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Louis A. Ploch

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TURNER—A STUDY  
IN PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE

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TURNER—A STUDY  
IN PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1947, at the request of the Maine Agricultural Extension Service, personnel of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Extension workers studied three Maine towns: Addison in Washington County, Easton in Aroostook County, and Turner in Androscoggin County. The prime purpose of the studies was to determine the factors related to participation in Extension and other community-based activities. The results of the research were summarized in Hay, et al. (1949).

The 1986-88 study of Turner analyzed in this publication is a component of a research project which focuses also on Addison, and Easton. The current study is not, per se, a duplication of the earlier research. The two projects employed different research methodologies. In 1947, interviewers utilized a set questionnaire to interview persons in "open country households in [the] three selected towns as to their participation in rural organizations and Extension activities."

In the 1986-1988 study the key informant was used to obtain data related to the structure and functioning of key community institutions in the three communities. Social change was a major focus of the studies.

To obtain the necessary data for each of the major social institutions—economics, education, family, government, religion—and the process of social stratification, persons with the requisite knowledge or experience were interviewed. In Turner, there were approximately eighty informants, many of whom were interviewed two or more times. The interviews, with a few exceptions, were tape recorded for later analysis. Most of the interview tapes were transcribed verbatim.

In addition to the interviews, sources of information were town reports, two published histories, several other local documents, and Turner items in Lewiston newspapers.

The publication by Hay, et al. (1949:4) contains this short summary of Turner:

Turner, in Androscoggin County, is a dairy and general farming area with some infiltration of "rural residents" employed in the nearby centers of Auburn, Lewiston, and Livermore Falls. Some of the organizations, such as churches, function chiefly by neighborhoods, while others, including farmers' cooperatives, operate on a town or community basis. Most of the formal organization activities are concentrated in the two principal villages in the town.

Although the quotation was written some forty years ago, and many changes have taken place, it is not completely inaccurate in the late 1980s. Although the number of farms has decreased drastically, Turner continues to be one of Maine's most important agricultural centers for eggs, apples, and milk. Long time residents continue to visualize it as a rural/agricultural community.

Neighborhoods, particularly the three village-like concentrations of Turner Village, Turner Center, and North Turner, continue to have social and psychological meanings. The churches and other organizations, however, are no longer neighborhood centers.

The "infiltration" of rural residents has not only continued, it has become a virtual flood. Throughout the narrative the importance of the process of suburbanization/urbanization for Turner will be highlighted. Turner is one of the most rapidly growing communities in Maine, although it continues to maintain many of its rural, small-town amenities.

*Acknowledgments*—To a very large extent, social research depends upon the cooperation of informants. Particularly when the key informant approach is employed, both the quality and the quantity of the data is informant dependent. To help ensure the informants' full cooperation, they were guaranteed anonymity. Thus, with the exception of two "public" figures, no interviewees' names are mentioned. In a few cases, however, to lend credence to specific statements, the titles or positions of informants are identified. Although they must remain nameless, my sincere appreciation is accorded to the eighty Turner residents who gave freely of their time and insights. And special "thanks" to those persons whom I contacted three, four, and more times.

I will identify one individual who was most helpful to me, but who is quoted just once in the manuscript. Paul Dowe, former Androscoggin 4-H Club leader for the Maine Cooperative Extension Service and Turner resident, was an invaluable aide in the early series of interviews. He opened doors, guided me in the right direction, and helped me to understand and appreciate the community. Thanks, Paul.

At the University of Maine, Mrs. Joan Bouchard, as she has for nearly forty-three years, provided her skilled secretarial services. Dr. Alan S. Kezis, Chairperson of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, in many ways, made the studies possible. The major funding sources were the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station and the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. Appreciation is accorded to the Station and the Center and to their respective Directors, Dr. W.C. Dunham and Dr. D.K. Heasley. My thanks are also extended to Vance E. Dearborn, a long time colleague, and Dr. Michele C. Marra for their helpful critical reviews.

## SOME HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

All communities are products of their past. Some, including Turner, take particular pride in their historical antecedents. Turner has nurtured a tradition of being proud of its past in many ways. Both Turner's centennial (1886) and its bicentennial (1986) were celebrated in grand style. The second Town House (1831) occupies a place of honor in what serves as a village green in Turner Center. In 1988 a brass bell, commissioned by the Turner Bicentennial Committee, was hung at the Town House site. The 1886 centennial parade and celebration were sources of pride and joy to Turner's more than 2,000 residents. A few, somewhat primitive but treasured photographs preserve the memories. One hundred years later the bicentennial parade and celebration were events which will long be remembered—this time on color videotape. A feature of Turner's present and newly renovated town hall is its historical room. The Turner Historical Society and other Turnerphiles have provided the means for present and future generations to take pride in the town's past, and it is hoped, to learn from it to help provide a future befitting of the past.

Turner's history began not in 1786, but in 1765 when the General Court of Massachusetts chartered the town of Sylvester-Canada. The original grant was made to "the heirs and assigns of Captain John Sylvester and his company, for services rendered in the invasion of Canada under Sir William Phipps in 1690" (French 1887:2).<sup>1</sup> The sixty, all male proprietors received legal rights to approximately sixty-three square miles of forest land north of what was New Gloucester in the Territory of Maine.

Fortunately, the two published histories of Turner provide a wealth of detail of the town's unfolding tapestry. The histories and the other sources cited in footnote 1 reveal, on close reading and analysis, the often convoluted trends pertaining to the five major social institutions and the process of social stratification which will be, as mentioned in the introduction, the major focus of this analysis.

For example, for at least the first one hundred years of its existence, organized religion was a major force in Turner. As will be described in a later section, the evolution of organized religion in the town did not follow a straight line path of growth to a peak followed by a straight line of decline as the population did (see center spread).<sup>2</sup>

Obtaining a "settled" minister within a limited time was one of the mandates contained in the original Sylvester-Canada charter. It proved to be a time-con-

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<sup>1</sup>All sources are referenced fully in the Bibliography. In addition to French, see also Willard 1986; Vail et al., 1985; and Bicentennial 1976 (no author).

<sup>2</sup>Wescott (unpublished history of Turner) correlates Turner's social and economic history with fluctuations in its population.

suming and difficult task. Although the original settlers appeared quite homogeneous in their social, cultural, and economic composition, their religious preferences were less than identical.

Fewer than twenty years after the original settlement of the town, religious dissension developed. A group of persons, who preferred the Baptist orientation to the official Congregational/Presbyterian form of the established "meeting," petitioned to be free to form their own congregation. The granting of the petition broke the religious monopoly of the publicly supported church (French 1887:120).

By the mid-1800s, whatever rifts that existed between Turner's Congregational and Baptist congregations located in Turner Village had healed to the point that they often held joint services and exchanged ministers. Later, exercising Yankee/Turner pragmatic thrift, the services alternated between the churches. Warmer weather services were held in the Baptist edifice. In the winter months, the combined congregations met in the Congregational Church, which was easier and less expensive to heat.

As in all fully developed communities, each of the five major social institutions (economic, education, family, government, and religious) have played important roles in Turner's development. French covers each of the institutions but tends to highlight the development of economic enterprises.<sup>3</sup>

French, although he does not state it explicitly, implies that a major motivation of at least some of the original proprietors of Sylvester-Canada was economic gain. No estimates are made of the proprietors' actual gain or loss from their financial stake in their township. It would appear, however, from all the trials and tribulations they experienced in convincing families to settle in their town, the difficulties of obtaining and maintaining a settled minister, and the expenses involved in laying out roads and building the required town house, that they may have profited little from their efforts and expenditures.

Despite these difficulties, the available evidence seems to indicate that Sylvester-Canada/Turner has been relatively prosperous from its late eighteenth century beginning to the late twentieth century. Much of Turner's economic well-being appears to be related to, at a minimum:

- The high value accorded the work ethic and the associated drive to succeed by many of its residents, particularly commercial farmers.
- The topography, soil resources, and climate which are conducive to dairy farming and apple production, two staples of New England agricultural economy.

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<sup>3</sup>In further sections, the functioning of each of the major social institutions in Turner will be analyzed. It is recognized that while each has its own importance, they are complexly interrelated at the community level.



- The abilities, dedication, and pragmatic mind-sets of the town's public officials. Throughout Turner's history, elected and appointed officials have set a pattern of sound economic conservatism, with just enough forward thinking to keep the town on a firm financial basis while meeting the challenges of changing economic and social environments.

The original proprietors were keenly aware of the economic potentials of the numerous mill sites on the Nezinscot and Androscoggin Rivers. They also recognized that if they were to induce entrepreneurs to construct water-powered mills in the semi-wilderness of late eighteenth century Turner, they would have to offer some inducements. In 1774 the proprietors voted to offer a subsidy of "twenty-five Pounds Lawful Money and a 'settling lot' to a person(s) who would build a mill in the town ... fit for sawing [timber] and grinding [grain]" (French 1887:20).

In the same year the proprietors voted to have a bridge built over the Little Androscoggin River so that there would be easy access to "the road lately cleared from Bakers Town [Auburn] to Sylvester." To erect the bridge the successful bidder was reminded that he should "employ a suitable number of hands in the most prudent and cheap way he can" (French 1887:21). The selectmen who have guided Turner's public expenditures over the years, including those in the 1980s, tend to operate by similar pragmatic economic principles.

Most of the mill sites on the Androscoggin and Nezinscot and their tributaries remain, but they have not been utilized for many years. In the 1800s they were vital cogs of Turner's remarkably elaborate manufacturing economy. It is difficult to imagine how this economy occurred in a semi-isolated community without rail or water service or major highway link. Turner became a manufacturing center even with a limited population base. During this era Turner's population never exceeded the 2682 figure attained in 1860. Certainly the availability of water power, abundant supplies of lumber, and agricultural products for processing were important factors. The determined, hard-headed, Yankee sense of hard work, frugality, and rationality of the town's proprietors and leaders were no doubt also important.

Included in Turner's nineteenth century economic profile were a number of lumber mills, a box factory, a major chair manufacturing firm at North Turner, several canneries (corn shops), a can maker, and the Turner Center creamery. All of these businesses were related directly to the town's natural resource base. Nineteenth century Turner was also home to textile manufacturing. Though nearly every farm had a few sheep, and some farmers specialized in them, local production of wool could not keep the looms operating. Although all the wool did not come from local sources, woolen cloth manufacture was embedded into the local economy. By the early 1800s, Gorham's fulling mill was built, which

used "the woolen cloth [which was] manufactured on hand looms in the homes of farmers." The cloth, which was used for menswear, was "fulled, colored, and pressed; and if for Sunday use, it was sheared so as to give it a nice appearance" (French 1887:75).

The operators of the Gorham woolen mill appear to have possessed some of the mechanical abilities and business acumen exhibited by later Turner entrepreneurs. For example, in the 1980s to remain competitive, the largest apple orchardists/packers have installed the latest, automated, electronically controlled apple grading and packing lines. This move will enable them to meet the increasing consumer demands for apples of specific size, appearance, and quality.

By the mid-1800s each of Turner's three village-like population concentrations—Turner Village, Turner Center, and North Turner—were manufacturing centers. The business climate was so healthy that the Turner correspondent for the *Lewiston Evening Journal* could report in 1886 (the centennial year) that "[b]usiness is lively here; there are no idle men around" (Willard 1986:10).

Except for some disastrous fires, the specific causes for the demise of manufacturing in Turner have not been documented. Two reasons for the decline appear to be obvious: the superiority of new sources of energy over water power, and the concentration in the late-nineteenth century of textile manufacturing in or near urban centers in Maine and southern New England.

Although manufacturing had not disappeared completely from Turner by 1906, a flyer published by the apparently newly organized Chamber of Commerce indicates that Turner Village had become a commercial and professional center. Using pitches worthy of a modern television huckster, the advertisements boast that the Village was the locale of at least 19 separate retail or service businesses. They included an undertaking establishment, watch repairmen, feedstore, fish merchant, two general stores which sold everything from staple groceries to clothing, a boarding house, an upholsterer, and the newly established electric car service.

According to the advertisement,

Turner Village offers all the advantages that can be found in the cities. Through its business and professional men it can supply your wants from the time the [local] doctor brings you until he can keep you here no longer and then Turner's undertakers will lay you away (Willard 1986:103-4).

The author of that bit of colorful prose probably would be shocked to learn that eighty-some years later the only commercial service available in Turner Village is a modern gas station/convenience store, complete with pizzas, outside the village proper on relocated Route 4.

Perhaps a hint of what happened to Turner Village and the town's other service centers is telegraphed by the phrase in the Turner Village advertisement:

"and the electric car service." Just as another means of modern transportation, the personal automobile, was a major factor in the decline of the downtown business centers of nearby Auburn and Lewiston (in favor of parking-rich shopping malls), the availability of the electric cars in Turner helped to shift the shopping preferences away from local sources of supply.

Changes also occurred over time in Turner's agricultural economy. During the nineteenth century, nearly every open country residence in Turner was on a farm. Many village families also had a cow or two, some chickens, and perhaps other livestock. By 1940 that situation had changed drastically. The U.S. Census of Agriculture enumerated just 148 farms, many of which were small, part-time operations. But by 1940 commercial agriculture was becoming dominant in the town. Few, if any, Turner residents in the late 1980s would identify the town as a manufacturing or service center. Most, however, would agree that, despite its recent spurt of rural residents, the community is still agriculturally based.

Ever since 1777, when Joseph Leavitt, one of the very first settlers, carried 19 young apple saplings strapped to his back as he traversed a trail through the forest to the then Sylvester-Canada, agriculture has been economically, socially, and psychologically important in Turner.

To test this assumption, in 1986, 16 key informants who included elected and appointed officials, agriculturists, school system personnel, and long-time citizens were asked to rate which of nine phrases best described Turner.<sup>4</sup> "Agricultural" and "rural" were selected most often as the first and second choices. Nine of the sixteen respondents placed "agricultural" in the first or second rank. Ten respondents placed "rural" in the first or second rank. No respondent placed "agricultural" or "rural" below the fifth rank.

During the nineteenth century, when almost all of Turner's rural residents were at least part-time farmers, all able-bodied members of the family were also members of the farm work force. The unspoken norm was, in the spirit of the tale of the Biblical norm, that each individual should add some measure of increase to farm production. It is unlikely that these earlier farmers were aware that they were, in effect, nurturing the work ethic concept for future farmers. It is obvious that this work ethic has been preserved in Turner. Time and again during the interviewing process, when I asked an array of informants if certain residents were held in esteem, their evaluation began with the phrase, "Well, [he/she] is a hard worker."

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<sup>4</sup>Each person was handed a set of nine randomly shuffled index cards which bore one of the following phrases: agricultural, conservative, friendly, education focused, industrial, liberal, religious, rural, suburban. The respondents were requested to arrange the cards so that they ranged from the most descriptive to the least descriptive of Turner.

According to French (1887:67), "The early settlers chose the highlands as best for the first crops, hence they selected farms on the 'Upper Street' and on the 'Lower Street' which run parallel with each other, three fourths of a mile apart." Today Lower Street and Upper Street (and its continuation, the North Parish Road) continue to be the location of a commercial apple orchard as well as several of Turner's largest and most productive dairy farms. It is possible that the original choice of lots on the town's hillsides was based on a little more than that they were judged to be "best for their crop." In addition to the air drainage, a necessity for apple production in New England, the ridges were probably less densely forested than were the valleys. The rational farmer knew that under these circumstances he could get his fields cleared more easily and quickly.

Apple trees were planted on almost every farm, but according to French (1887:102), dairying apparently became the most common commercial farm practice: "The dairy business is perhaps the leading one in town, a large part of the farmers being engaged in it, and several of them quite extensively." French (1887:102) also states, "Some claim that Turner stands first in the State as a dairy town; and it is certain that if any other town challenges her right to this claim, she will find in Turner no mean competitor for the coveted honors." In 1987 two of Turner's remaining dairy farmers assessed the situation in almost identical words.

The burgeoning volume of milk presented a marketing problem to Turner dairy farmers. Supply exceeded local demand. A partial solution to the problem was reached in 1882 with the establishment of the Turner Center Dairy Association. The business abilities of the creamery's management were demonstrated early in its history. The initial concentration was cheese making which "achieved a fair degree of success" (French 1887:104). At first, many farmers in the town did not associate themselves with the creamery because they preferred to make butter.

The creamery operators heard the message, and the plant began to make butter, 450 pounds a day (French 1887:105). Butter making was a natural outlet for Turner's milk. Most of it was produced by Jerseys, a breed well known for the high butterfat content of its milk, a fact not lost on Turner's economically rational farmers.

There was also money to be made in cheese making. In 1885 the cheese factory in North Turner produced over 35 tons of cheese, processing "5200 pounds of milk in one day" (French 1887:103).<sup>5</sup> The two dairy plants proved to be reliable outlets for locally produced milk, and they provided satisfactory returns for the investors.

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<sup>5</sup>By 1903, the Turner Center Creamery was utilizing 14,500,000 pounds of milk per year and shipped "to Auburn 1,000 pounds of butter alone daily" (Willard 1986:116).

By the mid-1880s, apples were also an important commercial crop in Turner. Ancestors of current apple producing families were among the five large orchardists whom French identifies as producers in 1885. In that year Albion Ricker "raised twelve hundred barrels of apples...besides pears and other fruits" (French 1887:101).

Perhaps one of the most unique events in Turner's history was that the town eventually became the owner of its own electric railroad—at the time the only municipally owned, intertown railroad in the United States (Willard 1986:113). As indicated above, Turner's location, off railroad lines (and later, major highways as well), was a factor in the demise of its manufacturing economy. An act of the Maine Legislature in 1903 gave promise of solving many, if not all, of the town's isolation problems (Willard 1986:118). The legislature granted a charter to the privately owned Auburn and Turner Railroad (A.&T.) to construct and to operate an electric railroad from Lake Grove, north Auburn, to Turner Village. Connections could be made at Lake Grove to Lewiston and to Auburn, and thus to steam railroad lines throughout New England and to Montreal, Canada.

Willard includes a most optimistic report, written by the railroad's chief civil engineer, on the potentials for Turner when it became the terminus of the electric road:

The route of the proposed Auburn and Turner Railroad runs through one of the best farming sections in Maine, and in fact of the whole country, with numerous manufacturing industries, and industrious inhabitants, and located just far enough from the existing steam railroads to make them useless, and this road of good benefit (Willard 1986:114).

The advent of the Auburn and Turner Railroad was greeted with considerable enthusiasm and optimism in Turner. The account given in Willard's history indicates, however, that the A.&T. never quite lived up to the expectations of either its proprietors nor Turner's residents. The burning of the Faulkner Woolen Mill in Turner Village was an early setback. The venerable company founded in 1856 was expected to be a major freight shipper on the A.&T. It had been using "several four-horse teams [to] carry the product of these mills to Auburn, and returning, raw material" (Willard 1986:116).

The A.&T. failed twice as a private corporation. Turner's power structure decided that the town's steel rail connection to the outside world must be maintained. Its local representative to the Maine Legislature championed a bill to authorize the town to operate the railroad. The act was passed in 1919. In the spring of 1920 the A.&T. resumed operation, this time as the property of the people of Turner. This act was as close as the town has ever come to sponsoring state socialism.

At first, all seemed to go well. After a few weeks of operation the general manager of the restructured facility was quoted in the *Lewiston Journal* that "It's a lot better than I had expected" (Willard 1986:122).

Service was improved. Under private ownership the first car left Turner at 8:00 a.m. Under municipal management the first trip to Auburn began at 5:15 a.m. A newspaper column quoted by Willard seems to indicate that the early departure time was a factor in transforming Turner into a semi-suburb in the early 1920s:

This departure enables workers in the factories in the city to live at home all the week. Patronage of this first trip of the car shows that it is appreciated and, further, a migration has set in from the city to points along the road (Willard 1986:124).

The honeymoon did not last long. The basic economic conservatism ingrained in Maine rural life proved to be stronger than whatever benefit the railroad provided to the collective population. At a town meeting on 1 April 1928 the vote was 226 to 203 in favor of discontinuing town ownership of the A.&T. (Willard 1986:125). The closeness of the vote conceals the fact that, apparently, it was on geographical lines. People living in or near the two principal population nodes, Turner Center and Turner Village, apparently were in favor of the town's continuing ownership and operation of the railroad, perhaps to the point of subsidization. Persons living in the western section of town and in North Turner, neither of which were served by the facility, "combined at town meeting to abandon the road" (Willard 1986:126).

It may be the memory of this experience that has raised doubts in the minds of succeeding generations of Turner citizens of the wisdom of engaging in activities not within the normal province of town government. Throughout the balance of this publication, particularly in the economics section, Turner's general reluctance to become involved in the provision of services not traditionally the role of small New England communities will be presented.

