

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUNCOOK VILLAGE

Suncook Village is one of the best-preserved small mill towns in New Hampshire. Built at natural waterfalls on the Suncook River, near the confluence of the Suncook and Merrimack Rivers, Suncook straddles the border between Pembroke and Allenstown, lying in two towns.

The first water-powered mills were built here in the 1730s. Sawmills and gristmills were augmented by fulling mills for cleansing woolen cloth, by trip-hammers for blacksmithing, and by mills for making paper from cloth rags. The village was also noted for its window glass factory, operated by the Chelmsford Glass Company on Glass Street between 1839 and about 1850. Deep beds of glacial clay made Suncook a center of brick manufacturing. By 1880, brickyards near Suncook produced 5.5 million bricks a year.

In 1811, the Pembroke Cotton Factory Company built a brick textile mill just below the Main Street bridge. This first mill was replaced by a second, which burned in 1859. The third Pembroke Mill (now Emerson Apartments) was built at the falls in 1860. The spinning and weaving of cotton transformed Suncook Village into a small metropolis. The advent of the railroad brought hundreds of French-Canadian families who were recruited to work in the mills after 1860 and quickly became predominant in the population of the village.

A second corporation, the Webster Manufacturing Company, built another mill just above the bridge in 1865; this burned in 1983. A third corporation, the China Manufacturing Company, built the China Mill on the Allenstown side of the river in 1868. China Mill is still operating.

The waters of the Suncook River generated 2,200 horsepower to turn the turbines of the three mills. By 1900, the mills employed 1,555 men, women, and children, producing 36 million yards of cloth each year.

The village that grew up around these mills was largely built of wood until the 1870s. During the 1870s and 1880s, at least seventeen fires consumed much of the wooden town and spurred the rebuilding of the downtown in locally-made brick.

One great fire, on January 25, 1876, destroyed many buildings on the western side of Main Street in Pembroke. The town widened the street on the west as merchants erected new brick blocks. A second great fire, on August 14, 1878, consumed much of the east side of Main Street. Again, this side of the street was widened as new brick structures replaced the old wooden buildings. A third fire, on December 11, 1886, burned the ten-year-old brick blocks on the western side of the street north of the clocktower building. Buildings 3, 4, and 5 on the map were constructed after the fire of 1886.

Many of these new buildings were designed and constructed by local builder-architect Samuel S. Ordway (c.1834-1909). Suncook Village displays excellent examples of brickwork and is one of the most intact small nineteenth-century commercial centers in southern New Hampshire.

The clocktower building, designed by Ordway in 1879 for merchants Charles Williams and J. L. Hosmer, has always been privately owned. Its clock, however, belongs to the Town of Pembroke, having been purchased in 1879 through small private contributions. The E. Howard Company clock was restored in 2001.

MEET ME IN SUNCOOK!

A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF

SUNCOOK VILLAGE

**PEMBROKE AND ALLENSTOWN
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

***SHOWING THE BOUNDARIES
OF THE
NATIONAL REGISTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT***

Published by the *Meet Me in Suncook* Committee to foster appreciation for historic Suncook Village, to encourage the preservation of its architecture, and to support the rehabilitation of the 1879 village clock and clocktower.

KEY TO THE MAP

1. Suncook United Methodist Church, built in 1911 to replace a building constructed in 1884.
2. Joseph Wilkins' Block, built after the fire of 1878.
3. Osgood's Inn, built to replace an earlier and larger brick hotel destroyed in the fire of 1886.
4. Addison N. Osgood's block, built after the fire of 1886 and first occupied by the department store of Simpson, Miller & Co. The building had an Odd Fellows' Hall in a third story, which burned in 1914.
5. T. J. Otterson's Block, built after the fire of 1886.
6. Charles Williams and J. L. Hosmer's clocktower building, built by contractor Samuel Ordway in 1879.
7. A row of five wooden boarding houses, built by Pembroke Mills before 1858.
- 8, 9, 10. Addison N. Osgood's Block, Piper's Block (now Gordon's), and Tennant's Block (now Rainville's Shoes)—three individual properties built after the fire of 1878 to appear as one large city block.
11. Jacob E. Chickering's Jewelry Store, built c. 1868.
12. Natt B. and Joseph E. Emery's Block, built about 1869 at the intersection long called "Emery's Corner" (now Mei's Chinese restaurant).
13. Jacob Noyes' Block, built about 1865 and once the headquarters of the *Cercle Dramatique et Litteraire*, which maintained the first library in Suncook Village.
14. Pembroke Mill (later Emerson Lounge Company), built in 1860 (now Emerson Apartments).
15. China Mill, built in 1868; still operating.
16. C. P. Morse Building, 1878. One-third of the original building, nearest the river, has been lost. Adjacent to the south stood Hayes Sterliding and Hall (1876), which served as Allenstown's town hall and an opera house. It burned in 1912 and again in 1971.
17. Site of Webster Mill, built in 1865, burned in 1983.
18. Sargent House, 1880. This was the home of Philip Sargent (1822-1898), a local brick manufacturer.
19. Site of Mill Agent's House. Built as a tavern in the early 1800s by local brickmaker Sterling Sargent, the house was remodeled around 1860 as a home for David Lyman Jewell, agent (superintendent) of the Pembroke Manufacturing Company. It was remodeled again after 1900. It was damaged by fire in 2001, demolished in 2003, and replaced by a new residence.
20. Church of St.-Jean-Baptiste (St. John the Baptist). Named for the patron saint of Canada, St. John's Catholic Church was built in 1873. Its stained glass windows were installed in 1881 and the steeple, with a 1,700-pound bell, was dedicated in 1885.

