Strathglass Park: Strategies for the Revitalization of a Rural Mill Town Community

Heather Megan Hendrickson
University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/hp_theses

Part of the Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons

https://repository.upenn.edu/hp_theses/731

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/hp_theses/731
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Strathglass Park: Strategies for the Revitalization of a Rural Mill Town Community

Abstract
Built in 1902 for Oxford Paper Company mill workers, Strathglass Park is one of the finest examples of twentieth century industrial worker housing still extant today. The rural town of Rumford Falls, Maine experienced a radical population boom during the last decade of the nineteenth century when the small agrarian village was transformed into a thriving industrial pulp-and-paper company town, resulting in a major housing shortage. Brainchild of Hugh J. Chisholm (1847-1912), founder of the Oxford Paper Company, Strathglass Park consisted of 51 red-brick architect-designed duplexes organized in a professionally planned park-like setting surrounded by a granite wall. The well-constructed, spacious, and modern company-owned duplexes were rented to mill workers at an affordable rate while the company also handled maintenance and repairs in the Park—which was kept in immaculate condition until the maintenance program ended in 1949. In 1967, the family-owned Oxford Paper Company was sold to the Ethyl Corporation which started the Park and the town on a downward economic trajectory.

The unified landscape of Strathglass Park deteriorated until a revitalization movement was prompted in 1973 with the nomination of the Park to the National Register of Historic Places. Since that time, sporadic interventions have been attempted to revitalize the Park, with only temporary effects achieved. This thesis examines the origins of Strathglass Park and tracks its evolution within the context of Rumford Falls. It documents and critically analyzes past preservation interventions along with contemporary community sentiment to create a framework which is used to develop a preservation strategy to reactivate Strathglass Park as one of Rumford's most distinctive community assets. Recommendations are proposed that address community and economic challenges through financing sources, policy modifications, and community programming—leveraging the architecturally significant Strathglass Park development to facilitate a larger neighborhood evolution.

Keywords
model community, C.P.H. Gilbert, industrial paternalism, Section 203(k), ARPA

Disciplines
Historic Preservation and Conservation

Comments

This thesis or dissertation is available at ScholarlyCommons: https://repository.upenn.edu/hp_theses/731
STRATHGLASS PARK: STRATEGIES FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF A RURAL MILL TOWN COMMUNITY

Heather Megan Hendrickson

A THESIS

IN

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2022

Advisor

Randall F. Mason
Professor

Program Chair

Frank G. Matero
Professor
Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks and deepest gratitude to:

My advisor, Randy Mason, who is perhaps the busiest person I know, yet always and without complaint, made ample time for me. I never could have completed this thesis without your patience, encouragement, and guidance. Thank you for coming along on my Strathglass Park journey and always gently steering me back to the task at hand when I lost my way.

Everyone in the great town of Rumford, Maine who met with me, zoomed with me, and had lunch with me. Thank you, Strathglass Park Preservation Society, Rumford Area Historical Society, and Maine Preservation. All your help was invaluable, and I hope this is only the beginning of our relationship.

My housemates and my sober community, you saw me through the ups and downs of graduate school and stuck by my side no matter how crazy I became. Without your unconditional support and acceptance, navigating graduate school and early sobriety would have been utterly impossible...special thanks to Rosie. Liz and Jess, thank you for giving me a haven and having unwavering belief in me even when I doubted myself.

My family, for setting such inspiring academic standards and paving the way for me to follow in your footsteps.

My HSPV cohort. It feels like only last week we were in Summer Institute. What a strange time to have gone to grad school, but I’m so glad I went with all of you. We made it! I’ll see you out there...
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................................ ii
List of Images .......................................................................................................................................... vi
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... ix
“To Readers of the Year 2000” .............................................................................................................. x

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 1
   1.1 Methodology .................................................................................................................................. 5
   1.2 Section Summary .......................................................................................................................... 7

2. History ................................................................................................................................................. 9
   2.1 Paper Manufacturing in America ............................................................................................... 11
       The First Paper Mill in America (1690) ....................................................................................... 11
       Change in Raw Material .............................................................................................................. 13
       Paper Industry in Maine ............................................................................................................. 15
   2.2 Hugh Joseph Chisholm (1847-1912) ......................................................................................... 16
   2.3 Worker Housing in American Company Towns ....................................................................... 21
       Rhode Island System ................................................................................................................... 21
       Waltham-Lowell system .............................................................................................................. 23
       Professional Architects .............................................................................................................. 27
       Professional Planners ............................................................................................................... 30
       Professional Architects + Professional Planners ....................................................................... 33
   2.4 The Rumford Realty Company ................................................................................................. 36

3. Strathglass Park .................................................................................................................................... 39
   3.1 Anatomy of a Mill Town ............................................................................................................... 39
   3.2. Strathglass – “The Brick Park” ............................................................................................... 53
   3.3 Setting the Record Straight: C.P.H. Gilbert, Architect ............................................................... 59
   3.4 Prosperous Days ......................................................................................................................... 73
   3.5 Decline ....................................................................................................................................... 77

4. History of Past Interventions ............................................................................................................... 82
   4.1 National Register of Historic Places, 1974 ............................................................................... 83
4.2 Photographic Architectural Survey, Maine Historic Preservation Commission....85
4.3 Fire Damages Strathglass Park Duplex, 1976..........................................................88
4.4 Street Widening Work, 1988 .....................................................................................90
4.5 Rumford’s 1998 Comprehensive Plan...................................................................92
4.6 Maine’s Most Endangered Historic Places, 2006...................................................93
4.7 Strathglass Property Owner’s Association, 2008......................................................94
    Community Development Block Grant, 2009........................................................94
    Replacement of Traffic Mirror, 2009.........................................................................94
4.8 Strathglass Park Preservation Society, 2010..........................................................95
    Revitalizing Strathglass Park: Guidelines and Goals for the Strathglass Park
    Preservation Society, 2010.........................................................................................95
    Gate Restoration and Historic Light Replacement, 2011.................................96
    Maintenance of Your Strathglass Building booklet, 2012 ...............................98
    Recommended Code of Conduct for Residents of Strathglass Park...............98
4.9 Historic Rumford Falls Illustrated Walking Tour, 2011.................................99
4.10 Rumford Comprehensive Plan, 2013 ................................................................100

5.  Current and Continuing Challenges.......................................................................102
5.1 Economic Challenges .............................................................................................103
    LOCAL ECONOMY........................................................................................................103
    COST OF SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR (SOI) STANDARDS OF
    REHABILITATION........................................................................................................105
5.2 Community Challenges.........................................................................................106
    OPPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY
    .......................................................................................................................................106
    OPPOSITION TO “HISTORIC PRESERVATION” ..........................................................107
    US VERSUS THEM....................................................................................................109
    OWNERSHIP CONFIGURATION..............................................................................111
    LACK OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION ................................................................112
    DIFFERENCES IN GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ........................................114

6.  Opportunities and Recommendations.......................................................................116
6.1 Addressing Economic Challenges ................................................................. 117
State of Maine Finance & Funding ................................................................. 120
Proposed Modification to the Affordable Homeownership Program............. 124
Old Home Days ............................................................................................ 128
6.2 Addressing Community Challenges .......................................................... 129
Pockets of Preservation ................................................................................ 129
School Programming .................................................................................... 130
7. Conclusions ............................................................................................... 131
8. Bibliography ............................................................................................... 133
Appendix A .................................................................................................... 141
Hugh J. Chisholm’s NYC Townhome & His Industrialist Neighbor ............... 141
Appendix B .................................................................................................... 146
Downtown Rumford, Congress Street on “The Island” .................................. 146
Appendix C .................................................................................................... 151
Sample Interview Questions ......................................................................... 151
Appendix D .................................................................................................... 152
Donald E. Sackheim letter attributing Strathglass Park to C.P.H. Gilbert ......... 152
Index ............................................................................................................. 157
List of Images

1. Strathglass Park historic panoramic postcard. c. 1910. Rumford Area Historical Society. ................................................................. xi
2. Map of Location of Rumford, Maine. Google Earth, 2022................................................................. xii
3. Rumford Falls Aerial Map. Strathglass Park outlined in red. Google Earth, 2022........ 1
6. A gathering of the Paternaude family in Strathglass Park, date unknown. Donated to Rumford Area Historical Society by Muriel (Paternaude) Arsenault. .................................................. 10
7. Two small girls in front of duplex, c. 1910. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society. 11
8. Rittenhouse Mill, 1890. Source: rittenhousetown.org ................................................................. 13
10. Slatersville Mill Houses, 1820. Source: NPS. ................................................................. 20
11. Lowell, MA boardinghouses before restoration, 1928. Source: NPS. ...................... 22
12. Restored boardinghouse in Lowell, MA. Now part of Lowell National Historical Park. ................................................................................................................................. 23
14. Worker Cottages on Brown Street in Westbrook, ME. Designed by John Calvin Stevens in 1881 for S.D. Warren's Cumberland Mills. Photo by author. ...................... 27
16. Early photograph of Strathglass Park with immaculate homes and landscaping. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society................................................................. 32
17. Pullman postcard of worker row houses, 1902. View of Morse Avenue and 113th Street. Source: Paul Petrakis Collection. Pullman Historic Site. ................................. 32
20. Looking south down Hancock Street. Photo by author. ........................................... 42
22. Looking south on Somerset Street. Photo by author. ........................................... 45
23. New York City Cotton Exchange Building. Source: St. Croix Architecture. ............... 46
25. Looking north on Erchles Street. Photo by author ....................................................... 48
26. Entrance to Strathglass Park, looking north. Photo by author .................................... 48
27. Looking south on Franklin Street, 2022. Home on corner is the J.W. Withee House built in 1893 for local business owner. Photo by author .......................................................... 49
28. Franklin Street, prominent citizen homes. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1912 ........................................................................................................................................ 50
29. 33 Franklin Street. The Waldo Pettengill House. Photo by author ................................ 51
30. 11 Prospect Avenue, the McCarthy House. Photo by author ........................................ 51
31. View of Strathglass Park from York Street looking east, date unknown. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society ........................................................................................................... 52
32. West elevation, Erchless Castle, 1983. Source: Scottish Development Department, canmore.org.uk .................................................................................................................................. 55
33. South view of Lochness Street. Notice Dutch gables, cross gables, bay window towers. Photo by author ........................................................................................................... 55
34. Coal fed warm air furnace, nicknamed "The Octopus." Photo by author ..................... 58
36. The Lost Woolworth Mansion designed by C.P.H. Gilbert for Frank Woolworth in 1901, 990 Fifth Avenue, nonextant. Source: Architecture Magazine ...................................................... 61
37. Harry F. Sinclair House built in 1898 for Isaac Fletcher, designed by C.P.H. Gilbert. Source: Andrew Balet .................................................................................................................................. 63
38. "Meudon," designed by C.P.H. Gilbert in 1900. Source: Old Long Island ................. 63
40. Strathglass Park designed by C.P.H. Gilbert in 1901. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society ................................................................................................. 65
41. The Joseph R. De Lamar Mansion, 233 Madison Avenue designed by C.P.H. Gilbert 1902. Source: Daytonian in Manhattan .................................................................................. 66
42. C.P.H. Gilbert obituary, Monday, October 27, 1952. Source: The New York Times . 70
43. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence ................................................................. 71
44. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Originally, the Park was planned to be much bigger with twice the number of duplexes. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence ......................................................................................... 72
45. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence ................................................................................................. 72
46. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence. .................................................................72
47. "The Boardwalk," leading to the center of town and the mill. Photo by author........74
48. Same duplex, 2022. Vacant and exposed to the elements. Photo by author. ..........76
49. Duplex on Erchles St. just upon entering the Park from the south. Clip from panoramic postcard, c. 1910. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society.................76
51. Exterior shed with "Beware of Dogs" spraypainted warning. Photo by author ....81
50. Plastic toys littered around yard. Photo by author. ........................................81
54. Detail of Architectural Survey. Rumford Area Historical Society. .....................87
56. One-story duplex. Top two floors lost in 1976 fire. Photo by author..................89
55. Parking lot where duplex once stood. Photo by author........................................89
59. Historic light replacement and gate restoration under construction. Source: Phil Blampied.................................................................97
58. Historic light replacement and gate restoration completed. Source: Phil Blampied..97
60. A Strathglass Park duplex with two owners. A clear difference is visually apparent. Photo by author.................................................................110
61. 813 Fifth Avenue (middle) and 812 Fifth Avenue (right). Source: Museum of the City of New York ..............................................................141
62. Mrs. H. Chisholm's Library at 813 Fifth Avenue, NYC. Source: Museum of the City of New York ..............................................................143
63. Atlante, from Hugh J. Chisholm Mansion, 813 Fifth Avenue, NYC. Source: Brooklyn Museum .................................................................145
64. View of "The Island" from south of Rumford. Looking directly up Congress Street. Photo by author.................................................................146
65. (from left to right) Rumford Post Office, Municipal Building, Fire Station. Municipal Building by Harry S. Coombs, 1915. Photo by author ................................147
66. The Strathglass Building, 2022. Photo by author........................................148
68. Congress Street looking south, 2022. Photo by author........................................149
69. Congress Street looking south, 1907. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society .....149
70. Greater Rumford Community Center, 2022. Photo by author..........................150
71. Mechanics Institute of Rumford, c. 1911. Source: Maine Memory Network ..........150
List of Figures

Figure 1. Rumford Population, 1777-2020.................................................................3
Figure 2. Value of paper product in Maine, 1873-1929. Department of Labor and Industry, Division of Research and Statistics, April 1960................................................15
Figure 3. Timeline of Early Rumford and The Oxford. Information taken from "Papermaking at Oxford," pamphlet 1966.................................................................35
Figure 4. State of Maine historic preservation finance and funding..............................120
Figure 5. ARPA Fund distribution in Maine (in millions)................................................124
“To Readers of the Year 2000”

“Standing on the threshold of the year 1900, we are looking backward in our review of recent history in the town of Rumford, to stirring times and marvelous progress in industrial developments. We aim, by illustration and pen to give a comprehensive view of the town of today, and a glance backward to the milestone of 1800. While we expect this paper to be preserved for its historic value, for examination and comment in the year 2000, we cannot undertake to predict or imagine what will then be the condition in Rumford, or the general status of human society and industries. Certainly the marvelous strides of science, art, invention, discovery and industry, within the memory of the writer, are prophetic of advancements in the next century entirely beyond the comprehension of the brightest intellects of the present day. Brother of the end of the 20th Century, we greet you as one we cannot see, but we know you are there and are coming to take our places.” ¹

1. Introduction

Strathglass Park is a planned residential mill community within the historic company town of Rumford Falls, Maine. Built in 1902 with 51 red brick duplexes, Strathglass Park retains an exceptional degree of integrity and is an important remnant of Maine’s industrial heritage. After its inception, it quickly became the cornerstone of the thriving mill town that grew around the Oxford Paper Mill, along
the Androscoggin River.\textsuperscript{2} When it was built, it subscribed to a new philosophy of company-built worker housing.\textsuperscript{3} Apart from providing four walls and a roof, Strathglass Park was envisioned as a way to provide workers and their families a well-constructed affordable home with spacious floorplans and modern amenities.\textsuperscript{4} The 51 duplexes were designed by the prominent New York City architect C.P.H. Gilbert and assembled in a manicured park-like setting, surrounded by granite walls.\textsuperscript{5}

Although the duplexes remain structurally sound 120 years later, deferred maintenance and vacancies over past decades have weakened the material fabric of this residential historic community. Strathglass Park is reaching a breaking point with many repairs and restorations needed soon. Without an organized and intentional intervention, Strathglass Park is at risk of permanent alteration through unsympathetic architectural repairs, historically insensitive redevelopment, or demolition by neglect. Its existence as one of the last remaining intact 20\textsuperscript{th} century model mill communities is in jeopardy. The loss of this affordable residential enclave would not only be a loss for Rumford, Maine—but a loss to the history of industrialization in America and a waste of well-built housing stock in a moment when supply of affordable housing is reaching a point of crisis in many places.

\textsuperscript{4} “Novel Business Enterprise at Rumford Falls,” \textit{Rumford Falls Times}, September 14, 1901.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
This residential community and the town of Rumford have been in an economic decline since 1967, when the family-owned Oxford Paper Company and accompanying mill were sold to the Ethyl Corporation—a national company with no local familial ties. This transaction resulted in the mill’s retreat from local politics and philanthropic financial support of Rumford community services. As automation could accomplish what previously could only be done by humans, the mill progressively laid off more and more workers each year. In 1930 the population of Rumford peaked at 10,340, slightly decreased by 1940, rose to 10,005 in 1960 and has steadily decreased annually. In 2020, only 5,858 people remained in the town.

