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*“Changes in Character of Response”:
Population Decline in
Cumberland, Maine, 1860-1920*

Thomas C. Bennett
Prince Memorial Library
September 2019

*“Changes in Character of Response”:
Population Decline in Cumberland, Maine, 1860-1920*

The town of Cumberland, Maine, seceded from the town of North Yarmouth on March 19, 1821. The new town was approximately eight miles long and three miles wide, included twenty-two square miles on the mainland and eighteen offshore islands, and had 1,386 residents (Sweetser 1976). The town’s population increased until 1860, after which it registered declines through 1920. During the 1920s, Cumberland added residents, and by the 1930 census the town had nearly as many inhabitants as it had at its founding more than a century before (Bennett 2007).

Local population collapse can be explained in numerous ways, including as a direct result of changes in an area’s economic base. The Great Northern Paper Company was once synonymous with the town of Millinocket, Maine, as the firm provided generations of townspeople with jobs during its century of operation and the paper mill accounted for 72% of the town’s tax revenues. The mill’s closure in 2008 contributed substantially to a 16.3% decline in the town’s population from 2000–2016, and is evidence of the effect that reliance on a single employer can have on a community (Daigneault 2018).

Packard (1916) wrote that population loss could be explained through exhaustion of natural resources, or an adjustment in a society’s needs that made those resources less necessary than previous. Shipbuilding, the carrying trade, fishing, quarrying, lumbering, and farming were responsible for the growth of settlements along the Maine coast. The irreversible decline of those industries, beginning in coastal Maine in 1860, and “changes in character of response” (Packard 1916, 335) to that decline, are cited as the reason for coastal population loss after 1860. Cumberland’s economy in the early nineteenth century included all of the industries Packard named, and the town’s experience can be used as a test case study for his theory.

Population loss in Cumberland

Applying Packard's thesis concerning population loss on the Maine coast to the town of Cumberland was accomplished by using five data sets: (1) census data for the period 1860–1930 (MR 1871-1960); (2) natality and mortality data for Cumberland residents (MDVS 1892-1951); (3) death listings reported in the 1893–1960 *Annual Reports of the Town of Cumberland* (CM 1873-2019; Bennett 2005); (4) the annual census of children between the ages of four and 21 in Cumberland's school districts for the period 1874–1920 (CM 1873–2019); and (5) listings for Cumberland males between the ages of 18 and 45 from the 1862 draft list, militia rolls from 1863–1865, and the publications *Record of Persons Liable to Enrollment in the Militia of Maine, Town of Cumberland, 1881-1899*, and *Book #2, Militia Roll, Town of Cumberland, 1903–09, 1917* (CM 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

Federal census figures show that Cumberland's population increased from 1,386 at its founding in 1821 to 1,713 by 1860, a gain of 19%, or 327 inhabitants. The town then registered steady population declines through 1920, when census figures show a populace of 1,150, a loss of 563 residents, or 35%, from 1860. Declines averaged 6.22% for each decade from 1860 through 1920, and ranged from less than 1% for the decades beginning in 1870 and 1900 to 18% for the decade ending 1920. Packard doesn't address actual population loss figures for individual towns, but points out that the increase in population in Cumberland County, which includes the town of Cumberland, during the period after 1870 was chiefly due to growth in the manufacturing cities (MR 1930; Bennett 2007).

The 1892 Maine legislation governing vital records registration resulted in the publication of a compilation of municipal natality and mortality data for the period 1892–1951. The data show that Maine's birth rate was higher than Cumberland's through 1930, after which

Cumberland outpaced the state (MDVS 1892-1951). The data present patterns consistent with the premise that Cumberland's older, less fecund population had proportionately fewer births through 1920 than that of Maine as a whole, followed by a period when newcomers both younger and more fertile than the town's native residents joined the community, thus changing the population and its composition through their presence and higher birth rate. Cumberland was losing its young people and retaining its older residents, who were less able to propagate to sustain the native population (Bennett 2007).

The death rate for Maine for the period 1900 through 1920 shows a decline, from 16.4 per thousand in 1900 to 15.43 per thousand in 1920, after a slight increase to 16.76 in 1910. Cumberland's rate, however, increased each decade from 1900 through 1920, from 14.96 per thousand to 23.48 per thousand, after which the rate declined to 13.06 per thousand in 1930, compared to Maine's 1930 rate of 13.9 per thousand (MDVS 1892-1951; Bennett 2007). Again, the town's declining death rate is consistent with a community that had an older population through 1920, after which in-migration infused the town with younger residents.

A third measure, after birth rate and death rate, is median age at death. Median age at death for the state was not published, but was obtained by request from the Maine Department of Human Services' Office of Data, Research & Vital Statistics (Terry Hilton pers. comm.). For Cumberland, median age at death was computed using the death listings reported in the town annual reports. The result shows the median age at death for 1900 was 59 years of age in Cumberland, as opposed to 55 for the state. Cumberland's figure declined for 1910, when the median age at death for the state was one year higher. For 1920, the median age increased for both the town and the state, to 62 and 58, respectively (CM 1873-2019; Bennett 2005, 2007). The aging of the group that remains during a phase of local population decline was mirrored

more recently in Millinocket, which registered a median age of 51.3 years in 2016, as compared to 44.5 years in 2000 (Daigneault 2018). Economic transformation and decreased employment opportunities do not always result in a higher median age among those who stay, but the experiences of nineteenth-century Cumberland and twenty-first century Millinocket demonstrate that it is often the youngest members of a society who are most willing to uproot themselves in search of better prospects.

