

# Walking Tour

**HOPEDALE,  
MA**



**Discover big dreams  
in a small town.**

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# Hopedale

Hopedale is unique among the villages of the Blackstone River Valley in that it was born of two distinct attempts to create an ideal society. Founded in 1841 as a small communal association of Practical Christians who advocated temperance, abolition, women's rights, Christian socialism, and non-violence, Hopedale evolved into a paternalistic model company town.

Today, its tree-lined streets, abundant parks, grand buildings and silent towering manufacturing

complex invite you to relive the story of a town rooted in a dream of "peak and love" and tempered by the fire of industry and spectacular wealth.

The story began when Universalist Reverend Adin Ballou and forty-four followers purchased a 258 acre farm in an area long known as "the Dale", located on both sides of the Mill River in the town of Milford. There they established "Fraternal Community No.1," launching what they hoped would be an ever growing number of Practical Christian communities that would transform the world.



Reverend Adin Ballou, a Unitarian clergyman from Mendon, was the guiding spirit for the Practical Christians who founded Hopedale. When the original community disbanded, he wrote, "The great question involved in our Hopedale experiment is not yet settled; only postponed to a wiser and better time."



Students attended well-appointed public schools subsidized by Draper money.

Among this small band of Yankee pioneers was Ebenezer D. Draper, who ran a machine shop that produced parts for mechanical weaving looms. Eventually, Draper's business became the main source of support for the communal association, and in 1856 he and his entrepreneurial brother, George, purchased the community and assumed all of its debts. George Draper gave rise to a new era in Hopedale. His successful use of technological innovations resulted in the Draper Company's emergence as the nation's leading manufacturer of looms for the textile industry.

Combining great wealth with a strong social conscience, the Draper family maintained complete control over the town for over one hundred years. They

provided jobs, built and maintained award-winning workers' houses, erected imposing public buildings, and regulated most aspects of public life within the community. They also left an endowment that continues to be used for community projects today.

George Draper had a passion for finding innovative technology to make the production of cloth more efficient. He led the company's charge to become the nation's leading producer of machines for the cloth-making industry. The more idealistic Ebenezer, who had started the business as a member of the original Hopedale community, eventually moved to Boston and died in bankruptcy.

At its height of production, the Draper Corporation employed more than 4,000 workers. But, due largely to the decline of the American textile industry, the Draper family divested themselves of most of their town properties in the 1960s, and the Corporation was acquired by an outside owner. By 1978 the plant was closed.

Today, the sprawling factory lies on the edge of town like a sleeping giant. But the town's moral and social underpinnings still resonate in the streets of Hopedale – streets name Freedom, Social, Union, Peace, and Hope.

# Walking Tour

## 1 Adin Ballou Park

Your tour begins in Adin Ballou Park where the statue of Hopedale's founder presides over a beaten front door step and boot scraper, the only remnants of the farmhouse the first Hopedale settlers called home. The spirit of hope that inspired these Practical Christians is evident in the town's name – Hopedale – which they chose for their fledgling experiment in communal living.

Much like the 1960s, the 1840s were a time when many people questioned the moral authority

of the existing establishment and sought to achieve modern Utopias by restructuring society along communal lines. During the 1840s, Henry David Thoreau withdrew to his cabin on Walden Pond, while Transcendentalists such as Emerson and the Alcotts experimented with communal living at Brook Farm and Fruitlands.

The original Hopedale community was the most enduring of these communal societies, outliving the better known Brook Farm by a decade.



In this "time-shattered" house the first 45 members of the Hopedale community survived their first winter together. As their village grew, members continued to live communally, sharing meals, chores, and profits from businesses.



# Walking Tour continued

## 2 Factory Site

As you head northwest along Hopedale Street, you will immediately be struck by the monolithic factory complex before you. The Draper office building across the street, between Social and Chapel Streets, is connected to the manufacturing plant by a tunnel. It was at the Draper offices, not the town hall, that most residents paid their taxes during the years of the Draper Corporation's dominance.

The section of the factory built first stands on Freedom Street, where it was constructed to take advantage of water power from Hopedale Pond. From the bridge on Freedom Street, you can see the water rushing under the building.

