road
- No Name Cemetery - Torrey Road (not located)
- Wilcox Family Lot - Manville Hill Road (not located/developed)
- Scott Lot - West Wrentham Road
- Wilkinson Cemetery & Tomb - Angell Road
- Kimball Lot - Kimball Street & Willis Drive
- Cook-Carpenter Lot - Apache Lane

## **2. Cultural Events and Resources**

In addition to Cumberland's rich historical resources, Cumberland's cultural resources include various cultural events and groups, as well as many churches. Some of these resources have been in existence for many years, while others are fairly new.

The Arnold Mills Fourth of July Parade has been held annually since 1927, it is preceded by a road race and is followed by a "Concert on the Green" in front of the Arnold Mills United Methodist Church.

Every Victory Day weekend, a three-day Cumberlandfest, which includes food, entertainment, crafts and fireworks, is held at Diamond Hill Town Park. This festival is the Blackstone Valley's largest summer family celebration.

In Valley Falls, several annual events take place in celebration of the area's prominent Portuguese population. These include a parade and procession held each June at the Lusitania Club for the Feast of St. John, the largest Day of Portugal Celebration in Rhode Island, which has been supported by the Town in recent years, and the yearly Our Lady of Fatima feast and procession are held at the church of the same name.

The Blackstone River Theatre is non-profit cultural art center, whose focus is on cultural events and programs specific to the Blackstone River Valley. The Theatre presents music concerts, folk dances, children's events, as well as other special events.

The Arnold Mills Community House also hosts cultural events.

### Religious Resources

A number of religious institutions of various denominations are located in Cumberland; some of which were identified in previous sections. The following is a list of Churches located within the Town.

- *Baptist*- Blackstone Valley Baptist Church, Fellowship Baptist
- *Catholic* - Our Lady of Fatima, St. Aidan's Church, St. Joan's Church, St. John Baptist Mary Vianney, St. Joseph's Church, St. Patrick's Church
- *Episcopal* - Emmanuel Episcopal Church, St. John's Episcopal Church
- *Methodist* - Arnold Mills United Methodist Church Cumberland Community Methodist Church
- *Orthodox* - Dormition of the Virgin Mary
- *Presbyterian* - Calvin Presbyterian Church
- *Other* - Blackstone Valley Church of Christ Providence Zen Center

These religious and cultural resources bind the community and improve the quality of life here. As the community becomes more and more developed, it is these resources that will remain unique to Cumberland and that will give it a sense of place.

## C. FINDINGS

Cumberland's historic buildings, villages, archaeological sites, country roads, rural landscapes, stone walls, and burying grounds are a significant record of the Town's history. Once lost, they cannot be recovered, and their loss alters the character and quality of the community. The major threats to Cumberland's cultural resources are primarily associated with unsympathetic and uncontrolled development.

The Town of Cumberland has a total of four historic districts and fifteen individual properties listed on the National and State Register. In addition there are four local Historic Districts. Numerous individual buildings and several areas have been identified as being eligible for National Register consideration. There are also 34 historical cemeteries in Cumberland, which are distributed throughout the Town. Cemeteries include both small family plots as well as larger burial grounds, some of which are associated with a nearby church.

Cumberland's varied historic engineering structures include dams and water canal systems associated with the numerous mills primarily along the Blackstone River and Abbott Run, and a fine collection of five iron-truss bridges erected in the 1880's, four located on Abbott Run and one in Valley Falls. In addition, there are several late nineteenth-century stone-arch bridges, the monumental Ashton Viaduct highway bridge (1934-45), and, in the northeast corner of Town, the Diamond Hill and Arnold Mills Reservoirs, both major civil engineering works built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The analysis of past preservation activities in Cumberland reveals that important steps have been taken by Cumberland to safeguard this valuable heritage. Yet, in order to adequately protect the Town's cultural resources, additional actions are required. Preservation planning is a dynamic process rather than a static goal to be achieved once and for all.

While for the purposes of preservation planning Cumberland's survey is current, it should not be considered final. In particular, comprehensive building-by-building inventories do not exist for Diamond Hill Village, Cumberland Hill, or Valley Falls, The Town's early-twentieth-century, summer resort and suburban residential developments have not been studied in detail, and recorded data on prehistoric and historic archaeological sites is limited. In addition, as time passes, new properties may be identified which deserve

inclusion in the Inventory. In order to sustain a preservation planning process, the Town needs to continually update and expand this crucial database.

Along with the historic properties currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register, a number of individual buildings and districts have been evaluated as eligible for listing. Research and nomination preparation remains to be done for these properties, as well as evaluation of additional properties.

#### D. GOALS, POLICIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goals and policies for cultural resources were formulated based on the inventory and analysis of the previous sections. The State has formulated cultural resource goals which local plans must consider because of the mutual interest of both the State and the Town in recognizing and protecting cultural resources.

##### State Planning Act Goals

- To promote the protection of the natural, historical and cultural resources of each municipality and the state.
- To encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses.

##### Cumberland Cultural Resources Goals

#### Goal CR.1 PROTECT AND PRESERVE PROPERTIES OF HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

**Policy CR.1.1** Continue to allow the Historic District Commission to review and comment on projects which may adversely impact the historic landscapes or the setting of historic properties.

**Action CR.1.1.1** Enhance the Design/Development Plan Review process which includes a review of the effects of each proposed development on adjacent historical and cultural resources.

**Action CR.1.1.2** Examine the feasibility of adopting a Demolition Delay Ordinance in order to give the Town a window during which a means may be found to protect and preserve a historic structure.

**Policy CR.1.2** Expand the role of the Historic District Commission as the primary historic preservation advocate in Cumberland. Provide additional and formalized mechanisms for the HDC to review and comment on development projects and to work with property owners to preserve historic and archaeological sites.

**Action CR.1.2.1** Integrate Historic Preservation Planning concerns with other areas of municipal planning and decision-making.

**Action CR.1.2.2** Regularly update the inventory of Historical and Architectural Resources.

**Goal CR.2** PROTECT AND PRESERVE CONFIRMED AND POSSIBLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

**Policy CR.2.1** Collect and maintain information on known archaeological sites and areas of archaeological sensitivity, and devise a mapping system with generalized archaeological site information.

**Goal CR.3** PRESERVE, PROTECT AND PROMOTE AWARENESS OF HISTORIC CEMETERIES

**Policy CR.3.1** Maintain and update an inventory of historic cemeteries and their condition.

**Goal CR.4** PRESERVE AND PROTECT HISTORIC TOWN-OWNED STRUCTURES AND REUSE HISTORIC TOWN BUILDINGS

**Policy CR.4.1** Develop and implement a regular maintenance program for Town-owned historic buildings.

**Policy CR.4.2** Establish a committee to study vacant Town-owned historic

buildings and develop recommendations for their reuse.

**Goal CR.5** PROMOTE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION OF CUMBERLAND'S CITIZENS ABOUT THE TOWN'S HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

**Policy CR.5.1** Continue and expand the existing educational programs of the Historic District Commission, including the historic technical publications donations to the library.

**Action CR.5.1.1** Design, produce and distribute interpretive materials that describe the historical, cultural and recreational resources of the Town.

**Policy CR.5.2** Develop new educational tools to assist the Town citizens and visitors to appreciate and understand Cumberland's rich visual and historical heritage.

**Action CR.5.2.1** Prepare and adopt a Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Overlay District in the Zoning Ordinance to improve public access and awareness of the river's historical and material qualities.