out of the home and into factories. In 1810 Daniel Day built one of the first woolen mills in New England in the eastern part of town on the West River. Other mills, including the Crown and Eagle cotton mill, the Rivulet woolen mill, the Capron worsted mill, and the Stanley Woolen Mills, followed in quick succession.

By the mid-19th century, more than 20 textile mills flourished in Uxbridge. They attracted many immigrant workers, including Irish, French, and Poles, who enriched and further diversified the town's population.

Corridor Commission Office

The industrial history of Uxbridge is one of the longest in the nation.

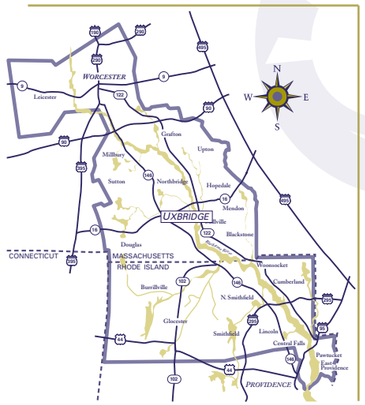
Uxbridge's 100-plus years of manufacturing prominence were brought to an end by the Great Depression and the subsequent move South of the textile industry. Many of the great mills are now occupied by several smaller companies.

But changing times have not dimmed the resourcefulness and industry that are characteristic of Uxbridge—a tapestry that grows richer with the passing years.

DIRECTIONS

Uxbridge is located at the junction of routes 16 and 122. Your tour begins on Route 16, just east of Main Street (Route 122).

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR



ALONG THE WAY

- **Free parking is available** at the Cornet John Farnum House, Mendon Street (Rte. 16), courtesy of Tom Schwartz of Emile Bernat and Sons, Inc. Free street parking is also available along Mendon Street and Main Street.
- **Places to eat** are available in the historic downtown.
- **Good resting areas** are Capron Park and the town common.
- **For information** about events, restaurants, and lodging in the Valley, call the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce at 508-234-9090 or visit www.blackstonerivervalley.com.
- **Be sure to visit** the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park and River Bend Farm Visitor Center at 287 Oak Street. Features include canal tow path walk, canoe launch sites, hiking trails, free maps, brochures, interpretive tours, and exhibits with videos, and more. Free parking and free admission. Open seven days. 508-278-7604.
- **Visit a historic working mill museum**, just 22 miles south of Uxbridge at Exit 27 on Interstate Route 95—Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, RI. Free parking. Restrooms. For hours of operation and admission prices, please visit www.slatermill.org or call 401-725-8636.
- **To take a riverboat excursion**—spring, summer, or fall—call for the schedule for The Explorer, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. 800-454-2882 or 401-724-2200.
- **For further information about Uxbridge**, visit the Thayer Memorial Library, donated to the town by Edward Thayer in 1894. This beautifully-appointed building contains many records and artifacts related to the town's history.
- **For more about Uxbridge history**, please contact the Uxbridge Historical Society at 508-278-4010 or http://uxbridgehistoricalsociety.org/index.html

www.nps.gov/blac/index.htm

Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA–the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.

This brochure was developed under the direction of The Rhode Island Historical Society in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.

Special thanks to Shelly Merriam, Francis Cove, Norma Housington, Carol Caffrey, and Betsy Youngsma for information about Uxbridge. rev2012

UXBRIDGE, MA

Walking Tour

Explore a living tapestry of historic dimensions.

John H. Chafee
BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY
National Heritage Corridor

UXBRIDGE

Many threads run through the story of Uxbridge, creating a tapestry as complex and richly woven as any of the cloths the town produced in abundance at the height of its prosperity.

As you walk through its multi-textured streets, you will be struck by the juxtaposition of old and new, the intertwining of agrarian and industrial, the evidence of decline and renewal. If you look closely, you can see traces of our nation's development, for as one local historian observed "Here in our small Town, through the last centuries, has been enacted a miniature United States history."

Like most communities that pre-date the Revolutionary War, Uxbridge was initially an agrarian community with a healthy smattering of gristmills, sawmills, and other small enterprises. Here, the Congregationalist majority lived in harmony with a small group of Quakers who erected their own meeting house on the outskirts of town. Such diversity would become characteristic of Uxbridge.

Early on, too, the impact of manufacturing would be felt. At the time of the Revolution, most cloth was made in the home. An Uxbridge farmer by the name of Richard Mowry successfully built and marketed the paraphernalia needed for making woolen, linen, or cotton cloth.

At the turn of the 19th century, Uxbridge was among the first communities to move cloth-making

Thayer Memorial Library

During its first 100 years, Uxbridge was a farming community. Its second hundred years saw the dominance of manufacturing. Dutch immigrants came to Uxbridge early in the 20th century and bought and revitalized many of the old farms.

1 CORNET JOHN FARNUM HOUSE

Your first stop is the Cornet John Farnum House on Mendon Street, site of Uxbridge's first town meeting in 1727. At that time, approximately 50 families comprised the new town.

John Farnum, who was active in the political affairs of both Mendon and Uxbridge, built this house around 1710. The house is on its original site and over the years it has overlooked an apple orchard, grist mill, gun factory, and livery stable. It has been extensively restored and contains many early furnishings and china.

The town bought the property in 1968. It is maintained by the Historical Commission and Historical Society. Open to the public, please see back for Uxbridge Historical Society contact information.

