

200 Years of Textile Production

Right Place, Right Time

Although scattered settlement and minor industry had occurred in and around the area of what is now the village of Greenwich prior to the 18th century, it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the full potential of the Battenkill River for providing power for industry was realized.

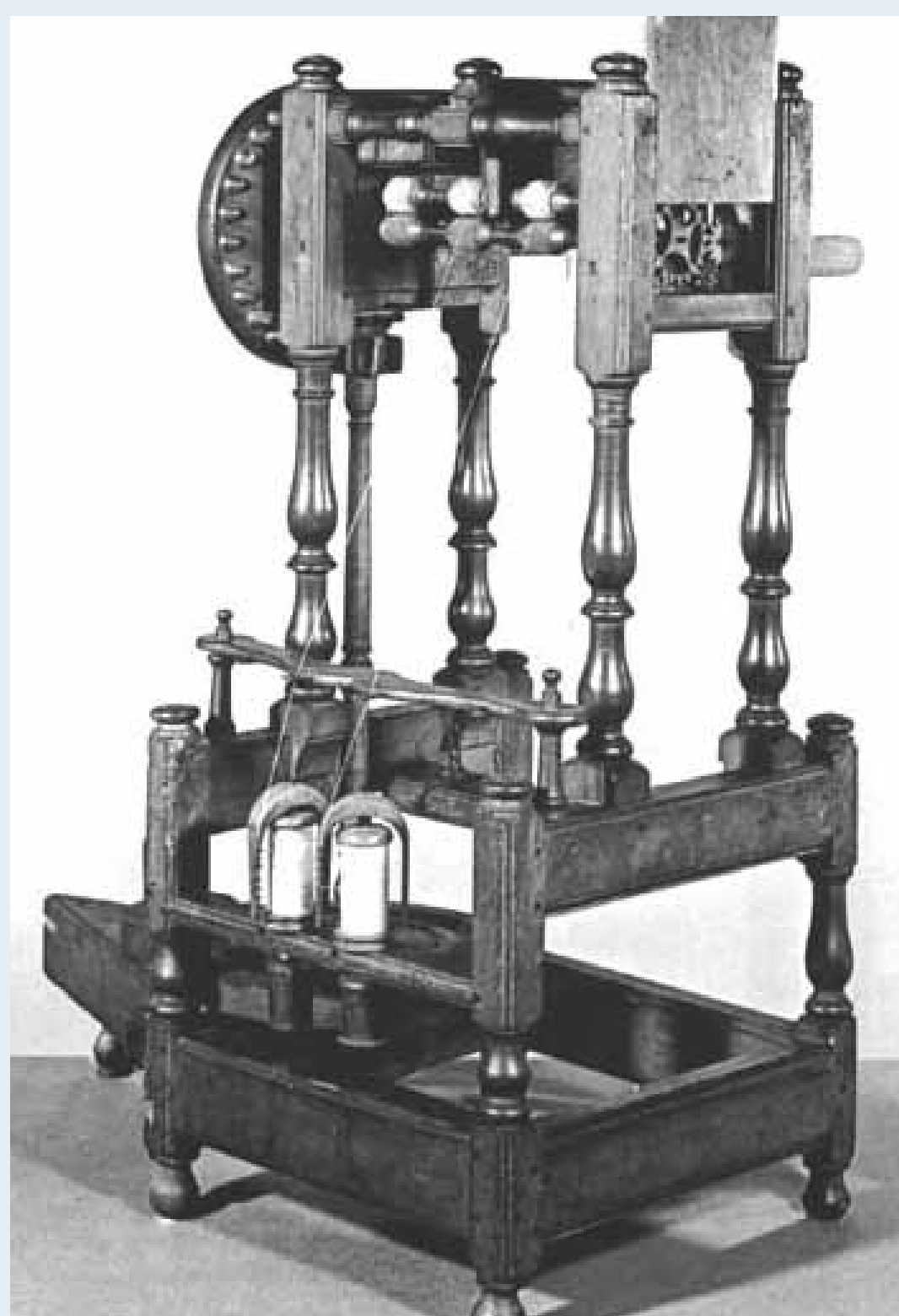
In 1804, Job Whipple, a Quaker from Rhode Island, along with his son-in-law, William Mowry, established New York State's first cotton mill along the banks of the Battenkill River. This partnership marked the advent of what was to become a village first known as Whipple City, later incorporated as Union Village in 1809, and finally renamed Greenwich in 1867.