Comparing Cumberland's birth and death rates and median age at death for 1900–1920 with similar data for the State of Maine shows the town had a lower birth rate, higher death rate, and a higher average median age at death than the state's for the period. The data support a depiction of a town where a significant portion of the population had departed, leaving behind an older populace that was having fewer babies. A good number of those who stayed behind were older, single women, as evidenced by the tendency of townspeople in 1900 to refer to Main Street, also known as the North Yarmouth Road, as SHE Street. The inhabitants of SHE Street were mostly female, widowed or unmarried, with few males among them. As early as 1871, 9 of the 32 residences on Main Street were listed under the names of women (Bennett 2007; Norton, n.d.; Beers 1871).

Under Chapter 11, Section 61, Maine Revised Statutes, approved Jan. 25, 1871, and by later acts and amendments of the Maine Legislature, school agents in the state were required to submit annual reports, during the month of April, that listed the children between the ages of four and 21 years old in the agent's district, "as they existed on the first day of said month..." (MSR 1871) Using town annual reports and School Agent's Census Reports, this study has compiled 44 years of Cumberland scholar census data from the period 1874–1920. The compilation, which is

missing data for the years 1895, 1897, and 1910, counts 20,003 scholars over the 47-year period, for an average of 454 for each available year (CM 1873–2019).

Whole numbers for the students in Cumberland range from 575 in 1874 to 277 in 1920, for a decline of 48% for the period. The average number of scholars for the 20-year period 1874–1893 was 553, compared to 351 for the period 1901–1920 (the data for 1910 was unavailable). Looking at the census years when scholar data is available, the percentage of Cumberland's population that was between the ages of 4 and 21 years old decreased from 36.38% of the total population in 1880 to 24.09% in 1920 (CM 1873–2019). As demonstrated by the vital statistics data, the population of Cumberland became substantially older during the 1860–1920 period, buttressing the image of a town with fewer school children in the many one-room schoolhouses and a higher percentage of elderly in the community.

There is one draft list and three militia rolls from the Civil War period for Cumberland, for the years 1862, 1863, 1864, and 1865. Only the 1865 list includes occupational information, but all include the age of the registrants. Beginning in 1881, male residents of Cumberland between the ages of 18 and 45 were liable for enrollment in the Maine militia under Chapter 225, Section 1, Public Laws of 1880, and later acts and amendments of the Maine Legislature (MSR 1880). *Record of Persons Liable to Enrollment in the Militia of Maine, Town of Cumberland, 1881-1899*, and *Book #2, Militia Roll, Town of Cumberland, 1903–09, 1917*, provided the ages and occupations of Cumberland males for the period covered (CM 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

The 1865 draft list and two militia books contributed to the compilation and analysis of 4,556 entries for the town's adult males. Some men appear multiple times, such as Fred L. Adams, a blacksmith who first shows up in 1883 at age 27 and last appears in 1899 at age 43.

Others, such as Foster Ames, only appear once, in Ames' case in 1917 with a listed occupation of "Chaffeur." There were 4,078 separate entries over the 16 years of records that included occupational status for the men, and 3,762, or 92.3%, of those entries stated occupation. The percentage of records showing occupation for any given year ranges from 81.68% for 1891 to 99.64% for 1903 (CM 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b). The data show a gradual shift in occupation away from traditional industries such as farming, fishing, and shipping, to other jobs such as railroad and street railway worker, laborer, retail, and the trades.

Population loss in Maine

Between 1790 and 1860, the population of Maine increased from 96,450 to 628,279. The following decade, the state registered a decline in population of two-tenths percent, to 626,915. From 1870 through 1910, Maine's population increased just 18%, compared to the nation's more than doubling. The growth in population in the state's manufacturing centers drove the state's increase, and counterbalanced an actual decline in six of Maine's eight coastal counties (Packard 1916).

Numerous explanations are given to clarify Maine's population losses during the 1860s, including the decline of lumbering within the state, the promise of cheap and productive lands out West, and the lure of the city (Smith et al. 1982, 179; Vickery, Judd, and McDonald 1995). According to Packard (1916), the industries responsible for the growth of settlements along the Maine coast were shipbuilding, the carrying trade, fishing, quarrying, lumbering, and farming, and declines in those industries were responsible for the coastal population declines.

The six industries provided the livelihoods for most coastal Maine residents through the mid-nineteenth-century. The initial seasonal stations established in the 17th century by fishermen and fur traders were supplanted by more stable farming settlements. The abundance of timber,

good harbors, and a demand for sailing vessels resulted in the development of the shipbuilding industry, which reached its zenith in Maine between 1845 and 1880. Many of the ships built on the Maine coast were owned and crewed by locals. Fishing villages up and down the coast sent men and boats offshore. Granite and limestone quarries employed locals in quarrying and Maine ships in the carrying trade (Packard 1916).

A shift in shipbuilding from wood to steel put Maine at a major disadvantage in an industry where the state previously had considerable success. A decline in the number of Americans in the shipping trade decreased demand for vessels built locally, further affecting the industry. Taken together, the number of ships built in Maine and crewed by locals declined dramatically, disrupting life in shipbuilding centers the length of the coast (Packard 1916).

Cumberland was part of this trend. In 1812, the area that later became Cumberland Foreside was the location of the Spear shipyard, started by David Spear and carried on by his son David Jr., until he went bankrupt in 1869. Cumberland was also home to numerous ship's captains, including Joseph Blanchard, Reuben Blanchard, and Ephraim Sturdivant, all of whom participated in the European and South American trades. Of the 205 Cumberland men who registered for the 1865 draft, 76 (37%) had a stated occupation of seaman or sailor, while two were ship's carpenters and another identified as a ship's master (Sweetser 1921; Sweetser 1976; Rowe 1929; Clayton 1880; CM 1865).