The Oxford Paper Company-funded maintenance program in Strathglass Park that kept the Park in impeccable repair and appearance ended in 1949. For the first time, the residents were left to tend to their duplexes without a guiding

---

7 Norman Carey, “Growing up with a Company Town,” Maine Times 5, no. 8 (December 1, 1972), 3.
manual or technical training. Slowly, the Park began to disintegrate, physically and socially with different owners putting varying effort into their home’s maintenance and upkeep. The unified landscape of Strathglass Park deteriorated until a revitalization movement was prompted in 1974 with the catalytic nomination of the Park to the National Register of Historic Places. Since that time, sporadic interventions have been attempted to revitalize Strathglass, with only temporary effects achieved. A dynamic strategy to return Strathglass Park to a beautiful, thriving, safe, and affordable residential community for residents and their families is desperately needed to sustain Strathglass Park as an historic landscape in the Rumford community.

This thesis examines the origins of Strathglass Park and tracks its evolution within the context of Rumford Falls—from prized town resource to another town problem. It critically analyzes the Park’s history, past preservation interventions, and contemporary community sentiment to develop a dynamic preservation strategy to reinvigorate the Park. The preservation of Strathglass Park presents a perfect opportunity to leverage a historic resource to encourage greater neighborhood cohesion and stability. Strathglass Park can again serve the people of Rumford in the way its original vision intended. Preservation of the architecturally significant residential development of Strathglass Park can be a vehicle to facilitate a larger and more important community evolution.

The research goal of this thesis is creating a tailored preservation strategy for Strathglass Park. The research question explored in this thesis asks which historic preservation tools can be used to craft the most relevant and effective preservation
strategy for the Park—to arrest further tangible and intangible decline and reinvigorate the community. To answer this question, three modes of inquiry are explored. First, a study of the Park’s historic relevance and context is researched. Then, past preservation interventions are compiled and analyzed for effectiveness. Lastly, contemporary community sentiment surrounding the Park is explored, highlighting current challenges. These challenges are then used as a framework to craft recommendations for their mitigation.

1.1 Methodology

The data needed to answer this question was gathered from historical research, meetings with organizations involved in Strathglass Park, and unstructured interviews with a variety of stakeholders.

Meetings with members of the Strathglass Park Preservation Society (SPPS) were pivotal in gathering information on past preservation interventions that have been attempted in the Park. SPPS also supplied society newsletters, publications, photographs, and a wealth of information on current climate of residents in the Park. They were able to shed light on the now dissolved group of Strathglass Property Owners Association, the predecessor of SPPS.

The Rumford Area Historical Society held many important sources of data for this research. Through their office, the two main historical accounts of Rumford and Strathglass Park were available for purchase. These resources were not available elsewhere and were instrumental in creating the foundation that this research rests upon. Local undigitized newspaper clippings concerning Strathglass Park were obtained which assisted in providing context for Strathglass within the town of
Rumford. Other Strathglass Park ephemera collected over the years by the historical society, an architectural survey conducted in the 1970s, and the newspaper clippings were photographed by the author.

Unstructured interviews were conducted with Strathglass Park stakeholders to understand the current challenges the Park faces and determine the sentiment surrounding the topic of its preservation. The interviewees included: historians, members of SPPS, residents of the Park, residents of Rumford, a local official, and the Executive Director of a statewide preservation organization. The interview sources are kept anonymous. Some interviews were voice recorded and some were recorded by handwritten notes.

Finally, field research was conducted in the town of Rumford. Experiencing the area in person was pivotal to understanding how Strathglass Park fit into the larger context of the spatial organization of Rumford as a company town. The small town was explored on foot by the researcher following an illustrated walking tour by a resident of the town. Documentation through photography provided the researcher visual context for Strathglass Park as well as supplied illustrative images for this thesis.
1.2 Section Summary

Section 2 provides the background history and development of Rumford, Maine. A brief introduction to the pulp and paper industry in America and 19th century Maine is presented, and biographical information of the man widely attributed Rumford’s founding—Hugh Chisholm, is introduced. After placing Rumford and the Oxford Paper Company in context of other company towns, discussion of the realty company responsible for building the mill’s worker housing is the last piece of groundwork needed to set the stage for the introduction of the Strathglass Park development.

Section 3 presents the landscape of the Rumford Falls mill town and introduces Strathglass Park. An important component to this chapter is the disambiguation of the Park’s architect, commonly attributed to the wrong man. The Park’s rise and fall is reviewed, which allows for the history of interventions to be discussed.

Section 4 chronologically lists and analyzes past preservation efforts starting with the listing of the Park on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and ending with the Rumford Comprehensive plan of 2013—the last intervention to date.

Section 5 is an analysis of current themes surrounding challenges and opportunities in the Park, gleaned from the interviews conducted by the researcher. This becomes the structure used to frame the recommendations presented in Section 6 and a conclusion in Section 7.
2. History

Rumford is a town in Oxford County, Maine, which was settled in 1774 and incorporated in 1800. In 2020, the population of Rumford was 5,858, much less than the town’s 1930s peak of 10,340. The town is divided into several small villages: North Rumford, South Rumford, Rumford Corner, Rumford Point, and Rumford Falls. Rumford Falls is the historic commercial center of Rumford, where the Oxford Paper Company mill was located along with the company town that was planned around it. There is still an active mill on the same site where “The Oxford” sat. Directly across the river is the town of Mexico, Maine. Historically, both towns relied upon the mill for their economic base but were organized as two separate towns. Today, they share a school system, police force, and fire department.

Mexico and Rumford are the same distance from the mill (See Image 5), but the mill has always been part of Rumford, and only pays town taxes to Rumford. In 1972, the mill’s taxes covered 70% of Rumford’s annual budget, paying $1.7 million of the $2.4 million budget.

---

10 U.S. Census Bureau.
12 Article written in 1972 claims every townsperson called the mill The Oxford back then, see Carey, “Growing up with a Company Town,” 2.
13 There is a saying in the area, “Rumford gets the money, Mexico gets the smell.” The winds have a history of blowing towards the town of Mexico and not Rumford. The mill exhaust has an odor reminiscent of rotting fish and sewage if it hits you just right.
14 Carey, “Growing up with a Company Town,” 2.

2.1 Paper Manufacturing in America

THE FIRST PAPER MILL IN AMERICA (1690)

Cotton, linen, or wool rag was the first source of fiber for papermaking in the Americas. Printing presses were in existence in English colonies long before the construction of the first paper mill, with a very low output of books and pamphlets between 1639-1700.\textsuperscript{15} Books and paper goods were mostly shipped from overseas and

demand was low for producing paper in the colonies, for this was before the prevalence of newspapers and frequent personal correspondence.\textsuperscript{16}

The first paper mill in the colonies was built in 1690 on a branch of the Wissahickon Creek in Germantown, at that time outside of Philadelphia. It was the only paper mill in the colonies for 40 years.\textsuperscript{17} The mill was a venture between Robert Turner, William Bradford, Thomas Tresse, and William Rittenhouse, who entered into an agreement with Samuel Carpenter, the owner of the land. \textsuperscript{18} Rittenhouse was born in 1644 in Germany, and several of his ancestors were papermakers.\textsuperscript{19} He was the first Mennonite minister in America and became the sole proprietor of the mill by 1706.\textsuperscript{20}

Famous early printer Benjamin Franklin was a good friend of astronomer David Rittenhouse, grandson of William Rittenhouse. Franklin was a loyal customer of the Rittenhouse mill. Demand for paper grew from early printers like Benjamin Franklin, famous for publishing works like the controversial \textit{New England Courant}, and the \textit{Poor Richard’s Almanacs}.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} Harvey Whitten, “The Rittenhouse Paper Mill Circa 1690...the Beginning in America,” \textit{PaperAge}, 1984, 23.
\textsuperscript{18} Weeks, \textit{A History of Paper-Manufacturing}, 3.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 4.
CHANGE IN RAW MATERIAL

Rags could not keep up with production demand, being a finite resource. Other sources of fiber were explored. Contests were held to attempt to find a more sustainable and abundant source of fiber for paper making. Experimental paper was attempted with things like aloe, corn husks, nettles, rice straw, seaweed, manures, leather cuttings, cabbage stumps, and many others.\(^22\) None of these fibrous sources were a competition for rag paper. Wood was a source that many had tried making paper with previously, but none had been successful in extracting only the necessary

wood fibers, separating them from the structural lignin that held the fibers together. This process is known as “pulping” the wood (separating cellulose fibers from wood).23

The use of wood for paper would revolutionize the industry and the process of separation was discovered in the 1840s by two different men. Two men, one from Canada and one from Germany independently pioneered the invention of pulping wood paper around the same time.24 Charles Fenerty of Halifax and Friedrich Gottlob Keller of Germany arrived at a very similar method for pulping the wood to be used in paper making.25 With this process now possible, the papermaking industry had what seemed to be a new and infinite source of paper material.

Keller and Henry Voelter, a machinist and paper maker, constructed a machine that ground wood into pulp in 1867 which was used in the “Keller-Voelter process” of papermaking and displayed at the Paris Exhibition, and received little attention.26 The machine was brought to America, and the patent was issued that year.27

---

25 Ibid.
PAPER INDUSTRY IN MAINE

There were ten paper mills in Maine before 1832, all located in the southern part of the state.\(^{28}\) Rag fiber was used in these mills, which was in short supply. They were not economically prosperous and many either closed for business or burned down.\(^{29}\) This small paper industry in Maine became much more pronounced and exponentially more prosperous after the mid-19th century, when the process for pulping wood was standardized.\(^{30}\) Maine had an abundance of wood and fresh water, the two most important resources for papermaking. The Androscoggin Pulp Company initiated the first major wood pulp operation in Maine in 1865 at Brunswick.\(^{31}\)

Early Years of the Pulp and Paper Industry in Maine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Mills</th>
<th># of Workers</th>
<th>Value of Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>$3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>$6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>$13 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>$99.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,800</td>
<td>$90 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,800</td>
<td>$106 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Value of paper product in Maine, 1873-1929. Department of Labor and Industry, Division of Research and Statistics, April 1960.

---


\(^{29}\) Ibid.


\(^{31}\) Ibid.
2.2 Hugh Joseph Chisholm (1847-1912)

The story of Strathglass Park and the industrialization of the town of Rumford began with a ride on a rented sleigh. This vivid image is appropriate for beginning to tell the story of Hugh Chisholm, the man attributed as the founder of the modern village of Rumford Falls. James Morrow, a journalist, once wrote, “The facts of his life sound louder and seem more impossible than fiction.” The historical accounts of this man are a mixture of fact and legend, and he is often portrayed as a larger-than-life character. This journalist interviewed Hugh Chisholm in 1908, when Chisholm was in his 60s. Morrow included a wonderful and enlightening description of the man in his article:

Smoking long cigars in a slim holder, he talked to me without reluctance, evasion or excuse, telling, with an entire absence of pride or self consciousness how he got his millions...His white, fluffy hair, his shaved face, and his full gray eyes, the pupils and iris of which are uncommonly large and very black, give him unusuality in the matter of personal appearance...Mr. Chisholm’s atmosphere is his own—he has not borrowed it or bought it from someone else. His voice is rarely gentle. In manner he is cordial, but reserved. His scarf blends with his shirt, and the tint of his shirt commits no outrage on the color of his clothes.

Chisholm was born in 1847 in Chippewa, Ontario. When Chisholm was 14 years old, his father died, and the family discovered that they were poor. He started work straight away to help his mother and held his first job for two days—digging potatoes. After two days, he concluded that digging potatoes was not a worthwhile endeavor and moved on. He acquired a job selling newspapers, candy,

---

34 Morrow, “Head of the Paper Trust.”
35 Ibid.
36 Leane and Burns, History of Rumford, 25.
and magazines on a train that ran between Toronto and Detroit.\textsuperscript{37} There was another boy that worked the Detroit-Port Huron train, and the two became friends. This boy was Thomas Edison, who would remain Chisholm’s friend for life.\textsuperscript{38}

Being observant and enterprising, Chisholm saw an opportunity to streamline the process of selling goods on the trains by organizing a business to handle distribution.\textsuperscript{39} But, without having the proper education to create such a business, Chisholm spent the entirety of his savings to attend a night class at the Commercial College of Toronto.\textsuperscript{40} Within three years he had partnered with one of his teenage brothers and created the “Chisholm Brothers” venture.\textsuperscript{41} By age 17, the Chisholm Brothers controlled newspaper and distributing rights for 5,000 miles of railroad and employed 200 people.\textsuperscript{42}

Yet, he had grander ambitions. The Chisholm Brothers soon entered the publishing business, publishing the goods that would be sold on the trains.\textsuperscript{43} They published tourist guides, souvenir books, and postcards. From 1860 to 1872 the brothers grew the business, working tirelessly. In 1872, Hugh Chisholm decided to break off from the venture and bought his brother out of the American side of the business. He settled in Portland, Maine, and married Henrietta Mason.\textsuperscript{44}

Chisholm had gathered extensive knowledge of the paper industry by being in the publishing business. The pulp and paper industry was a burgeoning business

\textsuperscript{37} Leane, \textit{The Oxford Story}, 2.
\textsuperscript{38} Morrow, “Head of the Paper Trust.”
\textsuperscript{39} Leane, \textit{The Oxford Story}, 2.
\textsuperscript{40} Morrow, “Head of the Paper Trust.”
\textsuperscript{41} Leane, \textit{The Oxford Story}, 2.
\textsuperscript{42} Leane and Burns, \textit{History of Rumford}, 26.
\textsuperscript{43} Leane, \textit{The Oxford Story}, 2.
\textsuperscript{44} Leane and Burns, \textit{History of Rumford}, 26.
in the state of Maine during the latter half of the 19th century and with his paper knowledge, he ventured around the state looking for places of opportunity. He acquired a patent for making wood fiber-ware and organized the Somerset Fiber Company on the Kennebec River. He was 25 at this point and took his first vacation to New Orleans. While on this trip, the first vacation that he had taken in his working life, his fiber-ware factory burned to the ground. Chisholm devised a new business plan.

His next venture took him to Livermore Falls, Maine, in 1881 where he developed the Umbagog Pulp Company, a small mill. It was here where he “discovered that paper making interested [him] more than anything else in the world.” In this small mill Chisholm was able to learn every aspect of the mill business—from building dams to improving the paper machines. He built the Otis mill in the same town, which was one of the largest in the country at that time.

With the pulp and paper fever, whenever he got the chance, he traveled around the state of Maine, looking for other areas to grow his business.

Stories of a place deep in the wilderness, with a cascading series of waterfalls that could rival the power of Niagara Falls were told to him. Almost too good to be true, but figuring he had nothing to lose, on a cold winter day in 1882 he took a train

---

45 Leane and Burns, *History of Rumford*, 27.
47 Morrow, “Head of the Paper Trust.”
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
to Bethel, Maine and rented a horse and sleigh to travel the remaining 24 miles to
the village of Rumford.\textsuperscript{51}

The initial visit of Chisholm to Rumford Falls is part of the town’s creation
story. There is an air of magic and foreshadowing in its telling. Famously penned by
Chisholm himself, he describes his first encounter of the falls in a letter:

It was in mid-winter, 1882, that I first saw Rumford Falls. The region where
the town now stands was little better than a wilderness then, with scattered
houses, few and far between, and rarely visited by outsiders except in the
course of hunting or fishing expeditions, though the beauty of the falls
attracted no few visitors. I was driving along in a sleigh when I came into
view of this half-mile stretch of falls, rapids, and granite gorges, in the course
of which the Androscoggin drops one hundred and eighty feet.

The magnificence of the spectacle was not at all lost on me, but very soon I
began to realize, as probably many a thinking man had done before me, the
vast power that was and for countless years had been going to waste and the
more I thought, the more I appreciated the possibilities of that stretch of
river, and I pictured to myself the industrial community which might grow up
there. Here was a water power greater than any other in New England—
greater in fact, as subsequent investigation showed, than the combined
strength of those waterpowers which have made Lewiston, Lowell, Lawrence
and Holyoke thriving and populous cities,—and the idea of developing and
making productive the great unchained power before me, of waking up the
sleeping farming community, of planning a city in this wilderness—was what
came to me then.

I could see plainly enough that the realization of this dream would mean not
only the expenditure of much money—but of the most careful and
painstaking thought, the most untiring energy and patience. It was not a
work to be accomplished in a night. But the more I thought it over, the more I
became interested and in the end, I determined to seize this hitherto
neglected opportunity.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} Leane, \textit{The Oxford Story}, 6.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid, 6-7.

2.3 Worker Housing in American Company Towns

RHODE ISLAND SYSTEM

Textile mills in Rhode Island birthed America’s first company towns. Samuel Slater (1768-1835) built the first successful textile mill at Pawtucket, Rhode Island in 1790 and employed children between the ages of 7 and 12 to work the intricate machines with their small fingers. This mill introduced the technology of mechanization to product manufacturing that previously had only been possible by hand. Spawning the first American Industrial Revolution (1790-1860), this textile mill was built from blueprints stolen from Britain by Slater himself, giving America a means to quickly process its vast quantities of cotton. By 1796 the mill at Pawtucket employed 30 employees, who were mostly children and whose families came to rely on their mill wages. These families moved closer to the mill to shorten their commute. Slater’s system became known as the “Rhode Island system of labor,” which involved employing whole families and dividing up factory work based on gender and age—efficient and cost effective.