By the 1890s, the Drapers dominated the nation's loom-making business. They manufactured every piece of the machines they used, including the nuts and bolts. They processed raw steel in their own foundry. They purchased land in northern New England to assure themselves of a steady supply of wood. The Grafton and Upton Railroad brought in raw goods, while trolleys provided transportation for workers from Milford and Uxbridge.

To ensure a force of stable dedicated workers, the Drapers built quality, company housing. Today, these large, comfortable duplex houses are still inhabited. You can see some of them along the shoreline of Hopedale Pond and in other sections of town.

In 1887, the Drapers cut the work week to fifty-five hours, more than a decade before Massachusetts made those hours a state requirement. Well into the 20th century, residents regulated their lives according to the company's bells which rang at 6:00 a.m. to wake people up, 6:55 a.m. to alert employees to report for work, 12:00 noon for lunch, and 12:55 to remind employees to return to work. A 9:00 p.m. bell served as a curfew for most of the town's youth.



George Draper (above right) had a passion for finding innovative technology to make the production of cloth more efficient. He led the company's charge to become the nation's leading producer of machines for the cloth-making industry. The more idealistic Ebenezer (above left), who had started the business as a member of the original Hopedale community, eventually moved to Boston and died in bankruptcy.



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# Walking Tour continued

## 3 Little Red Shop

The little Red Shop across Freedom Street provides a stark contrast to the sprawling Draper Complex. Yet it was in the rear section of this shop that the original Hopedale community operated several machine businesses, and where Ebenezer Draper began to manufacture loom temples.

When George Draper joined his brother's business in 1853, he devoted his considerable energy to finding more and improved ways to mechanize the weaving process. He was so successful that they soon outgrew the Little Red Shop: during the 1880s alone, Draper companies produced and sold more than six million new high-speed spindles to textile companies.

In 2009, the Little Red Shop was reopened as a museum that celebrates the story of the Draper Mill and the Town of Hopedale.



Hopedale Pond provided water power for the mill and recreation for town residents.

## 4 The Parklands

From the Little Red Shop, you can see the Parklands stretching along the eastern shores of Hopedale Pond, with the path beginning behind the beach. Before the turn of the century, the Drapers hired Warren Henry Manning, who had helped develop Boston's regional park system, to design a public park around the pond. If time permits, enjoy a stroll through this carefully planned woodland comprised of over 250 acres.

## 5 Dutcher Street Company Housing

Continuing north along Hopedale Street to Dutcher Street, you will find rows of duplex company houses, which were constructed between 1902 and 1907. By 1910, Hopedale had won international recognition for its model housing for workers, with an English housing expert declaring it, "America's Best."

The Drapers formed an "Army of Volunteers" to provide free maintenance to keep the houses in good condition. But there were restrictions: fences were prohibited and no one could "tie or fasten any horse to any shade or ornamental tree."

In addition to providing inexpensive housing, the Drapers implemented an efficient system of garbage collection and constructed a sewerage system that, by the late 1890s, was connected to every house in town. All houses had water, gas, electricity, and indoor plumbing by 1910.

Turn right on Dutcher Street. Adin Ballou's house, built in 1841, is number 64. Continue down



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During the Great Depression, the Drapers suspended rent collection for two years and provided work for every employee at least one day a week.

the street where you will see the Dutcher Street School, now condominiums, and the Hopedale House on the left. This former rooming house with over one hundred rooms provided housing for Draper employees who lived alone.

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# Walking Tour continued

## 6 Unitarian Church and Town Hall

At the corner of Dutcher and Adin Streets, note an old street sign donated to the town by George Draper's son, William, who distinguished himself in the Civil War. Turn right and you will find yourself at the Unitarian Church. This granite structure was erected in 1898 in the name of George and Hannah Draper by their sons George and Eben. Eben Draper served as Governor of Massachusetts from 1909-1911.

Across the street stands the town hall. Built of local granite and brownstone, this building was a gift of George A. Draper and presented to the town in 1887, one year after Hopedale was granted township. It was designed to accommodate businesses on the ground floor and has an auditorium on the second floor.