The decline of fishing was partially responsible for the loss of Maine's coastal population. Before the advent of refrigeration on vessels, Maine's fishing villages hosted the fishermen who caught the fish, the processors who dried, salted, or otherwise preserved the fish, and the middlemen who shipped the product to market. The use of ice in the fishing industry allowed for an increase in the market for fresh fish, and the expansion of rail lines resulted in a

greater distribution of product. Vessels that iced their catch could deliver to the distribution centers of Portland and Boston, bypassing the local harbors. The loss of the local fishing industry devastated many small coastal communities (Packard 1916). Cumberland was similarly affected; the draft listings show that 41% of the 198 men who listed their job status for the 1865 draft identified as fishermen, compared to an average of 1% for the 1903–1909 and 1917 militia lists (CM 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

Maine's granite industry, with its natural benefit of the location of product at the water's edge, had advantages over inland quarries in providing stone to cities along the Eastern seaboard. The growth of the railroads allowed the opening of inland quarries that competed with their Maine counterparts, and the westward movement of population and the consequent growth of inland cities further disadvantaged the state's granite industry. The use of concrete and steel in constructing buildings and bridges also diminished the importance of granite, affecting employment in the state's granite centers (Packard 1916).

Chebeague Island, which was part of Cumberland until it seceded from the town on July 1, 2007 (CM 2006), was known for its stone sloops, which transported granite down the Eastern seaboard for construction purposes. The stone sloops of Chebeague began operating as early as 1795, transporting ballast to the many shipyards in Casco Bay, and by the 1830s had started carrying grout for lighthouses and waterfront work all along the Maine coast and as far south as Delaware Bay. The sloops had increased in size by the 1860s, and were involved in transporting granite during the monumental building period, including for the Washington Monument and Navy Building in Washington, D.C., the Chicago Auditorium and Chicago Board of Trade, the post offices in Boston and New York, and the back wing of the State House in Boston. The stone

sloops were on their way out by 1899, just five years after the construction of the Stone Wharf on Chebeague in 1894 (Hauk 1949; Sweetser 1921).

Lumber provided work for many of Maine's coastal inhabitants. The abundant supply provided for building needs, wood products, and both industrial and domestic heating purposes, and allowed for exports. The location of the forests relative to the coast and the shipyards contributed to depletion of the resource, as did the exportation of lumber by water transportation to markets along the Atlantic coast (Packard 1916)..

Mainland Cumberland was home to dozens of saw, grist, carding, and stave mills over the years. John Powell built a saw mill and grist mill on Felt's Brook above Broad Cove around 1730. Mill Brook in West Cumberland was home to at least six mills, including the Mountfort Mill, which was rebuilt twice, the second time in 1865. Five mills were located on Mill Road in 1871, with others on the Gray Road and the brook between Blanchard and Range roads. Other mills in the area comprising Cumberland include a shook mill dating to 1780, a carding mill operated by James Leighton at the turn of the nineteenth century, and the 1817 shingle and clapboard mill run by Joseph Nash (Sweetser 1921; Sweetser 1976; Beers 1871).

Maine's climate from 1765 through 1880 was normally cool, interspersed with short periods of more moderate conditions. The decade of the 1820s was one of the climatically benign periods, raising expectations among farmers and prompting the introduction of new crops, including such exotic ones as silkworms. A return to cooler temperatures in the early 1830s, coupled with an increase in precipitation that lasted for nearly fifty years, forced the state's farmers to accept that the temperate conditions of the 1820s were an anomaly. New cash crops and agricultural methods were proposed, and two important institutions were established, the Maine State Board of Agriculture in 1856 and the land grant University of Maine in 1865.

The new crops and other agricultural efforts helped the state's farmers to some degree, but the unforgiving environment and railroad competition from the West limited recovery. Maine's remaining farmers survived by practicing a subsistence strategy that included diverse crop and livestock production, nonfarm work, and nontraditional products and crafts (Smith et al. 1982, 182-191; Vickery, Judd, and McDonald 1995).

Dairy farming and beef cattle were mainstays of Cumberland's farms. Spring Brook Farm was started in the early 1800s by Beza Blanchard, and began commercial operations under Frank Blanchard after his service in the Civil War. In 1861, fifty-eight percent of the eighty-six Cumberland businessmen subscribing to a Maine business directory identified themselves as farmers. In 1865, 92 of the 198 Cumberland men between the ages of 18 and 45 registering for the draft claimed farming as their occupation (Willis 1861; CM 1865; Bennett 2007, 2017b).

The Militia Lists and Occupational Changes

The first militia registration list was certified in Cumberland on April 29, 1881, and included the names of 179 men. The next list was certified in 1883, and listed 261 men, raising doubts about the completeness of the 1881 list. Further examination revealed that there were 129 names on the 1883 list that had not appeared in 1881. Eleven of the men on the 1881 list were 43 or 44 years of age, and would have aged off the 1883 list, and 34 of the 1883 entries were between the ages of 18 and 20, and thus would have been exempt from registering in 1881. Of the 95 remaining, 39 were identified on the 1883 list as "Marinner" (sic), 19 as farmers, and 18 as fishermen (CM 1899; Bennett 2017b).