By 1807 the Mowry-Whipple mill was thriving. Yarn was farmed out to housewives in the surrounding area to be woven into cloth. Sawmills and gristmills became a part of the mill complex on the Battenkill River. Perry Miller, one of Greenwich's original settlers, established the first cast iron plow factory in the nation. Pottery shops sprang up and prosperity followed.



Employees of Dunbarton Flax Spinning Company. *Greenwich Journal*, courtesy William G. Mulligan.

As mills producing linen thread, knitted garments, and paper were developed, immigrants arrived in the area to work in the mills. Descendants of these Irish, Italian, German, and French Canadian families remain in the community today, as do the churches they built.



The first water-powered spinning frame was invented by Richard Arkwright in 1769 in England.



1960s carder used by Battenkill Fibers until destroyed by fire in 2010.

Timeline

1609 Henry Hudson explores the Hudson River and the upper Hudson Valley.

1600

1624 The first settlers establish Fort Orange in the area that is now Albany. The Hudson River becomes a valued asset to the community for water, transport and manufacturing.

1763 Rhode Island and Dutch families begin to settle in the area that is now Washington County, NY.

1793 Samuel Slater builds the first successful water powered cotton spinning mill in the nation on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket, Rhode Island – considered by many to be the birth of the American industrial revolution.

1800

1804 Job Whipple and his son-in-law, William Mowry, establish the first cotton mill in New York State, and one of the first in the country. Their mill sparks further development; and what is now Greenwich, New York, becomes prosperous and a very attractive area for settlement.

1862 Battenkill Knitting Mill is formed in Greenwich, and operates for two years before a fire damages the machines and facilities. The mill was rebuilt and in 1870 Pleasant Vale Mills is incorporated here.

1899 Edwin Groat leases Pleasant Vale Mills with the intention of refurbishing the mill and expanding its machineries to once again create a prosperous knitting mill along the Battenkill. Fire damages the mill this same year, but it is rebuilt.

1879 Dunbarton Flax Spinning Company opens in Greenwich, NY. This mill housed the American branch of the Ireland manufacturer, Dunbar, McMaster & Co., Ltd.

1940 Dunbarton Company, the last remaining mill in the area, closes.

2000

2009 Battenkill Valley Fibers Carding and Spinning Mill is formed by Mary Jeanne Packer in Easton to process locally-grown wool and alpaca fibers. In 2010, fire damages the machines; and the mill is rebuilt in Greenwich.