## TURNER AS A COMMUNITY

Technically, the town of Turner is a legal creature, created originally by an act of the General Court of Massachusetts in 1765 and chartered as a settled town in 1778. The metes and bounds of Turner as a town are definable and distinguishable. Just where or what constitutes the "community" of Turner is less definable or distinguishable. As in most Colonial era towns, particularly in heavily forested, stream and pond intersected, hill and valley areas, such as Central Maine, the town of Turner became the site of several population concentra-

tions early in its history. Some of the early neighborhoods—Keene's Mills, Howes Corner, Chase's Mills—are now more memories than realities. Over time they lost their ecological and/or social/economic functions. At the time of the USDA study in 1947 and at the present, three of the early neighborhood/villages—North Turner, Turner Village, Turner Center—constitute Turner's population concentrations.<sup>6</sup> These three neighborhoods, unlike the town, have no legally defined borders, nor self government, (see map, center spread). In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century they were vitally important as economic, social, and psychological units.<sup>7</sup> They are far less important today as economic and social centers, but they do continue to have social/psychological meaning. They are the sites of the four churches, the educational complex, and the town hall. Turner Village and Turner Center no longer wage territorial skirmishes as they did in earlier days, but both must be considered when town events are planned. Thus, it is not without historical and present significance that in 1986 the 110-unit parade celebrating Turner's bicentennial as a chartered town began in Turner Village and ended in Turner Center. Never mind the fact that the two villages are separated by approximately a mile of very sparsely populated road, which provided very little usable viewing area for the parade. Similarly, North Turner was tied into the celebration—a number of important events took place at the Boofy Quimby Memorial Hall in North Turner. The B.Q.M.H. and the recreational area that has been developed adjacent to it, were made possible by a substantial gift in memory of a young North Turner boy who died as the result of an automobile accident.

A number of Turner informants, some of whom were strategically involved with the Bicentennial celebration, informed me that it was a community synthesizing event. Apparently, the feelings of tension related to the traditional rivalries among neighborhoods in the town were reduced, if not eradicated, by the successful cooperation of persons from all areas of the community. During interviews, several persons mentioned that the success of the celebration was also a factor in helping to heal a slight rift that had developed between the North Turner, Turner Village, and South Turner units of the Turner Volunteer Fire Company.

If one studies a map of Turner that contains the place names of the early settlements within the town, a clue to their origin is quite discernable. The names of

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<sup>6</sup>South Turner, the area north of the Auburn city line and bordering and near to Route 4 and north for approximately a half mile, is a much less definite interactive neighborhood. Its most important community-like denominator is the South Turner Fire Company, one of three units of the Turner Volunteer Fire Company.

<sup>7</sup>Under the heading "Places," Willard (1986:53) states, "From the earliest days of the town, Turner has always been the sum of its several scattered communities rather than a single entity."

many of them indicate that neighborhoods most often developed at mill sites along the numerous streams and rivers. The natural ecology of Turner was responsible for the siting of Keene's Mill, Chase's Mills, and Merrill Mills.

Each of the surviving larger neighborhood communities—Turner Village, Turner Center, and North Turner—were also developed at or near water power sites. In the days before either steam or electric power generation, the availability of water power at these locations almost ordained that they would become manufacturing centers. Within short time spans they developed into much more than simply places where manufacturing and other economic activities occurred.

Each of these places, in its turn and in its own ways, became social-cultural entities. They never became municipal units in either a legal or a definitive geographical sense. Generations later, the residents of Turner Village, Turner Center, and North Turner still "know" who they are. They identify psychologically and socially with "their" village, not just the town of Turner.

In earlier days, particularly in the late nineteenth century, subcommunities could be and were identified by the school district in which they lived. School districts were then semi-autonomous units. In Turner, as most everywhere in Maine, as the means of communication and transportation improved, many of the more rural district schools were closed. The village schools and the village itself became more important. Eventually, all of the schools were located in Turner Center. This left Turner Village and North Turner without their own school. Each of them lost some sense of local identity as a functioning neighborhood.

In 1988 each of the communities continue to exhibit, however informally and quietly, a sense of being and pride. Any differences or frictions between them are for the most part quite mild and difficult for an outsider (anyone not living in the particular village) to discern with accuracy. Occasionally though, some incident arises that sparks a sense of neighborhood pride and identification. The rift between units of the Turner Volunteer Fire Company mentioned above probably had one of its roots in neighborhood pride. The retention of a unit of the Fire Company has apparently been a way to compensate for the loss of schools in the population clusters. It is of interest to note that Turner Center, which is the site of the large, sprawling, three-unit School Administration District (S.A.D.) 52 educational complex, is the only population cluster in the town without a unit of the Fire Company. When a prominent and informed Turner Village resident was asked why there was no fire station in Turner Center, the answer was terse and to the point, "They have the schools."

Other than the three schools at Turner Center, the Fire Company and its closely allied counterpart, the Turner Rescue Unit, are perhaps the most impor-



tant community identifying and reinforcing aspects of Turner.<sup>8</sup> For a number of years, a husband and wife team has served as chiefs of the two units. Turner's annual report for 1985, complete with the chiefs' picture, was appropriately dedicated to them. Their home, more precisely, their living room, serves as the communications headquarters for both the Fire Company and the Rescue Squad. Twenty-four hours a day, conversation, television programming, and any other activity is bombarded by the announcements on several emergency radio channels.

Although both the Fire Company and the Rescue Squad have some modern equipment and keep abreast of the latest techniques in their fields, they are reflective of Turner's traditional values, particularly those of thrift and self-reliance. For example, the Fire Department has modified several pieces of used equipment, including a jeep and a bulk tanker, for use in fire suppression. And, although both units receive some town funding, they raise the majority of needed finances through their own efforts and those of other cooperating Turner groups and organizations. During the Bicentennial celebration, the proceeds (over \$3,500) from the auction of a handmade rug from the Priscilla Turner Rug Company were donated to the Fire Company.<sup>9</sup> The Citizen's Band (CB club) has been particularly helpful in supporting the emergency units with proceeds from their weekly "Beans" at the B.Q.M.H.

Each community has unique features. Turner differs from no other community in that respect. When a definitive history of the town is written for the celebration of its tricentennial in 2086, it is likely that the author will take particular note of the 1970s and the 1980s. During this period a "new" Turner began to emerge. Many trends, some of which had their roots in the immediate post-World War II period, began to crystalize and merge. Among them were:

- A reversal in static population growth and consequent spurt in new housing and development outside the informal boundaries of the village-like population concentrations.
- An acceleration in the decline of farm numbers but an increase in the size and degree of commercialization and specialization of the remaining farm operations, both dairy and orcharding. The development of the giant

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<sup>8</sup>Turner is one of the three towns comprising Maine School Administrative District No. 52. The high school (Leavitt Area High School), and the junior high school (Tripp) and Turner Elementary School are located in Turner Center on a large lot, most of which was the campus of Leavitt Institute. Leavitt Institute, controlled by a private board of trustees, served as Turner's High School until 1966. Turner's school system is detailed in a following section.

<sup>9</sup>The Priscilla Turner Rug Company was once a major employer, particularly of women, in Turner. Although it is no longer located in the town, many Turner residents maintain a strong psychological identification with it.

(3,000,000+ laying hens) DeCoster Egg Farm employing approximately 500 persons locally.

- The closing of the remaining rural schools, the transformation of the culturally important, privately controlled Leavitt Institute into the high school for the three S.A.D. 52 towns (Greene, Leeds, and Turner), and the erection of a modern junior high school and elementary school.
- The reversal in the loss of commercial activities in the villages, with State Route 4 becoming highly commercialized in several segments along its approximately 12-mile stretch through the center of the town. The significance and consequences of the single largest commercial development (Turner Plaza, 1986-1988) has yet to be determined.
- The necessity for the town as an entity to become more involved with larger units of government. Examples include imposition by the state of shoreland zoning regulations, solid waste disposal regulations, and in 1988 the state mandated "Act to Promote Orderly Economic Growth and Natural Resource Conservation and Growth" which will require zoning in Turner.

Despite all these changes, until early 1986 Turner was one of the few, if not the only Maine community of its size (1986 estimated population: 4017, Maine State Planning Office), lacking (a) a bank, (b) public housing of any sort, including housing for the elderly, (c) a modern supermarket, (d) a uniformed local police officer, (e) town manager, (f) traffic light, (g) condominiums or town house complexes, (h) a definitive zoning ordinance, or (i) public water supply, sewers, or automated traffic controls.

The acceleration of social change in Turner from spring 1986 to fall 1988 was swift and wide-ranging. Several of the community services that were missing in the early period had become realities in the latter. A supermarket type store was a key development in Turner Plaza. Almost directly across from the Plaza, private developers, not the town, began constructing a 25-unit housing project for the elderly. Though there was still not a town manager, a position of code enforcement officer/building inspector had been created to relieve the Administrative Assistant of those duties.

Several other events occurring in 1987 and 1988 indicate that, despite its recent rapid rate of growth, "communityness" is not being lost. During the flood threat of April 1987 a number of Turner citizens, young and old, banded together to protect the Town Office and Garage from being flooded by the swollen Nezinscot River. Turner citizens voted 248 to 67 to support the expansion of the

S.A.D. 52 Turner Elementary School.<sup>10</sup> The Daughters of the American Revolution presented a memorial flag to the town to be flown at the GAR Hall in North Turner. At Town Meeting it was voted to hire a full-time employee for the Turner Rescue Unit. A series of meetings were held to decide the fate of Berry Hall, the former dormitory of Leavitt Institute, a building with great sentimental value. The final decision was to dismantle it. A committee was formed to attempt to have specially designated state funds used to purchase a 2,000 acre undeveloped area on the Androscoggin River for community and area recreational purposes. A brass bell commemorating the 1986 Bicentennial was hung at the 1843 Town Hall building.<sup>11</sup>

Although Turner may not be the most progressive town in Maine, the enumerations above indicate that both persistency and change continue to be important aspects of Turner in the 1980s just as they were in the 1880s when, in his history of the town's first one hundred years, French wrote: "Great changes have been wrought since our forefathers made for themselves in the wilderness, where we now dwell in the midst of comfort which was denied to them" (1887:viii).

The Reverend French would, no doubt, be greatly surprised, if not dumbfounded, by the changes in comforts which have been wrought in Turner in the one hundred years following his pronouncement. Directly and indirectly in the sections which follow, analysis will be made of the changes currently taking place in the town. Among the more important of them is the transformation of Turner from a producing town (manufacturing/agriculture) to a community of consumers and, increasingly, commuters. The once farmed hillsides, some of which reverted to second growth woods during a fifty to sixty-year period, are now sprouting homes of a type that French could not have imagined. It is highly likely that most of the newly arrived settlers who are buying/building homes in Turner's rural areas are doing so because it is rural. It is just as likely that at least initially their values and interests will be less than identical with those of long-time residents. But, as is evident in the French and Willard histories and in other sources cited in the bibliography, Turner has a way of making Turnerites out of strangers. Turner will continue to change, but it will be change with persistency.

<sup>10</sup>The combined vote of Greene and Leeds, the two other S.A.D. 52 towns, was 66 to 50 in favor of the addition.

<sup>11</sup>For an example of a town which has made use of local, state, and federal funds to provide its citizens with services and amenities usually not available in a small agricultural community, see *Easton—A Town on the Move* (Ploch 1988b).

## TURNER ECONOMICS

Those activities which we term economic—production, distribution, consumption—are major forces in determining the structure and functioning of communities. Economic forces are time and ecological-geographical specific. Turner, Maine is an excellent example of a community that, from its beginning in the late eighteenth century to the present, has grown, declined, and grown again as changes have occurred related to ecological-geographical generated economic forces.

Turner's location on two rivers with developable mill sites almost decreed that it would become a manufacturing center in the era of water power domination. Similarly, its soil resources and its topography were the bases for Turner to become a highly productive agricultural community. When water power lost its original advantages to steam and electricity, Turner ceased to be a manufacturing center. Farming, however, continues to be important in Turner as an economic enterprise and especially as a time-honored source of community identification and pride.

In the mid to late 1800s, if family workers on the small-scale and largely subsistence operations are included, agriculture may have employed more persons than did manufacturing. By the 1920s, manufacturing was waning, but agriculture was taking on a new importance monetarily, if not in numbers of farm families. In the late 1900s, manufacturing is of minor importance in Turner.<sup>12</sup> Agriculture, although the numbers of persons involved in it is just a small fraction of the town population, remains important in both the economic and social/psychological aspects of Turner as an interactive community.

Turner, despite its rich natural resource base—mill sites and agricultural land—never became a major commercial center. A prime reason, no doubt, was its proximity to Lewiston/Auburn. In recent years, however, Turner's commercial base has been expanding rapidly.

In this section, three aspects of Turner's economy will be highlighted:

- a. Its agriculture, with emphasis on the dairy industry, orcharding, and the DeCoster Egg Farm.
- b. Its developing commercial sector.
- c. Land and housing development.

**AGRICULTURE**—In late 1988 if interested strangers wished to observe the farms in Turner, Maine, a town they had been informed was a leader in the

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<sup>12</sup>As noted in a following section on the DeCoster Egg Farm, some 500 persons are employed by Mr. DeCoster. The jobs range from feed handling, egg processing, equipment and vehicle maintenance to office work.

state's agricultural production, they might be surprised if they made a tour of the community by automobile. If they had chosen Route 219, they would have entered Turner at its extreme northeast corner. Driving alongside the Androscoggin River they would have noticed, at River Bend, the largest dairy farm in town, home to over 200 high-producing Holsteins. A mile or so farther, at Howes Corner, they would have passed through a part of one of the three large commercial apple orchards still operating in Turner.

In another mile, if the travellers turned south onto Route 4, the major north-south artery in this section of Maine, they would not observe another full-scale commercial farm for the entire eleven miles to the Auburn city line. They would pass a few small-scale market garden operations, a flower greenhouse and market, the DeCoster Egg Hatchery, and the massive L/P Farms apple grading and packing plant.

Had the travellers been misled when told that Turner was one of Maine's leading producers of agricultural products? Misled perhaps, but not lied to in the usual sense of the term. Rather, they would have discovered inadvertently a reality of agriculture in Turner in 1988—the number of agricultural production units has been greatly reduced, but the level of production of milk, apples, and eggs has increased.

In 1944 there were 119 farms in Turner with producing dairy cows. In mid-1988 there were less than 10 milk shippers in the town. In 1944 there were 26 farms with producing apple trees. In 1988 there were three commercial apple orchards in Turner. There were also two large apple grading/shipping plants owned and operated by local orchardists.

At one time, nearly every farm in Turner had at least a few laying hens; a few were of small commercial size. In 1988, although there may be a few backyard flocks, ninety-nine percent of the three million plus laying hens are located on a few acres on the Plains Road. DeCoster Egg Farm (D.E.F.) is one of the largest egg producers in the U.S. Until recently it was touted as the largest brown egg producer in the country. Recent events, including marketing demands, have necessitated the production of some white eggs.

During World War II, prior to the beginning of D.E.F., the U.S. Navy was considering using the almost level, well-drained, Plains plateau as an aerial training site. A collective sigh of relief followed the Navy's decision not to construct the training field. Now with the problems of odor, flies, possible water pollution, and the occurrence of several major fires, some Turner residents are beginning to wonder if an air base, especially a temporary one, might have been a more compatible neighbor.

Most of Turner's remaining commercial farms are not in the most visible locations in the community. They are, however, as a group, the most attractively maintained and landscaped farms I have observed in Maine. Almost all of the

larger farms are designated by an attractive sign. Several dairy farm signs feature a painting of a cow of the breed in which the farm specializes. At one large apple operation, in the foreground of a well-groomed lawn, a hand-carved sign provides the farm name and the year it was started—1803. The sign sits in the midst of a colorful planting of annual and perennial plants. The flower plot contains a flag pole flying an American flag and the Turner Bicentennial (1786-1986) banner.

The appearance of their homes and buildings and the pride which Turner farm families express about being producers of needed agricultural products is, to a large extent, a product of their heritage. Most of them are third and fourth generation Turner farmers. In at least two families, eighth generation Turner residents are active in the farm's operation and are justly proud of it. They, along with most of the other remaining farm families in the community, have every intention of making whatever adjustments are necessary to keep their operations flourishing.

Some of these adjustments have been minor; others approach being revolutionary. One Turner dairy farm, now under different ownership, can claim the distinction of having the first modern free-stall barn (the cows are never tethered in stanchions) in the Northeast. Another operation has been a leader in embryo transplantation in dairy cattle and the breeding of "super cows." One of these cows was auctioned in New York City's Madison Square Garden for \$530,000 (*Maine Sunday Telegram*, 10/27/83). The two orchardists-packers have installed state-of-the-art electronic sorter/graders. Though in many ways Turner's remaining successful farmers have gone "high-tech," some of the old values remain. At one farm, whose herds have set national production records, the pastured cows still drink from an old-fashioned porcelain bath tub. In Turner, it is not how new or how fancy something is, it's "how does it work?"—the bath tub works just fine, so do embryo transplants.

From observation, study of reports, and interviews with informed non-farm and farm residents, it is evident that agriculture continues to be a valued aspect of Turner as a social-interactive community. Farms and farming are valued for a mix of reasons: they keep a valued tradition alive; they keep the land open, and for the most part, attractive; they provide local employment, especially De-Coster Egg Farm; and they are among the town's largest taxpayers.

In the 1987 Turner Town Report there are nine entries for property and buildings in the tax list with valuations of \$300,000 or more. Eight of them are for agriculturally related enterprises.

**DAIRY FARMING**—Compared to most of the Northeast, Turner's dairy industry is relatively prosperous. One indication of this is that just a small propor-

tion of local dairy farmers sold their herds through the "whole herd buy-out" program conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1986.

At least some Turner dairy families were upset that all U.S. commercial dairy farmers were assessed a fee that provided some of the funds the USDA used to finance the buy-out. A family member of one of the larger Turner dairy operations expressed disgust for the program by stating, "It's ridiculous. We're paying for somebody else to go out of business." In further remarks by both husband and wife, it was evident that they were advocates of a Turner value, free enterprise, "When the price of milk goes down, we don't milk [more] cows." Although the price for farm milk in the 1980s was distressingly low, by milk producers' standards, one former dairy farmer remarked about another Turner producer who had recently retired, "Heck that guy is not poor! None of 'em are, really. I don't see any farmer in the town of Turner being poor."

For a number of years, Turner dairy farmers, including some recent retirees, expanded their operations by buying and/or renting land from persons who stopped dairying. One man illustrated how this process had worked for his family:

About 1948 there were 17 farms on this road. We bought all the land that was [suited for] row crop farming. We bought what was fit for farming; what wasn't, we didn't. The rest has grown up [into bushes].

These statements and others made during the interview indicate a rational approach to farming, one shared by many farmers as a necessity for survival in the 1980s. They tend to believe [in 1986-87] that the economics were less than fully favorable for them. With little or no prompting they will recite facts and figures to substantiate their contentions. Yet, in almost the same breath, they will express a tenacious optimism. An example:

There really ... is not going to be an animal agriculture in the state of Maine twenty years from now. Bear in mind [that] we're not a gloomy operation. We're positive thinking, and we're intending to expand in the next three months. We're moving ahead but the price of milk has dropped [in 1986] from \$14.50 to \$11.00 [per hundredweight], and take my word for it, that's serious.

Another farmer, speaking about a Turner dairy farmer, remarked, "I know he is discouraged, but he's still expanding." An agent of a farm lending agency, whose territory includes Turner, explains the fact that dairy farmers are expanding despite depressed prices in this way:

The increase in cow herds is based on dairy economics.... Farmers don't add cows to milk more cows—they're not crazy. It's to increase cash flow because the price of milk has gone down in the last eight years [since 1980] almost consistently.

So the surviving farmers increase the size of their herds.<sup>13</sup> Several of the larger Turner dairy farms are producing well over 2,500,000 pounds of milk a year. At least one is in the 3,000,000 pound range. A producer of this size could provide a quart of milk a day to approximately 4,100 families.

The tradition of passing farms down to generation after generation continues in Turner, but it is under some strain. Increasingly, young members of the farm family wish to carve out their futures away from the home farm. This fact and the increasing size of operations has made it necessary for more and more non-family labor to be utilized. Turner farmers normally met their needs for extra labor by hiring local people—both on a long and short time basis. That has become more and more difficult.

The two largest orchardists have solved the fact that fewer local people are available for apple picking by relying almost exclusively on male migrants from Jamaica. Rural communities are not usually distinguished by an open attitude toward ethnics and foreigners, but I heard no outright negative remarks about the Jamaicans. There may be some condescension, however, in such remarks as, "They sure are hard workers, but they stick to themselves and cause no trouble." There is a somewhat different reaction to a more recent group of ethnic farm workers.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, DeCoster Egg Farm has employed a limited number of Latin Americans. Some of them are so-called green card laborers, non-citizens, mostly from Mexico, who have been approved to work in the United States. Their presence in Turner has generated considerable negative reaction. Quite surprisingly, much of the negativism is directed at the management of D.E.F. rather than toward the migrants themselves. The importance of these reactions will be discussed in additional sections of this report.

The consensus among interviewed dairy farmers was that, in general, their major problem was hiring help for peak labor demands, such as haying and cutting silage. Long-time employees tend to be viewed with satisfaction, and in some cases, admiration. The herdsman for one of the larger dairy operations had been with them for 31 years in 1986. This anniversary was noted on the farm's float in the Bicentennial parade. A member of another dairy family remarked that of their six/seven man crew, one had been with them for sixteen years, and one for ten years. He added, "They're good people, we got no complaints of the crew we've got."

The lack of "complaints" with farm labor expressed by this person and members of other Turner farm families may be rooted in the traditional Turner value

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<sup>13</sup>This section was based, originally on information obtained in 1986-1987. In March 1989 I was informed that in 1988-1989 one dairy farmer has ceased operation; another farmer is retiring, but through a State of Maine program efforts are being made to keep the farm in production. At least two of the larger dairy farms have reduced the size of their herds.



of hard work. It is a tradition in which the owners of even the largest operations engage. They work hard and expect others to do the same. When asked about the compensation rate for farm workers, one informant replied:

If they're willing to work 55 hours, we can pay 'em a good 40-hour pay. We can keep them on the same living plane as their neighbors if they want to work 55 hours instead of 40, that's about the size of it. We can't get away that easy, but they can.