Taft Tavern in North Uxbridge was the site of two presidential visits. George Washington, newly elected President, stayed here during his triumphal tour of New England in 1789. He was so pleased with the accommodations that he sent the innkeeper's daughters, Patty and Polly, a piece of Chintz. In 1909, President William H. Taft, whose grandfather was born in Uxbridge, took time out from a visit with Governor Eben Draper in Hopedale to visit his ancestral home.

Thayer Memorial Library

UXBRIDGE

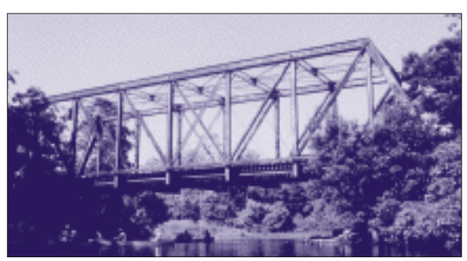
2 PROSPECT HILL CEMETERY

Across Mendon Street, near the corner of Depot Street, you enter Prospect Hill, the town's oldest cemetery. Here you will find the names that recur through Uxbridge's history—Aldrich, Farnum, Taft, Wheelock, Capron, Willard, Chapin, and others.

Note the Revolutionary War Memorial west of the gate as you leave the cemetery. Many of the same family names appear on other war memorials on the town common and at the high school.

3 TRAIN DEPOT & UXBRIDGE INN

The P & W Railroad tracks were laid in Uxbridge in 1847, and trains began to steam into town from all directions. The railroad brought raw materials to the factories and distributed their products to the rest of the country, contributing vastly to the expansion of production and precipitating the demise of the Blackstone Canal, which shut down in 1848.



Thayer Memorial Library

This trolley bridge over the Blackstone River was part of an elaborate electric railway system developed in the early 1900s to provide transportation around town and to many of the neighboring communities.

Before you continue west up to Main Street, you may want to stroll down Depot Street on your left to get a better view of the Capron mill or to visit some of the shops.

Or, simply continue up Mendon Street to Main Street, passing under the substantial Providence and Worcester Railroad bridge and turning left at the corner.

Every town along the P & W line had a passenger depot. Built in 1895, the former depot retains all the major elements of its original design and is characteristic of late-19th-century architecture. A walk to the rear of the building reveals the boarding platform and an excellent view of the tracks.

Cross Main Street and head north to the Uxbridge Inn. Built as the Hotel Wilson in 1882 on the site of two earlier public houses, the inn was a very important stop-over for travelers. It has been extensively renovated and includes on its premises a restaurant and several function rooms.

4 COMMON

Continue on to the picture-postcard town common on which can be traced many of the nation's major events.

To the east and west of the common you will see two imposing churches whose establishment was rooted in a religious conflict that swept New England in the 1830s. Differences between liberals and Calvinists caused a division among members of the First Church of Christ of Uxbridge, leading to the formation of two distinct societies. Facing the common on Court Street is the First Evangelical Congregational Church, built in 1833. Directly opposite it, on Main Street, is the First Congregational Society, Unitarian church built in 1834.

At the north end of the common is a small brick Federalist-style building, built jointly by a private academy and a Masonic lodge in 1819. Such joint ventures were common throughout

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

Irish immigrants first came to Uxbridge in the 1820s to work on the farms, and later on the canal, the railroad, and in the mills. They established St. Mary's parish in 1855.

Massachusetts in the first half of the 19th century before state laws required public support of high schools. The school opened on the ground floor in 1820, while the second story was reserved for use by the Masons.

Beginning in 1855, the ground floor housed the public high school, mandated by new legislation. Following the high school's move to a separate building in 1867, the former academy housed a district court until the mid-20th century. Solomon's Temple Masonic Lodge purchased the town's share of the the building and land in 1941.

Almost directly across Main Street you will notice the D.A.R. House. It was built in 1768 by Simeon Wheelock, whose descendents would play key roles in the development of some of Uxbridge's major mills. The house is open for public tours during Harvest Weekend in October.

5 CAPRON PARK

As you return to your car, you will pass a little park just west of Farnum House, overlooking Mumford Pond. Note the power generated by the water flowing over the dam. Three large rivers—the Mumford, West, and Blackstone—and numerous streams and ponds provided the water power that was the key to Uxbridge's early industrial growth.

Thayer Memorial Museum

The town produced a significant amount of cloth for uniforms and blankets for the Civil War and both World Wars. Five divisions of the Uxbridge Worsted Company were awarded the Army-Navy "E" flag for excellence in war production. In 1949, the town gained fame when the U.S. Air Force chose "Uxbridge Blue" as the color of their new uniform.

Across the dam stands one of downtown Uxbridge's oldest buildings. Built as a grist mill around 1777, the building later housed Bay State Arms, which produced single-shot rifles.

The Mumford also powered the once mighty Capron Mill across the street. The mill, built by Effingham L. Capron in 1820, operated under various names over the years, including the Uxbridge Worsted Company from 1910 to 1962. In its heyday, the company ran 24-hours a day, seven days a week, closing only on Christmas and Easter. The dye houses straddled the river so dye kettles could be dumped directly into it. It is said that the river ran blue when the dye kettles were emptied.

The company was sold to Emile Bernat and Sons, Inc., in 1962. Today, the mill houses several small enterprises.

Ice was harvested from the frozen ponds in the days before electrical refrigeration.

Corridor Commission Office

On the cover: Uxbridge Bakery wagon on its delivery route. Photo courtesy Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.