1995 Village of Greenwich Historic District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

Water Powered Many Mills

Industry Along The Battenkill River

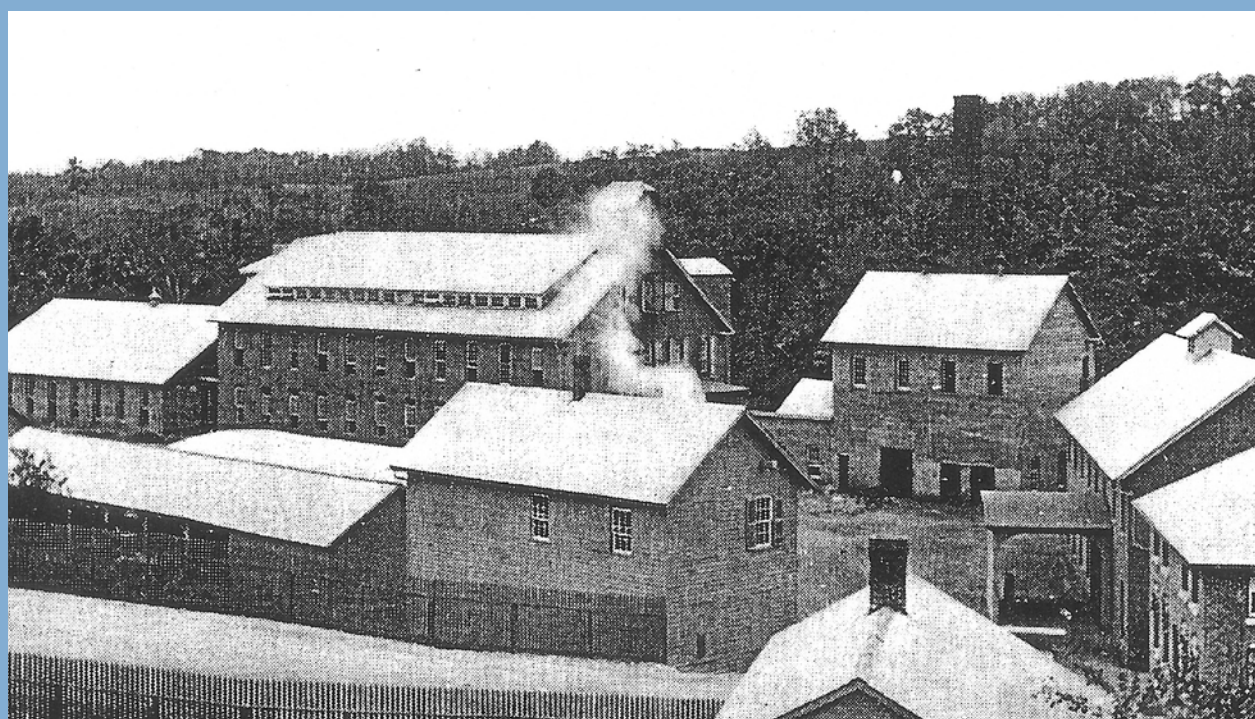
The nearly immediate success of the Mowry-Whipple Mill influenced the construction of at least six other fiber mills along a short stretch of the Battenkill River near what is now the village of Greenwich, New York. The River also powered sawmills, paper mills, and grist mills.

5 Woolen Mill

John Gale built this mill in 1845. This site was first developed in 1767 as a sawmill. Before it took on the form of a woolen mill, it was also used as a fulling mill, grist mill and a plaster mill.

6 Linen Mill

Constructed in 1868 by William Weaver to form the Greenwich Linen Company. The Dunbarton Flax Spinning Company was built on John Street near here in 1879.



Dunbarton Flax Spinning Company
From *Industries Along the Battenkill River* notebook.
Greenwich Free Library, Greenwich, NY.

9 Cotton Mill

The first cotton mill in New York State was built at this location in 1804 by Job Whipple and his son-in-law William Mowry. The Mowry-Whipple Mill closed in 1845 and became the location of a flax mill during the 1850s, and years later Eddy Plow.

10 Knitting Mill

The Battenkill Knitting Works was built here in 1862. It was later incorporated as the Pleasant Vale Mills in 1870.

11 Woolen/Cotton Mill

Daniel Anthony, the father of Susan B. Anthony, built this mill in 1838 on the Jackson side of the river. It was enlarged to a four-story building by Thomas Truesdell and burned completely in 1851. After the fire, a flax mill was constructed but it was also destroyed by fire.

12 Woolen/Cotton Mill

The foundation for the woolen mill had been erected about 1815 but the business failed. Daniel Anthony and Judge John McLean converted it into a cotton mill, which prospered for a time, then failed. A number of others tried manufacturing cotton goods there but all failed as well. The mill burned in 1868.