Samuel Slater built another cotton mill in Rhode Island on the Blackstone River in 1807 and constructed America’s first planned company town—naming it Slatersville. The town consisted of company-built boarding houses, and a company store, where workers could buy items on credit. The tab at the company store and

54 Ibid, 1140.
56 Riggs, “Rhode Island System,” 1140.
57 Ibid, 1139.
rent costs were deducted from a worker’s pay at the end of the week.\textsuperscript{58} Heavily reliant on the paternalistic Rhode Island system of labor, it grew to house over 300 people in only three years, inspiring mills to adopt this system along the Blackstone River in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{59} Slatersville company town was influential in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, showing industrialists it was possible to build mills outside of city centers and still attract a steady workforce.

\textsuperscript{58} Riggs, “Rhode Island System,” 1140.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

11. Lowell, MA boardinghouses before restoration, 1928. Source: NPS.
Leland M. Roth, a leading American architectural historian, categorized company towns into four types, mostly following a chronological order. The first type, prevalent from 1813-1890, was the town least costly to the company. It consisted of a simple grid laid out by the company engineer, with housing built by

---

the company, local contractors, or speculative builders. The company town of Lowell, Massachusetts falls into this first type.

Francis Cabot Lowell (1775-1817) was born in Massachusetts. He made his initial fortune on sponsoring merchant vessels and wished to enter the cotton manufacturing business. He travelled to England and spent two years studying the technology of the advanced English cotton mills and touring experimental villages in Scotland which were attempting to inspire social improvements in their residents through implementation of social programs. Similar to Samuel Slater, Lowell’s true intention was to memorize and steal the advanced technology of the English mills and make his own improvements back in Boston.

In Boston he formed the Boston Manufacturing Company, building their first mill in Waltham, Massachusetts in 1814 on the Charles River. In the textile mills of Samuel Slater, the spun cotton developed in the mill was shipped out to local women weavers who finished the cloth. In Lowell’s mill at Waltham, he created a system where all production took place under one roof—processing raw cotton to finished cloth—revolutionizing the textile business.

Lowell noticed the miserable working conditions of the mill workers in England and envisioned a different system of labor. The ongoing War of 1812 meant that men were in short supply, so Lowell organized a system for single women

---

63 Ibid.
between the ages of 15 and 35 to work in the mills.\textsuperscript{67} Implementing a system of company-built boardinghouses run by older matrons, he instituted social programs and strict rules. The women were expected to work an 80-hour workweek, while also attending church and education classes.\textsuperscript{68}

Francis Lowell died in 1817, before he could realize his larger vision. His partners, however, acquired land north of Boston on the Merrimack River Falls and constructed a mill and industrial town in 1821, naming it after Francis Lowell. Lowell, Massachusetts was managed the same way as the Waltham mill, following the Waltham-Lowell system of employing young women. Boardinghouses were constructed for single employees and rowhouses and tenements were constructed for married workers.\textsuperscript{69} The Mill Girls of Lowell, as they were called, were required to observe the Sabbath, keep a strict code of conduct, and temperance was strongly encouraged.\textsuperscript{70} The company built this town with room to grow. In 1830 the population was 6,474 and just 30 years later the town grew to 36,827.\textsuperscript{71}

Many other manufacturing towns patterned themselves after Lowell, such as Holyoke, Chicopee, and Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Manchester, New Hampshire.

\textsuperscript{68} Pierpaoli, “Lowell System,” 429
\textsuperscript{69} Roth, \textit{American Architecture}, 80.
\textsuperscript{71} U.S. Census.
In the 1840s, the town had reached a breaking point, and working conditions worsened, which caused the Mill Girls to organize unsuccessful protests. Instead of improving working conditions, the workers were slowly replaced by newly arrived immigrants who would work for less pay and accepted the living conditions. The boardinghouses were converted to multifamily tenements and the paternalist ideals that ruled the town faded. Lowell reached capacity in the 1890s, and the factories were allowed to deteriorate, finally closing their doors in the 1920s.

---

73 Ibid.
75 Weible, “Rise and Fall.”
PROFESSIONAL ARCHITECTS

According to Roth, the second general type of company town emerged toward the end of the 19th century. This type consisted of a town plan laid out by the company, who hired recognized designers and architects to construct the housing.76 There was a marked shift away from the tenement house and rowhouse toward detached individual homes for the workers with plentiful amenities. The ideology behind attractive and individual worker housing was that transience in the mill worker community would decrease if workers were satisfied.77 In this second

76 Roth, “Three Industrial Towns,” 320.
77 Roth, American Architecture, 138.
category, “workers’ housing reflected the current vernacular building practices rather than avant guard experiments.”

Cumberland Mills of the S.D. Warren Paper Company in Maine is a great example of this category of company town. In the 1880s Samuel D. Warren commissioned Maine’s leading architect, John Calvin Stevens to design homes and buildings in the mill town, now located in the town of Westbrook. In 1881, Stevens designed a series of Queen Anne worker cottages on Brown Street and a year later, three elaborate Queen Anne structures, a community hall, and residences for prominent residents of Cumberland Mills. The Brown Street worker cottages exist to this day, are occupied, and owned by private owners. They are part of the Cumberland Mills Historic District, which was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

“Oakgrove” worker housing by the Willimantic Linen Company in Connecticut is another example of this type of residential community, along with worker homes in Ludlow, Massachusetts. McKim, Mead & White were commissioned to design factories and worker housing in Niagara Falls, New York and Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. The rents that the workers paid were small, as were the profits the company made by leasing them. Mill workers paid less than

---

81 Roth, “Three Industrial Towns,” 320.
15% of their wages on housing on average. No landscape architects were hired to lay out the town in these examples.

---

82 Roth, *American Architecture*, 139.
PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS

The third category of company town that also emerged toward the end of the 19th century consisted of towns landscaped and designed by professional planners or landscape architects, with homes built by speculative builders. With the rents of the homes out of the hands of the company, it was possible for workers to be taken advantage of. At times “tenement sharks” preyed on the needs of workers who could not secure their own homes. Detached, individual homes were dominant in these

---

83 Roth, “Three Industrial Towns,” 320.
84 Garner, Model Company Town, 93.
company towns, still following the philosophy of creating more permanent living situations for the workers.

Vandergrift, Pennsylvania is the most well-known example of this category of company town. Vandergrift was professionally planned by Frederick Law Olmstead, Sr., renowned landscape architect, for the Apollo Steel Company in 1895. George McMurtry was the president of the Apollo Steel Company at the time and believed that a landscaped environment would add to the happiness and productivity of his workers.85 George McMurtry had a residence in New York City, and was the neighbor of Hugh Chisholm, industrialist of Rumford.86 The factory and the town were built entirely in advance on curving streets. When construction was complete, lots were sold to workers for them to build their own homes.87

86 See Appendix A.
87 Ibid.

PROFESSIONAL ARCHITECTS + PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS

Roth categorized the fourth type of company town as those laid out by professional landscape architects with homes built by well-known architects. These modern industrial communities emerged at the very end of the 19th century and into the 20th century. In stark contrast to the squalid living conditions in places like Gary, Indiana, and Lowell, Massachusetts, these towns were meticulously planned, funded, and maintained by the company, with green spaces and community buildings. These “model” company towns and communities were designed according to the ideals of the design professional, steering the community away from perceived societal ills.

The earliest and one of the most famous examples of this type is the failed Pullman, Illinois company town. Built in 1867 for the workers of the Pullman Palace Car Co., George Pullman had the goal of providing his workers with a clean, orderly environment 12 miles south of Chicago. Believing in the “civilizing effect of beauty,” Nathan F. Barrett was hired as landscape architect and Solon S. Beman hired as architect. Varied rowhouses made of brick with a variety of floorplans were built with an emphasis on public health and fire concerns. This town grew from 8,500 people in 1884 to 12,600 in 1893.

---

88 Roth, “Three Industrial Towns,” 320.
90 Roth, American Architecture, 140.
91 Ibid.
Pullman controlled every aspect of the town, from the books in the library to outlawing saloons and town meetings. Workers could only rent their homes and prices were set by the company at steep rates. The Panic of 1893 forced the company to cut wages, and while other company towns adjusted rent to match the wage cut, Pullman did not. What ensued was a violent riot that resulted in an intervention by federal troops.

Strathglass Park in Rumford, Maine—a much smaller scale than Pullman—fits into the company town narrative here. Hugh Chisholm traveled to company towns and observed conditions around Europe and America before intentionally commissioning the residential development. Construction on Strathglass Park started in 1901 and was completed in 1902.

---

93 Roth, American Architecture, 140.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Rumford Falls Power Company organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>First dam and canal completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rumford Falls Railroad completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>First electric power from new generating facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First paper produced by Rumford Falls Paper Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Hugh Chisholm founded Oxford Paper Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International Paper Company est. plant in Rumford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continental Paper and Bag Company est. plant in Rumford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Construction of Oxford mill started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Oxford mill complete, w/ 2 paper machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rumford Realty Company organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction started on Strathglass Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Oxford mill has 4 paper machines, producing 44 tons/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusive contract to manufacture all postal cards used by the United States Post Office - 3 million post cards/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strathglass Park complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Oxford has 6 paper machines, producing 125 tons/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>900 employees @ Oxford, Rumford population 6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Death of Hugh Chisholm, Sr., Hugh Chisholm, Jr. elected President of Oxford mill - rapid expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Oxford mill has 8 paper machines, producing 70,000 tons/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Oxford mill has 9 paper machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>No. 11 Machine began operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Oxford is largest book paper mill under one roof in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One of country's leading producers of book, magazine, business and specialty papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New production record of 101,931 tons/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Property and water rights of the Continental Paper and Bag Company mill purchased, become Oxford's Island Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>WWII: in addition to standard grades, many tons of map paper and other specialty grades for the military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>No. 11 Paper Machine rebuilt and converted to first on-machine coater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>No. 12 Machine added, also a coater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>William H. Chisholm elected president of Oxford, succeeding his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 50s/Early 60s</td>
<td>Revolutionary new North Star added, an off-machine coater utilizing the trailing blade process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Hardwood Kraft plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kamyr continuous softwood digester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recovery plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lime kiln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>5-year $40 million expansion and modernization program started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Production reached 1,000 tons/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Oxford sold to the Ethyl Corporation, first time not run by the Chisholm family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Timeline of Early Rumford and The Oxford. Information taken from "Papermaking at Oxford," pamphlet 1966.
2.4 The Rumford Realty Company

A paper mill and town were created seemingly overnight, and the small town of Rumford exploded in the final years of the 1800s. Strathglass Park was built in direct response to a shortage of housing for the workers of the mill. With a population of 898 in 1890, Rumford grew to 3,770 just ten years later. This created an enormous need for housing. Studying the downfalls of worker housing in other industrial cities, Chisholm was intentional about building quality homes for his workers, attempting to create a quality of life that would dissuade them from leaving Rumford to find work elsewhere.94

From Chisholm’s first visit in 1882 until work could be done to realize his developing dream for the area, he needed a lot of one thing—land. The town of Rumford consisted of farmers and farmland. Waldo Pettengill (1844-1926) was a local man who was well respected by the townspeople. Pettengill became Chisholm’s right-hand man. He was commissioned to purchase properties all around the falls and the river.95 He was told to do this slowly so as not to raise any suspicions from the townspeople about what could be happening. So, over the next ten years he bought land from the farmers around the falls, enough land for a town to be built upon. If the farmers would have known Chisholm’s plan, they would have either sold at an elevated price or perhaps not at all. When the mills would eventually be built, there was initially a sentiment in the town that Pettengill swindled the land from the unsuspecting farmers.96 However, after a speech made by a moderator in a 1907

94 Leane and Burns, *History of Rumford*, 52.
95 Ibid, 28.
96 Ibid, 47.
town meeting fervently praised the successes Chisholm had accomplished in Rumford in such a short amount of time, criticisms stopped.97

When, in 1890 all the land that was needed was acquired, work began on the first mills. Workers and artisans flocked to Rumford. The going rate for laborers in other New England mill towns was five to seven cents per hour. To entice people to come work in this far away town with no set infrastructure, Chisholm promised ten cents an hour and six long workdays per week.98 Rumford became a melting pot of many nationalities: Canadian, French-Canadian, Italian, Polish, Scottish, Lithuanian, and Irish. Many of these nationalities can still be traced in Rumford families today.

In the beginning, workers and their families lived in makeshift huts, which they built themselves. As time went on, they would build better accommodations. The different ethnic groups built themselves churches, to span their different religions and different languages that were spoken.99

In 1890 the population of Rumford consisted of 898 persons. Ten short years later the little town had exploded to 3,770 and showed no signs of slowing down. Houses could not be built fast enough for this constant in-migration, and something needed to be done about it. Hugh Chisholm saw this need and developed the Rumford Realty Company in 1901.

The Pullman Strike of 1894 highlighted certain issues with company-built workforce housing, as well as the overcrowded unsanitary tenements at Lowell,

98 Ibid, 42.
Massachusetts. This was influential to Chisholm when he was envisioning what his company housing would consist of.\textsuperscript{100} There was a trend in the northeast during the period of 1865 to 1920, where the goal of workforce housing shifted from making a profit from rents to making a profit in industry by providing adequate and affordable housing which decreased the mobility of workers.\textsuperscript{101} According to Leland Roth’s categorization of company towns, Rumford would have fit into the fourth iteration of company town which “combined both professionally planned buildings and professionally designed street plans.”\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} Also see Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{101} Leland M. Roth, “Three Industrial Towns by McKim, Mead & White,” Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 38, no. 4 (December 1979), 319.

\textsuperscript{102} Roth, “Three Industrial Towns,” 321.
3. Strathglass Park

3.1 Anatomy of a Mill Town

To understand the placement of the homes built by the Rumford Realty Company, it is necessary to understand the topography of Rumford Falls. The heart of the town was the Oxford Paper Mill. This mill was made possible by the unique features of the Androscoggin River at this location, which takes a 180-degree bend after falling over a series of cascading waterfalls measuring a total of 176 feet (just a few feet shorter than Niagara Falls). This 180-degree bend creates a swath of land surrounded on three sides by the river. This is referred to as “the Island.” The original mills were—and still are—located on the Island, as well as the downtown section of the town. The main street on the Island is Congress Street which is home to the town’s post office, courthouse, banks, and grand buildings from the town’s heyday. Two bridges connect the Island to the rest of the town, which is situated to the west.

The town of Rumford is laid out on the slope of the valley, which climbs up steadily and sharply from the river. The further up the hill, the further away from the possibility of the river flooding, the further away from the smell and the noise, and the larger the lot to build a house. From almost all areas in town, the smokestacks which were constantly churning out smoke, were visible. But just over the ridge, a house could be built outside of the viewshed of the unappealing mill complex and if it were not for the smell, you could just as well be in any other part of the northeast.
15. Looking north up Hancock Street. Photo by author.

20. Looking south down Hancock Street. Photo by author.
The Rumford Realty Company used this slope to strategically build a hierarchical worker landscape, starting with a cluster of four groups of homes built at the base of the valley—directly across from the mill, and close to the footbridge that connected Rumford directly to the industrial part of the Island. In total this included 28 wooden houses and two large boarding houses. Each boarding house—the Oxford House and the Central House—contained 40 rooms. The rents in these wooden structures were meant for the mill laborers. All have either been destroyed by fire, or demolished.

Further up the hill, nine identical brick apartment houses were built on Hancock Street. Four of them housed six families, and the remaining five housed four families. Just one street up is where we find the subject of this thesis, Strathglass Park. 50 brick duplexes (originally 51) neatly line a curvilinear complex, surrounded by a granite wall and a grand columned granite entrance. These homes were for workmen in the mill who were recommended by their foremen. Directly outside the Park gates, five more brick homes were built on Somerset Street. These included four single family homes, and one two family home. These homes were for the Oxford Paper superintendents. This ended the construction of homes by the Rumford Realty Company. They had built 186 units by 1904, all rented at very affordable rates, just enough to cover their maintenance and taxes.

103 See Appendix B for photographs of Congress Street.
104 “Novel Business Enterprise.”
105 Rumford Area Historical Society Committee, Pictorial History Rumford-Mexico: 1779 to the 1940s (Rumford, ME: Rumford Area Historical Society, 1995), 69.
Looking south on Somerset Street. Photo by author.
The Somerset brick homes were designed by Donn Barber, architect. One of his most famous buildings is the New York City Cotton Exchange Building, built in 1923.
24. Fifty-one brick duplexes of Strathglass Park. Source: Sanborn Fire
Insurance Map, 1912.

