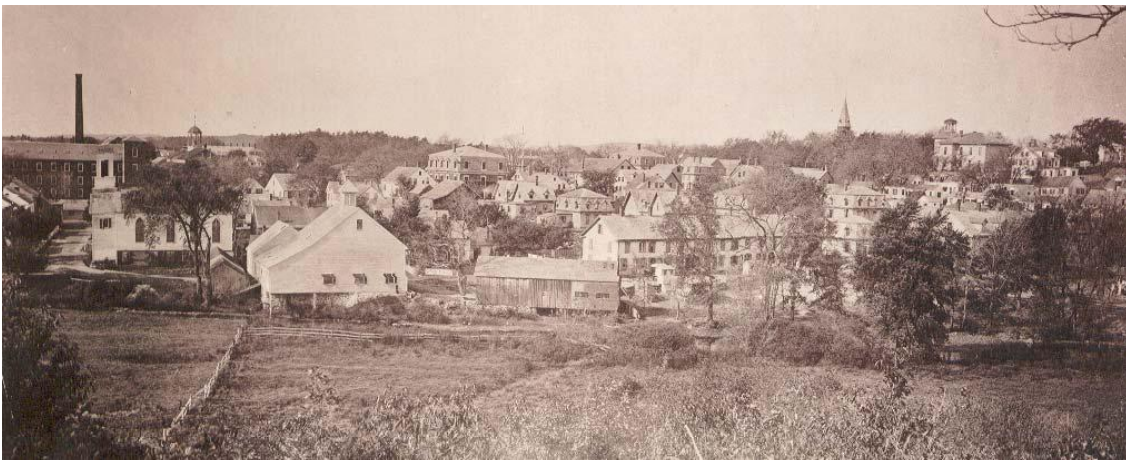


Saxonville

As a new teacher to Framingham, I was interested to learn that different areas of Framingham are designated as villages. These distinct regions of Framingham emerged over time in reaction to the each area's natural resources, the resulting ways these features were used, and the people who used them. Saxonville is perhaps the name that is still most recognizable and an interesting "artifact" to investigate.



"Saxonville from Danforth Hill" — a photograph from the book *Framingham Illustrated*, published by Lithotype. <http://www.saxonville.org/FOS%20Winter%202002b.pdf>

Settler John Stone was the first settler of what became Framingham when he built his home at Otter Neck as named by the way the winding of the Sudbury River encloses the area on three sides. He had first settled in Sudbury then found that while, "There was an abundance of water and woodland for fishing and hunting... his farm land in Sudbury was marshy." (Framingham ¶2) His new home provided him not only with all of those resources, it also allowed him to set up a corn mill as early as 1660 and he was soon joined by other settlers to the region as they increasingly replaced the established Native American tribe of Nipmucs. The region of land was initially called

Danforth's Farms after the grants of lands made to Thomas Danforth by the Colonial Government. In 1770 the town was incorporated as Framingham after Danforth's place of birth in England, "Framlingham", although there is no recorded reason why the "l" was dropped from the name. However, while the entire community was incorporated as the town of Framingham, areas within the town continued to go by village names including Nobscot, Salem End, Pratt's Plain, Sherborn Row, and Stone's End after the John Stone family.

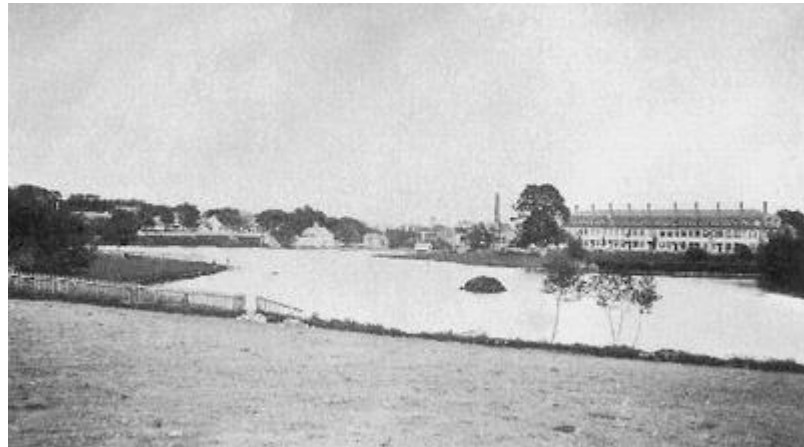
Stone was the first to harness the power of the river by erecting a gristmill at the Great Falls of the Sudbury River in 1650, which endured until 1795 when it was converted into a sawmill. In 1811, it was converted into a cotton mill under the auspices of the Framingham Manufacturing Company on the heels of nearby Westborough native Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin.