13 Woolen Factory

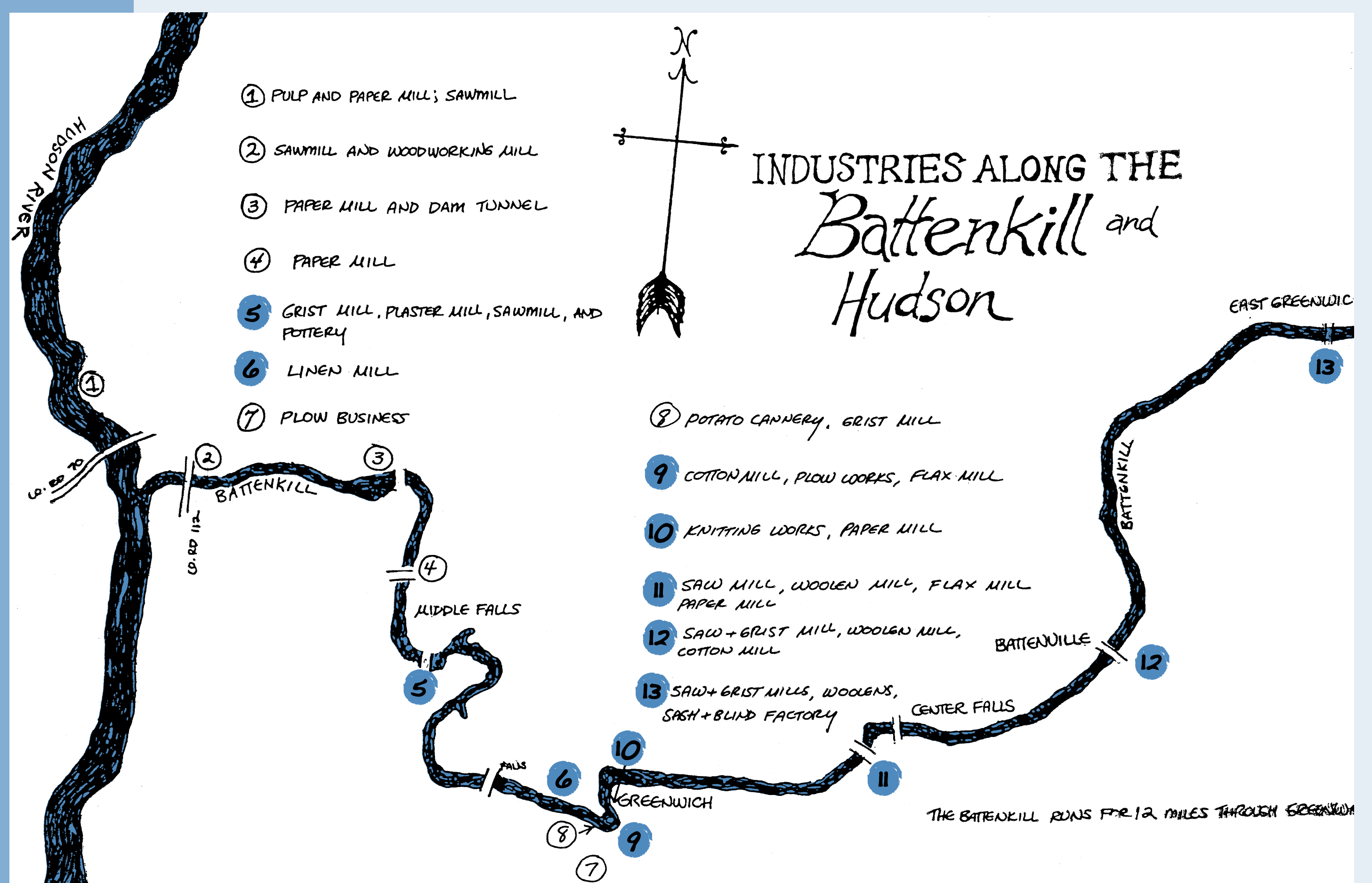
Built in 1828 by Jedediah Post and John Taggart, it burned in 1845.

From the documentation for the Village of Greenwich Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1995.



Jasper Francis Cropsey. *Autumn on the Hudson, 1860*. National Gallery of Art.

The first mill to harness the power of the Battenkill River for fiber production was built in 1804 by Job Whipple and William Mowry. The mill thrived for many years; and greatly contributed to the prosperity of the area.