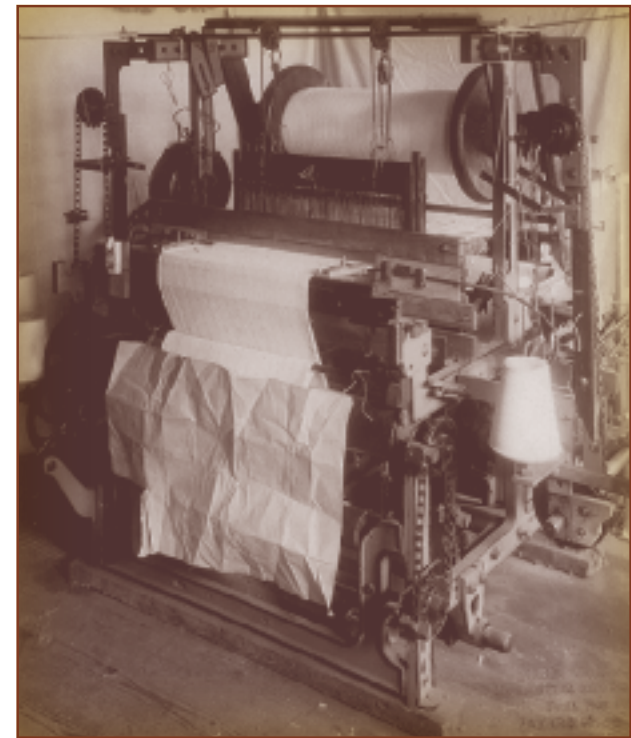
## 7 Bancroft Memorial Library

As you head back toward Adin Ballou Park on Hopedale Street, you will come to the Bancroft Memorial Library. Joseph Bancroft was a member of the original Hopedale community, and in 1856 he cast the lone vote against the dissolution of the community. He remained a life-long friend of Adin Ballou and became a business partner to the Drapers. With a strong interest in improving community life, he provided the money to build this distinguished building, which he dedicated to his wife. The library houses a small collection of artifacts and memorabilia, including Adin Ballou's cradle and writing desk, as well as some fine portraits of Hopedale's founders.



Three of the Thwing sisters from Uxbridge were among Hopedale's founders. Sylvia (standing, left) married Joseph Bancroft; Hannah (standing, right) married George Draper; Anna (seated, right) was the wife of Ebenezer Draper and held many important offices in the original Hopedale community.

The Henry L. Patrick store sold groceries and dry goods. For many years, it was the only business in town not owned by the Draper firm.



The loom temple, patented by Ebenezer's father, Ira, revolutionized the weaving process. By holding the fabric taut, the temple greatly reduced the number of hours required to manufacture cloth. Mechanized weaving led to a reduction in the cost of cloth, so that many people today own many more clothes than did their ancestors.

# Directions

Hopedale is located just off Route 16. To get there from Route 146, follow Route 16 East through Uxbridge and Mendon, approximately eight miles. Turn left on Hopedale Street.



## Along the Way

- Free parking is available on Hopedale Street near the Bancroft Memorial Library. Adin Ballou Park is diagonally across the street.
- Refreshments are available along Hopedale Street.
- Good resting areas are Parklands, near the Little Red Shop, and the small park at the corner of Hopedale and Dutcher Streets.
- For information about events, restaurants, and lodging in the Valley, call the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce at 508-234-9090 or visit [www.blackstonerivervalley.com](http://www.blackstonerivervalley.com)
- Be sure to visit the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park and River Bend Farm Visitor Center – just eight miles away at 287 Oak Street in historic Uxbridge, MA. Canal tow path walk, canoe launch sites, hiking trails, free maps, brochures, interpretive tours, and exhibits with videos, and more. Free parking and free admission. Open seven days. 508-278-7604.
- Visit a historic working mill museum, just 25 miles south of Hopedale at Exit 28 on Interstate Route 95 – Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, RI. Free parking. Restrooms. For hours of operation and admission prices, please visit [www.slatermill.org](http://www.slatermill.org) or call 401-725-8636.

- To take a riverboat excursion –spring, summer, or fall – call for the schedule for The Explorer, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at 401-724-2200 or 800-454-2282.
- The Little Red Shop Museum, at 12 Hopedale Street, is housed in the original home of the Draper Company. Today, the museum tells the story of Draper, and its role in the development of Hopedale. For more information, call 508-478-2926 or visit [www.littleredshopmuseum.org](http://www.littleredshopmuseum.org).

**Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA—the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.**



**This brochure was developed under the direction of The Rhode Island Historical Society in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.**

All photos are from the Bancroft Memorial Library.