**ORCHARDS**—Although the apple picking season is short, apple grading and packing, through the use of modern controlled atmosphere storage, has become a year-long operation. One packer reported that maintaining a permanent grading and packing crew was not a problem. Most of the permanent employees are women.

As mentioned previously, both the apple packers have installed modern packing lines. Their move to these new devices was, in Turner style, not precipitous. After separately viewing the new type of electronic, computerized packer/graders in out-of-state, real life situations, they bought slightly different machines. A front-line employee in one facility remarked that their machine was not equipped with a color sorter because "we didn't want to be the first one." This reaction was one of several instances of a mix of progressiveness and conservatism noted among Turner farmers. For one of the apple packers the cost of the new grading/packing line was partially offset by selling his outdated equipment to a smaller producer.

The full impact of the grader on the apple business in Turner has not yet been established. One of the owners of a new grader did remark, "It can do in one day what used to take a week. This year we will not run it at top speed except for peak periods like Halloween." If he continues to plant more of the newly developed apple lines that produce more fruit per acre and if he continues to buy additional orchards and surplus apples from other growers (all of which he has done in the recent past), the full capacity of his new equipment may be challenged.

As the Turner orchards have grown larger, they have more "drops" and other apples not suited for the fresh market. Once more or less a nuisance sideline, cider making has become a profitable business. Both of the Turner apple packers have modernized and increased their cider-making capacities. One producer ships cider to Florida each week during the winter. In keeping with his shrewd marketing strategies, the cider makes the trip to Florida on board the trucks of a major New England apple distributor.

Cider making by the thousands of gallons produces huge amounts of apple pulp. In the past, one producer has "dumped it in the woods, fed it to deer, and took it to the town dump. At one time I couldn't get the dairy farmers to take it;

now they are begging for it. I give it away. I could get a little money for it, but I haven't felt the need for it."

Sharing cider pulp with dairy farmers is just one example of the symbiotic relationship which exists among Turner farmers. Although Turner farms are highly competitive, as an article in *Salt* (29 September 1988) vividly portrays, they also are willing to help each other out, particularly in the sharing of equipment or surplus commodities like apple pulp and, as they say in Turner, "DeCoster's hen dreszen." Another example is DeCoster Egg Farm storing "flush season" eggs in the cold storages of the apple packing plants.

With one major exception, Turner's dairy farmers and orchardists are "home grown." As stated earlier, many of the farms have been in the same families for generations—up to eight. These farms have succeeded where others have failed at least in part by adopting modern methods and practices. They have not, however, abandoned the time honored traditions and values that have been instilled into Turner's culture. Two more recent Turner entrepreneurs tend to reflect styles of operation that are more personalized and less traditional. It is for this reason that the discussion of the DeCoster Egg Farm and the development of Turner Plaza by Anthony Casella will focus on the entrepreneurs as well as on their business enterprises.

**DECOSTER EGG FARM**—Until the late 1960s—early 1970s, milk and apples were the major products of Turner farms. One Turner "boy" has been responsible, almost single-handedly, for table eggs becoming the most important, in terms of dollar value, agricultural commodity produced in Turner. Austin J. (Jack) DeCoster, proprietor of DeCoster Egg Farm (D.E.F.), is the largest agricultural producer in Maine and perhaps in New England. In 1985, the cover story of *New England Business* (Bailey 1985:13) announced that "The DeCoster story is legendary in Turner."

Some Turner residents might question "legendary". It would be difficult, however, to locate anyone in the town who would not be quick to offer opinions about D.E.F. and its owner/operator. Few of the assessments would be neutral, but some would be both positive and negative. There is general agreement that at least until the late 1980s the presence of D.E.F. and its over 3,000,000 laying hens has been of economic benefit to the town. Nearly fourteen percent of Turner's total local taxes are assessed on Mr. DeCoster and his enterprises. D.E.F. is also the largest employer in the town, a fact often cited by Mr. DeCoster's supporters. Most of the farmers welcome the ready supply of organic matter for their fields.

Jack DeCoster is also admired because he was a boy from a limited income family who lost his father when he was in junior high school. Through extreme dedication and doggedness he rose from a schoolboy pushing a heavy wheel-

barrow up the road to feed and water a few hens, to one of the nation's leading individual agricultural producers.<sup>14</sup> All this by a lad described by former teachers and fellow students as, at best, an indifferent student at Leavitt Institute. Although he is controversial, few long-time Turner residents are not without words of praise for his accomplishments.

The degree of acquaintance that Turner residents have with Mr. DeCoster is revealed in the way they refer to him. This practice also provides an insight into the social interrelationships and structure of the community.

Persons who knew Mr. DeCoster when they were adults and he was a youngster refer to him as "Jackie," often with affection. Those who were schoolmates or knew him as a young man refer to him as Jack. Other adults who know him somewhat casually, but whose opinions of him are more or less favorable, tend to call him Mr. DeCoster. If they have a negative opinion, he is just plain "De-Coster," usually in a slurring manner. Young adults who "picked" eggs for him during their school days may call him "Deke," which seems to be a take-off on both his name and his well-known religious conservatism. As implied in this set of relationships, D.E.F. and its founder have become important in Turner in ways that have both economic and non-economic connotations.

It is not easy to determine the exact size, in numbers of laying hens or in egg production, of the DeCoster Egg Farm. When I addressed questions of this type to a management employee, his terse reply was, "That's not for public ears." Piecing together information from published and other sources, the approximate size of the laying flock averages over 3,000,000 chickens in some 68 large buildings arranged in six complexes of about 250,000 birds in each. In November of 1985 (Bailey:13), DeCoster's reported 1984 sales totalled \$70 million.

A management official "estimated" that the DeCoster Egg Farm employs approximately 500 persons. He would not go on record whether or not that figure included the part-time weekend and summer help who are mainly teenagers.<sup>15</sup> The same person estimated that the proportion of D.E.F. employees who lived in Turner was, "Maybe not quite half, maybe 25 to 30 percent." In either case, D.E.F. is the largest employer in Turner and in the non-industrial towns of Androscoggin County.

Most of the jobs at D.E.F. are some sort of manual labor, often unpleasant tasks such as manure handling and the disposal of dead birds. The firm is automating and computerizing many of the more skilled jobs (e.g., candling and grading eggs), which has reduced labor demands to some extent. However,

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<sup>14</sup>Mr. DeCoster owns or controls agricultural production units in five states in addition to those in Maine.

<sup>15</sup>Maine labor law specifically preempts large poultry farms from paying less than the standard minimum wage to teenagers, a fact which, at least until the "full employment" days in Maine in 1987 and 1988, made a job at D.E.F. attractive even though it was not otherwise desirable.

many of the jobs in egg production remain basically low-skilled manual tasks. For this reason, D.E.F. has become "a" if not "the" employer of last resort in Androscoggin County.

A prevailing belief in Turner is that a significant number of D.E.F. employees are otherwise unemployable. This assumption has contributed to the creation of two additional attitudes. One group of people applaud Mr. DeCoster for giving the unemployable a chance to earn some money, perhaps learn a salable skill, and stay off welfare rolls. In contrast, other residents are upset because of the "undesirables" in the community, some of whom live in the trailer parks provided by D.E.F.

In the 1980s the type of D.E.F. employees who have precipitated the most community concern have been persons of Latin American descent, and allegedly, some undocumented aliens from Latin American countries.<sup>16</sup>

In Turner there appear to be two major concerns about D.E.F.'s use of Mexican-Americans and other Latinos. There are those who worry that these imported workers are being exploited. Some people believe the Latinos were lured to Turner with promises of high wages which did not materialize, and they were misinformed about housing conditions. Over and over again I heard talk of the overcrowding in the D.E.F. trailer park—several families living in a facility designed for no more than five people. These arguments are countered and rationalized by those who say that "it's probably the best housing they ever had." Whatever the truth of the matter, the employment of Latinos by D.E.F. has caused concern in the community.<sup>17</sup>

Other than the current (1986–88) problems related to the employment of Latinos, the aspect of D.E.F. of most concern to Turner residents relates to a variety of environmental and "nuisance" issues. Some years ago there was an outbreak of grain beetles traced to the D.E.F. operations. Private homes and cottages were invaded and residents were incensed. In the early and mid-1980s there was an infestation of house flies which were almost always identified as "DeCoster flies." These were assumed to be related to the production of some 14,000 tons (approximately 342, 40-ton truckloads) of chicken manure yearly at D.E.F.

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<sup>16</sup>The following is an excerpt from the March 3, 1989 issue of the *Bangor [ME.] Daily News*: On July 13, 1988, DeCoster had been served with a notice of intent to be fined \$46,250 for violations of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, the law which now requires employers to verify the identity and right to work of the people they hire. In accordance with the settlement, DeCoster has agreed to pay a fine of \$32,850. The firm conceded 178 violations of the act; nine for knowingly hiring or continuing to employ people not authorized to work in the United States and 169 for failure to complete or complete properly the I-9 form for people hired after Nov. 6, 1986, the date the law was signed. DeCoster also has agreed to cease and desist from knowingly continuing to employ unauthorized aliens.

<sup>17</sup>The effect of the migrant children on S.A.D. 52 will be explored in the Education section.

Chicken manure and its disposal is something of a two-edged sword for D.E.F. Dairy farmers have used it to enrich their fields, particularly corn land. Because the manure contains significant amounts of lime, some farmers no longer have to buy and spread this valuable soil amendment.

In contrast to the dairy farmers, many Turner residents, particularly those whose homes, cottages, and wells are located on land that presumably could be affected by manure-tainted water, are very disturbed. At the first public hearing (1987) of the Site Review Committee of the Turner Planning Board, harsh words were exchanged between residents and D.E.F. representatives. The level of the vitriolic rhetoric exchanged between the two sides over alleged groundwater contamination was exceeded only by that related to the disposal of thousands of dead chickens, many enmeshed in the wire cages in which they were asphyxiated as a result of a fire in a D.E.F. laying hen complex.

Residents assailed DeCoster spokespersons and representatives of two State of Maine cabinet-level departments. Both the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources officials indicated that there had been multiple complaints.

In contrast to widespread negative feeling toward the operations of D.E.F., some Turner officials and many citizens are quick to point out its value to the town. Not the least of these values is that Mr. DeCoster's Turner properties generated almost one-seventh of Turner's local tax revenue in 1988. This was a welcome change from the situation a few years ago. After operating D.E.F. for more than ten years, Mr. DeCoster sold the operation to a Massachusetts concern in 1979. By 1985 the new owners went bankrupt. As a consequence, they owed the Town of Turner a large sum in unpaid taxes.<sup>18</sup>

When Mr. DeCoster, who was the mortgage holder, reclaimed D.E.F. (for several million dollars less than his selling price to the Acton Corporation) he paid their Turner tax bill. For his quick action he was considered by many as a local hero.<sup>19</sup> When he did not pay D.E.F.'s 1986 taxes on time his image dimmed somewhat. Coincidentally enough, the overdue 1986 taxes were paid the day Mr. DeCoster was petitioning the Turner Site Review Committee, and in effect, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for the right to complete rebuilding and expanding the poultry complex lost in the 1986 fire.

Whether or not Mr. DeCoster is a local hero or something close to a villain depends upon whom you talk to in Turner. One person made an appraisal which contained the essence of remarks made by others, "Now when folks that have moved ahead as rapidly as he's moved ahead, [they] have cut some corners along

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<sup>18</sup>For an account of the Acton operation of D.E.F. see Bailey (1985:12-16).

<sup>19</sup>In the Turner 1986 Annual Town Report, the A.J. DeCoster Co. is listed as owing \$121,855 for 1986 taxes, which amounts to one-half of all the unpaid taxes for the year.

the way somewhere, but he worked damn hard to get there and he took the kind of chances that most of us have not the courage to do. Every time he gets a \$100,000 he hires [borrows] a million to go with it, and he grew. He's made it work. While the rest was goin' bankrupt, he was movin' ahead." Mr. DeCoster's interrelations with other aspects of Turner, including religion and government, will be noted in following sections.

**NONAGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**—Turner's long-sustained loss of nonagricultural economic services was reversed in the 1980s. Route 4, the state highway that bisects Turner's twelve-mile length, has become the site of businesses of many kinds. Most of them are designed to serve the heavy commuting traffic on Route 4—gas stations, restaurants, truck stops, convenience stores. Although the variety of commercial services is great and growing, there are still several stretches along Route 4 of a mile or more in length that have not been commercialized. The distance between the commercial nodes is, however, rapidly diminishing. If the growth rate of new commercial establishments continues through the 1990s as it did in the 1980s, Route 4 will become a facsimile of the major highways that emanate from most urban concentrations.

In a "windshield survey" in September, 1988, 61 separate business enterprises were enumerated on Route 4 in the town. In a few cases, two types of businesses shared the same building. By category they are:

	<b>Number of Enterprises</b>
Automobile related	
(gas stations, automobile sales, service)	21
Recreational	
(electronic game room, indoor miniature golf, etc.)	2
Restaurants	5
Miscellaneous Commercial	
(non-auto, recreational or restaurant. Includes a wood yard and an airport)	28
Manufacturing, processing	5
Total	<u>61</u>

Since this inventory was taken, several new businesses have been added to Turner's industrial park area on Route 4 adjacent to the airport, near the Auburn line. Additional businesses have also been established at Turner Plaza located between Turner Village and North Turner.

The increased traffic on Route 4 has prompted the Maine Department of Transportation to relocate several sections of the highway. Over the years, most

of the road has been rerouted around the built-up section of North Turner. In 1988, a new section of Route 4, which bypasses Turner Village, was opened to the public. As a result, the Village's last commercial establishment, a more or less old-fashioned gas station/limited grocery store, was closed. In its place, on Route 4, which lacks sidewalks for pedestrians, a very modern gas station/convenience store was opened.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps ironically, the section of Route 4 that bisected the Village now has been officially designated "Main Street." It is a main street without commercial services.

The greatest concentration of commercial services in Turner's history has occurred at Turner Plaza. It is located on Route 4, about a mile north of Turner Village. The Center itself and all the businesses are owned and operated by newcomer (1984) Anthony Casella. Except for Case Equipment Company, discussed in the Community Section, all of the enterprises in Turner Plaza are retail or recreational in nature. While utilized by Turner residents, almost all of the Plaza's businesses are designed to satisfy the needs of Route 4 motorists and persons living in towns within a radius of twenty-five miles or so.

Without any great demand from the people of Turner, the town now finds itself home to such modern conveniences as indoor miniature golf, a unisex hair styling salon, and a trinket-laden gift shop. In addition, a super-modern gas station/truck stop has been built. It includes a rest area, equipped with showers for the truckers. Adding to the novelty of the Plaza, the cashier's office for the station is an authentic, brightly painted, railroad caboose sitting on standard steel rails. For Turner residents, perhaps the most important Turner Plaza facility is a not too large, but modern and complete service supermarket, a "first" in the town.

Because of some doubts about the intentions of its owner, some Turner residents were slow to become patrons of the store and the other features of the Plaza. That attitude, expressed in 1986 and 1987, appeared to be modified by the fall of 1988. Although no one expressed to me that Turner Plaza was a positive addition to the town, because of the taxes it generates, criticism might be mulled. A perusal of the tax list included in the 1987 Town Report indicates conclusively that the owners of Turner Plaza have become major local taxpayers.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>The relocation of the highway has made Turner Village a more pleasant, less hectic residential area. A dangerous intersection, guarded by a flashing red light for Route 117 traffic and a blinking yellow light for Route 4 traffic has been eliminated. In its place, however, a more dangerous crossing was created at the intersection of Route 4 and Route 117, (the Buckfield Road). There are caution and warning signs, but no lights. The original speed limit at the intersection for Route 4 traffic was 55 miles per hour. After a series of protests by Turner Selectmen, it was reduced to 50 miles per hour. Village residents walking to the Turner Post Office have to cross the intersection.

<sup>21</sup>In the Town Report for 1988, several Turner Plaza enterprises are named in the delinquent tax report.

**GROWTH**—It would be difficult, in 1988, to determine whether or not the DeCoster Egg Farm (D.E.F.) or the rapid pace of growth and development is the most common topic of conversation and concern in Turner. Certainly, the two are interrelated. People who live within a mile or so of D.E.F. voice concerns about odors and flies. Persons with homes and cottages on nearby lakes and streams worry about water pollution and the value of their properties. Persons throughout the community are concerned about possible effects on the school system of children from the families of D.E.F. workers (particularly those from non-English-speaking families) and children from the steadily increasing permanent immigrant population.

Certainly Turner is experiencing a variety of changes related to increases in population. Between 1960 and 1980, 1,649 persons were added to the town's population, an increase of 88 percent. For the seven years from 1980 to 1987, the Maine State Planning Office estimated an additional increase of 530 persons, an increase of 15 percent. Local persons who keep in close touch with development believe that the 1987 estimate is unrealistically low. One very well informed member of the Planning Board believes that Turner's 1990 census population count will approximate 5,000. That does not appear to be a wild assumption.

Through 1987, at least, and excepting the rash of commercial development along State Route 4, growth and development in Turner was more or less hidden. Most of it occurred off the main roads, primarily on hilly, long-abandoned farm land. Over the years, much of the land became lightly forested. The relatively gentle slopes, the trees, and in some cases, vistas combined to provide ideal housing sites. Their availability became generally known to the public in central and southern Maine. As a result, real estate agents and land developers have converged on the town. The plat book in the town office has become a constantly read document. The work of the Planning Board and the Site Review Board (established in 1987) have burgeoned. For example, the October 1988 agenda of the Planning Board, which meets monthly, included:

- Application for additional lots for the Hill View Trailer Park
- Subdivision application at Pleasant Pond
- Application by Patten Corporation [a major land developer in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine] for a 72-lot [400 acre] subdivision between Beal's Pond and General Turner Hill
- Application for a trailer park at Bear Pond

This level of activity is not unusual since Turner was "discovered" by local and regional developers. Turner has become extremely popular with urbanites who wish for the perceived benefits of a beautiful, rural-like residential area.



For the developers and some prospective residents of the town, lack of definitive zoning regulations is also a "plus."

Residential development in Turner has had little perceptible impact on its agricultural economy. Very little, if any, land that was used actively for farming in the 1980s has been converted to non-farm use. As farmers have ceased operation, according to one of the smaller farmers, "the bigger farmers are absorbing the smaller farmers [property] because they need the land."

The perception among interviewed farmers was that little agricultural land will be lost due to development pressures *per se*. Rather, they believe, if agricultural land is converted to development it will be the result of the economic pressures of farming, particularly dairying. One dairyman stated his position as, "It's [the bottom line] a negative balance, and so, you know, after some of us get pushed about so tight, then you think of selling something.... When we can't make a profit anymore, and we can sell [land], that's one thing that can bail us out."

In central Maine, generally any open land that does become available becomes the object of intense bidding. A representative of an agency, which deals primarily with farmers in central Maine, illustrated the dynamics of land availability by stating that when land goes on the market, "it is no longer farm land, it's land-land. It's not farmers competing with farmers for land anymore, its developer against developer." The same person also remarked that "[because] Turner farmers are good farmers there is not much pressure to sell land there."

At least one Turner farmer is hedging his resources. At the 19 December 1987 meeting of the Planning Board, he received permission to develop six rental units on an existing foundation. Rental properties are very scarce in Turner. Most of the existing rental units are designed for persons in the low- to modest-income range. One of the largest concentrations of rental housing is the six units above the store in Turner Center. No condominiums, townhouses, or other rental housing attractive to middle- and upper-income tenants had been built to mid-1988.

As is the situation everywhere in Maine in the 1980s, the price of housing is rising in Turner, but not fast enough to stem the tide of immigration. A very knowledgeable Turner resident, who has been a "public" person in several capacities and who has a finger on the pulse of the real estate market, remarked in 1986 that a "reasonably good" two to three bedroom house could be purchased "for \$65,000 to \$70,000, compared to a few years ago [when] it would [have been] \$25,000 to \$30,000. They used to think they could come to town and buy a house for little or nothing. But not anymore." Between 1986 and 1988 the costs of housing continued its upward spiral.

The popularity of Turner and its merchandising by real estate agents as a residential area, was noted by one informant, a relatively recent immigrant, "In

newspaper house ads you will notice that in dark print they will identify the location as Turner. It's the only place they do it for." A major cause for the movement into Turner, this observer believed, was, "We are 10 minutes from the Auburn Mall, 45 minutes to L.L. Bean, an hour and 15 minutes to beaches." Turner has been discovered by upwardly mobile, young, white collar families.

There is no accurate count of how many new families have moved to Turner in recent years. One way of tracking development in the more rural areas of the town is to note the increase in mail delivery stops and boxes served by mailcarriers. Some twenty-five years ago, when one of the two mailcarriers began his route, "there was 47 [route] miles and 157 boxes; now [1986] it's 57.2 miles and I've got 321 stops, 395 individual boxes, and 18 boxes in one cluster." Perhaps this explains a comment made to me by one of those box owners: "He used to get here by noon, now it's three, four o'clock."

The Turner Site Review Board was initiated in 1987 in response to the development boom in Turner. The twelve member group consists of a mix of Planning Board members, a selectman, and other citizens. They review all applications for development before they go before the Planning Board. The Board serves as a screening device for the Planning Board, and it provides developers and prospective builders with the opportunity to refine their plans before Planning Board action. Creation of the Site Review Board also widened the opportunity for broader community/citizen participation in the planning process. What it has accomplished, at least to a limited degree, is to institute a variant of spot zoning. Lacking a definitive zoning ordinance to judge the suitability of plans, the Site Review Committee is forced to make individualized judgments.