The addition of 95 names to the existing 1881 list would bring the total number of Cumberland males between the ages of 18 and 45 in 1881 to 274, which is much more in line with the 1883 total of 261. However, the total for 1883 is below the 285 who registered in 1885,

and the number engaged in shipping (which includes occupations such as “Capt. Steamboat”, “Marriner”, “Seaman “, “Ship Carpenter”, and “Steamboat Man”) in 1885 (63) is more than three times the number in 1883. These potential discrepancies emphasize that not all the adult Cumberland males liable for registration made it onto the lists, but the occupational breakdown for each year remains valid, as a percentage of total listed (CM 1899; Bennett 2017b).

The reason for the absence of potentially 95 men on the 1881 list could be due to their line of work: the fishermen and mariners might have been out to sea during the registration process, and the farmers could have been out in their fields. It is also possible that the newness of the law could have impeded the registration process, leaving scores of men off the list. A third possibility is that many of the men were from Chebeague Island (there are 34 adult Hamilton men on the 1883 list who were not listed in 1881), and were missed for any number of reasons relating to their work or habitation on the island (CM 1899; Bennett 2017b).

In 1865, the first year occupational information is available, 92 of the 205 Cumberland males registering for the draft, or 46%, reported working in agriculture, the highest percentage of any one occupation listed. By 1917, the last year for which data is available, that figure had dropped to 27%. Parsing the data by decade, an average of 35% of the men registered during the 1880s were engaged in farming, compared to 26% during the 1890s and 23% for the period 1903–1909. The 92 Cumberland farmers in 1865, probably a low figure to begin with due to the number of men serving in the Union Army, were whittled to 55 in 1909, and 53 in 1917. A nearly 50% decrease in the number of Cumberland men engaged in agriculture during the period is consistent with Packard’s thesis regarding the decline of a major part of Maine’s economy in the latter part of the 19th century (CM 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

The number of men engaged in fishing, at 41% the second largest cohort in 1865, declined to just 1% in 1917, or two individuals. Shipping, which showed its highest placement in 1885 with 63 individuals involved, was down to 33 in 1917. Conversely, there were no reported rail workers (a category that includes both railroad and electric trolley workers) in 1865, but involvement in that industry was reported by a high of 9% of respondents in 1903, and averaged 4% of all workers for the period 1881–1917. The category of “Laborer” was not represented in the 1865 list, and was claimed by just 5% of respondents in 1881 and 1883. For the period 1891–1909, 24% of the men claimed it as their occupation. Clearly, declines in certain industries forced the men into less defined categories of work than previously (CM 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

Looking just at the numbers of men reported as being liable for the militia, in 1881, the first year enrollment was required post-Civil War, 179 men were registered, which is, as previously discussed, probably not representative of the actual figure. Two years later, in 1883, 261 men registered, and the peak year, in 1897, had 293 men registering, a figure that declined to 165 by 1917. For the years records are available, 1862–1865, 1881–1909, and 1917, an average of 240 Cumberland men were recorded annually. The Civil War draft list of 1862 and the militia lists of 1863–1865 show an average of 171 for the period; listings for 1881–1909 average 265 (CM 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

The median age of the men registering for the militia during the entire 1863–1917 period rose, from 28 in 1863, to 32 in 1909, before declining to 31 in 1917. The 165 men enumerated for 1917, the fewest registered since the war year of 1864, and their higher median age, are evidence of a smaller, older group of males making up the cohort of men between the ages of 18 and 45, just prior to the nadir of Cumberland’s population in 1920. The median age data supports

the other statistics that show the town's populace aging between 1860 and 1920, while the men's stated occupations show a transformation that generally reinforces Packard's thesis regarding the loss of key industries on the Maine coast (CM 1863, 1864, 1865, 1899, 1917; Bennett 2017b).

Cumberland After 1860

One measure of a community's response to stress is how they treat their most vulnerable citizens. Regarding its poor and indigent residents, Cumberland relied on outdoor relief from its incorporation in 1821 until 1837, when voters approved the purchase of "a suitable farm on which to keep and maintain the paupers belonging to this town..." (CM [1821–1851] 2016, 220) (Outdoor relief is aid to the poor in the form of food, clothing, and/or boarding in an individual's home, while indoor relief requires the recipient to reside in an almshouse, work house, or town farm.) Cumberland's first almshouse, located on Broad Cove on the shores of Casco Bay, was in operation until 1866, when a measure was undertaken to sell the farm and all its accessories. The 1864 Overseers report gives one reason for the sale, stating that, in "regard to the Paupers now in the almshouse, from the large number that have been supported there for years past, death has swept them away & but one remains as a living monument to mark the house as an almshouse. On the 19th inst. Lemuel Hamilton died, he was found dead, having fallen into the fire & burned to death..." (COP 1864) The town was then without a poor farm from 1866 through June 1888, a 23-year period during which it returned to a reliance on outdoor relief for the care of its indigent. In 1888, Cumberland purchased a building and farm on Blanchard Road for an almshouse and town farm (COP [1910] 2014; CM [1851–1898] 2016).

The reason for the change in policy is not stated, but hints are available in the Overseers' annual reports and other town documents. The 1881 report states that "Mrs. Abbie A. Perry made her second appearance in town, being left at the M. C. depot alone and in a feeble

condition...Since that time she has been a very troublesome and expensive pauper...Miss Anna A. Merrill became chargeable as a pauper...with a probability of being a constant receiver of aid...Miss Mary Wyman became chargeable...She is in a feeble condition and liable to be a constant expense..." (COP [1910] 2014; Bennett 2017a, 51).