However, "The New England textile industry soon realized that cotton was not king." (Herring 284) The chilly climate of the region required a warmer material for clothing and bedding in the form of wool. In 1822 Abner Wheeler and his brother Eliphalet bought out the Stone family's interest in the ancient mill site at the falls. They called it the Saxon Factory Company as the word Saxon referred to the breed of sheep that would supply the raw wool, and ultimately became a name that the town embraced. An 1827 Town Meeting referred to that area of Framingham as the Saxon Factory Village. It was soon shortened to Saxonville.

In 1834 the citizens of Boston were dying of impure water and looked outside of the city to find an abundant supply of fresh water. They found these in the waters of the Cochituate Pond, which at this time was held by the next significant mill owner, William H. Knight. It took years of research for Cochituate Pond to be deemed the

selected source, and on March 30, 1846 the city of Boston took both, "... the water privilege and the extensive manufacturing establishment connected with the pond, both in the possession of Mr. William H. Knight." (Bradlee 146)

It was this move that preserved the quality of Cochituate Pond's water, but it was not to be the same for the Sudbury River. Michael H. Simpson came to Saxonville in 1835 with improved mill machine to deburr wool and became part owner in the Saxon Factory. He eventually took over as owner -and more importantly to Saxonville- he was known as a benevolent owner who built affordable tenement housing for mill worker families and contributed to many good works throughout Saxonville to benefit the community. However, an account of a boater's view of Saxonville highlights the disparity between the good that Simpson did versus the unfortunate affects his mill had on a region in the 1880's.



Michael Simpson built tenements for his mill work with an emphasis on comfort. <http://framingham.iougs.com/?p=14>

"Saxonville is a very fine specimen of the New-England manufacturing village. It is grouped in a very picturesque fashion around the end of the pond, and looks neat and thrifty. There is a boat-house on the pond and many boats. A road has been cut through the woods on the north side of the pond. This improvement, as well as many others, is due to the public spirit of Mr. Simpson, who from the constant rumor of his name, is evidently the presiding genius of the town.

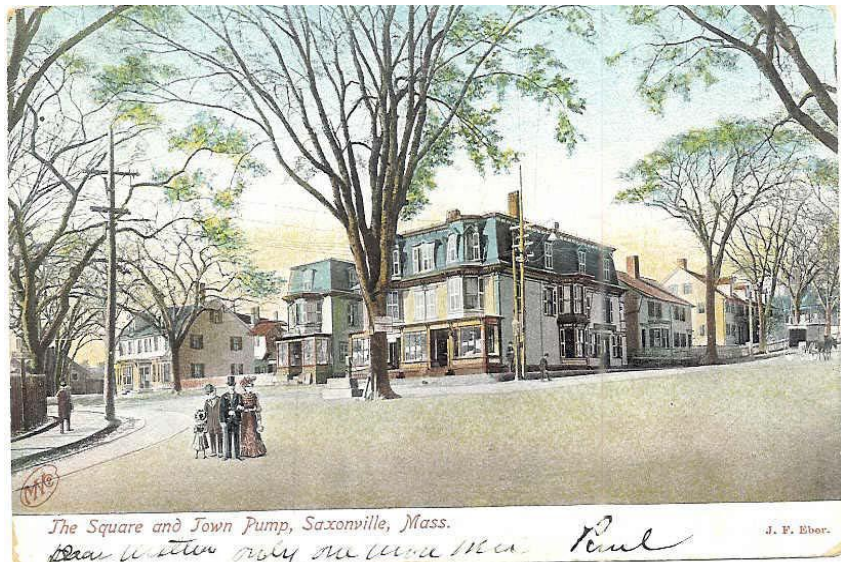
We found the stream below Saxonville shallow and filled with many rocks. The water was clogged with all sorts of impurities from the woolen-mill, and so muddy that we could only guess at obstructions... The oars in poling sank through thick, yellow water deep into oozy beds of yielding, slippery slime, and

the odor stirred up by the action was foul and miasmatic. Indeed, neither Styx nor Phlegethon, I suspect, is half so bad.” (Fellows 26-27)

This contamination continued through the 20th century as Saxonville resident Cynthia Buscone recalls of her school days in the 1940’s, “If we stayed on Concord Street, the next slow-down point was the river. Alas, there we’d check to see what color the river was running – red, blue, or green – with the river weeds drifting lazily in it. We all knew the color change was no a good or natural thing, but instead resulted from the dyes used at the carpet mill. Our parents talked about it at home, but what was there to do except watch it run – blue or red or green?” (Buscone 2)