Having a development plan and a planning board without a specific zoning ordinances appears to be consistent with a pragmatic Turner attitude. It enables decisions to be made on their individual merits, attributes that could be in violation of more specific regulations.

In Turner, if the case for an exception appears to be logical, it may be granted. For example, the Turner Board of Appeals ruled in favor of a developer for a proposed 25-unit elderly complex. The building lot did not meet the frontage requirements of the comprehensive plan. The vote for the exception was based, in part, in conformity with the logic expressed by one board member: "In this situation, I think we have to take into consideration the benefit this will bring to the town, and not necessarily the letter of the law."

The lack of a zoning ordinance has not (Fall, 1988) created intolerable situations in Turner. None of the three population concentrations have lost their traditional character. They remain largely residential without intrusive commercial or high density housing development. It is doubtful that any housing or commercial development could take place in the villages under the town's current land use restrictions. All lots have to consist of at least 80,000 square feet (almost two acres) and have 200 feet of road frontage.

In the meantime, the explosive growth of businesses on State Route 4 (see above) continues. The uncontrolled nature of commercial enterprises in Turner is reflected in part by the need for the selectmen/assessors to inspect twenty-two properties for which junkyard applications had been filed (*Lewiston Daily Sun*, 19 December 1987).

To help avoid conflicts between new residents and farmers in rural areas, a Turner resident had the legislator who represents the town in the Maine House of Representatives introduce a bill that might help alleviate some conflict. If a farmer voluntarily registers the operation with the town, any person selling property must inform prospective buyers that, with certain restrictions, the farmer has the right to use sprays and spread manure. In turn, the new property owner must not build within 250 feet of the farmer's property line. This provision provides property owners some protection from nuisances, but they then lose the freedom to build on their land.<sup>22</sup>

Zoning has had few proponents in Turner, particularly the farmers. The most constrained remark I heard about zoning from a farmer was: "Zoning so we can't bail out of business to cover our debts is not gonna be the popular method."

In 1986 when a former farmer with large land holdings in Turner was questioned about the possibility of zoning being imposed, he thought it would depend on the profitability of dairying:

Look, about zoning, you needn't have to worry about it in the town of Turner as long as agriculture is flourishing. It'll take care of itself. The minute agriculture gets into a tailspin and we start having difficulty with agriculture and the boys are having problems, you're going to see land dumped onto the market. There's going to be subdivisions. We're going to have bigger schools and more problems than we've ever seen. Then that is when maybe zoning or something of this nature needs to be considered, but not [now] the way things have been taking care of themselves.

Two years later this statement is "inoperative," a phrase made famous by President Nixon's press secretary during the Watergate investigations. In 1988 the Maine Legislature passed an act which will require Maine towns with Turner's growth pattern to have a comprehensive plan, containing "provisions for enactment" (zoning) by January 1, 1992. In effect, the ball has been taken from Turner's court. The state of Maine will decide if Turner's land use regulations are compatible with the growth management plan.

More and more the town of Turner is becoming a creature of the state. The following section provides a synopsis of how local government has operated in Turner until 1988.

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<sup>22</sup>A bill to modify the legislation will be acted upon by the Maine Legislature in 1989.

## TURNER GOVERNMENT

The implicit democracy of the New England town meeting form of government is an American ideal. In this format it is implied that, because all citizens have the right of decision making, everyone will benefit. Unfortunately, this presumption, while not without some substance, is not completely accurate. Shortcomings though there may be, town government directed by elected *selectmen* (regardless of sex) continues to serve many New England towns quite well, Turner, Maine included.

Despite Turner's rapid growth and, to a degree, suburbanization, there is little or no demand for a change in governmental form. There is growing sentiment that, perhaps, Turner should hire a professionally trained town manager to relieve the selectmen from ever-increasing responsibilities. That move may come, but if it does it will not be without serious thought and debate. Turner is not likely to turn its back on 200-plus years of tradition overnight.

When Turner (Sylvester-Canada) held its first town meeting in 1787, three selectmen were elected at large. Two hundred years later, with a population at least thirteen times greater, there are still three elected-at-large selectmen. There has been just one woman elected to the post. She served two three year terms, 1979-1985.

Most Maine towns of Turner's size have increased the number of selectmen from the traditional three to five. Some smaller and many similar size towns have hired professionally trained town managers.<sup>23</sup> Turner's first and present administrative assistant, a very dedicated and able person, is the former selectwoman. Until action taken at the 1988 town meeting, she was also the code enforcement officer, building inspector, and plumbing inspector.<sup>24</sup> With the hiring of a person to assume all but her administrative duties, she can now devote her attentions to increased responsibilities dictated by the avalanche of legislative acts and licensing/regulation procedures which have been exacerbated by the town's continued population growth.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>For example, Easton, in Aroostook County (1987 population 1,305), has had a town manager since the 1970s. It also has had five selectmen for many years (Ploch 1988).

<sup>24</sup>Article 25 of the warrant for the 1988 Turner town meeting reads: "To see if the citizens of Turner will vote to hire a full-time Code Enforcement Officer, Building Inspector, Plumbing Inspector, and Health Officer, and to see what sum they will vote to raise for a salary. Budget Committee recommends a salary of \$15,000.

<sup>25</sup>There are two additional elected officials who have specific, mandated duties that contribute to the functioning of the town's government: the Town Clerk and the Treasurer/Tax Collector. Also elected are a Road Commissioner, and the Budget Committee. The functions of the Budget Committee will be described below.

Turner's paucity of elected officials and administrative staff is not necessarily a manifestation of its citizens' lack of community concern.<sup>26</sup> Rather, it appears to be the continuation of a long-established, two-faceted, local principle: government actions should be minimal and close to the people. The saga of Turner's town houses, to be illustrated below, is an example of this tradition.

Turner's first public building was a town house, a stipulation of the grant that created Sylvester-Canada. It served as the religious meeting house, as the seat of government, and for other community functions. It was located on Upper Street amidst many of the earlier farms and homes. By 1822 town meetings were held in the Upper Street schoolhouse.

In 1830, when Turner's population had reached 2,218 and all sections of the town were populated, a decision was made at town meeting to build a new town house. The proposed site for the building made ecological sense. It was to be located at the approximate center of the town, but somewhat closer to Turner Center than to Turner Village.

The motion to construct and to locate the town house carried 93 to 79.<sup>27</sup> The location of the new town house, although geographically logical, did not meet the approval of a group of ethnocentric persons from the western area of the town. It took nine separate votes between September 25, 1830 and April 19, 1831 before the final decision was made to construct the building at the originally proposed, central location. Once its location was finally agreed to, the building soon became a reality. The first meeting in Turner's second town house was held on August 19, 1831.

The trials and tribulations of locating the town house are well described by Russell in his undated talk to the Turner Historical Society:

when the question arose over the location of the town house, the Village was ruled out as not central and convenient. But the western inhabitants were not willing to give the prestige of the hall to the Center and insisted on the precise center of town on an isolated little hill about a half mile out of the Center.

The Center adherents felt that this made no sense and was done out of pure spite. And so on a winter's night shortly after construction of the town house, men from the western [eastern] part of town gathered, took down the town house (the frame timbers had been pegged and could be taken apart) and re-erected it just west of the Center burying ground. Weeks later, men from the village took it down again and put it back on the original site. A short while later the Center adherents took it down and put it where it now is and they took the precaution of fixing the timbers with long spikes so they could not very easily again be taken apart. And there the town house has remained.

<sup>26</sup> Although there are just three selectmen, there is a total of 109 individuals filling 139 positions (elected or appointed) in 25 official boards, committees, and functions (Turner Town Report 1988: 5-8).

<sup>27</sup> Francis H. Russell, "The Turner Town House," mimeograph, undated. Turner Historical Society.

Turner Center won the battle of 1831, but eventually lost the war. The present Turner town hall has been located on Irish Street (Route 117) in Turner Village since 1951.<sup>28</sup> In recent years the building became too small for community needs and was close to being an eyesore. In 1988 a \$40,000 plus, 20 x 40 meeting room was added, and the exterior was vinyl sided. The renovation has made the building both more functional and attractive. In true Turner style, however, it remains utilitarian, rather than fancy. Turner's officials will not be able to boast in the 1988 town report that, "We have the most beautiful town office in Maine" as the Easton, Maine town manager did in his report for 1986. They might be embarrassed to say so, even if it were the case.

In Maine, in communities with the town form of government, the citizens assembled at the annual town meeting decide how much money the town will spend during the ensuing fiscal year. Generally, the major source of revenue is the local property tax. In many Maine towns, including Turner, the selectmen are also the designated assessors. With few exceptions, Maine selectmen are not professionally trained assessors. They learn on the job and by attending short courses, assessing schools conducted by the state and/or the Maine Municipal Association.

There is little doubt that in Turner the selectmen take their assessing duties very seriously. In recent years, however, some members have been considering the merits of hiring a professional to do the job. How such a proposal would fare at town meeting is debatable. It is possible that there might be fewer disputes arising over assessments if it were done by an acknowledged professional. One town official, in discussing the merits of hiring an assessor, stated, "If you get somebody [an assessor] that people don't know they're not goin' to hassle so much, or it's not goin' to be the same type of hassle." Perhaps not, but if the professional, in assessing a business, deviates from present policy of, e.g., "we haven't gone that far as to look at their bills; we trust 'em not to beat us too badly," there are likely to be some vigorous dissents.

The informality of the present system of assessing is illustrated in an example cited by a farmer: "If I buy a piece of equipment and it costs \$30,000 and then in a few years if it's only worth \$10,000, I tell 'em it's worth \$10,000, and some of the smaller machinery, they just overlook." This same person illustrated the informality of the present system when he remarked that when he built a new building, "he held the tape" when the structure was being evaluated for tax purposes.

If and when Turner hires a professional tax assessor is not determined. It is close to inevitable that this will happen. Turner has been remarkably successful

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<sup>28</sup>For many years prior to 1951 town business was conducted in the homes of town officials, particularly the elected town clerk.

in holding on to its informal folkways, but the tide of immigration/population increase and increasing state-mandated regulations and restrictions will force changes in local town governance. And if outside forces don't bring about changes in the assessing process, it may be that Turner's deeply embedded sense of economic rationality may be the spur to institute professional assessing. This thought is implied in the remark of one of the selectmen/assessors: "I think he'd [the assessor] probably make more than his salary. Probably pay his salary right at DeCoster's [DeCoster Egg Farm]."

**BUDGET COMMITTEE**—In Maine, selectmen are the town's fiscal officers, but there is a buffer between the selectmen and the voting citizens who determine at town meeting just how much money the selectmen will have available. Budget committees can be elected or appointed. Turner follows the traditionally democratic process of election. It is a process that tends to ensure that the recommendations of the Budget Committee will not be unduly influenced by the wishes of the selectmen.

The recommendations of the nine-member Budget Committee are suggestions, not fiats. The town meeting can accept, modify, or reject them. In Turner, the recommendations of the Budget Committee are usually taken seriously, although not unanimously accepted. At the 1988 town meeting, the Budget Committee made recommendations on fifty "money" items—forty-seven were accepted as read, one was amended, and two were increased. It would appear that the Budget Committee membership was reflective of Turner's citizenry, at least those who attend town meetings.

Some complaints were voiced to me that the Selectmen do not cooperate well with the Budget Committee. The primary complaint was that the Selectmen do not inform the Budget Committee well enough on some items. One very active and vocal citizen complained that the lack of communication caused problems for Budget Committee members at town meeting. He explained that, sometimes, when an article is placed on the floor, the Selectmen do not react to it and then:

"somebody from the Budget Committee gets up and recommends its movement. Then somebody ... wants to know "why?" Well, the poor guy from the Budget Committee hasn't been informed well enough so as he can really stand on good firm ground and explain it, and he gets whipped."

A former member of the Budget Committee voiced the same complaint.

Despite this perception of Selectmen/Budget Committee relationships in Turner (and I heard other, similar accounts) it would be unfair to conclude that the Budget Committee's role is perfunctory. In fact, the Budget Committee is used on occasions by the Selectmen in a much more inclusive manner than is normal. For example, in the words of a Budget Committee member, the Select-

men "use the Budget Committee to help them interview and hire key people." He went on to describe a hiring situation in which two of the selectmen happened to have a conflict of interest and the "third selectman wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole, and so they used the Budget Committee for that." The Selectmen also "used the Budget Committee ... when they negotiated with the road crew." Pragmatism is a well-developed art in Turner.

**PLANNING BOARD**—At present, Turner's Selectmen and Budget Committee are vital components of its functioning as a legal entity. The Planning Board, and its adjunct Site Review Board, will be of prime importance to its future. A community that experiences a population growth of 82 percent in seventeen years (1970 to 1987) and faces the prospect of a growth rate at least that high for a number of years to come, will undergo, as a minimum, significant social and economic changes and challenges. Confronting these realities without an updated comprehensive plan and zoning regulations complicates the process and makes the possibility of problems and conflict more certain.

Turner's Planning Board (1986–1988) appears to be making significant strides to meet these problems and challenges. The creation of the Site Review Board and the broad occupational and residence spectrum of its members will help assure that development and land issues will get the attention they deserve. But as long as both boards have to make decisions more on a case-by-case basis rather than being guided by definitive codes, conflicts of many kinds will develop. Currently, there is no assured protection for the maintenance of coherent usage zones. Commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural uses can be intermixed. Such a mixture can be, at the maximum, explosive; minimally, they are like oil and water—they do not mix well.<sup>29</sup>

A combination of rapid population growth and housing developments are the basis for a large share of Turner's planning problems. One town official expressed frustration in stating: "It's [growth and development] getting out of hand. I have been telling the Planning Board that it should put a moratorium on building, but it's pretty difficult to do. You got to have your reasons." Turner might be able to present a sound case for a development moratorium, but it would be an action inconsistent with the town's general free enterprise values.

One step in expanded local control related to building growth was the enactment of a new building code in 1988. It took fourteen months of rewriting to satisfy committee members. Turner people do not accept the need for regulation lightly.

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<sup>29</sup>In January, 1988 the Turner Comprehensive Planning Committee began functioning. "The purpose of the committee will be to develop a new updated Comprehensive Plan for Turner" (annual report for the Town of Turner, Maine, 1988:65).



Without question Turner's building boom is causing a variety of problems for the town and its citizens. There is at least one consequence of the increase in commercial and residential building to which few of the community's residents would object. The increased value of real property in 1988, estimated by a town official to be over eight million dollars for the 1987-1988 fiscal year, could result in a decrease in the tax rate.

Meanwhile, the development pressure continues, which results in more and more decision making by the Selectmen, Planning Board, and Site Review Board. One recent plan (1988) was for the development of approximately seventy house lots on a hillside tract. The drainage from the hill empties into a forty-acre pond. One disturbed town official remarked: "You get seventy-odd homes up there, you can imagine the impact on that little pond."

A development is also proposed for another relatively small pond. The proposal is another example of the increasing attractiveness of Turner as a living area. It is also an illustration that Turner's rapid growth, which produces a need for more decision making, can create additional stress among Turner's official agencies and bodies. When Rescue Unit members informed the Planning Board that the road into the development would not be adequate for emergency vehicles they were rebuffed: "We were flatly told ... that the Planning Board could not be concerned with our concerns." When governmental functions become departmentalized, it is almost inevitable that frictions will arise over policies and jurisdictions.

In addition to the specific challenges related to rapid growth and development, Turner, like most Maine communities, is wrestling with the problems of solid waste disposal. The useful life of the current Turner dump is very limited. Instead of waiting until the last minute, with funds authorized at the 1988 town meeting, the possibility of siting a new dump is being explored. In 1988 engineering studies were begun on a site that, unlike the present facility, is not over an aquifer. The proposed location is not owned by the town, which means it must be purchased at going prices.<sup>30</sup> The act of acquiring the dump site before a new one is mandated is, in part, an illustration of a Turner operating principle: solve your own problems and do not be dictated to by outside forces, in this case, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

**PROTECTIVE SERVICES**—In urban communities police and fire departments are usually major expense items. In rural communities, and particularly in northern New England, relatively little town tax money is spent for protective services. Turner follows that model. For the 1987 fiscal year the total town

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<sup>30</sup>In the report of the Landfill Committee in the 1988 Town report it is stated that: "The cost of opening a new and closing the old [dump] could run as much as three million dollars" (1988 Turner Town Report:74).

expenditures for the fire department were \$26,834, and \$5,460 for the rescue squad. The grand total spent for protective services amounted to 1.27 percent of the town's expenditures for 1987—a much lower proportion than most towns with organized fire and rescue services.

A major reason that so little is spent on protective services in Turner is that both the fire department and the rescue squad are volunteer and there is no police department. The only full-paid protective/emergency service person is one full-time rescue squad person, a position that was authorized at the 1988 town meeting. The salary recommended by the Budget Committee was \$9,300.

To fund their operations, both the Fire Department and the Rescue Squad rely primarily on voluntary community efforts. An item in the 1987 Annual Report, Town of Turner, Maine (page 114) illustrates one instance of community support: "The purchase of a new ambulance was made possible through the efforts of the Beano Committee and the good people who travel each Sunday to enjoy the game." As implied in the quotation, the majority of the beano players are not Turner residents. They are, to a large degree, making it possible for Turner to run a modern, efficient, emergency service at a very small expense to the town—a modernized version of shrewd Yankee thrift.

Both the Fire Company and the Rescue Unit (usually referred to as "the Rescue") are important constituents of Turner, both as an official entity and as a community.<sup>31</sup> Membership in one or both is considered by many to be both a duty and a privilege. The esteem that both groups are accorded was reflected in part in 1986. The Turner Town Report for the 1985-1986 fiscal year was dedicated to the Chiefs of the Fire Department and the Rescue Unit—respectively Lawrence and Laurel Gagne. Mr. and Mrs. Gagne form a unique team. Their common interests and dedication help assure that the efforts of these two vital services are coordinated.<sup>32</sup>

Through the fall of 1988 Turner had no uniformed police protection. Most towns of Turner's size (particularly those near urban centers, as Turner is) have either town police officers or pay to have uniformed County Sheriff's Deputies parole the community. When asked about the possibility of the town making use of a deputy sheriff, a town official replied:

They [county sheriff's department] tried to get us to do that about three years ago. We looked into having our own sheriff, and car, and so forth. We could see it was going to be very expensive. It might start out at a low figure, but after a couple of years things have a habit of getting out of hand.

<sup>31</sup>The Fire Department is a unit of the Town of Turner. The Fire Chief is appointed by the Selectmen. The Rescue Unit is not an official part of the town government.

<sup>32</sup>The use made of the Rescue Unit was documented in the 1987 Town Report (page 4) as follows: "Turner Rescue has experienced the busiest year yet with 442 instances needing assistance, 365 transports, and 2,987 hours utilized in rescue work."

It is inevitable with continued growth that Turner will have some sort of police protection on a regular basis, however, unless something unforeseen occurs, the town will not be rushed into that situation.

**GOVERNMENT PHILOSOPHY**—Turner's governing officers have been more conservative than liberal. The tendency has been to "wait and see what happens" rather than to adopt actions and attitudes to meet pending and possible future situations. The planning for a new dump is perhaps a signal that ingrained attitudes toward change and growth may change. Adding the 40 x 28 addition to the Town Hall is another example of change—a change which did not go unchallenged by the citizenry. When the item reached the floor of the 1988 town meeting it was challenged by a citizen asking for an amendment to determine if the building was located on a flood plain which would have prevented the expansion. The amendment was ruled out of order. The hand-count vote to accept the expansion carried 56 to 36 (61 percent "yes") but was challenged. A subsequent written ballot vote carried 81 to 61 (57 percent "yes"). Forty thousand dollars was appropriated from the General Fund for the addition, which provides needed working and meeting space. The external appearance of the building has also been improved noticeably, but internally it is still relatively Spartan. The emphasis on functionality rather than on appearance and gentility is in keeping with Turner's general social conservatism.

Turner's traditional conservatism in government, as well as in other ways, is, of course, changing, but not without resistance. The newcomers, at least those who speak their minds in public, are generally considered to be "liberal," i.e., they want more community services. One veteran public figure in Turner voiced his resistance to change by stating: "We don't want too many people from the city coming in and changing the way we do things." His wife added: "They [newcomers] are more free to spend money. They want new roads, and new this and new that... [the old timers] would rather do things for themselves and keep taxes down. These people [newcomers] want services *even* if the taxes go up, and then they complain about the service."

Although Turner has a history of avoiding entanglements with larger units of government, there is an active movement to tap into a state pool of money created by a bond issue in 1987. There is a sum of 35 million dollars available in Maine for the purchase by the State of land and sites that should be protected from development. Turner, through a group of active citizens, is attempting to obtain some of that money to purchase approximately 2,000 acres located in the town on the west bank of the Androscoggin River. It would provide a place for the general public to enjoy an unspoiled riverfront area. There is strong sentiment in the community in favor of it. Some persons are willing to vote the use of town money to help in the purchase. If that vote comes to reality, it will reveal just how far Turner has moved from its conservatism.

One Turner tradition that has stood the test of time, but seemed to be the most irritating aspect of local government to my informants, was the lack of the Australian ballot to elect Turner officials.

In Turner all officials are elected at the annual Town Meeting, which means that only persons able to and/or with an interest in attending are eligible to vote. The normal procedure is for an individual to be nominated from the floor for a particular office. Immediately following nomination, a show-of-hands vote is taken. If there is doubt about the results, someone requests a vote by ballot.

The present system may be cumbersome and archaic, but it has deep democratic roots. The philosophy is "if you care who your town officials are, you will be at Town Meeting to see them, hear them, and vote for your choice." Old traditions die slowly in Turner.