25. Looking north on Erchles Street. Photo by author.
Above Strathglass Park, on Franklin Street and Prospect Avenue is where homes for mill managers and superintendents were found. This is the top of the river valley hill, and these homes were not built by the company. Along with the managers and superintendents this is where local business owners, doctors, and lawyers had their homes. Hugh Chisholm did not have a house in Rumford, but on Franklin Avenue is where Waldo Pettengill had his grand home. Pettengill is the man who was tasked with purchasing the land around the river for Chisholm and became a prominent figure in Rumford.


---


Ibid.
30. 11 Prospect Avenue, the McCarthy House. Photo by author.

29. 33 Franklin Street. The Waldo Pettengill House. Photo by author.
31. View of Strathglass Park from York Street looking east, date unknown. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society.
3.2. Strathglass – “The Brick Park”

The inadequate supply of dwellings, in the face of the constantly increasing demand from the mill operatives, and the desire to give suitable homes for these people, who were pioneers in the growing town, and upon whom its future character so much depended, let me set apart a section across the river from the mills to be used for the erection of small houses, that should be at once attractive to the eye, of reasonable rental, and possessed of all up-to-date conveniences.¹⁰⁹ (Hugh Chisholm, in a letter concerning Strathglass Park)

Like a town within a town, Strathglass Park is situated in the middle of Rumford Falls, enclosed on an oval property surrounded by a granite wall. 51 brick duplexes were constructed on three tree-lined streets in a park setting carefully designed by the Boston landscape architect W. W. Gay.¹¹⁰ Of those 51 duplexes, 49 remain intact, one was destroyed by fire in 1971, and one has been reduced to a one-story home after a fire caused severe damage in 1976. The duplexes have seven front façade variations, with nearly identical interiors. The Park was named after Chisholm’s ancestral homeland in Scotland (Strathglass – the valley around the River Glass) and the streets bear Scottish names with ties to the Chisholm Clan: Urquhart (Urquhart Castle), Lochness (name of lake and highland area in Clan Chisholm area), Erchles (Erchless Castle, traditional seat of the Chisholm family), and Clachan Place.¹¹¹ Strathglass Park is a prime example of enlightened industrial

¹⁰⁹ Leane, The Oxford Story, 52.
¹¹⁰ Name of landscape architect found in the National Register Nomination, yet no other record of this architect was found by the author.
paternalism, a way of thinking that was new in the beginning of the 20th century industrial world employing both a professional architect and a professional planner to design superior quality homes for working men and their families at an affordable rent.

Hugh Chisholm hired C.P.H. Gilbert, a prominent New York City architect, and together they planned for more than a year before commencing construction on the development.112 This included a joint trip to the Scottish Highlands for Chisholm and Gilbert to search for architectural inspiration for soon to be Strathglass Park.113 It can be argued that many of the forms visible in the Park today have a striking similarity to features of Erchless Castle, which could have served as an inspiration for Gilbert’s duplex designs. The connection between the Castle and the Park has yet to be made. Currently thirteen duplexes are attributed to a brick version of Shingle Style, eleven with Tudor Revival features, nine with Dutch Colonial features, one with a single Dutch gable and eight with double Dutch gable.114

113 Curtis Rice, Historic Rumford Falls Illustrated Walking Tour (Curtis Rice, 2011), 7.
32. West elevation, Erchless Castle, 1983. Source: Scottish Development Department, canmore.org.uk.

33. South view of Lochness Street. Notice Dutch gables, cross gables, bay window towers. Photo by author.
Strathglass Park was constructed using five million red bricks, carried to site by oxcart from 17 miles away.\textsuperscript{115} Originally the roofs were covered in slate, imported by train from Vermont and Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{116} No expense was spared on construction and skilled contractors were hired to execute the designs. They were overseen by veteran contractor and builder, J. W. Burrowes of Portland.\textsuperscript{117} The homes had hollow, double layered brick walls for insulation and were complete with the most modern amenities including plumbing, hot and cold water, hard wood floors, electricity, and a coal-burning warm air furnace in full-sized basements.

A 1901 article in the Rumford Falls Times wrote of the modern “apartments” while construction was underway.\textsuperscript{118} A description of the interior and floorplan was explored as well as the amenities the duplexes would incorporate. The homes were designed with the housewife in mind, necessitating a minimum of housework which was achieved by having a smaller number of larger rooms as opposed to a greater number of smaller rooms. Larger rooms required less furniture overall and built-in pantries and cabinets also helped achieved this goal. The floors were hardwood which at the time was more economical and more sanitary, for rugs could be removed and cleaned or shaken outside. The homes were to consist of two full finished floors, with an open third floor attic which could be refinished to provide a family with more rooms. The basement was to extend under the entire house and be completely cemented, accommodating a large warm air coal-powered furnace and a laundry tub. The first floor of the half duplex were to include a large living room,

\textsuperscript{115} Robert Bourassa, “Strathglass Park,” \textit{American Preservation} 4, no. 1 (February 1981), 15
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} “Novel Business Enterprise.”
kitchen, dining room and pantry. The second floor was to include three or four large sleeping rooms. To keep out the cold winter temperatures and winds the front and back doors were to enter a vestibule before entering the main house.

The homes were indeed built to these specifications, and all were owned, managed, and maintained by the Rumford Realty Company. The only requirement of the tenants was to pay their rent of $9 per month, plus $1 flat rate for electricity.¹¹⁹ The Company took care of everything else including providing a valet service, snow shoveling, leaf raking, grass mowing, home repairs, painting, and papering.¹²⁰ Coal was delivered and dumped through a coal chute directly to the basement for the warm air furnaces at company cost.

The 1901 Strathglass announcement stated, “Workmen in the mill, recommended by their foreman, will have first choice of the houses.”¹²¹ Looking at the development today, it would be easy to assume these homes were for mill managers, but this was not the case. There is no indication what qualifications the foremen used to recommend their workers for living in these homes.

¹²¹ “Novel Business Enterprise.”
34. Coal fed warm air furnace, nicknamed "The Octopus." Photo by author.
3.3 Setting the Record Straight: C.P.H. Gilbert, Architect

Over the years there has been much confusion surrounding Strathglass Park’s architect. This confusion has stemmed from the very simple fact that there were multiple architects active in New York City with the last name “Gilbert” at the turn of the century. Both were even around the same age. The name of the architect that was more well-known is Cass Gilbert (1859-1934). Cass Gilbert has left behind a much more extensive archive and received more public accolades than the other Gilbert architect—Charles Pierrepont Henry Gilbert (1861-1952). Cass Gilbert was a
pioneer of early skyscrapers, and his most famous credits include the Woolworth Building and the United States Supreme Court building. The mix-up between these Gilberts is so common in fact, that when visiting the Cass Gilbert Wikipedia page, the first thing written is: “Not to be confused with another American architect C.P.H. Gilbert,” and vice versa when you visit the C.P.H. Gilbert page.\textsuperscript{122}

To make matters more confusing, the same very famous man commissioned both architects to create buildings for him. Frank Winfield Woolworth (1852-1919), extremely successful owner of the five-and-ten retail stores, chose Cass Gilbert as the architect to design what would become Woolworth’s headquarters in New York City. The Woolworth Building was finished in 1913 and was the tallest building in the world until the construction of 40 Wall Street and the Chrysler Building in 1930. During the same time, from 1911 to 1916, Woolworth commissioned C.P.H. Gilbert to design houses for his three daughters on the south side of East 80\textsuperscript{th} Street (2, 4, & 6 E. 80\textsuperscript{th} Street).\textsuperscript{123} C.P.H. Gilbert also designed Woolworth’s 990 Fifth Avenue mansion in 1901, and later Woolworth’s 32,000 square foot country estate in Glen Cove, Long Island in 1916.


\textsuperscript{123} Jerry E. Patterson, \textit{Fifth Avenue: The Best Address} (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1998), 176.
C.P.H. Gilbert was most known for designing townhouses and mansions for the wealthy of New York City. He had an office at 1123 Broadway and was active until the 1920s. When he closed his practice, it is unknown what became of his drawings, papers, journals, and letters. Having studied at Columbia University and

36. The Lost Woolworth Mansion designed by C.P.H. Gilbert for Frank Woolworth in 1901, 990 Fifth Avenue, nonextant. Source: Architecture Magazine.
then the Ecole des Beaux Arts, it would make sense if either of these schools had record of his work but unfortunately neither do.

It is important that the correct man is credited for designing Strathglass Park. An artist’s work tells a very important story of that artist and is their intellectual property. In an academic or professional sense, each design an architect creates is an important element of their personal and professional story and evolution. Similarly, The Strathglass duplexes, like historical artifacts, cannot be fully comprehended without being attributed both to their correct commissioner and their correct designer. The individual commissioning a building outlines the need for the building, guidelines, and parameters. The architect creatively solves this need-problem by drawing from their experiences, inspiration, and skill.

In the case of C.P.H. Gilbert, the absence of a paper trail makes it especially important that Strathglass correctly be attributed to him. Other than in writings specifically about the Park or about Hugh Chisholm, Strathglass Park is not attributed to C.P.H. Gilbert in any literature concerning the architect. And in most writings about Strathglass Park, the development is rarely attributed to the correct Gilbert. In terms of the artist’s evolution, this may be the most important commission of Gilbert during this time because it is so dissimilar from the other projects he was designing. Around 1900 he was known almost primarily as the designer of opulent mansions in Manhattan and Long Island.
37. Harry F. Sinclair House built in 1898 for Isaac Fletcher, designed by C.P.H. Gilbert. Source: Andrew Balet.

Strathglass Park was built between 1901-1902. Three years earlier Gilbert designed one of his most famous commissions, the French Renaissance Harry F. Sinclair House at 79th Street and Fifth Avenue, today the Ukrainian Institute. In 1900 C.P.H. Gilbert designed “Meudon,” the Renaissance Revival Long Island estate of William Dameron Guthrie, a prominent New York lawyer. The same year he designed the neo-Gothic Edmond C. Converse residence at 3 East 78th Street.

the same year Strathglass Park was completed, the massive Beaux-Arts Joseph De Lamar House was going up at 233 Madison Avenue, a C.P.H. Gilbert commission, now the Consulate General of Poland.

At the turn of the century, Hugh Chisholm had a townhouse in New York City at 813 Fifth Avenue. It turns out, C.P.H. Gilbert was also the architect of this home. In the April 21, 1917 Record and Guide it states that Mrs. Henrietta M. Chisholm (Hugh Chisholm’s wife) had William B. May & Co. sell the six-story dwelling at 813 Fifth Avenue which “was erected from plans by C.P.H. Gilbert.”

This connection serves as the link between Chisholm and C.P.H. Gilbert.

---

The Joseph R. De Lamar Mansion, 233 Madison Avenue designed by C.P.H. Gilbert 1902. Source: Daytonian in Manhattan.
This Gilbert mix-up runs deep in the literature surrounding Strathglass Park. In a June 14, 1902, article in The Rumford Falls Times titled *Modern Homes for Working Men*, the only reference to the architect of the Park is a mention of “Mr. Gilbert.” As was mentioned previously, Cass Gilbert was the more renowned architect of the time because his buildings were much larger and more prominent than C.P.H. Gilbert’s domestic architecture. The information in this 1902 article was understandably misinterpreted and appeared in some influential writings—namely—the National Register Nomination form for the National Park Service. Strathglass Park was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NR) on October 18, 1974, and the accredited architect is Cass Gilbert.

The information found on the NR nomination is often taken as fact by many researchers and used as an important secondary resource for many projects. A NR nomination form is helpful in that it can highlight the most significant aspects about a place historically in a short amount of time. Most research on the Park happened after 1974, for the NR listing was the catalyst for commencing the preservation movement. The incorrect architect attribution spread over the next few decades.

However, it was caught in 1982 by a PhD student from Yale University. Donald E. Sackheim was writing his Ph.D. dissertation at Yale that dealt with Cass Gilbert and had done extensive research on him. Sackheim noticed that Cass Gilbert was attributed to designing the Strathglass duplexes in an article written in the

---


1981 issue of American Preservation magazine.\textsuperscript{127} He wrote a letter to the State Historic Preservation Officer of Maine and forwarded a copy of the letter to the Rumford Area Historical Society.\textsuperscript{128} According to Sackheim, the Strathglass commission did not fit the Cass Gilbert timeline and he postulated the architect could be C.P.H. Gilbert instead.

What transpired from this interaction was the realization that C.P.H. Gilbert was the true architect of Strathglass Park. Marketing drawings, painted by C.P.H. Gilbert were found in the Rumford Public Library along with documentation in an article from the Rumford Falls Times from September 14, 1901—one year before the “Mr. Gilbert” 1902 article.\textsuperscript{129} In the 1901 article it clearly states that “the leading New York architect, Mr. C.P.H. Gilbert of 1125 Broadway” was the architectural talent behind the 51-duplex Park.\textsuperscript{130} The 1901 newspaper article mentioned the large marketing paintings were on display in a storefront on Congress Street and urged Rumfordites to visit them.\textsuperscript{131}

However, it seems that this 1982 letter which was sent to the Rumford Historical Society never left the premises and remained in the “Strathglass Park” folder until now. Writers continued to attribute the Park to Cass Gilbert up until the year 2022.

\textsuperscript{128} See Appendix D.
\textsuperscript{129} These paintings may now be in a private collection.
\textsuperscript{130} “Novel Business Enterprise at Rumford Falls,” \textit{Rumford Falls Times}, September 14, 1901, 4.
\textsuperscript{131} Earle Shettleworth, Maine State Historian was able to procure photocopies of the paintings and shared them with me. The originals must have been stunning!
C.P.H. Gilbert’s obituary was printed in the New York Times on October 27, 1952. An interesting detail noted in his obituary is that early in his career, he practiced architecture in the mining towns of Colorado and Arizona.\footnote{132 “Charles P. H. Gilbert,” \textit{The New York Times}, October 27, 1952.} Progressing to primarily build luxurious private mansions in New York City and Long Island, his project in Rumford could have felt like returning to a mining town, where his career began. The industrial boom town of Rumford may have had a similar energy to the overnight mining towns of the west.
PELHAM MANOR, N. Y., Oct. 26—Charles P. H. Gilbert, a retired architect, died yesterday in his home, 216 Townsend Avenue, at the age of 92. Born in New York, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Loring Gilbert, he attended Columbia University and the Beaux Arts Academy in Paris.

Early in his career he practiced architecture in the mining towns of Colorado and Arizona. Returning to New York, he designed private residences for wealthy New Yorkers, including the homes of F. W. Woolworth and Elbert H. Gary, along Fifth Avenue and in Long Island.

A veteran of the Spanish-American War, he was a founder of Squadron A, New York National Guard, and was one of the oldest living members of the American Institute of Architects.

Mr. Gilbert belonged also to the Racquet and Tennis Club, Sons of the Revolution, and Society of Colonial Wars.

Surviving are a son, Dudley P. Gilbert, and three grandchildren.
43. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence.

44. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Originally, the Park was planned to be much bigger with twice the number of duplexes. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence.
45. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence.

46. Strathglass Park, promotional painting by C.P.H. Gilbert, 1901. Source: Earle Shettleworth correspondence.
3.4 Prosperous Days

The town of Rumford boomed in the first half of the 20th century. Hugh Chisholm recruited top architects from metropolitan centers on the East Coast such as New York City, Providence, Rhode Island, and Portland, Maine. Downtown Congress street was bustling with activity. In a 1906 magazine article, during the prime of Rumford it was written,

It is like a section of New York transferred to the edge of the woods. Although you can walk around the condensed city in fifteen minutes, you will see modern hotels, classic bank buildings, electric lights, new stores, great mills and all the confusion and excitement of a hustling city.\textsuperscript{133}

Everywhere you look you find odd contrasts, strange sights, curious people. On the streets you hear French, Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, Lord knows what! Even the signs in the postoffice are printed in five languages!\textsuperscript{134}

Rumford was a diverse cosmopolitan hub in the middle of the forest.

In Strathglass Park, the Company took care of landscaping, duplex upkeep, and interior issues. A maintenance worker lived on site in a small home at the edge of the Park (that was not a brick duplex). One fondly remembered caretaker was Bob Hutchins. He could be seen climbing up on roofs to check the slate, always working on something in the Park.\textsuperscript{135} Supplies and wallpaper were kept in the caretaker’s home and each unit in the Park could update wallpaper in one room per year.\textsuperscript{136} The Park was remembered as being uniform, open, and green. No fences or outbuildings were permitted.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{133} “A Canadian Who Owns a City,” \textit{The Busy Man’s Magazine}, May 1906, 99.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Bourassa, “Strathglass Park,” 16.
\textsuperscript{136} Information conveyed to author by long-term residents of the Park.
\textsuperscript{137} Bourassa, “Strathglass Park,” 16.
Strathglass Park was built before the time of the automobile so the roads that led through the Park were narrow, dirt, and only constructed to handle horse and buggy. In old photographs, children were plentiful and could play safely in the neighborhood, enclosed in the residential development. The Pettengill School (elementary school) was just outside of the Park as well as the Chisholm School (high school). The Pettengill School has since been demolished but the Chisholm School building remains—now a Head Start.