These concerns about ongoing expenses are supported by a review of town budgets for the period 1874-88, which shows that expenditures on support outpaced appropriations each year by an average of 15%, ranging from 1% in 1876 to 49% in 1881. (A \$1,000 budget for the Overseers for 1879 and 1880 was decreased to \$850 for 1881, despite budget overdraws every year during the previous seven years.) Expenditures increased from 9.9% of the total town budget in 1874 to 14.23% in 1888, and averaged 15.15% for the ten-year period leading up to the purchase of the town's second almshouse. Support for the poor in 1886 went mostly for board for individuals in private homes, with care for the insane close behind. The population of Cumberland decreased 13% from 1860 to 1890, so more was being asked of fewer taxpayers in supporting the poor (CM 1873-2019; MR 1871-1960).

The 1889 Report of Overseers of Poor states that Israel A. Skillings and his wife were given charge of the new town farm on Blanchard Road, with the promise of \$235 in pay for a nine-month term, plus board for their daughter. Some of the poor being maintained through outdoor support were moved to the almshouse, while others were told payment would be stopped for their board, and were not heard from afterward. The town farm in 1888 had three cows, a hog, two shoates, and 26 hens, as well as produce for consumption by the residents. Skillings put up 25 cord of wood and a thousand feet of round lumber, and was credited by the town for labor performed off the farm. Butter, eggs, and apples produced on the farm were sold for income (CM 1873-2019).

Expenditures on support decreased dramatically with the 1888 purchase of the new town farm, from \$1,830.44 to \$206.42 the following year. Sale of produce from the farm and labor performed by the farm superintendent and residents offset town appropriations, resulting in real costs of between \$40.19 and \$612.80 annually for the period 1889-98, and an average annual expenditure of \$390.33. Evidently, the return to indoor relief resulted in savings for the town (CM 1873-2019).

By 1899, Olive Titcomb was the last resident of Cumberland's second almshouse. In addition to providing for the expense of maintaining the town farm, Cumberland continued to spend funds on the so-called outdoor poor. Expenditures for outdoor support reappeared in the 1891 Cumberland Annual Report, after being absent from the reports for 1889 and 1890, and were for board at the Insane Hospital, medical examination or attendance, and supplies. The town farm system, though more economical for taxpayers, was being supplanted by specialized care for the mentally ill and other medical purposes (CM 1873-2019).

Miss Olive Titcomb died on July 12, 1901, at the age of 65. With her death, the words the Overseers wrote with the closing of the town's first almshouse in 1866, "but one remains as a living monument to mark the house as an Almshouse," (COP 1864) rang true again. Titcomb's passing marked the final chapter of the town's indoor relief system for its poor and indigent. A. N. Lawson and his wife leased the Blanchard Road farm for the years 1902 and 1903, and boarded paupers there when necessary. The former almshouse was sold to A. W. Stanley for \$930 on May 23, 1904 (CM 1873-2019).

From 1901 through 1920, the town spent \$11,155 on outdoor support of the poor; of that amount, \$5,209, or 65%, was paid to the Maine Insane Hospital for board, clothing, and care for fewer than ten individuals for whom the town was responsible. After 1911, payments for the care

of individuals committed for psychiatric reasons ceased, and the state absorbed those costs. Other changes in reimbursements were put into place over the following years, including the status of state case, the disbursement of Aid to Dependent Children, and, after 1918, support of World War veterans, all of which resulted in the state compensating the town for care provided to individuals in those categories. Other forms of repayment to the Overseers of the Poor account included the use of labor on town roads and rent on the Drowne property, a farm on Tuttle Road bequeathed to the Town of Cumberland in 1891 (CM 1873-2019).

The records of the Cumberland Overseers of the Poor show the town was willing to support its disadvantaged residents, as long as it could be accomplished in an economical fashion. Cumberland closed its Broad Cove almshouse, in operation from 1837–1866, apparently due to a lack of residents (CM [1851–1898] 2016). The closure occurred at a time when communities across the country were shuttering their town farms and reinstating outdoor relief as the norm, due to indoor relief having lost favor in part due to the efforts of Dorothea Dix, the Maine native, social reformer, and champion of the mentally ill (Brown 1998). The fact that Cumberland would reestablish an indoor relief system within a generation of halting the practice indicates that the financial benefits of indoor relief outweighed the negative connotations the system conveyed.

It's conceivable that a community experiencing population decline would neglect its social institutions, but that wasn't the case with Cumberland. Sawga Tribe #20 of the Improved Order of Red Men was a benevolent organization that held its first meeting in the town on October 18, 1889. The group had an active sister organization, Indianola Council 44, Daughters of Pocahontas. On April 27, 1914, ground was broken for a new hall for the Red Men on

Blanchard Road, and meetings, celebrations, dances, and theatricals were held there. The building was sold to the town in 1974 (Sweetser 1976).

In 1894, a group of women established We Neighbors, a learning and recreational assemblage that was formally organized into a Women's Literary Club in 1904. Younger women could join the Cumberland-Falmouth Girl's Glee Club, which gave weeknight performances that included piano and mandolin solos, readings, and songs. There were also less formal gatherings in private homes for music, drama, and charades. The meetings that occurred in the neighborhood schools prior to the Civil War had by 1900 moved to the houses of the musically and theatrically disposed, creating the opportunity for gatherings of merriment in the midst of neighbors (Norton, n.d.; Sweetser 1976; Merrill 2016a).

In 1897, the Reverend Frank Davis, pastor of the Congregational Church of Cumberland from 1892 to 1899, and his wife Helen, were instrumental in organizing the Cumberland Library, which was housed in the homes of volunteer librarians, including Annie Buxton Small, Coral Adams, Esther Hill, and Olive M. Hall. The death of Carroll D. Prince on September 5, 1920, and of his wife, Annie Lincoln Prince, on October 10, 1920, resulted in a bequest of \$35,000 for the construction of a public library in Carroll's birthplace of Cumberland. The Prince Memorial Library was incorporated on November 7, 1921, and opened on January 7, 1923, with 600 books from the Cumberland Library on its shelves (Sweetser 1921; Sweetser 1976; Hutchinson).