## EDUCATION IN TURNER

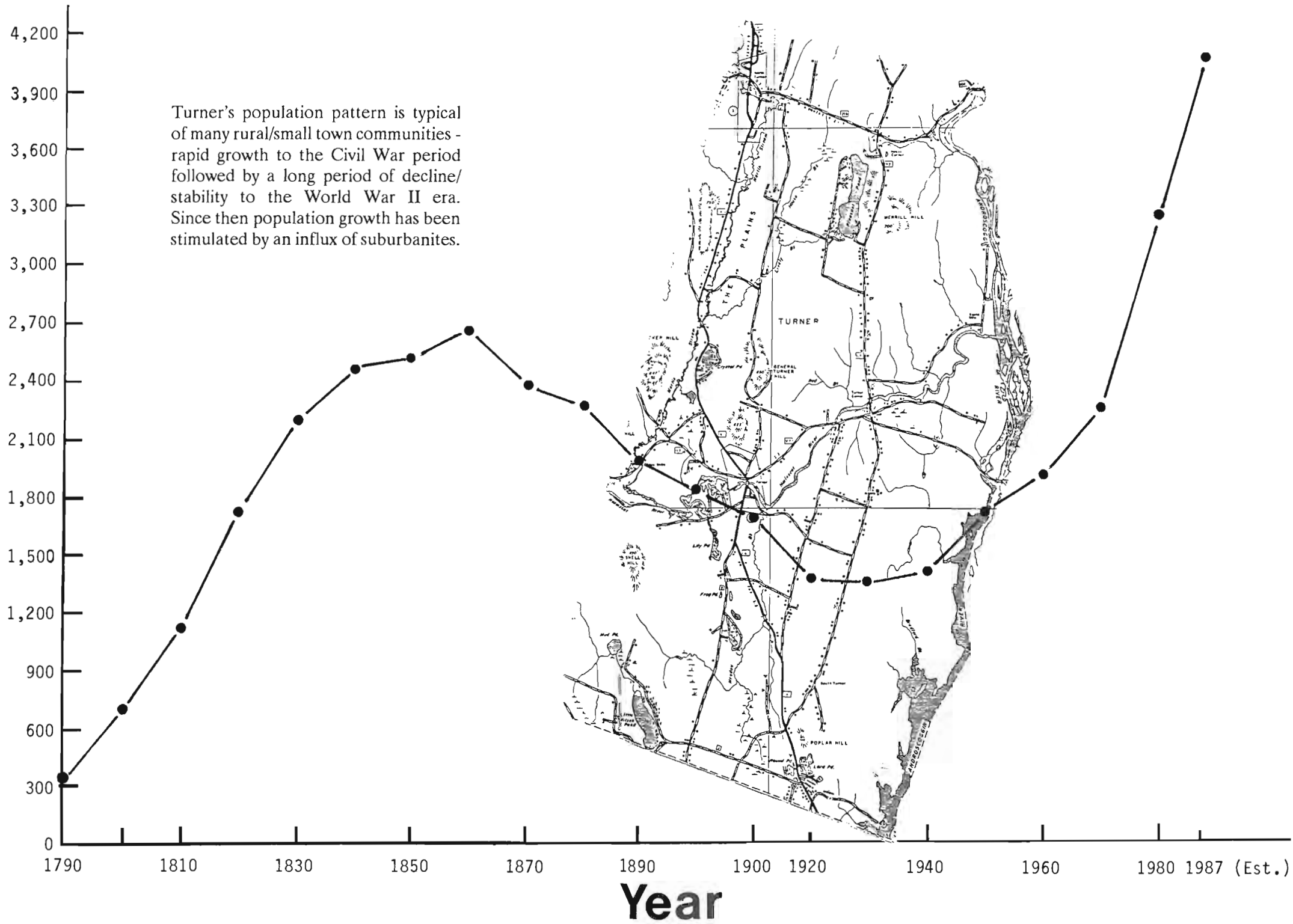
Turner's status as a traditional small town, rural/agricultural community has changed little despite the recent population growth. Since its inception, schools and education have also been important aspects of the town. Perhaps related to Turner's historical duality, taking pride both in the provision of public services and in valuing private initiative and enterprise, the town's first educational institution was a private, for-profit institution. "The first school in town was a private school on the Lower Street, about 1788 [two years after the community became an incorporated town], Mr. Arthur Bradman being the teacher" (French 1887:169).

Whether or not the tuition of the early scholars was subsidized is not documented in the sources used in this study. It is known, however, that a fund for the support of education was established early in Turner's history. Four of the original settler lots were sold for a total of \$2,550. Interest earned on the principal was used to support schools. A school and church fund still exists in Turner. Its income is used to provide college scholarships for Turner students.

Turner's efforts to provide secondary education was spurred by an act of the Maine Legislature in 1886. In that year "the town of Turner obtained enough money from these funds to [support] two terms of Free High School which are referred to ... as Fund Schools" (Bicentennial Report 1976:30). Town funds were also used to support the "free" high schools. Apparently, these schools provided secondary education classes on a periodic basis for interested scholars in the population concentrations in the town: "The free high schools were rotated between districts so that all students might have the same opportunity" (Bicentennial Report 1976:30).

During the 1886–1896 period, even though Turner was in a period of relatively sharp population decline (a 19% loss from 1870 to 1890), the number of

Population



common schools (grades 1 through 8) held steady at 20 to 21. This situation was probably related to a strong sense of identification with local neighborhoods. As late as 1903 there was at least one Turner school in which most of the children spoke French.

From 1895 to 1896, two events occurred that greatly modernized and expanded Turner's educational system. Under the direction of Joseph Conant, superintendent of schools and Turner native, the town in 1895 added normal school—teacher training—to its curriculum. This action was soon followed by a very generous act of another Turner native, James Madison Leavitt.

Leavitt became wealthy manufacturing umbrellas and dealing in real estate in Brooklyn, New York. In 1896 Mr. Leavitt offered the town \$10,000 to erect a high school building. Though there is little doubt that the offer was greatly appreciated, its location became the center of a territorial conflict, which had overtones of the controversy over the location of the second town house some sixty-five years earlier. Once again, the residents of both Turner Village and Turner Center insisted that the building should be in "their" village. The location dispute reached such proportions that Mr. Leavitt began to have second thoughts about the gift. It is recorded that "the donor of the funds for it finally said that if they didn't quickly settle the question he would withdraw his gift" (Russell n.d.:2). As was the case with the town house, Leavitt Institute was located in Turner Center.

Leavitt Institute quickly became an important Turner landmark. It served as Turner's high school, and it was also a boarding school, attracting students from a number of other towns. By 1900 its enrollment was 108 for the fall and winter semesters, and 83 for the spring semester. The lower number in the spring may have been related to the need for high school students to work on Turner's numerous farms.

Leavitt Institute, along with most small Maine high schools (particularly those that were originally privately funded, often by religious denominations), followed the classical model of education. Music, languages, and even etiquette were essential components of the curriculum.

Turner has had a number of institutions, organizations, and buildings that over time became invested with deep community pride and emotion. The Universalist Church in the Center, the union church in the Village, the town house, and the stately Grange Hall are held in special reverence in the town. It is doubtful that any of them has the force of sentiment and tradition bestowed on Leavitt Institute. But as important as it was (and in some ways, still is), Leavitt Institute as a functioning educational institution succumbed in 1966 to the changing conceptions and methods of education in small-town and rural Maine. What was Leavitt Institute became the core of Maine School Administrative District (S.A.D.) 52.

S.A.D. 52 (Turner, Leeds, Greene) is one of seventy-six Maine School Administrative Districts. Their creation was due to a recognition in Maine, in the 1950s, that many of Maine's smaller communities could not provide all of the modern, accepted educational opportunities for young people. An underlying belief was that the larger number of pupils, and the financial support that would be generated by the several towns from which they came, would provide for an elaborated and updated program of studies. Among other advantages there would be greater opportunities for social growth and participation in extra-curricular activities, including sports. These goals have been achieved in many of the new school systems. But if you ask most Turner residents who are alumni of the Leavitt Institute, how they feel about the incorporation of Leavitt Institute into S.A.D. 52, you receive, at best, a mixed reaction. They tend to recognize some of the advantages of a larger, more modern system, but remain sentimentally loyal to *their* school.

S.A.D. 52 (River Valley School District) straddles the Androscoggin River just north of Lewiston/Auburn, Maine's second-largest standard metropolitan statistical area. The district's three towns are contiguous and share similar small town/agricultural histories. They do not, however, constitute a natural social/cultural entity, the ideal situation for a consolidated school system.

Turner is entirely west of the Androscoggin River; Leeds and Greene are entirely east of it. There are just two connecting bridges. One bridge is at the northeast Turner, northwest Leeds border; the other bridge is at the conjunction of Turner's eastern midpoint with Greene's northwest boundary and Leeds' southwest boundary. None of the more built-up areas in one town is adjacent or relatively close to the centers of population in the other towns. With the exception of the junior and senior high schools in Turner and the health clinic in Leeds, there are few commercial, professional, or social bonds among the three towns.

There is an S.A.D. 52 elementary school in each town. This situation contributes to maintenance of individual community identity, but it tends to retard S.A.D. 52 from evolving into an interrelated community. In effect, the action of the three towns joining together to form S.A.D. 52 was more a marriage of convenience than one of mutual attraction. It did give them the opportunity of providing a modern education for their children in a small-town atmosphere.

By the mid-1980s, a faction of Greene residents decided that it was time for the town to withdraw from the school district. An informed Turner resident analyzed the problem by stating:

Well, just a few people got this thing going. A reason was they didn't like their children being bused so far [a maximum distance of approximately 13 miles]. They felt their children were not getting the best education. They thought they could be better educated in Greene. It was costing them too much money in the district. Drug problems [existed because young children were riding] on the bus with older children.

An S.A.D. 52 official summed up the situation in these words:

They wanted the seventh and eighth grades to go back to Greene because we were considering building . . . [an addition to Tripp Junior High in Turner]. They felt instead of building that, add on to the elementary schools in Greene and Leeds. Then there would be more of a neighborhood concept up to grade eight.

When the issue came to a vote in Greene it was defeated by a wide margin. A statement by the S.A.D. 52 superintendent of schools in the 1986–87 annual report of the district summarizes the action:

Of extreme significance to me was the strong support exhibited in the town of Greene when the citizens voted 284 to 1,004 to remain part of S.A.D. No. 52. It is my sincere hope that the concerns and problems which caused the withdrawal considerations to initially take place can be addressed to make our district more united. (Annual Report and Budget (1986–87), Maine School Administrative District No. 52:3).

Apparently the superintendent's hopes have been realized. Of the two Greene School Board members who were in favor of their town's withdrawal from S.A.D. 52, one was not re-elected and one chose not to run for re-election.

The present board, according to an informed source, "is in favor of keeping the district the way it is. So there really isn't any competition between the towns... [except for] competition among the three elementary principals, which is only natural."

All informants questioned about the S.A.D. No. 52 School Board were very favorable in their evaluation. Some of the typical comments that support this contention were:

they [the Board] are very concerned about education and they are involved in a lot of curriculum [issues] and they want to know what's going on.

They want the schools and the superintendent to be accountable for what is going on in education and they are very informed.

They will spend money if they feel it can benefit students and the educational process.

We are moving to a more liberal-thinking Board who don't seem to have as conservative an approach to education as they did in [1984–1985].

The "liberality" on the Board is evidenced in a variety of ways: the people who are being hired "tend to be more liberal thinkers, more risk takers, but manage to carry an affect that isn't threatening to people." In addition, the Board "is working to see if there is a need for this district to hire someone, if you want to



call it a health director or chemical dependency person." That position was filled in 1988.

One consequence of the creation of school administrative districts has been, to a degree, the loss of community identity with *their* school. A portion of the dissatisfaction of some Greene people with S.A.D. 52 in the mid-1980s was community-identity related. As a result of this type of feeling there is a loss, in a sense, of democratic control of the School Board. Citizens tend to feel that their vote and voice have lost meaning. As a consequence, except when highly controversial issues come to a head, public attendance at official School Board meetings is very low—even when the district budget is voted upon.<sup>33</sup> For example, the S.A.D. No. 52 budget for 1988–89 of \$8,077,486, an increase of fifteen percent over the previous year, was approved by a handful of people at the annual meeting to adopt the budget.<sup>34</sup>

During 1987–1988 S.A.D. 52 underwent an intensive review of all aspects of its operation. The report of the evaluators was generally favorable toward the District and the Board. The review team made several recommendations related to the continuing need for the S.A.D. 52 Board of Directors to better inform the citizens of the district of its activities. Perhaps from the community point of view, the most important of these recommendations was:

That the Board more effectively communicate with all of its citizens and design specific programs to communicate with those citizens who do not have children enrolled in M.S.A.D. 52 schools (page 18).

Full implementation of the recommendation might help to restore a sense of identity with the school system. It is possible that the communication recommendation could be less meaningful for Turner than for Greene and Leeds. Residents of those communities might remark: "Why should Turner people complain? They have the high school, the junior high school, and *their own* elementary school." It is interesting to note the subtle differences, perhaps unintentional, in the official names of the S.A.D. No. 52 elementary schools: Greene Central School, Leeds Central School, *Turner* Elementary School.

**ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES GROWTH**—Population growth in a community and/or in a school district normally produces an increase in the num-

<sup>33</sup>There have been exceptions. According to a school official: "If the townspeople feel as they did eight or ten years ago and they thought the Board of Directors were being irresponsible [they would come] ... there was standing room only at Leavitt Area High School. Between 400 and 500 people showed up and they cut the budget."

<sup>34</sup>Turner's share, from local taxes, was \$1,064,788. The State of Maine pays 75 percent of the state mandated "foundation program" costs. In addition to their 25 percent contribution toward the foundation program, S.A.D. 52 towns raised an additional \$745,000 to support non-mandated programs and activities.

ber of school-age children. Predictably, there has been, in recent years, an enrollment increase in the S.A.D. 52 schools. The school population in the district increased by 4.7 percent between the 1981-82 and 1987-88 school years. In contrast, the rate of population growth for the three towns combined was nearly three times that rate—12.8 percent. Despite the lag in S.A.D. 52 enrollment, the district's Board of Directors and the Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services were convinced that a significant expansion of school facilities was warranted.<sup>35</sup>

In Turner there was a major addition to the elementary school. There was also a beautiful and modernistic expansion (approximately \$3,000,000) of Tripp Junior High School, which is located between Turner Elementary School and Leavitt Area High School.

In Maine, schools are joint responsibilities between the state and the local governmental units and/or the multi-town school administrative district. In recent years the Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services has been receptive to the needs and requests of S.A.D. 52. For example, a teacher at the Turner Elementary School stated that a preliminary request for an addition to the school was turned down by state officials because, "What you [S.A.D. 52] are asking for is too small." This same informant indicated that even with the new Turner Elementary School addition, two mobile classrooms would be in use in the fall of 1988.

An S.A.D. 52 official explained that the district was a fortunate beneficiary of changes in the state financing of new capital improvements:

In recent legislation they [the state] realized that some districts were growing rapidly. In order to keep up with the facilities that were necessary, they put a ceiling on the debt that any district could be responsible for. When we went over the ceiling the state would pick it up. In our case we pay about \$92,000 in debt service in interest and principal a year. We are obligated for \$700,000 so the state is paying roughly seven times what the district is paying.

S.A.D. 52 and its constituent towns face a problem if development and thus their state tax evaluation increases. According to an article in the 31 December 1987 *Lewiston Daily Sun*, the 75 percent reimbursement that S.A.D. 52 was enjoying could fall to 66 percent if development continued at its present pace. The level of state reimbursement for school facilities is decreased as the property value of a school district increases.

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<sup>35</sup>The foresight of the S.A.D. 52 Board was more than vindicated by the 1988-1989 enrollment data. Between October 1, 1987 and October 1, 1988 there was an increase of six percent for the district. The number of pupils attending Turner Elementary School (K-6) increased by 19 percent, three times as high as for the District (K-12).

The need for educational expansion is recognized by many Turner residents. One informant, who is a major taxpayer and active in community affairs and who personifies the conservative/liberal attitudes of many Turner residents, articulated the interplay of local and state educational responsibilities as follows:

The school has to expand, we realize. Of course, the building of schools is not all that expensive [to the town] because that's basically state funds. But running them afterwards gets expensive. We are supposed to vote in a month or so which will, hopefully, keep the quality of the new building(s) so that they are not a complete loss as far as town use is concerned.

This thought was echoed in the 1988–89 report of the S.A.D. 52 Superintendent of Schools:

Besides providing the necessary space and modern facilities for our students, other benefits are derived for our citizens. The facilities in each town are also intended for community usage. Updated equipment, computers and facilities enhance our Adult & Community Education Program. Renovated gymnasium and new fields allow improved areas for community use.

There appears to be a general feeling among S.A.D. 52 school officials, administrators, and teachers, as well as among interested citizens, that although the District has been doing a creditable job, improvements of various types are in order. Examples include: (1) the thrust for new facilities; (2) positive reaction to state-mandated expansion in the arts, humanities, and sciences; (3) the migrant education program; (4) a renewed emphasis on community adult education; and (5) the institution and growth of a program in alternative education.

In 1986 the state of Maine instituted a uniform statewide testing program for students in the eighth and eleventh grades. S.A.D. 52 students have not done well on these examinations. The results of the most recent tests, which were for eighth grade students, were released in March, 1989. As in the previous tests, S.A.D. 52 did not score well. For all six test categories, students from Turner scored below the state average.<sup>36</sup> As a result of the relatively poor performance for all three S.A.D. 52 eighth grades, the school board has been conducting an intensive review in an attempt to discover whatever problems may exist and to establish procedures to correct them.

There is an emphasis within the school system on upgrading teaching practices which, it is believed, will enhance both teaching and student learning capabilities. In 1986 "Seventy of our [S.A.D. 52] hundred and twenty-one teachers will be receiving training this summer and fall on effective teaching practices" (1986 Annual Report, Maine School Administrative District No. 52:4).

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<sup>36</sup>The test categories are: reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, humanities.

There is an emphasis within Leavitt Area High School on achievement and motivation of bright students.<sup>37</sup> In the 1986–87 S.A.D. 52 annual report (page 5) it is noted that, "A Leavitt Area High School team, coached by Mr. Kimball, took first place in both the regional and state competition [of *Odyssey of the Mind*] and is preparing to compete in the World Competition scheduled for late May in Flagstaff, Arizona."

The high quality of work being done in individual classes at Leavitt Area High School is illustrated by a report entitled "Nezinscot River Project." It is a very detailed account of a study that employed sophisticated field techniques to determine the potential of the Nezinscot River as a salmon spawning habitat. The study was done by the 1987–88 class in Physical Geology. Interests and abilities among Leavitt Area High School students is also evident in their individual accomplishments. In 1987 a Leavitt Area High School student was the recipient of a four-year scholarship to Cornell University for study in forestry and natural resources. The scholarship had a maximum value of \$24,000.

**STATE MANDATES**—In recent years the state of Maine has issued several mandates to improve education, particularly in the fine and cultural arts. The S.A.D. 52 Superintendent of Schools related to me that the only area in which the District was not up to par was in fine arts. A program has been initiated to integrate fine arts, specifically art and music, first at the middle school level and then in the elementary schools. Additional staff has been added to meet this goal. Leavitt Area High School, unlike many in its size range, has had little emphasis on music. There is no school orchestra nor marching band. In the near future the steps now being taken to overcome deficiencies in the arts and humanities will negate a statement made by a long-time S.A.D. 52 administrator, "I don't think we were ever very heavy on humanities."

At the same time that efforts are being made to meet state mandates, increased emphasis is being placed on special education. One of the necessities for this focus appears to be related in part to the influx of new people into the District. A school administrator summed up the situation by remarking:

[Among the new students] I think you'll see children that may be handicapped, and I'm not talking physically, but mentally retarded. A lot of time parents would like to get out of the city and be in the country where there is more freedom and room for the children. We have a good program. We go the extra mile in providing a quality program for them.

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<sup>37</sup>School personnel, at several levels, indicated to me that traditionally, there has been an effort, particularly at the secondary level, to work especially hard to motivate and to assist the very brightest students, many of whom have matriculated at prestigious colleges and universities. Some informants believe that this emphasis has been detrimental to the less able students.

S.A.D. 52, in addition to operating three elementary schools, Tripp Junior High School, and Leavitt Area High School, has developed an effective, highly creative, and responsive Adult and Community Education Program. It is operated, under the aegis of the S.A.D. 52 Board of Directors and Superintendent of Schools, by the Community Education Council. Its members represent all the S.A.D. 52 member communities. The course offerings of the adult program are diverse and are reflective of both community requests and the creative imagination of the Council and members of the S.A.D. 52 family.

In 1985, sixty courses were offered; more have been added. Although neither S.A.D. 52 nor the Adult and Community Education Program are exclusively Turner enterprises, the offerings reflect one of Turner's several philosophical dualities. In this case, it is a combination of practicality/rationality with enjoyment and enhancement of leisure time. Courses that reflect the practicality/rationality perspective include, among others, Basic Automotive for Beginners, Parent Group for Teen Mothers, Basic Sewing, Self Defense Judo, First Responder (first aid safety), Computers for the Uninitiated, and a series of G.E.D. and diploma courses. Enjoyment and leisure type courses include Hunter Safety, Significance of Touch (Swedish and Eslon massage), Raising Herbs in Your Garden, Beginner Basketweaving, Intermediate Guitar, and Advanced 18th Century Crafts.