A path led through the middle of the Park, down the hill to connect to the bridge heading to the mill complex. This path exists today and is referred to as “The Boardwalk.” Mill workers would take this walk to work. It was convenient, and enabled workers to quickly reach the mill with short notice if they were called in. Hierarchically the Park sat higher on the valley hill, differentiating itself from the lower-ranking mill employees—but still extremely accessible to the mill.

47. "The Boardwalk," leading to the center of town and the mill. Photo by author.
As automobiles entered the picture, the Park was not equipped to handle the weight of the new technology. A section was laid out on the edge of the Park to the north that became rows of single car garages. Residents would park their cars there and walk into the Park. This kept the idyllic landscaping of the Park intact and free from loud automobiles, motor oil, and gasoline.

Although, the smell of the mill—said to smell like rotten eggs—permeated the town. Depending on the direction of the wind, debris would often rain down into the town. It is said that after a fresh snow at night, there would be a layer of black ash by morning.\textsuperscript{138} This is before environmental laws changed the way the mill processed exhaust. Yet, since the mill was the livelihood of the town, the reason for the town’s economic success—the negative facets were overlooked. “You smell/see that? That’s money!” people would say of the smell and ash.\textsuperscript{139}

With steady work, a healthy economy, and no responsibility for property upkeep, it was seemingly a time of ease in Strathglass Park. By all accounts Strathglass Park pre-1947 was characterized as “the good old days” when life was predictable and comfortable.

\textsuperscript{138} From conversations with long-term residents.
\textsuperscript{139} From conversations with long-time residents.
49. Duplex on Erchles St. just upon entering the Park from the south. Clip from panoramic postcard, c. 1910. Source: Rumford Area Historical Society.

3.5 Decline

The first event attributed to the Park’s decline was in 1947, when the Company-sponsored Park maintenance program ended. The Rumford Realty Company sold the homes to tenants at prices that only reflected building cost. The average unit selling price was $3,400 per unit, or $6,800 for the entire duplex. In 1980 the cost of replacement was estimated at $180,000, and no doubt it would be many times more expensive today. No manual or guiding documents on how to property care for the brick properties were given to the new owners. The rules that were previously in effect concerning fences and outbuildings were no longer enforced. The buildings started to deteriorate slowly. By the 1970s, most buildings needed repairs.

Monica Wood’s memoir, *When We Were the Kennedys*, told her story of growing up in Mexico, Maine around the Oxford Paper Mill. In the introduction to her memoir, she described the nuanced relationship between the townspeople and the mill in the 1960s:

The unlikely source of that promise penetrated our town like a long and endless sigh: the Oxford Paper Company, that boiling hulk on the riverbank, the great equalizer that took our fathers from us every day and eight hours later gave them back, in an unceasing loop of shift work.

“The Oxford,” we chummily called it, as if it were our friend. From nowhere in town could you not see it.

The mill. the rumbling, hard-breathing monster that made steam and noise and grit and stench and dreams and livelihoods—and paper. It possessed a scoured, industrial beauty as awesome and ever-changing as the leaf-

---

141 Ibid.
142 As noted on the 1973 Architectural Survey of the Park, stored at Rumford Area Historical Society.
plumped hills that surrounded us. It made a world unto itself, over-bearing and irrefutable, claiming its ground along the Androscoggin, a wide and roiling river that cracked the floor of our valley like the lifeline on a palm. My father made his living there, and my friends’ fathers, and my brother, and my friends’ brothers, and my grandfather, and my friends’ grandfathers. They crossed the footbridge over the river’s tainted waters, carrying their lunch pails into the mill’s overheated gullet five, six, sometimes seven days a week.143

At that point, the Oxford mill was still a reliable source of income. Anyone in town that wanted work could find it at The Oxford. It was difficult work, dangerous in numerous ways, but it was predictable and offered financial stability to families. Rumford at that time was a one-industry town, with jobs dependent on the pulp and paper business. From supplying the mill with resources to make paper, to the mill employees, to the auxiliary jobs to support the workforce, the economy was dependent on production and manpower. If production slowed or manpower was reduced, the rest of the economic web was affected.

In 1967 the Oxford Paper Company merged with the Ethyl Corporation. In the early 60s there was an all-time high in the demand for white paper, higher than what The Oxford could produce. Money was needed for mill upgrades and William H. Chisholm, third generation Chisholm president of the Oxford Paper Company, looked to outside help.144 What started as a merger between the two companies ended in a full sale when a disagreement sparked the resignation of William Chisholm in 1970.145 This was the first time the management of the mill would not involve a Chisholm.

144 Leane and Burns, History of Rumford, 158.
145 Leane and Burns, History of Rumford, 159.
The 1960s saw the passage of new environmental legislation including the Clean Air Act of 1963, the Clean Water Act of 1965, the Clean Water Restoration Act of 1966, and the Air Quality Act of 1967. In 1970 the Federal Government passed legislation establishing guidelines for worker health and safety, the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). These acts required an enormously high capital expansion which resulted in the elimination of jobs to decrease overhead costs.\textsuperscript{146} Automatic paper finishing equipment was installed to cut, inspect, and package papers, resulting in a further reduction in employees.\textsuperscript{147} The mill was no longer a place of guaranteed employment. The reduction of mill workers, a decrease in family size, and urban sprawl due to faster and more reliable transportation resulted in a population decrease.

Changing hands less than a decade later, the mill was sold to Boise Cascade Corporation in 1976 for $90 million. To make the operation more profitable, further automation and computer control caused further cuts to manpower.\textsuperscript{148}

Thomas Beckley’s 1994 University of Wisconsin dissertation studied the power structures that existed in the towns of Rumford/Mexico and the role the mill played in town economics.\textsuperscript{149} Pre-1967, the mill managers filled important political roles in the town. Considerable resources were spent on the wellbeing of the people of Rumford (and Mexico). According to Beckley, the Ethyl Corporation pulled back

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, 164.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, 165.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid, 168.
from the town and did not participate in local politics. They diverted their resources elsewhere. There were no familial ties in the leadership of that company, and so the town was left to its own devices. The paternalistic relationship between the mill and the town had ended.

The end of company-funded maintenance at Strathglass Park was to be only the beginning of its decline. The economic decline of the town further exacerbated the strain of residents' abilities to care for their homes. The negative psychological effects associated with a declining community prompted lack of morale and increased transience along with vacancies. A series of cosmetic alterations to the Park decreased its aesthetic appeal, altering the Park’s character from the flawlessly landscaped initial vision.

Another memoir was written about growing up in the Rumford/Mexico area, this one a memoir intertwined with an exploration of harm caused by the mill—both to the environment and to human health. As a small detail, on returning to the area for her grandfather’s funeral, the author Kerri Arsenault described going for a run through Strathglass Park. To her readers, she introduced Chisholm’s initial vision, its pristine beginnings, and offered a quick descriptive snapshot of its impression in 2009:

As I run through Strathglass Park, broken snowmobiles and other lifeless remnant litter front lawns while listing, half-baked additions or porches scab once pristine houses. Sheets shroud leaded glass windows and garbage lies in heaps alongside scattered woodpiles. Dog-shit-covered snow accompanies abandoned bright plastic toys, and wind chimes tinkle above the din of a yowling mutt.\footnote{Kerri Arsenault, \textit{Mill Town: Reckoning with What Remains} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2020), 15.}

\footnote{Beckley, “Pulp, Paper, and Power,” 224.}
50. Exterior shed with "Beware of Dogs" spraypainted warning. Photo by author.

51. Plastic toys littered around yard. Photo by author.
There are a total of approximately 100 units in the Park. Today Strathglass has an estimate of nine vacant units. At least three entire duplexes are empty and in need of a complete renovation. An unofficial gathering of property owner information was compiled in August 2021 to determine the mixture of owner-type in the Park. About half of the units are owner-occupied. About 30 are rental units owned by Maine residents, and the remaining 20 are owned by out-of-state residents. The city of Rumford owns one duplex (two units). This is a wide spread of owner type adding to the difficulty of a preservation movement.

4. History of Past Interventions

A preservation movement in Strathglass has been underway in some form since 1974. Over the decades, different players have joined the movement at different times and the momentum has waxed and waned. Key factors make a widespread intervention extremely challenging such as the state of the economy and the high price of renovation. Community factors are complicated by the varying types of tenure across the Park, and the physical configuration of the duplexes.

Rumford is and always has been a town without zoning. The Park, however, did have some deed restrictions in the mid-20th century to control some aspects of the landscape. These three guiding restrictions were: the houses had to maintain a 12-foot setback from the street, no other buildings could be built on the lots such as garages or sheds, and owners were not allowed to keep pigs, chickens, or other

---

152 Estimate by Economic Development Director of Rumford.
153 Data graciously shared by Maine Preservation staff.
livestock.\textsuperscript{154} These restrictions were not followed, and none covered property maintenance, therefore did little to prevent degradation of the homes, addition of outbuildings, or alteration of architectural features.

\textbf{4.1 National Register of Historic Places, 1974}\textsuperscript{155}

Concern for the Park grew until it reached a breaking point in the 1970s. Until that point, the awareness of the Park’s condition was mainly only known locally. One factor that did not help in having a wider audience sooner is the Park’s out-of-the-way location. This condition exists for many other industrial historical resources, tucked away in the outer reaches of society. A call for help brought in Earl Shettleworth and Frank Beard who together with the local residents, drew up a National Register nomination. Strathglass Park was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 18, 1974, as a historic district.\textsuperscript{156}

Being listed on the National Register has some benefits as well as some limitations. This listing opens doors to certain financial benefits, such as the Federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) program. If a property is listed on the National Register, it is considered a “certified historic structure” by the Secretary of the Interior (SOI), through the National Park Service (NPS). If that property were to be rehabilitated, and the NPS approves of the rehabilitation project—20\% of the “qualified rehabilitation expenditures” could be written off as a tax credit over a five-year

\textsuperscript{154} Phil Blampied, “Repair and Maintenance of Your Strathglass Building” (Rumford: Strathglass Park Preservation Society, 2012), 7.


\textsuperscript{156} Shettleworth and Beard, “Strathglass Park District - NR Nomination.”
period. 157 The rehabilitation and restoration of a property must comply with the SOI Standards for Rehabilitation, which is a set of ten specific requirements that must be met for the project to qualify for the tax credit.158

A limitation of being listed on the National Register is that it offers little to no protection. According to the Economic Development Director of Rumford, the Historic Tax Credit program is sometimes completely irrelevant in property redevelopment in Rumford. Having to abide by the strict Secretary of the Interior Standards prevents projects from making sense financially to syndicate the tax credits. However, this is not always true. Some downtown buildings have used tax credits to make restoration financially feasible.

4.2 Photographic Architectural Survey, Maine Historic Preservation Commission

Shortly after the National Register nomination, Shettleworth helped organize a photographic architectural survey of the park. The Strathglass Park Association applied for and received a $6,850 grant from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The project was extensive and was executed by Moore/Weinrich Architects of Brunswick, Maine. A photograph was taken of four views of each building in the Park. The images were then transferred to a large (roughly) two feet by three feet plotting paper. Individual aspects in need of restoration were circled and exact notes were written as to what interventions needed to be executed to bring the Park back to its original condition. Notes such as, “Remove concrete walls and

---

replace with brick,” “Clean and repoint brick,” or, “Repair lattice rail” were neatly noted.

The plots were incredibly detailed, and all remaining 50 duplexes were surveyed. A study report was produced by the Moore/Weinrich firm, detailing estimated cost of landscaping, structures, and utilities. The plans were never used for restoration and are now inaccurate as decades have gone by. They would serve as a helpful reference for comparison, or as primary data in the study of individual structures.


160 This survey can be found at the Rumford Area Historical Society, located on the top floor of the Municipal Building on Congress Street. The plans are in two cardboard tubes, behind the door when you walk in.
4.3 Fire Damages Strathglass Park Duplex, 1976

The Park survives mostly intact. Originally consisting of 51 brick duplexes, one on Lochness Road was completely lost due to fire in 1971.\textsuperscript{161} Currently, it sits as an open lot, used for parking. Five years later, another fire broke out in the Park. This was at 42 and 44 Erchles Street and was caused by an accident with a woodburning stove while both families that lived in the duplex were out.\textsuperscript{162} Burning for three hours, there was extensive damage to the upper two floors. Instead of demolishing the building, the upper two floors were removed, and the duplex is now only a one story, one family building.

These two fires constitute the only major alterations to the Park’s home configuration, which is remarkable given that the Park has been in existence since 1902. 49 full duplexes remain along with the salvaged one-story.

\textsuperscript{161} Shettleworth and Beard, “Strathglass Park District - NR Nomination.”

56. Parking lot where duplex once stood. Photo by author.
4.4 Street Widening Work, 1988

Strathglass Park was built before the time of automobiles. When automobiles came into the picture, the dirt road that supported horse and buggy was tarred, without the installation of roadbeds. Without roadbeds, residents of the Park were experiencing street difficulties such as rocks coming up through the road.\textsuperscript{163} Lochness Road was widened eight feet, and a retaining wall was constructed. Erchles Street was also widened and paved by the Rumford Highway Crew. This street widening process changed the character of Strathglass’ original plan, but perhaps what changed it even more was what had to be removed for it to happen.

Three Linden trees that Chisholm imported from Scotland in 1902 were cut down to make way for the widening of the road on Lochness Street. On Erchles Street, a group of 30 residents petitioned the Rumford selectmen to save six trees.\textsuperscript{164} The selectmen voted to go ahead with the plan, saying that perhaps the trees designated for removal could be moved on private property at the request of property owners.

In a 1976 article from the Maine Sunday Telegram, Mrs. John Hay—whose parents moved to the Park in 1911—reminisced that when she was growing up, the Park was beautiful. Along the narrow dirt roads of the Park, there were trees, shrubs, and rose bushes that are no longer there.\textsuperscript{165} Along with the initial tarring of the roads sometime before 1976, the roads were widened and according to Mrs.

\textsuperscript{163} "Reconstruct Lochness Road," \textit{The Rumford Falls Times}, August 2, 1988, The Rumford Area Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{164} "Save the Trees," \textit{The Rumford Falls Times}, June 18, 1988, The Rumford Area Historical Society.

Hay—this was partially the cause of the vegetation loss. Another cause for some of the loss were hungry horses which pulled the grocery wagons and ice cream wagons around the Park before the automobile takeover.\textsuperscript{166}

There was contention in the Park about the plans for the road widening and tree removal. In a letter to the editor on August 19, 1988, concerned Park resident Audrey Guay exposed frustration that the selectmen refused to meet with the residents of Erchles Street to discuss alternatives to the construction plans for the road widening and tree removal. She writes, “We are not only concerned about the trees; we are also concerned about the appearance and functional aspect of our street.”\textsuperscript{167} The citizens were of the opinion that the plan for a 30-foot-wide street with two 10-foot travel lanes and a 10-foot parking lane was overkill for their small compound. The neighborhood character that they would lose was more important to them than having extra room on the road.

In the letter to the editor, Guay claims that selectman “Frank Anatasio felt listening to residents of a street would be like “opening Pandora’s box” and Kathleen Mesereau called it a “can of worms.”\textsuperscript{168} The residents of Erchles Street were denied having a voice in a project that would directly affect them. This project had detrimental effects on the aesthetic composition of the development.

\textsuperscript{166} Decker, “Strathglass Park Was Dream.”
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
4.5 Rumford’s 1998 Comprehensive Plan

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan includes a section on “Historic and Archaeological Resources.” It highlights the importance of maintaining historic buildings in the community which can conserve resources, time, energy, and money all well they maintain a sense of community character. The properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are listed, which includes the Strathglass Park district. In addition to the Register list, structures that were listed in Randall

---

H. Bennett’s book Oxford County, Maine, A Guide to its Historical Architecture are also listed.170

Apart from pointing out the historic resources of the town, there are no guiding recommendations on how to maintain them or if they are in need of maintenance.

4.6 Maine’s Most Endangered Historic Places, 2006

Maine Preservation, a statewide historic preservation nonprofit organization, puts out a list each year to highlight the most endangered properties across Maine. The purpose of this list is to bring awareness to these places, to promote advocacy, and to allow these places access to Maine Preservation’s resources such as technical assistance, preservation education, and help in applying for grants.