Saxonville drew waves of immigrants to work in its mills. While life in Saxonville offered some advantages over living in the city, the immigrants still faced prejudices. One of the first waves was the Irish-Americans. In 1847, St. George’s church of Saxonville was one of the first Catholic churches founded in the region due to the growing population of Irish-Americans working the mill. By the early 1850’s, the church had established a

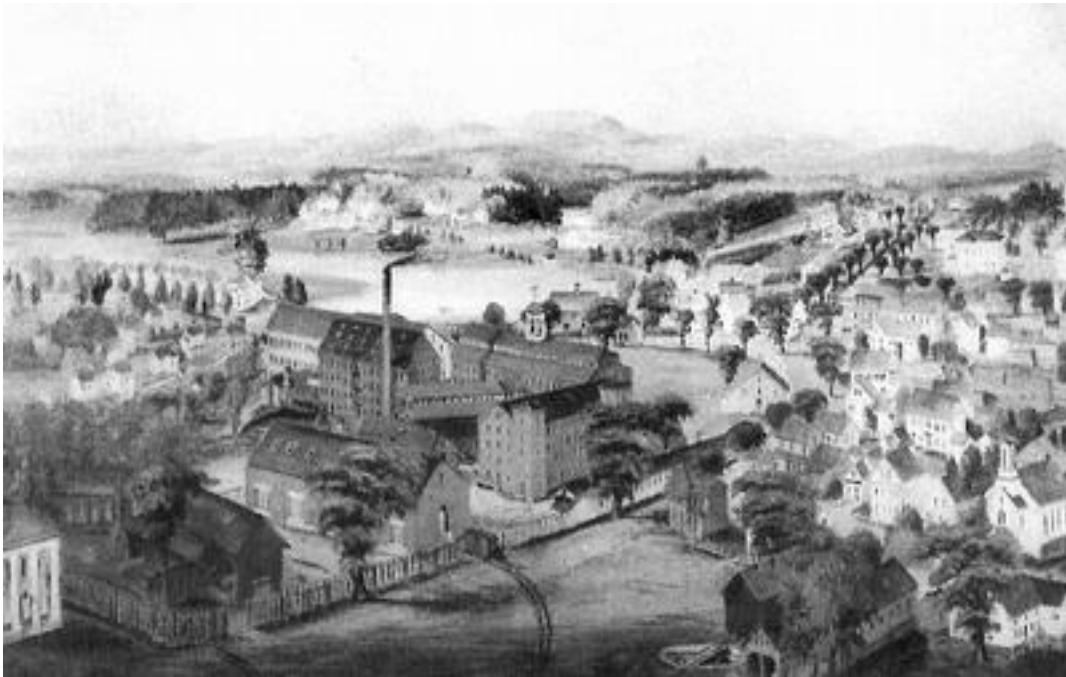
parochial school. However, in 1853, a mob from the “Know Nothing” Party broke into the church and desecrated it and burned the Parish priest Father Farrelly in effigy from the town square’s liberty pole. The following St. Patrick’s Day this



same group set fire to the town’s meeting hall where Father Farrelly was speaking. It

<http://www.saxonville.org/FOS%20Winter%202004.pdf>

was reported that Father Farrelly was now wise to their methods and calmed the audience so he could continue with his lecture.



**1882 view of Saxonville Mills, "Mfy's of blankets,
woolen robes, worsted & woolen yarns, &c."
*<http://www.saxonville.org/FOS%20Spring%202001.pdf>***

It was not only the Irish-Americans who settled in Saxonville as noted in a report on tuberculosis findings from 1919. The Community Health Station of Framingham reported out on the sections of Framingham by village, with specific language about the who lived where, under which conditions, and the impact on the number of cases of tuberculosis. The report noted that the districts, “were selected because they represented fairly distinct geographical, racial, and economic divisions....Saxonville is a somewhat isolated village with one industry, a woolen mill, comparatively poor environmental conditions, and a population made up largely of Irish-Americans, French Canadians, and Jews.” (Framingham, MA 33) This was noted

in relation to the particularly poor housing conditions of Coburnville with most of the Italian population and the Center containing residences of many of the middle-class and more well-to-do families.

This custom of differentiating regions of Framingham by immigrant populations carried further into the 20th century. In recollections of growing up in Saxonville in the 1950's, siblings Len and Nancy McGrath recall the challenges of leaving the community school in Saxonville for the district high school. They said students from other parts of town looked down upon the Saxonville “mill kids” because of the mill and the “foreigners” it employed. (Boli 4)

Immigrants still settle in Saxonville today, but things have changed. The mill closed in the 1970's and smaller businesses and artists' studios occupy the buildings. The immigrants who come today are from countries including Hungary, Russia, and China. There are three elementary schools within Saxonville, but with school



The only remaining mill building in Saxonville.

www.framingham.k12.ma.us

choice among the seven elementary schools in Framingham we have a mix of students that include these nationalities as well as many others, helping to reduce the impact of what are still predominantly village sections of Framingham today.