The Adult and Community Education Program is an important aspect of S.A.D. 52 efforts to make the school an integral community component. It probably helps instill a sense of community among the three towns, an effect that can stimulate support for the Board's efforts to continually improve the academic and other functions of S.A.D. 52. The Director of the Adult and Community Education Program recognizes the value of the program to the community and the value of community to the program. Volunteers are a major factor in providing many of the courses.

The program's director states:

I computed the volunteer hours by the minimum wage and we came up to over \$15,000. Two hundred were at our banquet last year and there were people that weren't there. So you're talking about a change in community from when it was looked at years ago. There's a real effort made on the part of the school district as well as the people in the school to get involved in education.

S.A.D. 52 has instituted another nontraditional program which has the potential to produce profound community effects. One of the most vexing problems of Maine school administrators has been the high rate of school dropouts.<sup>38</sup> The

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<sup>38</sup>Based on data contained in the 1987-88 Annual Report of S.A.D. 52, in 1984-85 there were 174 students enrolled in the ninth grade in Leavitt Area High School. Four years later there were 128 students in the twelfth grade, a decrease of 26 percent. For the 1983-84 to 1986-87 period there

Alternative School Program begun in S.A.D. 52 in 1986 has become an antidote for dropping out of school. The program has been so successful that through the 1987–88 school year eighty-three percent of its graduates had enrolled in post-secondary education programs—a higher percentage than for Leavitt Area High School in general or for most other Maine high schools.

The Alternative School Program is not a haven for lazy or marginal students. It is designed to provide an education to students who find that the normal, regimented, secondary program does not meet their personal needs. Some traditionalists might balk at a setting in which students work at their own pace, can get out of their seat for a cup of coffee or a soft drink. According to the program's director and his supervisor, the informal setting is in itself a motivating factor in the learning process.

During the start-up period of the Alternative School, which was meeting in a section of the old Turner Elementary School that serves as the S.A.D. 52 headquarters, a teacher remarked about the importance of deinstitutionalizing their program:

we're still working to make it like a living room setting so that these people can feel a little more comfortable. They're scared stiff of [schools]. I have students, I met one last week, he said, "I won't come into a school building, you'll have to meet me." So, I met him on his lunch hour. He was working in the woods. I had to meet him out on a logging road because he won't come in. There's more of that population out there that we're trying to reach.

Most of the students have paying jobs. This is an aspect of the school that complements the area's traditionally strong work ethic. In addition to courses that meet all the requirements of the normal academic programs, they are also taught practices and procedures that will help them on the job. They are taught courtesy, proper dress, the necessity for being on time, and performing in ways that the boss expects. The leader explains, "I try to model this like a boarding school—the way rich people get educated."

Because many of the Alternative School students come from disadvantaged homes, there is an emphasis on cultural enrichment. In addition to visits to museums and similar institutions, guest lecturers and performers are invited to the classroom. But even the performances are structured as learning experiences. When a cello player performed, students also were taught about the history of the instrument and the music.

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was a decrease of 18 percent in the total number of high school students. Probably not all the loss of students can be attributed to "dropouts" in the usual sense. Some may have moved or transferred to another school. Because of the area's high growth rate any loss of students should have been offset by the children of immigrant families.

According to a school official, a major goal of the Alternative School is to "get these students, who have had problems of adjusting to their lives at home, in the community, and in the school, to begin thinking realistically about choices they can make that they never thought they had before." In the first year of the program, after just 16 weeks of attending the school, many of the students, for the first time in their lives, became reasonably self-assured. As a faculty member recalled, in the beginning, if students had been asked to make a public presentation, "they would say I was absolutely out of my mind. But after 16 weeks they were able to attend three different conferences and to talk about their gain in self-esteem."

The Alternative School does not bypass the regular academic program; it takes a different approach to reach the same goal. The program stresses the principle of "credit by objective." In the words of a teacher:

What we do is to take exactly what the high school teaches and teach in small classes and meet the objectives, but we're not constrained by the September-June time limit or the four-course a day limit. Some students may be taking one or some may be taking five or six. We meet the objectives of the school exactly.

Academic objectives may be met "exactly," but in unorthodox ways. Classes may be held very early in the morning or late in the evening, on weekends, or during school vacation periods. The objective is to get education to the student whether she is a teenage mother, and there are several of them, or someone whose work schedule will not permit school attendance during the usual day-time hours.

Although there may be detractors of the Alternative School Program in the community, it has the support of the School Board, the School Superintendent, high school administrators, and ultimately, the citizenry who provide financial support for the program. During the first two years the program received no state subsidy, so it represented a higher direct cost per pupil to S.A.D. 52 towns than did the regularly enrolled students.

Maybe one reason for the acceptance of the program is that it is the type of "can do" effort admired in Turner. An example is the way their cramped quarters in the S.A.D. 52 headquarters have been made functional and comfortable. The program's director is a resourceful purchaser. She relates: "the Superintendent kids me, 'Where are you getting your money?' I go to Marden's (salvage goods). I go to K-Mart and second-hand stores. I scrounge and Scrooge and don't pay out a lot of money. There are ways around it. You can get people to help."

**MIGRANT PROGRAM**—In recent years S.A.D. 52 school administrators and teachers, particularly at Turner Elementary School, have become increas-

ingly aware that Turner is now a target for two types of immigrants whose children have special educational needs. DeCoster Egg Farm is attracting both traditional highly mobile American farm worker families and, more recently, Spanish- American/Mexicans. A federally mandated and supported program administered by a state education agency requires that local communities must provide special educational help for "a child who within the past twelve months moves across state boundaries so that members of his [her] family may find work in agriculture, fisheries, or forestry" (Maine Migrant Education - Program for Migrant Education n.d. or page number).

In 1986 there were twenty-two children in the program at Turner Elementary School, with two teachers hired with federal funds. In general these students, who, because of their parents' mobility, may be behind the grade level of their age peers, appear to fit into the school quite well. One teacher remarked that some of the "regular" students expressed a wish to get the special tutoring available to the migrant children. Much of the need for special attention teaching is directly related to their changing schools so often. One recent Turner migrant sixth grader had moved twelve times since beginning school.

Of more current (1987-88) concern to S.A.D. 52 and Turner Elementary School has been the influx of the Spanish-American/Mexican students. In neither year was the school notified about the number of students who would be arriving. According to one teacher, the first day of school in 1988 was punctuated by hectic meetings between teachers and school officials to accommodate some thirty extra students, some of whom could speak little or no English. One fourth grade boy who spoke both Spanish and English fluently was called out of class several times to act as an interpreter:

Someone [a Spanish-speaking person] would walk in the door and someone would say, 'Go get Luis.' We should have paid him.

A "migrant" teacher related, "Those children [Mexican-American migrants] were in school the very first day in town. The parents were very strong as far as wanting them in school. [The problem is] some stay for a month, some a week. A few are staying but some have already gone back. Most came from Texas, most are anxious to get back."

**CITIZEN, PARENT, SCHOOL INTERRELATIONSHIPS**—During the nineteenth century in America's small towns, the annual school picnics, a very informal and low-key affair, was a highlight of the year for the schools and the community. The annual Turner Elementary School Parent/Teacher Club (P.T.C.) Carnival doesn't have quite the same importance as its predecessors, but it is important in and of itself and as a symbol of school/community relations. Several hundred people gather to have fun and renew acquaintances. The school



principal gets dumped into the dunking tank, kids are "put in jail," competitions are held, and, most importantly, the bond between community and school is renewed.

Unfortunately, other, more academically oriented events sponsored by the Parent/Teacher Club are not so well attended. One teacher-parent expressed her disappointment in the interest in the P.T.C. by saying, "It's a core group [who attend]. Last month fifty were there because they knew the principal would be there." There are events which attract larger crowds. When the sixth grade graduates were honored at an evening ceremony there were 200 in attendance to share the cake, which was decorated with forty-eight names.

Even though only a small minority of citizens of the three S.A.D. 52 towns generally attend the annual school district meeting or attend school functions, there is evidence that education and the District are highly valued. Two findings from the 1987 study of the District by a team of professional educators confirms this conclusion. For example, in a survey of S.A.D. 52 residents, "45% believe that not enough money is being provided [to the District] ... and only 4% thought that too much money is provided" (Annual Report and Budget, S.A.D. 52 1988-89:14).

**SPORTS—EXTRA-CURRICULAR**—A visitor travelling through Turner Center on State Route 117 during the late-1980s could easily miss the modern S.A.D. 52 complex. He/she probably would notice three turn-of-the-century buildings located some 200 feet from the highway.<sup>39</sup> These venerable edifices are the legacy of the original Leavitt Institute. Also inherited from Leavitt Institute are the sports and extra-curricular activities that are now housed in three much more modern buildings: Turner Elementary School—attractive, modern, functional, with a new wing; Tripp Junior High, originally a rather drab, unimaginative elongated rectangle now being joined to a beautifully designed, town-house-like, \$3,000,000 addition; and Leavitt Area High School, a 1950-1960s style, functional secondary building beginning to show its age.

What the driver would surely notice is a tall sign capped with "Leavitt" in large capital letters. In movable letters, there is a calendar of current activities.<sup>40</sup> On an October day in 1986 the sign announced a dance on the ninth and three athletic events on the third: Hockey at Winthrop, Soccer Home, Football at Jay. This combination of sports and nonsport activities is a Leavitt tradition.

<sup>39</sup>The largest of these buildings, the former dormitory of Leavitt Institute, has been razed.

<sup>40</sup>Attached to the bottom of the sign are two additional hanging signs: Home of the Homets (painted in yellow and green block letters); and, in script, Turner Public Library. The sign symbolizes, in a sense, Leavitt Institute's continuing presence in the Village and the interrelation of the community and S.A.D. 52.

There are few, if any, school systems in Maine, with an enrollment of 1,080 students in kindergarten through grade six, 259 in grades seven and eight, and 593 in grades nine through twelve (1986–1987), with the athletic and recreational facilities that the S.A.D. 52 Turner Center Complex possesses. There are separate varsity football and baseball fields. The baseball field is larger, better engineered, and better maintained than many professional minor league fields. Contrastingly, the grandstands are small and outdated.

One might get the idea that Leavitt Area High School is one of those "win at any cost" institutions. Yet, that is not the impression I received from interviews with a number of persons close to the school, including the Superintendent, three past/present S.A.D. 52 principals, and School Board members. One school official, when asked if there was community pressure for winning teams, replied:

No, not too much for winning teams, not to the same extent as I saw in some other places that I've been in. What they expect is that you will have someone that teaches different skills in team sports and cooperation among the team and would take their coaching position seriously, not that they necessarily are going to win, but they are serious about coaching and teaching some of those skills.

No one I talked to specifically stated that the sports and extra-curricular programs were designed to be training in life skills, but that inference appeared to be a part of many of the conversations I had with people representing a wide spectrum of Turner residents. This philosophy may be one of the motivating forces related to an array of school and community activities. An example of early skills learning is elementary school students' exposure to soccer. At Turner Elementary School, first through third graders participate in soccer games. The teams have both girls and boys on them; the coaches and referees are a mixture of older students and parent volunteers. The kids are simultaneously learning a competitive sport, having fun, being disciplined, and learning respect for authority. The linking of pleasure and learning is one of several ways that the community utilizes to unite attributes that may seem to be incompatible.

As in every Maine community, however, sports as sports, which translates into having winning teams, is not completely lacking in Turner. In 1986 a school official remarked:

I think any community in the state of Maine is sports-oriented, every place I've ever been. We have, traditionally, a very fine field hockey, soccer, football program. A very fine softball, baseball program. The area for the last few years has been weak in basketball, I don't know why. This year we've hired some new coaches and I think we're gonna do fine in that area.

To assure that outdoor sports will continue to be attractive to students and spectators, additional athletic facilities have been built at the S.A.D. 52 complex. As reported in the 1988–89 Annual Report of S.A.D. 52 for 1988–89 (page

3), the District, "coupled with state construction monies create[d] another baseball field, softball field, and three practice fields at the Leavitt-Tripp Complex." School officials mentioned that one of the pressing needs for Leavitt Area High School was for a new, larger, more modern gymnasium.

From its days as a combination boarding/public, quasi-preparatory school, Leavitt Institute/Area High School has sponsored a diversified program of extra-curricular activities. As earlier stated, although music *per se* was never a major emphasis, drama has always been important. It was, for many years, a recreational/learning program which united the community with the school.

Drama continues to be a major extra-curricular activity. Tentative plans for an addition to Leavitt include expanded drama facilities. In the meantime, a new theatre program began in 1987. A school official remarked that the program has been well received, growing "from six to twenty-two youngsters in a year. We want them to have things which will carry them through life. How many people are going to be playing basketball at fifty- five?"

## RELIGION IN TURNER

Turner, as many small towns, has been home to a variety of religious expressions. As in most Maine rural communities, religious diversity is continuing and/or increasing. Community change and religious change are concomitants. The four Turner congregations that retain church edifices represent different degrees of the religious and social conservatism/liberalism that has been a long-standing Turner characteristic.

Despite Turner's relatively rapid population growth, three of the four churches are not thriving in membership, attendance, or community relevance. At the community level, two of these churches are, in the late 1980s, more symbols of and ties to the past than they are functioning realities.<sup>41</sup>

Although few Turner residents are active, contributing members of the local churches, the great majority would be genuinely saddened if fire or any other force destroyed a church. The community would not be the same without it. There is little doubt that if it were at all possible, the affected church would be restored as closely as possible to its traditional form. The effort to do so would be a community effort, not just a task of the congregation or a larger church organization.

The history of religion and churches began for Turner even before its official organization. In 1765 the original grant by the Massachusetts General Court of the township that became Turner, Maine, included the proviso that:

<sup>41</sup>For an almost opposite situation for a Maine community, see Ploch, 1988b.

the Grantees [must] within six years settle Thirty Families in said Town, build a house for public worship and settle a learned Protestant Minister and lay out a sixty-fourth part of said town for the Ministry" (French 1887:5).

The proprietors accepted this codicil, and after problems in securing a suitable minister, went a step further. In 1779, the proprietors "voted to pay one half the charge the settlers shall be at, for the support of a Clergyman for three years, and one third part for two years." To ensure that the support of a minister would not be too burdensome on the settlers, the proprietors further agreed that the minister's income could "be for money or articles of produce" (French 1887:28).

The proprietors also provided the first Meeting House (church). French reports three entries from the minutes of proprietors' meetings related to building of the meeting house. Each attempt by the proprietors to have a meeting house built in Sylvester was, in French's words, "still more generous" (French 1887:34). The Proprietors' representative was authorized "to give the settlers any sum he shall think proper, and to allow the undertaker or undertakers such further sum as he shall judge necessary for compleating said house" (French 1887:35).

The proprietors were just as vigorous in their efforts to obtain "a learned Protestant minister" to provide spiritual guidance to Sylvester Town's early inhabitants. The delays in obtaining a suitable minister were culminated on "August 12th, 1784, [when it was] voted to call Mr. Strickland 'to settle in the work of the ministry' and to pay him fifty pounds lawful money for his annual salary, so long as he shall be minister of the town" (French 1887:37).

The phrase "minister of the town" was an apt one. Instead of the minister's salary being paid voluntarily by church members, "Money was appropriated for this purpose the same as for any other for which money was raised, and the parish was the whole town" (French 1887:37).

The original church membership was small and male dominated—twelve men and three women. French estimates that at the time there were "in town about thirty [families] containing probably about two hundred souls" (French 1887:112). The sparsity of church membership, despite being taxed for its support, was probably related to more than one factor. It appears one of those was dissatisfaction with the "Presbytery form" of the church. In 1792, "Those who were alienated from him [Reverend Strickland], now joined with a number of people of neighboring Buckfield and petitioned the General Court for an act of incorporation as a Baptist Society" (French 1887:112). Twenty-four of the original incorporators of the Baptist Society were Turner residents. It took just eight years for religious schism to occur in Turner. It has occurred several times since 1792.

When Sylvester's proprietors commissioned the building of a town house they designated that it should be located "as near centre of the Parish, upon a

road, as best to comode the Proprietors and settlers" (French 1887:34). The location on Upper Street met, to a large degree, those stipulations. Turner is, however, a large town, and even the early settlers were located some distance from the church. French recounts a method which some parishioners used to facilitate a long trip to church. It is both "Turner practical" and amazingly modern in its concept—an early form of the now-familiar "park and ride" practice common to many commuters.<sup>42</sup>

The people rode to church ... and not infrequently they would "ride and tie" if the place of worship was a considerable distance away. One, or perhaps, two, would mount the horse and ride a portion of the way, when they then would dismount, tie the horse by the road-side, and proceed afoot. When the other party came upon the horse, they would mount, and ride past their companions, when they in turn would tie the horse and proceed afoot.

In 1804, after a period of unrest and dissension in the established church, it was voted to change its format "to that of a Congregational church, and seven male members subscribed a confession of faith and covenant" (French 1887: 115). This action gave rise to a defection of members in the church. After the hiring of a new minister in 1804, the defectors established "a society of Universalists, in which fifty-four persons were incorporated, and thirty others joined them within a year. These measures left the Congregational part of the inhabitants free to organize themselves as a distinct parish, in which capacity they have since acted" (French 1887:115).

The evolution of church bodies and groups in Turner which has continued into the 1980s, has not always been marked by separatism. As early as 1886, and perhaps earlier, union services were held by the Congregational and Baptist churches. Over time the two congregations became effectively one. A Methodist church also existed in Turner by 1886, and it also took part in the spirit of ecumenism that prevailed at the time, as indicated by an excerpt from the "Turner" column in the weekly *Lewiston Evening Journal* of 13 January 1886:

Rev. Mr. Roberts occupied the Baptist pulpit in exchange with Rev. Mr. Clark. Mr. Clark occupying his pulpit at the Methodist. Rev. Mr. Jones preached at the Congregational.

A Baptist church was dedicated at North Turner in 1875. It was a very active congregation when North Turner was a flourishing community with a furniture factory, creamery, and commercial services. Since 1948 it has been one of the churches in M.A.T.E. (Mission at the Eastward), an outreach in rural central

<sup>42</sup>The nearest Park and Ride location to Turner is in Winthrop, some 15 miles from Turner Center.

Maine of the Northeast Synod of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. It is the most active in community affairs of the four organized churches in Turner.

Although little evidence exists to document just how "religious" Turner's churches were in the 1800s, it can be assumed that religion as religion was a prime concern. However, by the early 1900s, the earlier days of ecumenical relationships seemed to have soured. In the words of a venerable Turner resident recalling the period of seventy-five and more years ago: "Probably no town had more religion than this town had. The Baptists, Methodists, and Universalists were separate. No way to get them together on religion, but they sat side by side in the Grange."

No evidence, direct or implied, was discovered that animosities presently exist among the churches or between the community and the churches. Rather, as implied earlier, with the exception of the North Turner Presbyterian Church, the churches are not "community" institutions, although they continue to have important meanings to their active membership.

For two of the four churches their community importance is vested in their linkage to Turner's past, not its present. The fourth church is quite new and is not community based. The congregation is drawn from a multi-town area.

**TURNER'S CHURCHES**—At present, 1988, three of the four religious bodies have edifices in Turner. At least three other religious groups meet fairly regularly. On a scale of religious liberalism/conservatism these groups have been identified as being religiously conservative. Two of the four established churches also have been described by Turner informants as religiously and socially conservative. The other two are apparently, by local standards, more liberal. This mix is to be expected in a traditional rural community in the midst of a period of rapid social change characterized by population growth.

The neat, simple handcrafted sign hanging by the entrance to Turner Center's lone church identifies it as "FIRST Universalist CHURCH, Turner Ctr. 1848" It was originally located west of Turner Center, dismantled and removed to its present site. As mentioned earlier, Universalists were among the first dissenters from Turner's officially established meeting house church. Eventually there were at least two groups of Universalists—those who established the First Church and those responsible for the Universalist Church at Howe's Corner, three miles from Turner Center.<sup>43</sup> It was built in 1840, eight years before the erection of the Turner Center Universalist Church.

In an undated and unattributed account in James H. Willard's history of Turner, there is the following statement, which appears to be a headline for a newspaper account of the demise of the Howe's Corner church:

<sup>43</sup>The Turner Center Church had been built outside of the built-up area, but was subsequently moved to the Center.

Ruins of the Howe's Corner Universalist Church stand as a testimonial to the Dissent and Strife among Congregations—Oldest Church in Turner and Once a Prosperous Place of Worship (Willard 1986:64).

The accompanying article, also undated and unsigned, gives no hint of just what the "Dissent and Strife among the Congregation" was. An anonymous author of the undated entry in the Willard history, which follows the apparent newspaper account of the demise of the Howe's Corner Universalist Church, provides some interesting remarks that have relevance, in an indirect way, to the status of organized religion in Turner in the late 1980s.

[The ruins of the Howe's Corner Universalist Church] ... stand to-day not as a monument to a dying faith, rather to the depletion of the town's inhabitants by at least one-third the number who lived in Turner when this church was erected in 1840; and to conservatism in support of modern methods of church maintenance (Willard 1986:65).<sup>44</sup>

As previously noted, a hundred years ago the Baptist and Congregational churches in Turner Village were active and cooperating bodies. Eventually they became a federated church, but their ties to the past were strong enough for them to continue to make use of both buildings. In conformance with the Turner norm of practicality, the Congregational church, which was much more comfortable in winter, was the church home during the cold months. The Baptist church became the site of services during the warmer part of the year.

This arrangement came to a cataclysmic end in 1928 when the Congregational Church was completely consumed by a fire. According to one account there wasn't a dry eye in the crowd that watched the feeble attempts to suppress the fire. Turner did not yet have an organized, equipped fire department.