Maine Preservation visited Rumford and toured Strathglass Park and the downtown area in 2005. 171 The Rumford town manager at the time, Steve Eldridge was an advocate of historic preservation, architecture, arts, and culture. Strathglass Park was added to the following year’s list in 2006. The executive director of Maine Preservation noted that it was the first time that an application for addition to the list was submitted by a town manager.172

Before the town manager submitted the application for consideration for the list, a town meeting was held so that Rumford residents could voice their opinions

and concerns. Eldridge was concerned that without assistance, the buildings in the Park may start falling apart. This concern is still true sixteen years later.

4.7 Strathglass Property Owner’s Association, 2008

Around the time of the Maine’s Most Endangered Historic Property list, some concerned citizens of the Park decided to band together and create the Strathglass Property Owner’s Association (SPOA). The thinking was that together as a group, they could accomplish more, solve Park problems, and achieve tangible results. Within a short time, the SPOA was able to sign 80% of the Park’s homeowners.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT, 2009

The SPOA was instrumental in helping the town of Rumford apply and be granted a $300,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). This grant was for the purpose of repairing and upgrading buildings in the town, including structural repairs on over a half dozen duplexes. The work done on the duplexes was approved by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

REPLACEMENT OF TRAFFIC MIRROR, 2009

Exiting the main gate of the Park could be dangerous due to the inability for drivers to see vehicles coming up Maine Avenue and there had been many near accidents. The town of Rumford installed a traffic mirror to mitigate this issue, but only after a few months it was vandalized and broken.

---

The SPOA raised funds by hosting a bake sale, a candle sale, and a bottle drive. Overall, they donated $250 to the town to get it replaced.\textsuperscript{174} This improved visibility from the gate, keeping Park and town residents safer.

4.8 Strathglass Park Preservation Society, 2010

In 2010, the SPOA became inactive, but not before doing one final thing that would greatly benefit the future of the Park. They decided to create a nonprofit dedicated to the Park, which would be able to accept funds and grants were they to become available. The Strathglass Park Preservation Society (SPPS) was founded in 2010—the initial filing fee was funded through the SPOA.

REVITALIZING STRATHGLASS PARK: GUIDELINES AND GOALS FOR THE STRATHGLASS PARK PRESERVATION SOCIETY, 2010

With the formation of the SPPS nonprofit group, a formal documentation of goals and guidelines was drafted. This was published in a small book and distributed in November of 2010. This book includes a short history write-up of the Park, a history of past attempts to join forces within the community, and a write-up of current challenges and needs.

The booklet calls for encouraging residents to come together to revitalize the outdoor public spaces as a good first step to creating neighborhood cohesiveness. Another important strategy the booklet calls for is the education of residents on the history of the park. The reasoning being that there would be a stronger inclination

to wish to preserve the Park if there was better knowledge of why the Park is important. The possibility of attracting tourist dollars is mentioned as well.¹⁷⁵

GATE RESTORATION AND HISTORIC LIGHT REPLACEMENT, 2011

The very impressive granite entrance to the Park was in desperate need of repairs. Originally the pillars surrounding the entrance had lights, as can be seen in old photographs. These lights stopped working around 1950 and were replaced with a metal rod that connected one pillar to the other. The rod could have been installed to stabilize the columns. Not only were the lights removed, but the pillars and walls were subject to vandalism and deteriorating mortar. Being the first view of the Park, the condition of the entrance gate set the tone for the condition of the rest of the Park.

For two years, the SPPS planned and raised money for the restoration and revitalization of the gate—which was owned by the town of Rumford. The SPPS nonprofit group raised $6,000 to undertake the project, which it then donated to the town.¹⁷⁶ In return, the town agreed to pay the electric bill. The SPPS chose historic looking lights, similar to the originals. Very proud of this accomplishment, the SPPS hoped it would be the first of many accomplishments in the revitalization of the Park.


This booklet, put together by the SPPS and Phil Blampied is small but filled with very valuable and practical information. In addition to recounting the history of the park, the duplex materials are gone over in detail. The booklet covers maintenance of the brick and woodwork, mitigation for toxic substances, and recommendations for modern practical upgrades. Things like electrical and heating technology upgrades are explored and issues with accessibility are covered.

Another very helpful topic covered in this booklet is ideas for coming up with the money needed to fund these upgrades and routine maintenance projects. Information on the 20% Historic Tax Credit is given, although mentioned that this is probably not practical to use in all situations. Other sources such as state tax credits, affordable housing tax credits, the federal Section 203 (k) program through the Federal Housing Administration, or potentially the donation of an easement all might help in the funding of a project.

One thing that detracts from the helpfulness of this booklet is that it is difficult to find. Having an online PDF version on the SPPS website could be a helpful way to distribute to Park residents if they want to access the information.

RECOMMENDED CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESIDENTS OF STRATHGLASS PARK

To try to steer the direction of the behaviors of people in the Park, the SPPS put together a document to outline unofficial rules and regulations of Park residents.

---

The Park is home to a diversity of people, including owners, absentee owners, renters, and renters in subsidized housing. There was concern over the differing amount of social investment being made in the Park by households.

Trash piled outside of homes, children’s toys scattered, aggressive dogs off-leash, and adolescents breaking into vacant homes and vandalizing property all were concerns of the SPPS and for certain Park residents. To attempt to mitigate these negative behaviors, a recommended code of conduct was drafted and dispersed to Park residents.

The potential issue with a recommended code of conduct is that it is unlikely to modify a person’s behavior without being an enforceable document. A person who is going to leave trash outside their house will most likely not stop because someone told them in a document to do so. A code of conduct could have the opposite intended effect and create a contentious “us versus them” mentality, further dividing the Park and its residents.

4.9 Historic Rumford Falls Illustrated Walking Tour, 2011

Available at the Rumford Area Historical Society in the Rumford Municipal building is an amazing, illustrated walking tour of Rumford Falls. Compiled by town resident and lawyer Curtis Rice—it guides tourists through the streets of Rumford Falls, bringing attention to many residential homes, churches, and downtown buildings. For each stop on the tour, a short history is provided along with a historic picture or photograph of what that property previously looked like.

The main and oldest section of Rumford Falls is a very small and walkable district. This walking tour covers lots of ground, and it is easy to be transported back
in time to see the town as it was 100 years ago. The historical highlights and interesting facts make the tour very enjoyable and reveals another side of Rumford apart from the main tourist attractions of Strathglass Park and Congress Street.

Throughout the walking tour, different residential buildings are pointed out that are in the process of being renovated by private individuals. Rice’s home was such a house. Before being completely renovated, the “Spite House” at 20 Prospect Avenue had been sitting vacant, vandalized, and boarded up for several years.

This walking tour highlights that there exist many isolated pockets of preservation happening in the town of Rumford. According to the walking tour, two of the vacant churches on Franklin Street are being restored and renovated as family homes. ¹⁷⁸ Also, many older historic homes have already been renovated by people who have taken great care in preserving the historic characteristics and attributes of the buildings.

4.10 Rumford Comprehensive Plan, 2013

An updated comprehensive plan was adopted on November 5, 2013, in Rumford. In this iteration of the town’s comprehensive plan, it presents a finding that, “Rumford’s land use ordinances do not contain specific performance standards that will protect historic resources.”¹⁷⁹ It lists the Park as a National Register Historic District and introduces the Strathglass Park Preservation Society for the first time in a town plan.

However, the only guiding sentiment when it comes to Strathglass Park is that “More restoration work in the Park is needed.”\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{180} “Rumford Comprehensive Plan Update,” 10.
5. Current and Continuing Challenges

Unstructured interviews were conducted in Winter 2022 with a diversity of people in Rumford to identify a set of relevant challenges surrounding Strathglass Park. Interviewees included residents of Rumford, residents of Strathglass Park, local historians, local officials, Strathglass Park Preservation Society members, and statewide preservationists. A wide range of challenges were found, and they could be classified under economic challenges or community challenges.

The most pressing challenge revolved around money. This is the basic necessity to make a substantial change in the Park. In this section, the challenges concerning the local economy will be discussed. Having deferred maintenance in many cases has elevated the initial costs of renovations. Also discussed is how the regulation tied to renovating or rehabilitating with tax credit programs can be more costly. Similarly, there was a perceived notion that “historic preservation” is automatically tied to more expense.

Community challenges that were identified spanned logistical, educational, and generational issues. The duplexes in the Park are about half owner-occupied and half rental properties. The nature of the duplex house type can impede an owners desire to restore or renovate their property if their neighbor does not wish to do the same. This can also create tension between those with different desires and financial ability. A need for place-based education was found along with a difference in generational understanding of Rumford and Strathglass Park.

---

181 Sample questions in Appendix C.
5.1 Economic Challenges

LOCAL ECONOMY

A substantial contributing factor in the decline of Strathglass Park is connected to the overall economic decline of the town of Rumford. In the early 1900s, the one-industry town boomed due to the overwhelming success of the pulp and paper industry. Some older residents remember how anyone could walk down to the Oxford mill and get a job on the spot, and that job was virtually guaranteed for life. The paychecks were steady, and depending on what shifts were worked, it was possible to make a sizeable amount of money. For example, it was possible to work 16-hour days, and working on Sundays was double pay. It was said that when young people came home from college, they could make $10,000 per summer if they worked hard.

The downsizing of the mill affected the entire community economically. Older residents of the town say when they grew up, there was only a very small amount of people affected by poverty. Contrasted with now, many families and many people in Rumford depend on some type of government assistance through programs like Section 8 housing vouchers and Welfare or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

In Strathglass Park there are a good deal of rental properties that accept Section 8 housing vouchers. In the community, these properties are also associated with absentee owners who profit from the vouchers and do not invest money back into the maintenance of their units. The voucher value remains constant while the properties deteriorate, and the community suffers.
According to a local official, Rumford’s does have a semi-diversified economy. The mill is still the largest employer at 520 workers (in early 1960s there were over 3,000 employees)\textsuperscript{182}, and only makes up 10\% of the town’s property tax base (in 1966, the mill paid 65\% of the town’s tax).\textsuperscript{183} Other industries in the town include: the Rumford Hospital (~300 employees), Walmart (~300 employees), nursing homes (~50-100 employees), the school system (~300 employees), Sunday River Ski Mountain and Black Mountain of Maine, Hope Association, and Hannaford Supermarket.

Rumford has an aging population. While many long-term residents who lived in Rumford during its prosperous days decided to age in place, many of the younger generation decided to move away. From 2020 demographic data, the median age in Rumford is 52.6 which is 20\% higher than the median age in Maine.\textsuperscript{184} To renovate and reactivate Strathglass Park, time, money, and energy will be needed. Young energy could be a catalyst for initiating change in the Park.

While purchasing a duplex in the Park can be as inexpensive as $24,000, the cost of renovation can be very high.\textsuperscript{185} One estimate for complete renovation and restoration of an entire duplex (in very poor shape) has been quoted at approximately $500,000 ($250,000 per unit).\textsuperscript{186} Putting a substantial amount of money into a duplex will not necessarily translate directly to the value of the home.

\textsuperscript{182} Leane and Burns, \textit{History of Rumford}, 158.
\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Papermaking at Oxford}, 21.
\textsuperscript{185} https://www.swanagency.com/listing/1344976/9-erchles-street-rumford-me-04276/
\textsuperscript{186} Estimate quoted to a statewide preservation organization in 2021.
Therefore, these projects do not attract investors who are driven by resale profit. This makes the pool of potential investors much lower. The only way renovation of a duplex makes financial sense is if the project is envisioned in the long term. This limits the pool of investors to those with differing motivations—such as highly valuing the historic aspects of the Park and feeling driven to play a role in its protection.

**COST OF SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR (SOI) STANDARDS OF REHABILITATION**

Many residents in the Park associate the SOI Standards of Rehabilitation with very high prices. Strathglass Park is a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore can qualify for the Federal Historic Tax Credit program. In the community the SOI Standards are seen as financially unfeasible when attempting to renovate or rehabilitate a home in Strathglass. This sentiment is very strong when concerns over energy efficiency are considered. In the cold winters of Maine, heat efficiency is very important. Keeping the home’s historic windows greatly reduces the energy efficiency of a house in the winter. This can be mitigated by having the historic windows professionally restored with double paned glass and the addition of weatherstripping, but this is a very costly service.

It seems like there is an “all or nothing” sentiment surrounding the SOI Standards. When appearing in conversation, the first point that is invariably brought up is about the slate. The duplexes in the Park were all originally built with slate roofs. There is only one duplex remaining with a complete slate roof and it is worn out. To prove a point as to why the SOI Standards are not feasible, someone
will say, “to replace the slate roof will cost $100,000 alone. To replace the roof with other material could cost only $10,000.”

5.2 Community Challenges

OPPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY

It became very clear that the people of Rumford value their private property rights strongly. The town has no zoning laws, nor do they wish to have them. There are factors that have allowed this absence of zoning to work out very well for the town and still enforced a loose set of parameters. The town’s historic settlement pattern accomplished what zoning essentially was created for. Rumford’s growth was exponential, and it happened quickly. The town was initially planned in zones. There was the island, separated from town by the Androscoggin River. This was the industrial center. The downtown commercial district is also located on an island, separating it geographically from the main residential areas.

There is a town building code which affects new construction and ensures proper massing and setback. There is a life and safety code, and new construction must abide by Maine’s Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA). This ensures no new construction will negatively impact significant wildlife habitat, fragile mountain areas, freshwater wetlands, great ponds and rivers, streams, or brooks. When an activity (including construction) will be located in, on, over, or adjacent to any of these natural resources, a permit is required.187

---

For Strathglass Park, residents associate the thought of being told what they can and cannot do to their property to a governmental regulatory “taking.” The Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment states that, “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” 188 A regulatory taking occurs when “governmental regulations limit the use of private property to such a degree that the landowner is effectively deprived of all economically reasonable use or value of their property.” 189 A historic ordinances is a common tool that communities use to preserve their historic properties. They do impose restrictions on property owners, and it is understandable that this is not looked on favorably in the community. If Strathglass Park were to abide by an ordinance, it would be the only place in town to have property restrictions of that nature. A goal is to find another preservation tool that could produce similar outcomes as an ordinance.

OPPOSITION TO “HISTORIC PRESERVATION”

“Historic preservation” is a field that encompasses many different things. It can be scientific and deal with conservation of building material. It can also be community development and focused on placemaking. Preservationists can work for government entities to identify, protect, and enhance a place’s historic resources. Historic preservation can also be real estate development, adaptively reusing outdated historic structures. A person’s understanding of historic preservation is dependent on their experience with the field, and what parts of it they have been


exposed to. It seems that many people in the town of Rumford do not have a favorable outlook on the field of historic preservation because in Rumford preservation has been associated with people from the outside telling the people of Rumford what buildings are important and how they “should” be taken care of or look like.

In Strathglass Park and Rumford, historic preservation is associated with the SOI Standards and the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit almost exclusively. It is seen as a rigid set of rules about what you can and cannot do with a historic property. In Rumford, historic preservation is understood as freezing buildings in the past with no consideration of the present and future. Preservation is also thought of as reserved for grand architectural buildings like some found on Congress Street. This understanding of preservation is confusing for some residents of the Park because in their mind the Strathglass Park homes are no different than other homes in the town because they were just worker housing. Having rules imposed on their homes when other people in the town have no rules is not looked on favorably.

This negative view of preservation and the natural tendency for all-or-nothing thinking is detrimental to accomplishing the real goal of creating a future for Strathglass Park. By dismissing all things associated with a preservation agenda, no components that may resonate with a resident can be realized. In Strathglass Park, keeping the duplexes standing and affordable for the town of Rumford is more important than having all original windows.
US VERSUS THEM

In speaking to people from the Strathglass Park neighborhood, there emerged a pattern of “us versus them,” which highlighted a present divide in the community. In this equation, the “us” are the people who own their homes, and support preservation. They would like all residents in the Park to abide by a certain framework of rules and regulations when it comes to behavior, ethics, and morals. The “them” group is characterized by their (the “us”-es) perception of absentee owners, renters, and people using the Section 8 housing voucher. It is of the opinion that the trash in the Park and the poor upkeep of certain homes must be associated with people who do not own their home. It is an easy assumption to connect these two things.

However, the truth may not be so simple. It is of the opinion of a local official that many of the homes with poor upkeep are owner-occupied units. This oversimplification can be problematic in trying to grasp the extent and scope of the problem. This mentality may also further widen the divide between people who live in the Park.

Strathglass has a high number of rental units at about 50%. Of these, about half are out-of-state owners. A tenant has little power to make decisions about their home if they are a renter. They are completely at the whim of their landlord. The landlord on the other hand, does not directly benefit from doing more than what is necessary to keep the house functioning and standing. A rental property is an investment and a source of monthly income and perhaps may not be more than that
to a landlord. The benefit of a landlord in not living in the Park is they do not have to deal with day-to-day repercussions of disgruntled neighbors or visual annoyances.