Cumberland's Economy, 1860–1930

Business listings for Cumberland in the *Maine Register* over the years attest to the rural nature of the town. The 1891 edition, under the heading of "Manufacturers," includes carriages; smiths; painters; carpenters and builders; canned goods; and saw, stave, and grist mills. Occupations and businesses listed in later registers include meats and provisions; lobster traps;

poultry and eggs; grain and feed; fruit and confectionary; florists; cattle breeder; boat builder; and lumber manufacturer. Commerce in the town was of an extractive nature, or supportive of agricultural endeavors (MR 1871-1960).

Poultry farming had become one of the leading industries of the town by 1900, with the principle breeds being White Wyandottes, Plymouth rocks and Rhode Island reds. There were at least three main poultry dealers and processors in town, with their product going to the urban markets by express rail shipment through Cumberland Junction or to Portland and Lewiston via electric street railway. Gilbert Strout, Harvey Blanchard, and Willis and Walter Thurston packed barrels with poultry and ice for shipment to Boston and elsewhere. The workers processing the birds were mostly female (Mitchell 1904; Norton, n.d.; Sweetser 1976).

In the early 1890s, Frank and Arno Chase had a greenhouse in Cumberland and sold their product under the Chase Brothers brand. By 1904, the town had four large greenhouses boasting 28,000 feet of glass, producing flowers, primarily carnations, for the state's wholesale trade. Howard C. Blanchard built two small greenhouses in 1914, and later constructed two larger houses with 30,000 square feet of glass. Just as with the town's poultry businesses, the proprietors of Cumberland's flower operations depended on the 40 trains a day that passed through Cumberland Junction, some of them providing express service to Bangor, Portland, Boston, and New York. Another relatively recent endeavor in town in the early 1900s was trout farming, and the Roland and Rowe's ponds were said to be stocked with in excess of 5,000 fish (Mitchell 1904; Norton, n.d.; Sweetser 1976; Merrill 2016b).

The farmers of Cumberland in the late 1800s grew a variety of products, most notably potatoes, hay, and corn. At least two canneries supported agriculture over the years. Merrill Brothers established a canning factory in 1881 at Cumberland Junction, with the capacity for

3,000 cans a day, and was in operation through the early 1900s. Charles E. Herrick, with his son Horatio, operated a canning factory in the late 1890s that provided seasonal employment for many of the town's young people. Both facilities canned primarily corn, but also other vegetables, fruits, and meat (Mitchell 1904; Norton, n.d.; Sweetser 1976).

Apples were, and continue to be, an important piece of the agricultural heritage of the town. As early as the 1830s, Samuel and Amasa Sweetser were grafting trees and developing new strains of apples. Samuel's son Frederick Sweetser was an early member of the Maine Pomological Society, and his son, Herman, was a professor of horticulture at the University of Maine at Orono who returned to Cumberland to run the family orchard (Sweetser 1921; Sweetser 1976).

The self-sufficient nature and varied agricultural enterprises of many of the town's residents in 1900 is demonstrated in the recounting of one man's holdings and activities. At the turn of the 20th century, Nat Cole, former manager of one of the town's canneries, had 13 cows, two sows, and 40 trees bearing various types of apples on 35 acres. His cows were pastured on a neighbor's property because he had planted his in potatoes and sugar beets, and he had to hire a local youth to help him get the cows to pasture and back each day. He kept three kinds of wagons and a sleigh for winter travel, three horses to pull them, and put up 50 ton of hay for his livestock. Cole's house was close to the rail line, and he was known to make a bit of cash by meeting the traveling salesmen at the railroad station and driving them with their sample cases throughout the area (Norton, n.d.).

In 1900, Cumberland Junction was the center of economic activity within the town. The many trains that stopped there each day not only took the local product to market, they delivered to the town's residents their dry goods, furniture, and other items from the stores in Portland, the

wharves in Bath, and the mail order businesses in other parts of the country. The town had two lines running through it, with the earliest, the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad, opening in 1848. The Atlantic and St. Lawrence later became the Grand Trunk Railway, while the town's second rail line was merged with the Maine Central Railroad system in 1871. Half of the 40 trains passing through Cumberland Junction during the early 1900s were passenger trains (Norton, n.d.; Sweetser 1921; Sweester 1976).

The steam rail lines were joined in servicing the good citizens of Cumberland with the chartering in 1894 of the Portland and Yarmouth Electric Railway, which ran along what is now Route 88 in Cumberland Foreside. The line began operations in August 1898, and soon had service every half hour from 6 a.m. until nearly midnight. The Portland-Lewiston Interurban Railroad, chartered in 1907, began service through West Cumberland in 1914. In addition to passenger service, the line facilitated the shipment of milk and farm produce from West Cumberland to Portland and the Lewiston-Auburn area. Both rail lines allowed area residents to commute to the cities for work and errands, and both ended service on June 28, 1933 (Sweetser 1921; Sweester 1976).

By 1920, there were two mills remaining in town, one a saw, stave, and grist mill, and the other a saw and stave mill. Other businesses in 1920 included a sausage maker, a painter, a stone cutter, a mason, and canned goods, and the number of merchants, and their offerings, remained relatively unchanged from 1891. The arrival of the tourist industry was evident in 1920 by the listing of eight hotels, all of them on Chebeague Island. By 1930, there were two golf courses in town, one in Cumberland Center and one on Chebeague. The rest of the listings that year included many of the same businesses and business types as in 1920 (MR 1871-1960).

