



Become a NorWALKer!

EXPLORE THE STRAWBERRY HILL AREA

This former farmland is home to three of Norwalk's public schools and scenic, winding roads.

Loop 1

Exit the Naramake Elementary School parking lot and turn right onto King St. Take a right onto Strawberry Hill Ave. Turn right on County St, and then a right on William St. Turn right on King St. and enter Naramake Elementary School's driveway.

Loop 2

Exit the Naramake Elementary School parking lot, turning left on King St. Turn left on Oriole Dr. and continue around the loop until you reach William St. Turn right on William St., then turn right on King St., eventually returning to Naramake Elementary School.



PROCEED WITH CAUTION WHEN FOLLOWING NORWALKER ROUTES!

The *Healthy for Life Project* is not responsible for any injuries or accidents that may occur while following NorWALKer routes. Consult your doctor before beginning an exercise program. Use pedestrian crosswalks when available, obey all traffic laws, and if no sidewalks exist, walk against traffic. Wear proper footwear and reflective gear, and bring water with you while walking. Have fun!

DEVINE, KEELER & TAYLOR FARMS

It's best to start this walk in the Strawberry Hill area at the parking lot for Naramake Elementary School, which was named after Native American Chief Naramake. Early tribal inhabitants of the area are thought to have been a branch of the Algonquin Confederation that comprised the largest group of North American tribes. Algonquins generally lived in bands of 100 to 300 persons and were close relatives. They lived in lodges made of bent saplings covered with birch bark. It is likely this group merged into other tribes as their numbers became depleted by smallpox, measles, and a bitter war with the Iroquois Confederacy.

In 1640, Sachem (Chief or Chiefs) Mahakemo sold land between the Saugatuck and Norwalk rivers to Roger Ludlow, an Englishman, who was in the area as a result of his service as a soldier in the Pequot Indian wars. The last major battle of the Pequot wars was in Southport, CT.

By 1867, most of the Native Americans living in the area were gone. Although it has been written that they left peacefully, it is likely they left because of cultural clashes with the new settlers or died from European transmitted diseases.

A beautiful mural showing the appearance of the Strawberry Hill area you are walking in is on display in Norwalk's City Hall. Titled "Dairy Farm-Grade Herd", it was one of twenty-four created by the nationally recognized painter of WPA murals, Alexander J. Rummier, during the years of the Great Depression (1929-1941). It is a composite of three early Norwalk farms, the Devine Dairy Farm, the Keeler Farm (which was located at the corner of the intersection of Strawberry Hill and Tierney Street), and the Marvin Farm on Beach Road.

In earlier days, products of the farms were sold to local customers along an established route or at their stands along the roadsides. The farmers and their children or farm workers would make weekly trips using horses and wagons to deliver milk, cream, butter, eggs, and other products, such as apples, to their customers. There were numerous apple orchards in the area and some apple trees are still in existence in the Strawberry Hill

neighborhood.

John Devine emigrated to America from Ireland in approximately 1847 as a result of the potato famine. His son, John, born around 1856, was the original owner of the Devine Dairy Farm, which was established around 1893 through purchase of about 100 acres. Additional farmland was obtained when possible. He built a home in 1903 and eventually expanded his holdings to 225 acres. Much of the land had to be cleared to become usable farmland.

John Devine's family consisted of his wife, five sons, and two daughters. The family lived in a house still in existence on William Street.

In the 1930s, the Devine Dairy Farm included a horse barn, a hay barn, and a cow barn for his sixty cows. The farm's milk and cream were bottled on Strawberry Hill Avenue.

The State of Connecticut purchased land in 1957 to build Interstate Highway 95, which cut the farm in half and was a factor to sell the property. The family name is still prominent in Norwalk, and is well known for their current business, Devine Brothers Inc. Many family members still live in Norwalk and are active in the area.

The Keeler Farm was located at the intersection of Strawberry Hill Avenue and Tierney Street. Emigrant Ralph Keeler, born in 1613, first settled in Hartford where he was a "viewer of chimneys" and a carpenter and house builder. When he moved to Norwalk, this "founder" purchased one of the "homelots" (#7) on Town Street, now known as East Avenue. Another Ralph Keeler purchased a home in Norwalk in 1665. The Keeler family descendants have been active in business and many descendants lived or live in Norwalk.

The Keeler family name and achievements have been recognized since the days when Connecticut was a Colony. In 1712, Joseph Keeler operated a gristmill on the Samuel Keeler property at the head of the harbor some time after 1781. Edwin C. Keeler was one of the first mayors of Norwalk, around 1893. Anson Keeler was mayor of Norwalk in the early 1930s. Other Keelers were in real estate, tavern owners, excavating contractors, while others served as school administrators and teachers.

Many towns and cities along the East Coast maintained "Poor Farms" for their less fortunate citizens, and Norwalk was no exception. Its "Poor Farm", named the Naramake House, was located in the Naramake School area in the late 1800s. Persons living there had to work on the farm to help pay for their cost of living on the premises. Most of the land within the circle you'll walk in this neighborhood is now residential.

Compiled by Richard (Dick) Booth, 2004

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Healthy4LifeCT

For more information about NorWALKer Routes, call (203) 854-7776 or visit www.healthyforlifeproject.org



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