Today the former federated church is known as the Turner Village Church, Evangelical. As the name implies, the theology of the approximately fifty-member church is more conservative than liberal. As do many of the newer conservative churches, the Turner Village Church holds an Evening Song Service and Bible Study each Sunday, and a Wednesday Mid-Week Service.

As conservative as the Turner Village Church, Evangelical may be, a few years ago it was not meeting the religious needs/wishes of part of its congregation. According to local legend, among the most dissatisfied members was A. J. DeCoster. Numerous informants indicated that Mr. DeCoster was the major benefactor in the establishment of the Calvary Baptist Church located about

<sup>44</sup>Just a limited number of Universalist churches remain active in Maine. It is somewhat ironic that in the late 1980s although Turner is experiencing a population growth of persons with the socioeconomic characteristics often associated with the Universalist Church, that the Universalist Church in Turner is open only part-time. It is served by a lay preacher.

one-quarter of a mile north of the Turner Village Church.<sup>45</sup> In fact, whenever I mentioned the "new" church it was always identified as either "Jack's Church," "DeCoster's Church," or "the church that Jack built."

Whatever its origins, the Calvary Baptist Church has the largest, most involved congregation of any Turner church.<sup>46</sup> There are two full-time pastors. The church sponsors and supports a kindergarten through twelfth grade Christian school which will be discussed below.

The attendance and active membership of the Calvary Baptist Church far exceeds the combined active membership and attendance at the other three Turner churches. This fact does not mean that there has been a phenomenal upsurge of interest in or conversion to a conservative religious orientation or affiliation by the town's residents. Along with most of the "New Right" churches, the Calvary Baptist Church draws its membership from a wide geographic area (Ploch 1989). Churches of this type are not usually "community" churches. They tend to appeal to persons seeking an interpretation of Biblical events that meets their specific religious and social needs. As a result, congregations of this type tend to be highly homogeneous in their values and habits. In relatively sparsely populated areas the congregations come from a much larger geographic area than does the membership of most community churches (Ploch 1989).

In contrast to long-established churches, the membership of the Calvary Baptist Church tends to consist of relatively young families with school age children. The employed members work primarily in skilled trades and other blue collar occupations, and in service jobs not requiring advanced education. From the minister's perspective there are no active farmers in the church.<sup>47</sup> If the members of the Calvary Baptist Church conform to an important norm of the more conservative churches, they are not likely to want their children to be overly exposed to worldly ways. Many religious conservatives believe that public schools are the promoters and perpetuators of behaviors and beliefs that are, if not sinful, at least not fully in keeping with Christian values. Persons with these orientations are likely to be staunch supporters of the Calvary Baptist Church Christian School.

According to a school official, who expressed a distaste for the drug-related activities and disregard for authority often found in public schools, the:

main reason for our school is to teach the principles of the word of God, and to teach our young people to be patriotic citizens and more than that, to prepare them not just for now but for eternity.

<sup>45</sup>During an interview in which church affiliation was discussed, Mr. DeCoster did not confirm or deny that he was a benefactor or a member of the Calvary Baptist Church.

<sup>46</sup>Most of the information about the Calvary Baptist Church is based on interviews conducted in 1986. Some of it may no longer be fully accurate.

<sup>47</sup>Apparently he considers Mr. DeCoster a businessman rather than a farmer.



The school had an enrollment in the fall of 1986 of 110 students in grades K through 12, a smaller number of pupils than in any of S.A.D. 52 elementary schools. The major use of a space in the school is a large, modern gymnasium/auditorium. Sports and athletics are considered to be important life training experiences.

As stated earlier, the Calvary Baptist Church is not a "community" church. Most of its congregation and the children who attend the Christian school live in surrounding towns. Its religious and social conservatism and paucity of local parishioners isolates the Calvary Baptist church from the community in general. There is very little contact between it and Turner's other churches. In 1986 the pastor of the church could not name the ministers of the three other Turner congregations. The church did enter a float in the 1986 celebration of Turner's bicentennial. When asked about the parade, the pastor replied: "I didn't see it, I was in it [on the church float]. That was an opportunity we could have. Our children enjoyed it. They did a fine job."

**NORTH TURNER CHURCH**—If the Calvary Baptist Church is the most non-community related of Turner's churches, the North Turner Presbyterian Church is the most community related. Its community orientation dates to its inception in 1875. The church, originally Baptist, owes its beginning largely to a group of ladies, many of them members of the Sewing Circle. They made and sold mittens. The proceeds of the group's efforts (\$1105.56 after ten years) were used to help build the church. The Sewing Circle joined forces with the North Turner Union Meeting House Society. "Both [groups] worked together towards getting a [church] building finished and adding to it as the years went by" (Bicentennial 1976:7).<sup>48</sup>

Despite an auspicious beginning, the support for the fledgling church, as with all the nineteenth century Turner churches, eroded over time. This downward trend is noted by Florence Whitman in the report, Bicentennial 1976: "I have lived in Turner since 1922 and as far as I know during that time services were not held regularly, except for a few in the summer, until 1946 when the Mission at the Eastward [MATE] of the Presbyterian Church opened the church and has kept a minister there since" (Bicentennial 1976:7).

MATE also supports four other small-town rural churches in central Maine, including one of Turner's contiguous neighbors, Leeds. A major motivation of MATE is to improve the lives of rural people. It involves itself, through the supported churches, in a variety of socially responsible community services. Among these services have been house building and repair, planting and pro-

<sup>48</sup>As in most churches of the time, part of church expenses were met by selling or, less often, renting pews. This action is noted in the Bicentennial Report: "In 1880 a committee was chosen to rent pews at \$1.20 a year or sell them outright for \$20.00" (1976:7).

viding individual and community gardens, helping with rural family expenses, and a wide variety of youth centered services, including a summer camp. A former North Turner Presbyterian pastor summed up this aspect of the church's outreach by stating, "Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ always tells the story about how he was at a meeting and he said he goes to this church and they said, well that's the 'do-gooders,' and we do."

The North Turner Church, because of its relationship to the Presbyterian denomination and to MATE, draws out-of-state ministers who wish to be involved with the community while they are learning about the rural ministry. For some seven years in the 1980s, the MATE minister was a young woman who was very concerned with the welfare of her parish. She did not feel completely comfortable as a former city person in a tight-knit rural setting: "I couldn't have survived if it were not for ... the kind of comraderie that I had with the Mission staff."

Apparently, part of her problem stemmed from difficulties in conforming to local ways of life. While she was more than willing to make calls on the ill at home or in a hospital, she was less willing to conform to the image of a minister being a regular house caller:

I have difficulty doing it in the way they want it done ... just routine visiting for the sake of making contact with people who I would see anyway. I have [personal] difficulty doing [that], so there's been a conflict.

The minister's personal conviction and the social/political positions of the Presbyterian church also presented problems for her among a congregation that is basically socially conservative: "when I speak for the church, not even just sharing my own personal feelings, but sharing a policy statement of the [Presbyterian] Church or saying the General Assembly just adopted the statement, it's not very well received."

The community activities of the North Turner Church transcend the informal boundaries of North Turner. The church has been especially responsive to social needs identified by the S.A.D. 52 school system:

The schools will often call here if there's a family in need of clothing or the kids come to school on the first day of school and need shoes .... We have participated in the attempts of the school to have graduation parties that were alcohol-free by providing food at the church. We would do one part of the meal. I guess the other things I'm called on to do are prayers at graduation and those kinds of things.

**SUMMARY**—The four churches in Turner represent an interesting, if not a unique, continuum. The First Universalist Church has a long and respected reputation of representing the best of Turner values. Its membership has withered

away and its status is more of a symbol of the past than a reality of the present. The Turner Village Church, Evangelical, also has a long and respected history. It is now independent, conservative, and with a small but devoted membership. The Calvary Baptist Church is thriving because it provides a variety of spiritual and social needs that are not particularly community relevant but that the other churches are not providing. It is physically present in Turner but its "parish" is a much larger area. The North Turner Church exists largely because it was rescued by the benevolent interest in rural Maine of the Northeast Presbyterian Synod. A former minister of the church may be correct in her assessment that "there's resentment toward the Presbyterians, toward the Mission [MATE] that the minister isn't fully their own."

Whether or not the several other small religious groups, which now meet more or less informally in Turner, evolve into churches remains to be seen. It is likely, however, that Turner's churches will be affected by the town's continuing population increase of essentially suburban commuters. It is not at all unlikely that in the near future Turner will be home to additional churches that are compatible with the religious and social values of the new residents.

## FAMILY IN TURNER

In the charter granted by the General Court of Massachusetts that established Sylvester Town-Turner, the terms "families" and "settlers" are used synonymously. Some of the family names of the very first settlers are found in Turner today. Among them are Leavitt, Prince, and Gilbert.

Members of these and other early families have held prestigious, formal and informal community roles. Their influence has been felt in the community in countless ways. Strangely enough, however, none of the families with colonial heritage has assumed the status of community kingpins as has occurred in many other rural communities including nearby Livermore (where the nationally known Washburn family dominated the town for decades).

Family importance in Turner tends to be based to a large degree on how well, or poorly, family members reflect traditional values, particularly hard work and square dealing. Joseph Leavitt is remembered not just because he planted the first apple orchard in Turner, but because he carried those apple saplings on his back twenty miles over a difficult trail through a forest. He proved his worth by attempting and completing a difficult physical task.

Joseph Leavitt's descendants and the descendants of many other early settlers carry on the tradition. Although not everyone in Turner is positive in their evaluation of the accomplishments of the town's presently most well known person, A.J. DeCoster, mention his name to anyone who knew him as a youngster and the responses are remarkably similar. You will hear the tale of how he and his

widowed mother worked extremely hard and long to establish the fledgling poultry business that culminated in the gargantuan DeCoster Egg Farm.

Much of the family tradition of Turner is, not surprisingly, related to its agricultural basis in the past and present. A long-time member of the Leavitt Area High School staff asserts that the recent increase in problems of discipline and lack of educational focus among students stems mainly from the loss of the area's family-farm base. The assumption has merit. Among the family stabilizing forces in Turner, as in most Maine agriculturally rural communities, were the 4-H and women's groups sponsored by the Maine Cooperative Extension Service. Both programs helped to mitigate the drudgery of farm work, gave a purpose to life, taught the values of leadership and cooperation, and provided meaningful roles that complemented life on the farm. Turner was known in Extension Service circles for the quality of its leaders in both the family-oriented women's programs and in the youth/family-oriented 4-H club work.

Activity in the women's and youth-related extension groups has greatly decreased in recent years. The loss, particularly in 4-H, was associated with the loss of farms and the rural social environment. In Turner, as in every American community, fewer mothers have as much time as their mothers did to be involved in their children's activities. In the average family, outside employment has become a fact of life for all of its adult members.

One of the most obvious aspects of family interaction in Turner exists among members of the farm community. As mentioned earlier, there are several multi-generational farms. At least two family-run operations span five generations. Those families that exhibit close, cooperative interaction and work-sharing are important as role models. It is an aspect of family in which the community takes pride.

Traditionally, rural churches have been family centered. All of the Turner churches have made efforts to continue the tradition. Apparently the most successful effort to integrate church and family has been accomplished by the congregation that is both the newest and least community related. The pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church states that, "Our church has all ages. We are geared toward the family, everyone in the family."

The North Turner Church has a very active program for children, including a summer vacation school and an involvement in camping at the facility in nearby Starks maintained by the Mission at the Eastward.

A former minister of the North Turner Church expressed frustration because it "[the church] is mainly women. There are very few men in church." The minister believed that there "would be more women if husbands would choose to come as a family." Her feeling was, that for some families who were active in the church, membership in a fraternal organization was more important to the husband-father than church participation.

Turner Elementary School has been quite successful in involving family members in some of its activities. Perhaps that success is also part of a tradition. One middle-age woman remembered how she had been involved in the country school near her home, "We used to send the meal up at noon, hot. [Our son] ... had a classmate that was back for reunion a couple of weeks ago and he said, 'Oh, I can never forget how good that was.' That just made my summer."

There is, as mentioned earlier, a fairly active Parent Teachers Club at Turner Elementary School. The big event of the year is the annual field day. In 1987 several hundred persons, mostly parents and their offspring, attended the late afternoon festivities. Before the fair began, one classroom was literally overflowing with cake and other parent-made and donated articles. The chief attraction of the afternoon was the opportunity to pay for the chance to plunge the school principal into a vat of cold water on a not-too-warm spring day. Although Mr. Cote is not a Turner native, he had adopted its pragmatic values—he was wearing a modern "wet" suit.

At the same time the fair was going on, a soccer game for the first through third grades was in progress on the spacious front lawn of the original Leavitt Institute buildings. Many mothers were there to encourage their offspring. A recent immigrant from Lewiston, along with the school principal, expressed a pragmatic value. When asked if the kids were not a little young to be involved in contact sports, she replied, "Well, it's better than football. I think a lot of the mothers would rather see their kid play soccer than football. Soccer teaches team work."

In Turner, as in all agricultural communities, women played important family roles. In the larger, more prosperous farm families, milking cows was not usually a female role. When a wife on one of the larger farms was asked if she ever milked, the question seemed to almost startle her. She replied, "Never, never!" She volunteered that she had taken in boarders, including one relative, for nineteen years. She added, "I guess I was really busy all the time. I did the book-keeping." (for their farm and also for a commercial dairy operation).

Today, some of the wives work off the farm. A member of the Leavitt Area High School staff who has worked closely with students for a number of years expressed concern over the plight of children with working mothers and fathers:

I feel sorry for the kids whose mothers work three to eleven. They don't get to see their mothers except on weekends. You see more kids now who are the caretakers of the family. The kids are responsible for the fires. Twenty years ago the parents would have missed part of their work to get the kids to school. They don't see that importance any more.

A professional person, one of whose roles is to counsel Turner families, particularly those in the lower income brackets, concluded that "the women are the

strong members [of low income families]. I think that women play major roles in the rural society, especially here." She added, "The women really are the ones who keep things going, which includes keeping the men in the family going as well."

There are, of course, some low-income families in Turner. The DeCoster Egg Farm trailer community and another trailer park represent the largest concentrations of low-income families in town. As long as there are no restrictions on the placement of trailers in Turner, the town may continue to be attractive to persons and families who cannot afford or who do not prefer conventional housing. The state-mandated imposition of updated land use planning and some form of zoning by January 1, 1992 may alter the situation to a significant degree.

Turner has become a very attractive housing area for relatively large numbers of families who fit the U.S.'s loosely defined "middle-income" image. It is likely that the boom in middle-income housing developments in Turner will continue. It is also likely that townhouse and condominium complexes will appear. If these predictions are correct, the family structure of the community will be elaborated. The income differential between the less well off families and the most affluent will be widened. How such changes will affect family structure is not clear. It is quite likely, however, that the traditional Turner norms of hard work, accountability, and positive family norms will not be lost in a short period of time.

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN TURNER

Though the terms may vary—caste, class, social rank—some sort of social class identification exists in all societies. Reflective of our pervasive democratic structure, a less rigid system of social stratification exists in the United States than in most other modern societies.<sup>49</sup> In white, northeastern, agriculturally rural communities class identification has been based on a combination of economic and social factors—how well off one is by community standards, family heritage, and how well one adheres to community values and standards.

Social stratification in Turner is more subtle than overt. A stranger may sense few, if any, stratifying forces or mechanisms in the community. They do, of course, exist. There is a distinction, held by many informants, between the residents of Upper Street and the rest of the community. Upper Street received its name because it is the upper street in the town. Now it also connotes an upper social status, as does its northern extension, North Parish Road.

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<sup>49</sup>In American society the most rigid manifestation of social stratification is based on racial differences: white/black, for example. There are also significant social differences based on one's ethnicity/nationality, religion, and economic status.

Conversely, a stranger soon learns that the trailer park at the DeCoster Egg Farm represents, more or less, the bottom of the scale of social differentiation. Many informants will also indicate their displeasure (and often, sadness) that the trailer residents' living quarters, are substandard. In addition to two trailer villages, a section of North Turner may also be identified as a location of relatively poor housing despite the existence of a few outdoor swimming pools.

Overall, however, class consciousness is not as prevalent as it is in many rural communities. The image of social equality in Turner appears to be related to a relaxed sense of "openness," the common, casual dress of most of the inhabitants, the lack, in the usual sense, of landed estates (even though some farm families own hundreds of acres), and the general lack of the flaunting of wealth. No interviewees denied that some class differences did exist in Turner. On the other hand, few viewed them to be extreme or a major factor in the structure and functioning of the community. If there were remarks about lower social class standing they were generally couched in phrases that indicated concern rather than scorn.

At least part of the social distinctions that exist in Turner in the 1980s have a long heritage. Although the 1887 history of Turner by the Reverend W. R. French, D.D., provides little information on class differences, it does highlight the presence of prosperous farm families from the early 1800s to the mid-1850s. For example, he relates that:

the custom of decorating the floors of the best rooms in this manner [with patterns of sand 'to make it look attractive'] prevailed for a long time among certain classes of people. When the people found it convenient to build good houses, they built them large and two stories high. Nearly all the houses of the early settlers were of this description and some of them now remain to indicate the taste and aspirations of the farmers of that period (French 1887:71).

As in most communities, housing and its location are indicators of social position in Turner. A number of prosperous farmers continue to live in large, well kept nineteenth century homes similar to those described by French. Some were inherited family homes. Others were bought by their present owners as material wealth increased, usually through farm-produced wealth.

**LOCATION AND STRATIFICATION**—Upper Street's relatively high social status has a long history. It was the site of much of the early development in Turner. The first meeting house was located there. Post-colonial meeting houses were usually the true center of the community. They were utilized for religious, governmental, and often educational purposes. Apparently, to have one's home and farm near the meeting house carried with it a measure of social distinction.

During interviews, if informants mentioned the names of families living on Upper Street/North Parish Road, the references were almost always positive. Little or no jealousy nor animosity punctuated the discussion of the residents of this preferred residential/farming area. Perhaps the positive reactions were based in part because the farmers, former farmers, and others who live there, and control much of the still undeveloped land, became successful through a combination of hard work and business acumen, two highly respected Turner values. Farmers' status as wise financial managers is reflected in the makeup of the town's budget committee. This group of nine elected officials evaluate all spending items considered at the annual meeting. In 1986 four members of the budget committee were farmers.

If Upper Street/North Parish is Turner's housing and social status zenith, the nadir is the trailer housing provided by DeCoster Egg Farm (D.E.F.). Increasingly these trailers, at least some of which were second hand when they were put in place twenty years ago, are homes to the Latin Americans whom D.E.F. is employing. Whatever the trailers' true condition may be, the perception of all but three informants who referred to them, was as being, at best, barely liveable.<sup>50</sup>

When asked if the persons who live in the D.E.F. trailer park were integrated into the community, a local minister replied, "They are not very well integrated into the community. We try hard, we try to deal with that in the church, but the community is not real open to receiving them. The minister concluded that the Turner community tended to place a portion of the burden of their low-income status on the individuals' lack of aspirations:

I think the general feeling is that these people are getting what they deserve and if they would work a little harder or were more industrious, they could find better jobs and not have to deal with the factors that they are constantly struggling with.

In contrast to the minister's evaluation were the reactions to social stratification in Turner by a woman whose family operates a large and successful farm. She brushed aside any implication that her family might be considered as above average economically or socially with the remark that "we'd rather they refer to us as a good cook. We don't feel any great big distinction of better or less."

Turner is experiencing, in the late 1980s, a variety of social changes. Most obvious among them, is the burst of commercial development along Route 4, which was discussed in the economics section. Less obvious, but perhaps more

<sup>50</sup>Two of the exceptions were Mr. DeCoster and the employee who was in charge of the complex. In 1988 the lawns of the trailer site were well maintained. Some yards were cluttered, but not to an extreme extent. The trailers in general were in acceptable outside repair, but a few did have some boarded up windows and patches on the sides.



important from a community standpoint, is the boom in private home development. It is not confined to any one area, but all of the development clusters have one thing in common—they are not located within any of the several population concentrations or directly along the main roads. Nor are they, at least as of mid-1988, supplanting "working" farmland. Most are tucked away in wooded areas, some of which had been abandoned as farms a generation or two ago.

**STRATIFICATION AND ECONOMICS**—In addition to the strains that the increased housing activity is placing on the provision of town services, it is likely that socioeconomic composition of Turner is undergoing change. Many of the new residents are moving to the town to escape the negative aspects they perceive in nearby urban areas. The bulk of the new Turner families appear to closely parallel the majority of immigrants to Maine during the 1970s and 1980s. These persons were relatively young, mid-level white collar and professional persons who wished to enjoy the presumed advantages of small-town/rural life (Ploch 1988a).

Undoubtedly, the educational level, occupational composition, and some of the values of the newcomers differ in some degree from those of many long-time Turner residents. A long-time Turner official remarked that, except for the ethnic immigrant workers at D.E.F., "They [new people] seem to just fit right in. They work with basketball, children's sports, Little League, very helpful."

Despite the differences in education and occupation between the newcomers and long-time Turner residents, the "fit" of the immigrant families appears to be quite good. Unlike their counterparts in many other rapidly growing areas of Maine, the new residents are buying or building single-family homes. This type of housing generally is preferred by families with children. As of 1988 there were no condominiums, apartment or townhouse complexes, or other cluster housing in the town.

There is a wide range in the value of the new housing, a fact which probably reflects a comparable range in the socioeconomic status of the newcomers. If this is so, it probably means that the system of social stratification in the community is not likely to rigidify in the near future.