Maine and Cumberland after 1920

The state's small farmers in the 1920s were nearly self-sufficient, and combined specialized farming, mixed crops, and livestock with non-farm occupations such as lumbering, fishing, and tourism related activities. There were, however, differences across the state. Aroostook County farmers, with a loamy, fruitful soil and flatter topography that contrasted with the rocky earth and hilly terrain of the central and southern regions of the state, focused their efforts on potatoes. Farmers in the County were more successful than their colleagues elsewhere in Maine, and used half of the state's tractors in producing nearly 15% of the nation's potato crop in the early 1930s (Condon 1985, 62-64).

Outside of Aroostook, Maine's increasingly part-time farmers kept livestock and raised vegetables for consumption and sale, and provided the cities with dairy products, apples, poultry, and other goods. The state's egg business, centered in York and Cumberland counties, was part of the progressively more specialized nature of Maine farming that competed with Midwestern beef and pork products and Vermont's dairy industry. Farmers in the coastal counties were more likely than their brethren elsewhere in Maine to abandon their farms during this period (Condon 1985, 61-64; Condon 1995).

Cumberland participated in the movement toward specialized produce and self-sufficient farming. As previously mentioned, the town produced a variety of goods, including potatoes, hay, corn, eggs, apples, flowers, and fish. The town's poultry farmers maintained their flocks for the period 1924 through 1935, with the number of chickens in town ranging from 8,474 in 1927 to 12,326 in 1929, for an annual average number of chickens of 10,467 for the 12-year period. The number of cows kept by the town's farmers declined during the 1930s, due either to improved dairying methods that resulted in fewer animals producing higher yields, or a partial

abandonment of dairy farming. Significantly, the number of bulls remained static, implying that the propagation of the herd was still important (CM 1873-2019).

The decline in population that affected so many rural Maine communities during the 1920s was less evident in Cumberland County. The 26 municipalities comprising Cumberland County in 1920 included 20 that had populations under 2,500, which the U.S. Census classified as rural, and of those 20 towns, 11 registered population increases between 1920 and 1930. The growth rates experienced by those 11 towns ranged from 2.24% to 54.89%, while actual growth ranged from 26 in Gray to 842 in Cape Elizabeth. The 1920s was the decade when Cumberland saw its 60-year population decline reversed for good (MDVS 1892-1951).

Cumberland County's population increased by 23.51% from 1900 to 1920, from 100,689 to 124,358. During the same period, the population of Portland grew by 38.14%, from 50,145 to 69,272. That growth was bound to impact the county's rural towns, particularly since the introduction of automobiles and the ease of travel on the electric street railways made commuting to work much easier. The population increase in Portland would have put a strain on the ability of that city to house the influx of people, and more of those moving to the city would have spilled over into the county. In addition, ten of the towns that registered population increases between 1920 and 1930 had lost population between 1910 and 1920; conceivably, there was an oversupply of housing in those towns, which could have attracted new residents (MDVS 1892-1951).

The changing economy, and the appeal of the city that drew so many of Maine's young people off the farms and out of the state's rural communities, left many residents with the sense that the Depression that took hold in 1929 was just more of the same. The "communism of the poor," which dictated that neighbors and towns take care of their own and relief from the state or

federal governments was not an option, was supplanted by at least a partial willingness to accept outside help. The Cumberland Overseers of the Poor saw their caseload increase from zero in 1929 to 43 cases comprising 163 individuals in 1935. Total dollars spent on the poor averaged \$3,844 a year for the period 1930 through 1940; of that, some was reimbursed by other municipalities, the state, or the federal Work Projects Administration (CM 1873-2019; DeVoto 1932).

Rural residents of the “Yankee commonwealth” believed that paying taxes and avoiding debt went hand in hand with an aversion to mortgages and a reliance on antiquated farm machinery. Another indication of distress in Cumberland was the extent of uncollected taxes, which increased from \$398 in 1929 to \$855 by 1935. The figure declined the following two years before it peaked again in 1938, at \$822. For the period 1929–1938, between 19% and 89% of the unpaid taxes, or an annual average of 53%, were still on the books the year following when they were due (CM 1873-2019; DeVoto 1932).

The leaving behind of the rural communities by what was usually their youngest and most enterprising residents threatened the very existence of Maine’s rural communities. That abandonment took place in Cumberland starting in 1860 and continued through to 1920, a 60-year period when the town lost one-third of its populace. The remaining population was older and less fecund than it would have been had the out-migration not occurred. The town’s lower rate of natality and higher rate of mortality could not, in the long run, sustain the community; if Cumberland had been a closed society after 1920, with no influx of new residents to bolster the populace and alter the balance between births and deaths, the community would have eventually died out. There are numerous examples of populations that have significantly increased or decreased through migration (Hinde 2002). The town of Cumberland, which sustained a 33%

decrease in population from 1860 to 1920, followed by a 240% increase in population from 1920 through 1960, is an example of both.

The rural population of Maine in 1930 was older and more religiously and ethnically homogeneous than the populace of the state's urban centers (Condon 1985, 58-60). The analysis of Cumberland's natality and mortality rates, which shows that the town had a lower birth rate and a higher death rate leading up to 1930, implies that Cumberland residents in 1920 were older than Maine as a whole, and thus adheres to the general pattern of an older rural populace. The evidence supplied by the Cumberland militia lists and scholar census data support the concept of an older population having fewer children. In addition, the 1920 federal census shows that heads of household in Cumberland had a median age of 53; an older populace results in lower fertility and natality rates, which again is evident in the Cumberland data (MDVS 1892-1951; Bennett 2007; USBC (1920) 2003).