Many cultural barriers exist in the Strathglass community, and it would be beneficial to organize activities, events, or community organizations that could help residents share space and connect. A way to encourage or incentivize landlords to maintain and invest further in their properties would be helpful. Taken care of properly, the duplexes can stand for another 120 years.

60. A Strathglass Park duplex with two owners. A clear difference is visually apparent. Photo by author.
OWNERSHIP CONFIGURATION

The Strathglass Park homes present a difficult challenge for preservation due to their building typology. With a duplex, it is possible and probable that there are two different owners within the same building. These two owners may have very different ideas of how they want to upkeep their sides of the home. If one side of the duplex wishes to invest money into the restoration of their unit, they could reconsider if the other side does not. This fosters a lack of motivation to making capital improvements to the units.

When the duplexes were initially built, they were never meant to be owned by multiple people. This issue of ownership configuration was nonexistent when the company not only owned the units but handled the maintenance and upkeep. The fundamental change in real estate structure and the rights and responsibilities that come with property ownership creates tension between neighbors, especially those that share a common party wall.

When maintenance and rehabilitation efforts are carried out separately for each unit, it creates a disjointed aesthetic in the Park. It is a tricky circumstance when a person owns their own home, but their home is actually only half of a home, and they have no say in what happens to the other half of the larger home that their home is a part of.

There is an issue that some properties are owned by absentee owners and the tenants have no say or control over the upkeep of the home. With owners living outside of the Park, it is perhaps not on their mind, or they are unsure when their
property is having a problem that needs to be fixed. It could be a case of “out of
sight, out of mind.”

With the ownership configuration being what it is—it is difficult to create
momentum in having a unified vision for the future of the Park. It would be
beneficial if there was a way to unify the two sides of a duplex through a formalized
agreement, or an incentive for one person to own the whole duplex, using the other
side as a rental property.

LACK OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

To reactivate Strathglass Park, a wider evolution of change needs to take
place in Rumford. Strathglass does not exist independently from the town but rather
is in the heart of it.

Currently, teaching the rich history of the area is not a part of the curriculum
in Rumford grade schools. As an outsider, it is easy to appreciate how special and
significant the history of the area is. But it could be much more difficult to see if you
were born in the area and have been surrounded by the town for your whole life,
becoming desensitized to it. Without seeing Rumford in context to other places, it
could seem like a tough area with limited opportunities and lack of character.

Rumford Falls is a pristine, almost unaltered, company town. Perhaps
because of its rural nature, it has been left unadulterated unlike other company
towns on the East Coast. Rumford is not on the way to anywhere and perhaps that
has protected it from outside infiltration. Another reason could be the still active
mill which serves as the main industry like in the past. There has yet to be a large
industrial shift.
A mill town that is often compared to Rumford Falls is S.D. Warren’s Cumberland Mills, now part of the town of Westbrook. Like Rumford, Cumberland Mills had a philanthropic benefactor as the founder of the town and hired a renowned architect to design worker housing. Although there are many similarities, Cumberland Mills’ location cannot be compared to Rumford. Westbrook is on the outskirts of Portland, Maine—a sought after place to live with a population spilling out into the towns around it.

Other intact mill towns have become national parks. In 1978 Lowell, Massachusetts became the site of the Lowell National Historical Park run by the National Park Service. Pullman, Illinois became the site of Pullman National Monument in 2015, a component of the National Park System. Rumford Falls has a history just as rich and significant as these two places, it has just been tucked away in Oxford County, yet to be brought into the national limelight.

However, instead of looking for assistance from the outside through a national recognition program, Rumford should be reactivated from the inside. Through conversations with Strathglass Park and Rumford stakeholders, it is predominantly the middle aged and older crowd that is prioritizing preservation and community development.

---

The future of the town lies in the youth of the town. If preservation is only important and practiced by the elders of society, it will die away with that generation. By exposing the youth to the rich history of the town, by showing them what Congress Street looked like in the early 20th century, it may spark an interest in them that they will carry on through adulthood. Showing the young people what the town has been, it could open their imagination to the possibility for a thriving future for the town.

Learning the rich history of Rumford as a young person in the town can foster a desire to work towards a strong future. It has been a trend for many young people to leave the area after high school graduation but perhaps with a deeper connection to the place some will wish to stay and build a life.

DIFFERENCES IN GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

A person’s perspective of Rumford is heavily based on their lived experience. Having memories of living in the town when times were prosperous, it is easier to imagine the possibility of a flourishing future. When a person’s only experience of the town is during the less prosperous days that is much more difficult. In Rumford, it seems that there is a generational trend when it comes to measuring the town’s potential.

The elders of the community remember the thriving days of Rumford when they were children and saw their parents with steady employment. The population was booming, and older residents remember when Congress Street was filled with shops, banks, restaurants, and bars. There were multiple schools, and multiple churches with services conducted in different languages.
The older residents remember the pristine idyllic Strathglass Park when they were children. When asked about its current condition, they are saddened by the state it is in. Today instead of it being a coveted place to live, it is almost seen by the town as a slum.

As these children grew up, they started witnessing the town’s decline. In some cases, they were born during this time. Their elders spoke of the “good old days” longingly, something slowly sinking into the past. Many of this generation were encouraged to leave Rumford after high school to seek better opportunities elsewhere. The mill business was shrinking in manpower every year and opportunities in town were not as plentiful.

The next generation of children in Rumford never experienced the prosperous days firsthand. They only know the town as a “has been” place, strongly in a depressed economic state. There were fewer young people in the community and the school system of Rumford and Mexico consolidated. Living in a “has been” place feels like living in a place that only has a past. In speaking with a young person in the community about this research they were genuinely surprised that someone wanted to study the Park, and that there was something about the Park to study. They were also confused that someone not from the area would travel to study it.

To close the generational perspective gap, it would be beneficial to open lines of communication between the young people of the town and the town elders, to share their stories and experiences.
6. Opportunities and Recommendations

The difficulties that are interfering with a reactivation of the Strathglass Park community are like difficulties faced by many small rural historic communities across America that have lost their industry and lack capital. But more capital alone will not solve the challenge of preserving and reactivating Strathglass Park. Rumford's mill is still operational, but the massive loss of jobs and tax money since the 1960s has put the town in a very different and challenging situation. In a town built to serve the mill, what happens when the mill no longer needs the town?

A preservation strategy for Strathglass Park must be tailored specifically to that community and address multiple problems simultaneously. Through conversations with town residents, a set of relevant challenges emerged and have prompted the framework of recommendations described in this last section.

To benefit the people of Strathglass Park, the creation of a new program that combines the use of Historic Tax Credits and Section 203(k) Rehab Mortgage Insurance, and a modification of the existing ARPA Affordable Homeownership Program is recommended. To attract previous residents to return and invest in Rumford's future, bringing back the historic New England tradition of Old Home Days is suggested. Also recommend is the creation of a grade school lesson plan surrounding Rumford's mill history, connecting young people with town elders, and creating an exercise to allow young people to discover the architectural treasures present in their town.
6.1 Addressing Economic Challenges

Logistically, the economic challenges of reactivating the Park present the biggest barriers. Finding funding sources through loans or grants will be necessary to offset the higher price tag of appropriate renovations. It is probable that more than one funding source will be necessary to make a renovation project financially feasible and therefore stacking incentives will be a good strategy.

20% HTC + Section 203 (k) Rehab Mortgage Insurance loan

The 20% Historic Tax Credit program through the IRS is the most well-known incentive. This program does, however, require the project to abide by SOI Standards and requires the property to be income-producing. Strathglass Park presents an interesting opportunity for this requirement. It would be possible for a homeowner to live in half of a duplex while renovating the other half to rent. The property must be income-producing for only five years.

Section 203 (k) of the National Housing Act is also a financial tool that can be used in Strathglass Park to secure a loan to include the purchase (or refinancing) of a house and the cost of rehabilitation. Called Rehab Mortgage Insurance, it allows homeowners and homebuyers to finance a mortgage which could not be done through a typical mortgage in the case of the Strathglass duplexes.\footnote{“203(k) Rehab Mortgage Insurance,” HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), accessed May 11, 2022, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/sfh/203k/203k--df.} In a standard mortgage, when an individual wants to borrow money for a house, the lending institution requires that the house be valued at least the amount of money being
lent. This way, if the borrower defaults on their payments, the lending institution can recuperate their money by selling the house.

The Strathglass duplexes will require more money for rehabilitation than the duplexes are currently worth. No lending institution could responsibly make this loan. The Section 203 (k) Rehab Mortgage Insurance loans are provided through any Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-approved mortgage lender and are insured through the Federal Housing Administration. The loan can be taken as a 15 or 30-year fixed-rate mortgage.194

A program at Strathglass Park can be implemented for individuals to buy (or refinance) an entire duplex through Section 203 (k), taking out the amount required to purchase the property and rehabilitate. The FHA mortgage limit for a two-family home in Oxford County is $538,650.195 In addition to the loan, the Historic Tax Credit program can be used by renting the side of the duplex the owner will not be residing in.

There is already a strong Section 8 program in the Park, this could be carried on through that rental, preserving this subsidized housing. In place of Section 8, another option could be to make the rental affordable and stack other incentives such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).

Stacking

The State of Maine has other preservation incentives that could be stacked on to the 20% Historic Tax Credit, offsetting the cost of renovations even more. If meticulously planned, there could be an enormous opportunity to combine multiple types of funding. For instance, a resource that is currently not being utilized is the help of the Strathglass Park Preservation Society.
## STATE OF MAINE FINANCE & FUNDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Maine Historic Preservation Commission</th>
<th>Historic Preservation Revolving Loan Fund w/ Preservation Easement (94-089 Chapter 815)</th>
<th>Endangered Historic Properties (EHP)</th>
<th>Provides funds to qualified nonprofit organizations in Maine to acquire EHPs &amp; sell with preservation easements/covenants</th>
<th>Up to $25,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maine Historic Preservation Commission</td>
<td>-State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (Small193F or Substantial194F), -Affordable Housing Rehabilitation Credit Increase</td>
<td>Income-producing Historic Structures</td>
<td>State Rehabilitation Tax Credits for Certified Qualified Rehabilitation Expenditures (CQRE)</td>
<td>Small: $50k-$250k (CQREs): 25% Substantial: +$250k (CQREs): 25% (must also claim Federal 20% HTC) Affordable Housing Increase: + 5%-10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPS through Maine Historic Preservation Commission</td>
<td>Historic Preservation Fund Grants195F</td>
<td>Historic Preservation Projects</td>
<td>Matching grants for architectural or archaeological survey or pre-development projects</td>
<td>1:1 matching grants between $5,000 - $24,995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine Preservation</td>
<td>1772 Foundation Matching Grant196F</td>
<td>Historic Preservation Projects in Maine</td>
<td>Matching grants for small components of preservation projects (exterior finish restoration, repointing, porches, sill repair, etc.)</td>
<td>1:1 matching grants of up to $10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. State of Maine historic preservation finance and funding.

---

Reframing “Preservation”

If 100 people were asked what “historic preservation” means, there may be 100 different responses. Historic preservation can mean many different things. It is common, however, that people can associate historic preservation with elitist agendas, strict guidelines, a taking of personal property, and overpriced home repairs. Historic preservation is sometimes thought of as only appeasing a small group of wealthy people who want to freeze a historic building in time, not only making it inconvenient for modern living but nearly impossible to afford. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are seen as very strict guidelines that offer little to no leeway for the property owner. This is not entirely true.

Following these guidelines would be necessary if the property were to receive government money, such as the 20% Historic Tax Credit, to help fund restoration or rehabilitation. However, this is not the only way to preserve. In the case of Strathglass Park, this may be unobtainable for many property owners and perhaps not the ideal course of action. The most important thing for the Park is to get people into the duplexes. There are some vacancies, some a half of a duplex, some the entire duplex.

If abiding by the Secretary standards is something a property owner does not wish to do, it does not mean that they are not practicing “preservation.” Just keeping the homes functioning safely is an act of preserving. However, if a property owner does not wish to follow the Standards because of financial reasons, it would be beneficial to perform a cost-analysis to see if there is a difference in cost. It could be
possible that the financial incentives afforded for following the guidelines could work out to be the same or less expensive than renovating a duplex without incentives.

If the community is leery of preservation, it is possible to omit this word entirely and reframe preservation goals using different language:

Strathglass Park is a subdivision of brick duplexes, that survive mostly intact since 1901. They are not only aesthetically beautiful, but they are extremely well-built. It would be impossible to build such structures today. The amount of brick, granite, wood—assembled with such craftsmanship and designed by a man famous for building luxury mansions on Fifth Avenue, NYC—would be far too expensive to duplicate in our modern world. These building have survived in a solid state for over a century. There is no reason to let them go to waste when they can still fulfill a need. If only cosmetic repairs are done, and maintenance is kept up, they can survive for at least another century, probably more. Some duplexes do need more extensive repairs but putting money into bringing these duplexes up to code will absolutely pay off financially in the future. This residential community is important to Rumford because it helps tell the history of the town’s industrial past when mill managers lived there with the latest modern amenities at affordable rents. The Park has the potential to thrive one more, just like it did in the early 20th century. The foundations are solid, the location is central, and the landscaped development is perfect for families with children. These are the reasons why measures should be taken to ensure these extremely well-built duplexes can continue being useful to the people of Rumford. It would be a waste of an irreplaceable resource if they are
neglected and left to deteriorate, or if parts of the duplexes are replaced with cheap materials that cause the integrity of the structure to degrade faster.

In the context of Strathglass Park, preservation has a specific goal which is to allow the material fabric of the Park to continue to remain useful, and by doing this, strengthen the community and foster a safe space for people to thrive and root themselves. Preservation does not have to prove a point, so the word is not necessary to achieve the desired outcome.
PROPOSED MODIFICATION TO THE AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM.

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA)\textsuperscript{201}

Another financial tool useful for Strathglass Park is a modification to the current Affordable Homeownership Program through ARPA.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{arpa_fund_distribution_maine.png}
\caption{ARPA Fund distribution in Maine (in millions).}
\end{figure}

ARPA, known as the COVID-19 Stimulus Package or simply the American Rescue Plan was signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021. The $1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill was passed for the purpose of helping America recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, which began one year prior. It built upon the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which was passed March 27, 2020, and signed into law by former President Donald Trump.

ARPA allotted approximately $4.6 billion to the State of Maine, which was allocated to several programs. $3.6 billion went towards various recovery efforts like public health, stimulus payments, business supports, broadband infrastructure, etc. $119 million went to the newly created Local Fiscal Recovery Program, which infused Federal funds into Maine towns and cities to support their economic recovery. The remaining $1 billion went towards the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan, supporting Maine businesses and enhancing job training as well as investing in Maine people and communities. Part of the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan is an allocation of $50 million to create the Affordable Homeownership Program, run by the Maine State Housing Authority.

---

This new program responds to Maine’s current affordable housing crisis by incentivizing real estate developers to “create modestly sized and prices homes that will appeal to first-time homebuyers or other homebuyers who earn up to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI) and would be attracted to homes more appropriately sized and priced than many available today.”\footnote{Maine State Housing Authority, “2022 Affordable Homeownership Program” (mainehousing.org, April 11, 2022), 3.} To be eligible for these forgivable loans the developer must plan on constructing a single-family housing development with a minimum of five single-family “Affordable Homeownership Units.” An Affordable Homeownership Unit is defined as “a new (never previously occupied), owner-occupied single-family home,” that meets the criteria of the program.\footnote{Ibid.} The maximum forgivable loan varies depending on which county the housing development is located. In Oxford County (where Rumford is located), the maximum forgivable loan is $60,000 per Affordable Homeownership Unit. With a minimum of five single-family homes needed to qualify for the loan, the minimum total loan amount is $300,000 and can be as much as $1.4 million.

The Affordable Homeownership Program outline does not explain why a unit must be new and never previously occupied to qualify for the program. In the case of Strathglass Park, there are approximately nine units (duplex halves) that are vacant, some of which are not habitable in their current condition.\footnote{According to the Rumford Economic Development Director.} These units in need of renovation could greatly benefit from this program if the criteria were altered to include vacant properties that do not currently meet market standards.
Opening the program to historic homes such as the Strathglass duplexes would have additional benefits apart from providing a “modestly sized and priced” home for first-time homebuyers or others below the 120% AMI mark. The forgivable loans through the Maine State Housing Authority could fund affordable homes for families while simultaneously preserving Maine’s history and culture and enriching Maine communities. The approximate nine half duplexes could qualify as a housing development, and they could be renovated in one project—greatly improving Strathglass Park exponentially in a short time.
OLD HOME DAYS

A tradition was started during the last year of the 19th Century in New Hampshire. It was around this time that rural New England was losing many residents to the West or to big city industrialization. Governor Frank Rollins proposed to have annual town reunions in the summer, lasting from one day to one week. Aptly named “Old Home Days.”