Five C's	PRIMES
<p>Context: Industrial Revolution</p> <p>Contingency: If Saxonville did not have a mill, it would not have been as much of a destination for immigrant populations</p> <p>Causality: Saxonville had the power of the Sudbury River and Falls</p> <p>Change Over Time: Different immigrant populations settled the region over time</p> <p>Complexity: One mill led to the Saxon Factory Village, which emerged as Saxonville.</p>	<p>Intellectual/Technology: Industrial technology allowed for mills</p> <p>Economic: The mills in Saxonville employed a full 10% of Framingham's population</p> <p>Social: There were tensions between newer immigrant groups and established populations</p>

Annotated Bibliography

Barry, W. (1847). *A History of Framingham, Massachusetts including the plantation from 1640 to the present time.* Boston, MA: James Monroe & Co.

This is a history of Framingham written by the former pastor of the First Church in Framingham. It is a narrative that is very readable with information on all aspects of Framingham up to the 1840's.

Bartlett, J.G. (1918). *Gregory Stone genealogy: ancestry and descendants of Dea.*

Gregory Stone of Cambridge, Mass. 1320-1917. Harvard, MA: Stone Family Association.

This is a compilation of family genealogy commissioned by the Stone family. It includes not only the birth and death dates, but also brief notations of occupations and noteworthy accomplishments.

Boli, J.M. "One family's Saxonville story: a conversation with the McGrath's

Part II." News of the Friends of Saxonville. Fall 2001: 4-5, 7.

This is the second part of a two-part article written by Boli and other members of her family about their experiences through generations who stayed in Saxonville who had descended from Irish immigrants. It is a look at the daily life of generations of the family and how things in Saxonville have changed.

Bradlee, N.J. (1868). *History of the introduction of pure water into the city of Boston:*

with a description of its Cochituate water works. Michigan: A. Mudge.

This provides the information about the need for and acquisition of fresh water by Boston with data as well as supplemental information, including W. H. Knight's brief message about the burning of his mill buildings he was leasing back from Boston after they had just purchased them for \$50,000 in addition to the water rights for \$100,000.

Buscone, C. "The Road to learning." News of The Friends of Saxonville. Fall

(2001): 1-2, 6.

This article is a collection of the author's memories of attending school in Saxonville in the 1940's and 50's. It includes information about not only the school system at the time, but also the life of a child growing up during that period and the features of the buildings and landscape of Saxonville.

Buscone, C. "St. George's Parish." News of The Friends of Saxonville. Autumn (2003) 1, 5-6.

This article is a history of St. George's Parish of Saxonville. It references History of the Archdiocese of Boston Volumes II and III and commemorative booklets from the Parish contemporary to the time.

Fellows, H.P. (1884). Boating trips on New England rivers. Boston: Cupples, Upham and Co.

This is a period account of the author's impressions of the waterways of New England including the communities that dotted the landscape. While it is one man's account, it is interesting to consider what he found noteworthy and how he compared what he found from location to location.

Framingham, MA. Framingham Community Health and Tuberculosis

Demonstration of the National Tuberculosis Association. Framingham

Monograph No. 5 Medical Series III Tuberculosis Findings. Community

Health Station, 1919.

This is a government pamphlet report on the findings of positive tuberculosis tests in Framingham. It is of note that the data is organized by villages of Framingham including generalizations of different immigrant populations and their living conditions.

Framingham Online. (n.d.) *History Narrative*. Retrieved August 15, 2009 from

<http://www.framingham.com/history/histnarr.htm>

This is a brief account of the history of Framingham from the settlement by John Stone in the 1640's through to the mid-1900's. It is separated into sections (First Settlers, Colonial Days, 19th Century, Industry in Town, and A History of Education) and is a cursory read as an overview.

Gutteridge, W.H. (1921). *A Brief history of the town of Maynard,*

Massachusetts. Maynard, MA: Town of Maynard.

This is a history about the town of Maynard including the establishment of the Assabet Mills and the formation of the town of Maynard due to the mill causing increased industry and commerce in the region of Assabet, which up until that time was a village on property in Stow and Sudbury.

Herring, S.W. (2000). *Framingham: An American town.* Framingham, MA:

Framingham Historical Society.

This is a narrative of the history of Framingham from its settlement by John Stone in the 1600's through to contemporary history. It features the contributions of significant residents including Crispus Attucks and Christa McAuliffe as well as defining conditions including the Framingham Heart Study. It is a great resource for all things Framingham.