Among the new housing there is a flush of house trailers and relatively inexpensive prefabricated houses. Because Turner lacks a definitive zoning ordinance, it is possible to site inexpensive housing almost anywhere, including next to a very expensive home. Not much of this is happening, however, because most of the more luxurious housing is being built in developments. If there is a continuing expansion of houses in the \$150,000 and over category, some rigidification could take place in social stratification.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup>It is highly likely that the local assessment of the new more expensive houses is considerably less than the same facility with a comparable physical setting would be in most Maine suburban loca-

The family orientation of many of the newcomers and their apparent interest in education should help them to fit into a community with a long tradition of placing value on education and youth-related activities. One relatively young immigrant couple related to me that they quickly began to feel a part of their new community because of their early involvement with the elementary school's Parent Teachers Club and the Cub Scouts.

There is a shortage of rental housing in Turner, as there is in most rural communities. This fact could restrict the immigration of families employed in service and other lower paying occupations. The rental housing that is available are, for the most part, small units which are attractive to people on limited incomes. Apartments of this type are concentrated in or near the three population centers in contrast to the new single family owner-occupied housing which is being build in undeveloped areas. The differentiation in the physical setting of housing by value and type could become a social stratifying force.

With the exception of the D.E.F. trailer community, the existence of an economically deprived segment of the population is not viewed as a major community problem in Turner. Some poverty does exist, however, in scattered sections of the town. One observant person expressed concern over the situation:

I think in areas [such as Turner] where things aren't zoned, you know, you have a trailer next to us here, you'll have people living in real poverty right next to people who are fairly well off. It's very difficult not to see it. People are not segregated.

Yet, by and large, people tend not to "see" differences in social economic position in Turner. One housewife/mother who lives in an area without visible poverty, in response to a question, gave a reply that confirms the obliviousness to the existence of low-income residents:

when our [son] was being interviewed to go to college somebody asked him about poverty in Turner. He said, "There isn't any." I said to him we probably don't see it. It is present.

Oddly enough, Turner's lack of restrictions on placement of trailers may be an impetus toward upward social mobility for some young residents. As a member of the Planning Board explained it:

the majority of them [trailer owners or renters] are real young people. Now that young person may then come along and buy a lot and [put a trailer on it]... You give him five years and he'll build a home. Right down there on the crossroad

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tions. Similarly, taxes are also low by suburban standards. The 1987 tax for a house in the \$190,000 range was under \$3,000. The same house in many suburban areas would be evaluated at over \$300,000 and would be taxed at least \$7,000. Because of the low housing costs, some upwardly mobile people may choose Turner over the more expensive areas to the south toward Portland.

a fella put in a trailer. [Now] he's building a nice big home right behind it. I think that's progress.

The same informant asserts that, in the past, policies of the Planning Board discriminated against lower income persons. In speaking of restrictions placed on trailer parks and individual trailers by the Planning Board, he maintained that "They made it as difficult as they could on the poor person to get established."

According to this person and others, home building remains, as it was in the 1800s (French 1887), a way to establish one's social position in Turner. The effects of trailer parks on social stratification in the community is apt to become more apparent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In addition to the four trailer parks operating in mid-1988, the planning board had approved, before the 1989 Town Meeting, two additional parks with a total capacity of ninety mobile homes. Before mandatory zoning [by State of Maine fiat] becomes operative in Turner no later than January 1, 1992, some decision will have to be made as to the siting of trailer parks.

In American society a major stratifying factor is one's relative worth. There is a variation from the norm in Turner. Wealth and property accumulation are not without some importance, but the tendency is to judge a person more on how well he/she emulates traditional values than on his/her net worth. Observing the norms of hard work, trustworthiness, and cautious conservatism appear to be more important than wealth *per se*.

A. J. DeCoster has his admirers for the prodigious efforts he made in becoming a financial success. One of the most common remarks I heard about him was, "He's a helluva worker, always was." Mr. DeCoster's image as a "common man" is perpetuated in many ways, including his driving older model cars and living in a very modest house located on D.E.F. when he is in Turner. Mr. DeCoster's local image is deflated by some of his alleged "sharp" business practices and his alleged less-than-gentle treatment of some of his employees. You can be a hard driver in Turner but you must play the game fairly.

The local evaluation of Mr. Anthony Casella, an apparently wealthy newcomer, differs in interesting ways from that of Mr. DeCoster. Mr. Casella arrived in Turner in the mid-1980s. In a very short period of time he developed the massive (by local standards) Turner Plaza, which is described in the Economic section.<sup>52</sup> He and his family live in a new, large, and expensive-looking home. It is located in Turner's most attractive new development. The Casellas' home and possessions are objects of interest in Turner. In September 1988 I was asked by an informant whether or not I had seen "Casella's new red Rolls [Royce]."

<sup>52</sup>Most Turner informants, when they mentioned Turner Plaza, did not refer to it by its designated name but by a disparaging sobriquet.

A second person added, "His old one is for sale at [Casella's] Turner Motors." There were implications of condescension in the remarks.

Mr. Casella, whose major enterprise is believed to be the Case Equipment Company located in Turner Plaza, is an enigma to many Turner residents. They are unable to fathom just how he, Case Equipment Company, and his several other enterprises fit into the community. In July of 1986 when the first interviews for this study were conducted, Turner Plaza was in its early stages of development. Case Equipment Company occupied one relatively small building. A town official informed me that when he was in the building he noticed that, "Case Equipment didn't have any equipment that I could see, just ten or twelve people at telephones." Talking on telephones does not fit the Turner image of work.

The building housing Case Equipment has been expanded. It houses equipment that prints and decorates textiles. In the spring of 1987, at the first public hearing of the newly established Turner Site Review Board, Mr. Casella described Case Equipment as "a worldwide broker in textile equipment."

By the fall of 1988, although his stretch limousine with the darkened side windows continues to make frequent trips to and from area airports, arousing local curiosity, I noticed a subtle change in attitude toward Mr. Casella. For example, two informants who previously boycotted Mr. Casella's version of a supermarket, the first in town, now patronize it to some degree. A local community-oriented committee had some tee-shirts imprinted by Case Equipment. Although the general tone toward Mr. Casella had muted, there were still concerns about the impact of his enterprises upon the community. Turner is growing and, to a degree, urbanizing, but it still wants to be able to place people in their proper niche in its loosely defined social system. So far, they are not quite sure about Mr. Casella.

**EDUCATION AND STRATIFICATION**—Based on interviews with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, there appears to be relatively little social stratification within the schools located in Turner. During an extended roundtable discussion with seven college students who attended Turner schools, a consensus developed that at the high school level there were two social status groupings: "The kids from Leeds and North Turner and the rest of us." It was the students' opinion that discipline problems were most prevalent among the North Turner/Leeds groups. The North Turner/Leeds students were considered to be "less a part of the mainstream" than the rest of the student body. A person whose position in S.A.D. 52 provides a wide range of student contacts asserted that students family background was a factor in how they were judged in the classroom. "I do know that [a student's social status relates to] what your name is and how well you do in school."

Although some school personnel I spoke with believed that students whose parents worked at D.E.F. comprised an underclass, not everyone shared that view. The consensus was that though they might come from backgrounds different from the majority of students, the D.E.F. youngsters were treated well in the schools. One administrator with student contacts remarked, "They are good kids, for the most part. They may not be as academically motivated. They are less likely to be in the academic program—they don't have the background. We take them on and they come along."

As in all schools, there are cliques. A high school administrator believed that most of the cliques were based on whether or not the student was college bound. Asked if the non-academic course students felt looked down upon, the reply was, "I don't think that they are, but I think some of the kids think they are."<sup>53</sup>

A senior school official, apparently reflecting the attitude of the School Board and other school administrators, remarked that social discrimination would not be tolerated in S.A.D. 52 schools:

I feel very strongly about discrimination. If I felt any person was not afforded the same opportunities [as others], whether they were poor or whether they were rich, I would be very upset, and I would stop at no ends to correct that. I feel very strongly about that.

**STRATIFICATION AND ORGANIZATIONS**—Unlike many communities, Turner's organizations are not highly related to class structure. If there is a pattern of membership in organizations, it relates more to special interests and age than it does to one's place in the socioeconomic composition of the community.

For many years *the* organization in Turner was the Grange. It was among the largest in Maine in membership (600 in 1900) and very active. Meetings were well attended; the long animal shed (now garages) alongside the large, handsome Grange Hall (circa 1900) could, and did, house 100 horses.

The Grange Hall was the site of many community activities, including high school graduations and plays. The annual Grange Fair was an attraction that was anxiously anticipated by both farmers and nonfarmers.

The Grange Fair is now just a fond memory. None of Turner's remaining farmers are active members of the Grange. In 1987 most of the fifty members were older persons, some of whom had farm backgrounds.

**STRATIFICATION AND CHURCHES**—At present, Turner's churches are not major components of whatever social stratification may exist in the town. The most active church, Calvary Baptist, is just peripherally community related.

<sup>53</sup>In early 1989, a professional person who closely monitors Turner schools informed me that increasingly students at Leavitt Area High School were cliquing on the basis of dress.

Its congregation is scattered among a number of central Maine towns. They come to church not because of any particular social identification, but simply because that is where the church is located whose theology and organization appeals to them. Most of the congregation represents blue collar working families, which would place them somewhere in the middle of the social status hierarchy of Turner.

The North Turner Presbyterian Church functions largely as a neighborhood organization. As mentioned previously, it is the most community conscious church. It supports a variety of community activities, particularly those relating to young people. It probably cuts across Turner's ill-defined class lines more than do the other churches.

The Turner Village Church, with roots extending back to the post-colonial Congregational and Baptist churches, at one time was the church home of many of Turner's most prominent families. Today, neither it nor the Universalist Church in Turner Center could be considered "status" churches in the full sense of the term. Both churches, and particularly the Universalist, still have a few members who can trace their ancestry to some of Turner's "first" families.

In summary, while Turner lacks the severe socially stratifying aspects of some northern New England communities such as those described in *Peyton Place* and *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*, a degree of social identification does exist in the town. At present, at least two, quite opposite trends are occurring in Turner that will affect the structure and functioning of stratification at the community level. On the one hand, it is quite possible that the lower paid D.E.F. workers will become a visible social minority in the town. On the other hand, the increasing suburbanization of Turner through the concentration of new, relatively expensive housing developments of middle class/professional/management families will widen the social distance between the relatively well off and the not so well off. This elaboration of the social stratification hierarchy in the community is likely to strain some old social relationships and norms and to create some new ones.

## TURNER ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Throughout this analysis of Turner, social change and its effects have been persistent themes.<sup>54</sup> The changes occurring in the town in the 1980s have been

<sup>54</sup>For a detailed analysis of the processes of social change as they operated in post World War II United States see Warren, 1972. Warren identifies seven "great changes," all of which are interrelated. The "great changes" are: division of labor; differentiation of interests, associations; increased systemic relations to the larger society; transfer of functions to private enterprise and government; bureaucratization and impersonalization; urbanization and suburbanization; changing values.

less dramatic or cataclysmic than some that have occurred in the past, e.g. the burning of the Faulkner Woolen Mills which was to be a major source of revenue for the Little Turner-Lake Auburn electric railroad. Unfortunately the fire occurred before the line was completed (Willard 1986: 116, 121). Unspectacular as they may be, the more recent changes will have consequences as great or greater than any others in Turner's history.

Turner is no longer a declining/stable community as it was for most of the 1870-1940 period. Today its growth pattern is similar to that of the early 1800s. Then it was developing into a combination manufacturing/agricultural center. Now, Turner is on the verge of becoming a modern suburb. Its present and future is fraught with all the adjustments and challenges related to that possibility.

To explore this situation, the most recent four years, 1985 through 1988, will be highlighted. The prime data source will be the Turner town reports for 1985 and 1988.

As implied above, the changes occurring in Turner are broad based. A whole series of events, most of them stimulated by forces beyond the town's control, have coalesced to induce changes in the Turner community. Almost all of the changes occurring or about to occur in Turner are related to its population growth. The majority of the recent increase in the town's population is associated directly with the urbanization/suburbanization phenomenon.<sup>55</sup>

As illustrated in Figure 1 (centerfold), after a long period of decline/stagnation Turner's population began to grow rapidly after 1960. From the 1 April 1960 U.S. Census enumeration of 1,890 persons to the Maine Planning Office estimate in 1987 of 4,069, Turner's population increased by 2,179 persons or 115 percent. The bulk of the new inhabitants were persons from the urban areas of central and southern Maine (Lewiston-Auburn, Augusta, Portland) who were seeking housing and life in a visually pleasant small-town atmosphere.

To a large degree, Turner has become a suburb; a home for commuters. Remarkably, however, despite the increased population, which inflated the proportion of persons with managerial, professional, and other white collar occupations, Turner through 1988, has maintained a culture that is consistent with its traditional ruralness/small townness. During the 1985-1988 period, through formal action of both the town officers and the Town Meeting, as well as by other more subtle, but important forces, Turner is beginning to recognize that rapid social change is taking place in the town and that adjustments must be made to these forces.

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<sup>55</sup>For example, during 1988 there were 59 births and 21 deaths in Turner which resulted in a net gain of 38 persons for the year (Turner 1988 Town Report:43). In contrast, the *average* annual increase in Turner's population from 1980 to 1987 was 76 persons. (Calculated from U.S. Census reports and estimates of the Maine Planning Office.)

To date, however, this rapidly growing community, which may reach the 5,000 population plateau by the time of the April 1, 1990 U.S. Census, still maintains its three-member Board of Selectmen which functions with the help of an administrative assistant. As a perusal of Maine town reports reveals, if towns of this size maintain the Town-Meeting-Selectmen form, there are usually five selectmen and/or a town manager.

To highlight the changes taking place in Turner, data drawn from the annual town reports for 1985 and 1988 will be utilized. As one analyses the two town reports, it becomes quite obvious that, while all of the "great changes" identified by Warren (see footnote 54) are operative in Turner, the key element is urbanization/suburbanization. For example, as shown in the following distribution, the increase in Turner's population closely parallels the increase in new homes and developments rather than a sharp rise in the town's birth rate and/or a dramatic decrease in deaths or marriages.

	1985	1988	Percent Change
<i>Vital Statistics</i>			
Births	69	53	-23
Deaths	23	21	-9
Marriages	55	47	-14
<i>Real Estate Activity</i>			
New or used trailers	13	(ND)	—
New homes	16	89	456
Swimming pools	8	9	12
Garages	25	41	64
Commercial buildings, additions and alterations	13	109	738

While the birth rate of the resident population for the two years decreased by 23 percent, the number of new homes constructed in Turner increased by 456 percent. Perhaps even more symbolic of the urbanization/suburbanization of the town was the 738 percent increase in the number of new commercial buildings and/or in additions and alterations to existing commercial structures.

A large proportion of the new home construction in Turner is occurring in scattered developments on open land, much of it long abandoned farmland. In contrast, almost all of the commercial development has taken place on Route 4, the major north-south artery between the urbanized Lewiston-Auburn area and the small towns and relatively rural areas of north-central Maine.

This development pattern, as uncontrolled as it has been because of the lack of definite zoning in Turner, may turn out to be fortuitous. Because most of the new housing development is clustered and most of the commercial development



is confined to the Route 4 strip, the work of the newly appointed (1988) Turner Comprehensive Planning Committee may be simplified. Presumably, both the housing and commercial development, particularly the latter, has occurred in suitable social and ecological settings.

The pace of residential development in Turner is well summed in the two introductory sentences of the report for the year ending December 31, 1988 by the Planning Board (1988 Turner Town Report p. 63): "The Planning Board has completed an extremely busy year. All signs point to an even busier year in 1989." The statistics provided by the Planning Board confirms those conclusions:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>No. of Lots</u>	<u>Acres Involved</u>
<b>Approved Subdivisions and Mobile Home Parks</b>			
Subdivisions	7	50	160
Mobile Home Parks	<u>1</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>40</u>
Totals	8	100	200
<b>Applications Pending or Approved After 12/31/88</b>			
Subdivisions	5	125	557
Mobile Home Parks	<u>1</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>28</u>
Totals	<u>6</u>	165	577
<b>Applications Known To Be Forthcoming</b>			
Subdivisions	2	80-125	360+
Mobile Home Parks	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Totals	<u>2</u>	80-125	360+

Thus, excluding the "applications known to be forthcoming," in 1988 the Turner Planning Board approved 12 nonmobile home subdivisions containing 175 lots and encompassing 717 acres (more than 1.1 square mile), and two mobile home developments with a total of 90 lots on one-tenth of a square mile. If these lots sell and have homes built on them at the rapid pace of the last few years, they will add, as a minimum, another 600 persons to Turner's population not long after the 1990 census.<sup>56</sup>

The increase in Turner's population has stimulated a number of changes in the town government. Paradoxically, although official town functions have proliferated and bureaucratized, local government officials have not lost close contact with the Turner citizenry. For example, in the 1985 Town Report, twenty-

<sup>56</sup>At the 1989 Town Meeting, Turner citizens enacted a home building moratorium. For the next two years just a total of sixty-six new homes may be built by developers and/or nonresidents. Current Turner homeowners are exempted from the moratorium.

three boards/committees offices are listed.<sup>57</sup> Despite what seems to be an increase of just two new offices or functions, because of combinations of duties, there are actually five additional boards/offices listed in the 1988 report. All of these new functions are related directly to the increase in Turner's population.<sup>58</sup> The number of new positions available jumped from 60 to 183, an increase of 205 percent.<sup>59</sup> Turner, despite its need to bureaucratize is finding ways to incorporate more of its citizens into its official family.

Forecasting just what the effects of Turner's rapid urbanization/suburbanization will be is an impossible task. As a minimum, there will be increased tensions at Town Meeting, changes in the traditional ways of doing business, and significant changes and adjustments in each of the social institutions outlined in this report. Some inkling of the problem, including the frustrations that will occur are included in the remarks of Turner's elected road commissioner which appeared on page 69 of the 1988 Turner Town Report:

Highway costs are increasing something terrible. The price of culverts increased about 20% this year. With the new ordinance on road construction passed this year, that is going to cost considerably more. Everything we use to build with now will have to be screened and that costs money.

We have some large culverts that must be replaced next summer and I will be applying to the D.E.P. in a couple of weeks to speed this process up.

We hope to trade the old loader in toward a new one this year. The present one is 20 years old now.

I have acquired a number of new names this winter not fit to put in print. Also have been informed the roads in Turner are the worst roads anywhere around. This is not very encouraging for a man who would like to keep his job for another year.

The road commissioner was reelected. It is unlikely, however, that his tribulations will be much reduced in the next year, or the next ten years. Turner will continue to grow, and all phases of its "communityness," including the demand for more and better roads, will become more complex, bureaucratized and depersonalized.

<sup>57</sup>Excludes membership on the S.A.D. 52 Board of Directors which was not included in the 1985 Town Report.

<sup>58</sup>The new listings are: (a) code enforcement officer, building and plumbing inspector; (b) landfill committee; (c) comprehensive planning committee; (d) appeals board; and (e) site review board.

<sup>59</sup>In addition to memberships on the new committees and boards, the election clerks/counter category was increased from eight to forty-two in 1988.

## CONCLUSION

As for all communities, the themes of persistence and change included in the title of this report will continue to have importance for Turner. Some of the aspects related to the continuance of persistence and change will be subtle, quiet, and not always easily observable. Others will be public, confrontational, and traumatic.

**PERSISTENCE**—Turner has a rich history spanning over two-hundred years. No doubt some sites, events, and personages that had importance in the past will fade from memory. For those that do, it is a natural process. In Turner, however, the past has been important and it is likely to continue to be so. Turner's centennial (1886) and its bicentennial (1986) were the two most socially important events in its history. It is likely that the tricentennial in 2086 will be just as important. With the completion of the history room on the second floor of the renovated Town Hall in 1988 there is now a renewed focus on the past. Instead of becoming weaker, the sense of history is likely to become intensified.

The adult generation of the 1980s will resist any attempts or forces (including the current rapid population growth) that might undermine old traditions and values. The home building moratorium passed at the 1989 Town Meeting is just one instance of an attempt not to let change in Turner run rampant. Practicality, rationality, and work ethic, expressed in the often told tale of Joseph Leavitt carrying the first apple trees into town strapped on his back, are the values that continue to have meaning in Turner.

**CHANGE**—Change, to some degree, is, of course, inevitable. Evidence of change is apparent in each of the sections of this report—for example, the hiring of an administrative assistant for the Selectmen (Government); the commercialization of Route 4 (Economics); the modernization of the educational curriculum and plant (Education), and the emergence of conservative religion, particularly the Calvary Baptist Church (Religion). The major force of change in Turner, however, is its "discovery" by persons seeking the perceived ambience of a small-town environment within convenient commuting distance to their places of work.

A population increase of eighty-two percent in 17 years (1970–1987) is bound to result in cultural change in any community. If the values and perspectives of Turner's immigrants closely resemble those of the modal immigrant to Maine in the 1970s and 1980s, the fears of long time residents that their community will be changed in negative ways may not materialize.

Research on immigration to Maine has demonstrated that the majority of urban to rural migrants have a desire to maintain as much of the ruralness as possible (Ploch 1988a). Immigrants who chose to live in a community that they perceived

as rural, expressed intentions to keep it that way. Oddly enough, some of the conflicts among old timers and recent immigrants are related to the new people's resistance to loss of old values and ways of life.

The Turner of twenty-five years from now certainly will be different from that of the late 1980s. If the past is truly a prologue for the future, the "changed" Turner may not be a mirror image of the "old" Turner, but certainly it will be a recognizable reflection of it.

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