The purpose for this tradition was both recreational and economic. Towns were suffering with the loss of residents. With automation of agriculture, losses from the Civil War, and big city industrialization—towns were hurting financially. Old Home Days pulled people back and reminded them of where they came from. For stirring up old fond memories, nothing is stronger than being in the physical place. Governor Rollins’ hope was that people would consider buying second homes or moving back into the community. The reunion of the town was hoped to boost town morale and spirit of the place.

This tradition gradually spread to other places in New England, including Maine. Some towns still honor this tradition. It is unclear if Rumford ever participated in an Old Home Day tradition, but Strathglass Park held annual reunions at one point. In a newspaper article from July 31, 1996, it mentions that the fifth annual Strathglass reunion was held on July 28.210 This is the only mention of the reunion in the Strathglass archive.

A Rumford Old Home Days celebration and a Strathglass reunion could be overlapped to attract former residents to the town. The town is in need of outside investors, and the best investors would be people who have a connection to the town and to the Park. Many former residents of the area moved away to seek greater financial opportunities, so there may be former residents in a position to make an investment in the future of their old town.

A theme of the festivities could be focused on community reinvestment. There could be factors to incentivize investment—such as low or no interest loans, the creation of a town revolving fund, or town-owned properties given away for $1.00 with stipulations that improvements must be made within a certain timeframe.

6.2 Addressing Community Challenges

POCKETS OF PRESERVATION

In the Rumford community, from speaking with people and observing activities around town there seems to be pockets of preservation and rejuvenation happening independently of each other. For example, downtown Congress Street recently replaced all curbs and sidewalks—a multimillion dollar job. Across town, a family takes a vacant blighted building and restores it back to its former glory—creating a warm and safe home to root that family to the town. In Strathglass Park, the massive granite entrance gate is repointed, and light is illuminated for the first time in 50 years—planting a seed of hope for the future of the mill worker enclave.

If these efforts and energies could be joined together as one town movement, it would not only be more powerful but could serve to unite the town. In joining the isolated energies together, the movement becomes contagious and stronger.
SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

“It is like a section of New York transferred to the edge of the woods.”211

As an outsider experiencing the charm and peculiarity of Rumford, it’s easy to see how rare and significant the town is. Perhaps as someone who grew up there, the rareness might be looked over because it’s of its familiarity. This especially may be true for the younger people of the town. Having town history as part of the school curriculum could be an engaging way to invite the young people of the town to participate in the history of the town.

There are a wealth of historical documents and photographs in the Rumford Area Historical Society. These can be used to curate an engaging and personal student history curriculum for a section of the school term. The small town offers numerous sites for fieldtrips, where lectures and activities could be taught and experienced.

With a large elder population and nursing homes in the area, part of the process could be conversations and oral interviews with people who have lived in Rumford their whole lives. Creating a connection between the young generation and the older generation would be valuable for both parties.

Rumford’s collection of buildings would be impressive for any town. the fact that such an extraordinary collection is found in a small mill town in rural Maine makes it that much more impressive. Congress Street could rival any Main Street in America, architecturally.

211“A Canadian Who Owns a City,” 98.
The collection of buildings by prominent architects may serve as an interesting lens for young people to experience the context of their own buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rumford Building</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Other Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strathglass Duplexes</td>
<td>C.P.H. Gilbert</td>
<td>Ukrainian Institute of America, NYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset Street Buildings</td>
<td>Donn Barber</td>
<td>Old New York Cotton Exchange, NYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathglass Building</td>
<td>Stone, Carpenter &amp; Willson</td>
<td>Union Station, Providence, RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic’s Institute</td>
<td>Miller &amp; Mayo</td>
<td>Central Fire Station Portland, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Building</td>
<td>Harry S. Coombs</td>
<td>Colonial Theater, Augusta, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Library</td>
<td>John Calvin Stevens</td>
<td>State Street Congregational Church Portland, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumford Falls Power Company Building</td>
<td>Henry J. Hardenbergh</td>
<td>Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, NYC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Conclusions

Strathglass Park and the Rumford area have been dealing with slow economic decline and a steadily diminishing population since 1967. As early as the 1970s, the importance and urgency of preservation has been acknowledged by members of the community. Many people have stepped forward to help and been successful in isolated preservation projects. The obstacles faced today by Rumford and by Strathglass Park are complicated and multidimensional, spanning economic difficulties and community challenges.

Strathglass Park is an architecturally significant residential development, important to the history of American industry and important to the town of
Rumford. Planned meticulously in 1901, it offered working men a reliable, affordable, convenient, and beautiful home for them and their families. The semi-enclosed granite walls, the park-like setting, and the duplex house-type encouraged community. The mill was prosperous, and the town of Rumford thrived—until it didn’t. With the termination of the maintenance program, the structure that Strathglass Park was built upon started to crack. Duplexes that were never meant to have two owners started looking like two separate halves.

Strathglass has remained affordable, but deferred maintenance and vacancies over the past decades have weakened the material fabric, and many restorations are needed to stabilize the community. Those that see Strathglass as important only in an architectural sense, would push for strict SOI Standard rehabilitation of the duplexes. However, taking the town of Rumford into account this approach may not make logical sense.

The community needs stabilization and reactivation foremost, so that the spirit of Strathglass Park’s original conception can live on and continue to be community focused. There is a history of outsiders swooping into Rumford as self-proclaimed saviors, sure they have figured out how to “save Rumford.” These projects fall through, the outsiders leave, and Rumford is in a worse position than when the project started. There is no easy fix to save Rumford, just as there is no easy fix to save Strathglass Park. The solution will be multifaceted and respond to economic challenges as well as to social and cultural challenges. Fixing the buildings will be the easy part.
8. Bibliography


http://www.strathglass-heritage.co.uk/chisholm-trail/.


Minutes and Documents of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the Year Ending April 30, 1898. New York: The Martin B. Brown Company, Printers and Stationers, 1898.


Appendix A

Hugh J. Chisholm’s NYC Townhome & His Industrialist Neighbor

813 & 812 Fifth Avenue

61. 813 Fifth Avenue (middle) and 812 Fifth Avenue (right). Source: Museum of the City of New York.
Hugh Chisholm’s primary residence—when not in Rumford or at the family farm (Strathglass Farm) in Westchester county—was 813 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Fifth Avenue at the turn of the century was lined with mansions of the Gilded Age. Between 59th and 78th Streets was referred to as the “Gold Coast,” or “Millionaire Row.” 813 Fifth Avenue was between 61st and 62nd Street, across from the southern end of Central Park, close to the Central Park Zoo.

While conducting research, an interesting fact about Chisholm’s Fifth Avenue neighbor surfaced, which connects to Rumford and Strathglass Park to another important company town. Living at 812 Fifth Avenue was George Gibson McMurtry (1838-1915), president of the Apollo Iron & Steel Company. Under his presidency, the company flourished and had the opportunity to expand. However, there was no more room in Apollo to expand so McMurtry convinced the directors of the company to purchase land downstream to build a new town and mill.

McMurtry spearheaded the building of the mill, and the founding of an entirely new town. Like Chisholm, he toured Europe and Russia looking at industrial villages there. In returning, he started plans for the building of a new town: Vandergrift.

His dream, “included clean water, parks, a cultural center and comfortable homes for his workers.” He hired Frederick Law Olmsted, already a

---

A distinguished landscape architect, to lay out and design the town. Vandergrift started to be built in 1895.

Around 1900, McMurtry retired a very wealthy man and moved to 812 Fifth Avenue, next door to Hugh Chisholm. Chisholm had been working feverishly to build his own town in Rumford, Maine. Around 1900 the mill was being built and more and more workers were arriving to the town each day with no place to live. Temporary homes and huts were created until the family could build something more permanent.

It is very interesting to speculate the conversations that could have been shared between these two industrialists. One year later Chisholm founded the Rumford Realty Company for the purpose of building modern, clean, affordable

worker housing under the same welfare capitalist ideals of Vandergrift. A landscape
architect and an accomplished New York City architect started plans on Strathglass
Park that year.

Both 813 and 812 Fifth Avenue were demolished in 1961. The Gilded Age
mansions had been on their last legs and a developer replaced them with a large
modern apartment building which still stands today. Before Chisholm’s 813 was
demolished, an anonymous arts recovery society salvaged the four limestone
Atlantes (sculptural supports in the form of a man) that were on the façade and
donated them to the Brooklyn Museum. They can still be seen in the Steinberg
Family Sculpture Garden.
63. Atlante, from Hugh J. Chisholm Mansion, 813 Fifth Avenue, NYC. Source: Brooklyn Museum.
64. View of "The Island" from south of Rumford. Looking directly up Congress Street. Photo by author.


68. Congress Street looking south, 2022. Photo by author.
70. Greater Rumford Community Center, 2022. Photo by author.

Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions

1. What is your relationship to Rumford and Strathglass Park?
2. Do you have any historical connection to the Park?
3. What are your feelings about Strathglass Park?
4. Do you think the history of the park is important today? Should this history be preserved?
5. What are the main challenges facing the Park, in your opinion?
6. In your opinion, how do you think the park is viewed by those living in Rumford?
7. Is the mill’s existence still central to the politics of Rumford?
8. How do you think the mill is viewed by those living in Rumford?
9. If you could envision the park being redeveloped in the best way, what would that look like?
10. Could Strathglass Park’s preservation be beneficial to the people of Rumford? Do you think restoration work there could spur other development and invite new economic opportunities to Rumford?
Appendix D

Donald E. Sackheim letter attributing Strathglass Park to C.P.H. Gilbert

745 Orange Street
New Haven, Ct. 06511
January 7, 1982

Director
Greater Rumford Area Historical Society, Inc.
Box 307
Rumford, Maine 04276

Mr. or Ms. Director:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I am sending to Mr. Earle Shuttleworth, State Historic Preservation Officer for Maine. The letter is self-explanatory, and I hope will be of interest to you. I would very much appreciate any light you could shed on the questions it raises.

Sincerely yours,

Donald E. Sackheim

Donald E. Sackheim
Mr. Earle Shuttleworth
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
31 Western Avenue
Augusta, Maine 04330

January 7, 1982

Dear Mr. Shuttleworth:

An article by Robert P. Bourassa in the January-February 1981 issue of American Preservation identifies "Cass H. Gilbert" as the architect of Stratglass Park, built 1901-2, in Rumford. I am currently writing a Ph.D. dissertation at Yale which deals in part with Cass Gilbert and having identified virtually every published item on either him or his buildings, and having labored through huge collections of his personal papers and office records at both the Library of Congress and the New-York Historical Society, I've come across absolutely nothing to indicate that he ever designed any workers' housing in rural Maine. I strongly suspect that the architect of Stratglass Park was not Cass Gilbert, but C.P.H. Gilbert ([first name Charles], also of New York, quite another man, and no relation.

Mr. Bourassa's sources for information seem to have been the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the Rumford Historical Society. As a first step in trying to check the accuracy of the attribution to Cass Gilbert, I've obtained a copy of the National Register nomination form for the Park completed by your office, to see what sort of documentation it cites. The only source it mentions is an article from the Rumford Falls Times from June 1902, which it quotes. Unfortunately the quoted portion refers only to "Mr. Gilbert," although the nomination itself later mentions "Cass H. Gilbert."

A second piece of documentation, not mentioned in the National Register nomination, is apparently a letter from the builder of the park, Henry W. Chisholm, to "Gilbert," his architect, quoted by Mr. Bourassa in his article. Perhaps this letter is in the possession of, or known to, the Rumford Historical Society.

Alas, neither of these sources is, so far, convincing. Does the article in the Rumford Falls Times refer anywhere specifically to Cass Gilbert? (For that matter, is it likely that a local newspaper in rural Maine in 1902 would have been likely to know the difference between Cass Gilbert and C.P.H. Gilbert?) Is the letter from Chisholm to Gilbert addressed specifically to Cass Gilbert? Does it indicate the address in New York to which it was mailed (and which could be checked against Cass Gilbert's and C.P.H. Gilbert's addresses, respectively)?

Cass Gilbert never used a middle initial in his name; in fact I'm not aware that he even had one. Furthermore, in 1901-2 he was at the crucial point of solidifying a national reputation — an explicit...
goal he had had at least since the 1880s. He had come to prominence in 1895 by winning the competition for the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul, his hometown. But he knew that in order to truly rise to the top of his profession, he had to look toward New York; and by 1899 he had received the commission to design the Broadway Chambers office building in that city, a major skyscraper of the day — and late that same year he strove furiously, and ultimately successfully, to win the competition for the United States Custom House there. It was this win which finally enabled him to feel secure enough to move to New York in 1900. Although he had designed many houses in his early, rather struggling days in St. Paul, after about the mid-1890s he designed far fewer; and after his move to New York, none at all. Rather, he concentrated on the sort of commercial and institutional commissions of which national reputations were made: banks, office buildings, courthouses, public libraries, city halls, college buildings, and private clubs. Although certainly it is not impossible, it is highly unlikely that in 1901 he would have devoted any attention to the professionally insignificant subject of workers’ housing in rural Maine. (Nor did he have the slightest sympathy for workingmen or their lives and problems.) In the absence of hard proof, I think the notion is simply not credible.

C.P.H. Gilbert, on the other hand, was, in 1901, not a newcomer to New York, but a well-established architect there — with a practice devoted primarily to domestic commissions. Although these commissions were mostly for the large townhouses of rich people (including, ironically, Frank W. Woolworth, who later employed Cass Gilbert to design the Woolworth Building), it is far more likely that he would have somehow become involved in Strathglass Park than that Cass Gilbert — aiming toward the presidency of the American Institute of Architects (achieved in 1908) — would have. And C.P.H. Gilbert virtually always used his first three initials, rather than his full name. There is something very skewed about that reference to "Cass H. Gilbert."

I hope all this will be of interest to you, but even more, I hope you may be able to send me a more complete indication of just what that Rumford Falls article says, or of what the letter from Hugh Chisholm contains, or of what other information, if any, your office has on the architect of Strathglass Park. Among other things, I'm compiling a comprehensive bibliography on the works of Cass Gilbert, and without more convincing proof that Strathglass Park is indeed one of them, I'm not inclined to include Mr. Bourassa's article in it. The article has, however, already been entered into the (now computerized) Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals under "Cass Gilbert," and unless the error, if it is one, is corrected, it will thus live on forever and be spread far and wide.

Sincerely yours,

Donald E. Sackheim

cc: Greater Rumford Area Historical Society, Inc.
745 Orange Street
New Haven, Ct. 06511
January 7, 1982

Director
Greater Rumford Area Historical Society, Inc.
Box 307
Rumford, Maine 04276

Mr. or Ms. Director:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I am sending to Mr. Earle Shuttleworth, State Historic Preservation Officer for Maine. The letter is self-explanatory, and I hope will be of interest to you. I would very much appreciate any light you could shed on the questions it raises.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Donald E. Sackheim
## Index

### A

Apollo Steel Company ................................................................. 31

### C

C.P.H. Gilbert ................................................................. ii, iv, vi, vii, 2, 53, 58, 60, 61, 63, 64, 66, 67, 68, 129, 152
Cass Gilbert ................................................................................. 58, 59, 66, 68, 133
company town ........................................................................... 1, 2, 6, 9, 21, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 38, 110
Cumberland Mills ............................................................... v, 28, 111, 138

### F

Frederick Law Olmstead .......................................................... 31

### G

George McMurtry ........................................................................ 31
George Pullman ........................................................................... 33

### H

Historic Tax Credit ................................................................. 82, 96, 103, 116, 117, 118, 120
Hugh Chisholm ........................................................................... i, 7, 16, 17, 31, 34, 37, 48, 52, 53, 61, 64, 71, 142, 143

### J

John Calvin Stevens ................................................................... v, 28, 129

### L

Lowell ......................................................................................... ii, v, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26, 33, 38, 111, 135, 136, 137, 139
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit ......................................................... 117

### M

McKim, Mead & White ................................................................. 2, 23, 28, 38, 138
Mill Girls ...................................................................................... 25, 26, 132, 136
N
Nathan F. Barrett ............................................................... 33
National Register of Historic Places .................................. ii, 4, 7, 28, 66, 81, 82, 90, 103, 111, 138

O
Oakgrove ........................................................................... 28
Old Home Days ............................................................... iv, 115, 126, 127

P
pulp and paper .............................................................. 7, 18, 76, 101

R
Rumford Realty Company ................................................ ii, v, 36, 37, 39, 43, 56, 75, 144

S
Section 203 (k) ............................................................... 96, 116, 117
Slatersville ............................................................... v, 21
Solon S. Beman ............................................................... 33

T
The Chisholm Brothers ..................................................... 17
The Island ............................................................... iv, vii, 39, 146

V
Vandergrift ........................................................................ v, 31, 139, 142, 143, 144

W
Waldo Pettengill ............................................................. vi, 36, 48
worker housing .................................................. 2, 7, 27, 28, 36, 106, 111, 144