More than three-fourths of the state's rural residents were native born of native parentage, the highest percentage in the region, and an equal proportion was Protestant (Condon 1985, 60). The 1920 census shows that Cumberland was similar to rural Maine in that respect. Census returns identified 447 heads of household in Cumberland, and of those, 362, or 82.1%, reported being born in Maine. That proportion varies little with the 1910 returns, which showed that 84.44% of the 482 heads of household in the town were native born (USBC (1910) 2003, (1920) 2003).

The 1920 U.S. Census numbered the town's residents at 1,150; the previous decade had seen an 18% decrease in Cumberland's population, and the community's numbers had reached their lowest point. The next four decades would bring population increases of between 8% and 36% per decade, resulting in a total population of 2,765 in 1960. The rapid growth was one

reason behind the creation of the Cumberland Planning Board in 1955, and the board's membership in the Greater Portland Regional Planning Commission. One of the new board's first significant actions was the issuance of the 1958 Comprehensive Plan, which described the community as a "bedroom town" whose residents were as likely to work in Portland as in Cumberland. In 1956, fifty-three percent of employed males and fifty-eight percent of employed females living in Cumberland worked outside of the town; of those both working and living in Cumberland, a substantial number were farmers, woodsmen, craftsmen, laborers, and fishermen (GPRPC 1958; Sweetser 1976; MR 1871-1960).

Last Thoughts

In the end, the picture that emerges of Cumberland in 1930, when the country had just entered the Great Depression and the town's population was within eight residents of the number it had on its founding more than a century before, is of a rural community where the inhabitants did what they needed to survive. Subsistence farming and diversified livestock production helped sustain the residents, and the town's proximity to Portland permitted commuting to jobs in the city. As it had before, when its numbers increased 19% during the years between its founding in 1821 and its initial population peak in 1860, Cumberland welcomed new residents, many of them of different ethnic stock than those already there. The new inhabitants did little to alter the town, joining the churches that were in existence rather than starting their own, changing the community's framework by their numbers and birth rates and not their bloodlines and institutions. The town's farmers, like all farmers in Maine, had responded before to necessity, and would continue to do so, just as those who previously rode the electric railroads into Portland or Lewiston or Yarmouth would now use the ubiquitous automobile for their transportation needs.

Cumberland's experience during the period 1860 through 1920 bears out Packard's view of changes in specific aspects of the Maine economy, and the impact on the population of the coastal counties. Federal census figures document the town's loss of 35% of its population between 1860 and 1920. State vital statistics data show that the town's residents were older and less fertile than their counterparts throughout the state, and the school census numbers demonstrate that young people made up a significantly smaller proportion of the populace in 1920 than in 1860. The draft and militia lists bear out Packard's major argument concerning the demise of the state's major industries, while also confirming an overall aging of the residents.

Cumberland lost a significant portion of its residents leading up to 1920 due to the failure of the state's major industries during the period. Spear's shipyard on Broad Cove survived nearly six decades before succumbing in 1869. The town's many mills followed that fate. Farming, which previously could be supplemented by fishing, shipbuilding, or millwork, was no longer viable without the ability to work in those ancillary industries. The town's farmers responded by adding new products such as poultry, eggs, fish, and flowers, but in the end it took the proximity to Portland, and the ability to commute to work there, to restock the population. To this day, Cumberland remains a bedroom community, where a significant portion of the populace works out of town.

Welcoming newcomers, adapting in the face of want, taking care of one's own, were the hallmarks of the social order evident in small towns throughout the country. Cumberland, borne of North Yarmouth and since surpassing its mother town in terms of population and economic activity, would recover from its loss of populace and shift in industrial fortunes, welcoming new residents to what would become another of Portland's suburbs, allowing its inhabitants to benefit from the nearness of Maine's largest city while residing in a pastoral setting.



150th Anniversary of Cumberland Congregational Church, August 29, 1943

Fig. 1: *Back row, left to right: Fred L. Adams, Arno S. Chase, Horatio H. Herrick, Edward B. Osgood, Samuel S. J. Porter, J. Edward Warren, Samuel Ross. Front row, left to right: Annie Florence Sturdivant, Laura Lyman Herrick Wyman, Alice May Sawyer Doughty, Emily Norton Wilson, Evaline Howard Merrill Sweetser, Elizabeth C. Sweetser Greely.*

On August 29, 1943, members of the Cumberland Congregational Church gathered to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the church's founding. A photograph was taken of the 13 septuagenarians and octogenarians among the celebrants, including seven men and six women. They were all born between 1857 and 1871, represented some of the oldest families of the town, and were in the twilight of remarkable lives. Each among them had witnessed the Civil War or its immediate aftermath, Reconstruction, the Spanish-American War, the Great War, the Great Depression, and the bulk of World War Two. All but one would live to hear the news of D-Day,

and nine of them would survive to the end of the war and beyond. These national and international events had affected the town, the state, and the nation, in countless ways, but it may well be that the men and women in the photograph were impacted more deeply, and personally, by what transpired locally, the loss of one-third of Cumberland's citizens between 1860 and 1920, and the transformation of society and economy.

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the State for the service of the United States, to serve for nine months, unless sooner discharged; the number opposite the name of each man exhibited below being the one drawn by, or for him, in accordance with instructions for making said draft, contained in General Order No. 32, of the 16th ult. September 24th, 1862.

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