Fiber in Washington County - Then & Now

A Prosperous Rural Economy

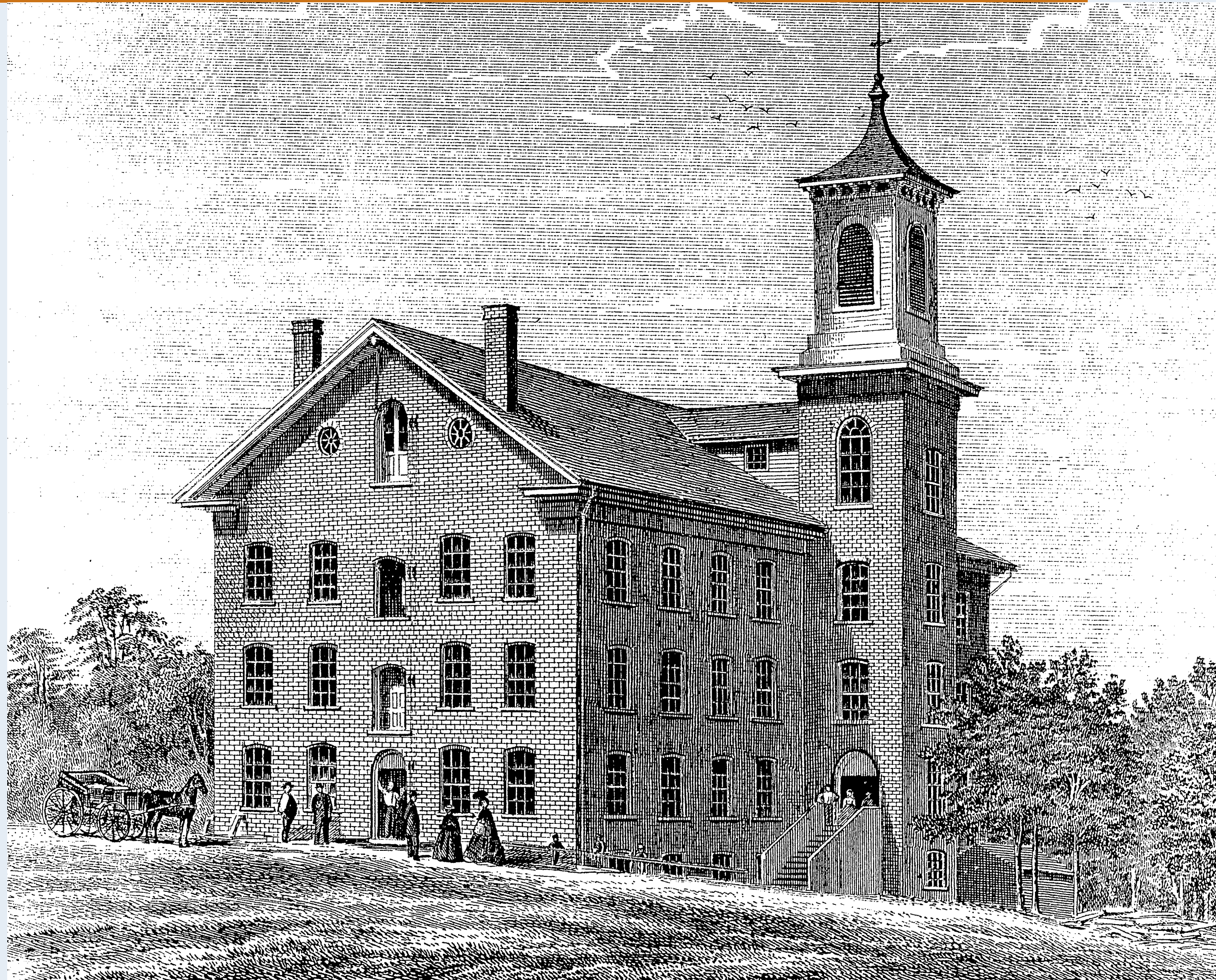
The Battenkill Knitting Mill was formed in 1862. It operated at a profit for two years before a fire damaged its machines and facilities. It was rebuilt and in 1870, the mill was incorporated as Pleasant Vale Mills, but through the next few years, prices fell so low that the knitting mill was closed. However, in 1899 Edwin Groat leased the mill and expanded its machines to once again create a prosperous knitting mill along the Battenkill.

"For the first time in many months, the bell of the Pleasant Vale mill was heard ringing Tuesday morning. It is to be hoped that it is an omen of better times and livelier business for Greenwich. About a dozen men began work Tuesday cleaning, repairing and placing new machinery and otherwise getting in readiness for the early opening of the mill.

"The producing capacity of the mill will be much increased by the introduction of new machinery. Ten double knitting machines will be added to the twelve already in place, besides machinery for the manufacture of wool and cotton fleeced-lined underwear. It is expected that the mill will be in condition to commence manufacturing by the latter part of this month. Employment will be furnished to about one hundred and twenty-hands, most of whom will be secured from Greenwich and the immediate vicinity." Greenwich Journal, January 4, 1899.

The Dunbarton Flax Spinning Company opened in Greenwich in 1879. This mill housed the American branch of the Ireland manufacturer Dunbar McMaster & Co., Ltd. The Company manufactured flax threads, yarns and twines. They employed about two hundred local workers. The products manufactured here were sent to all parts of the world.

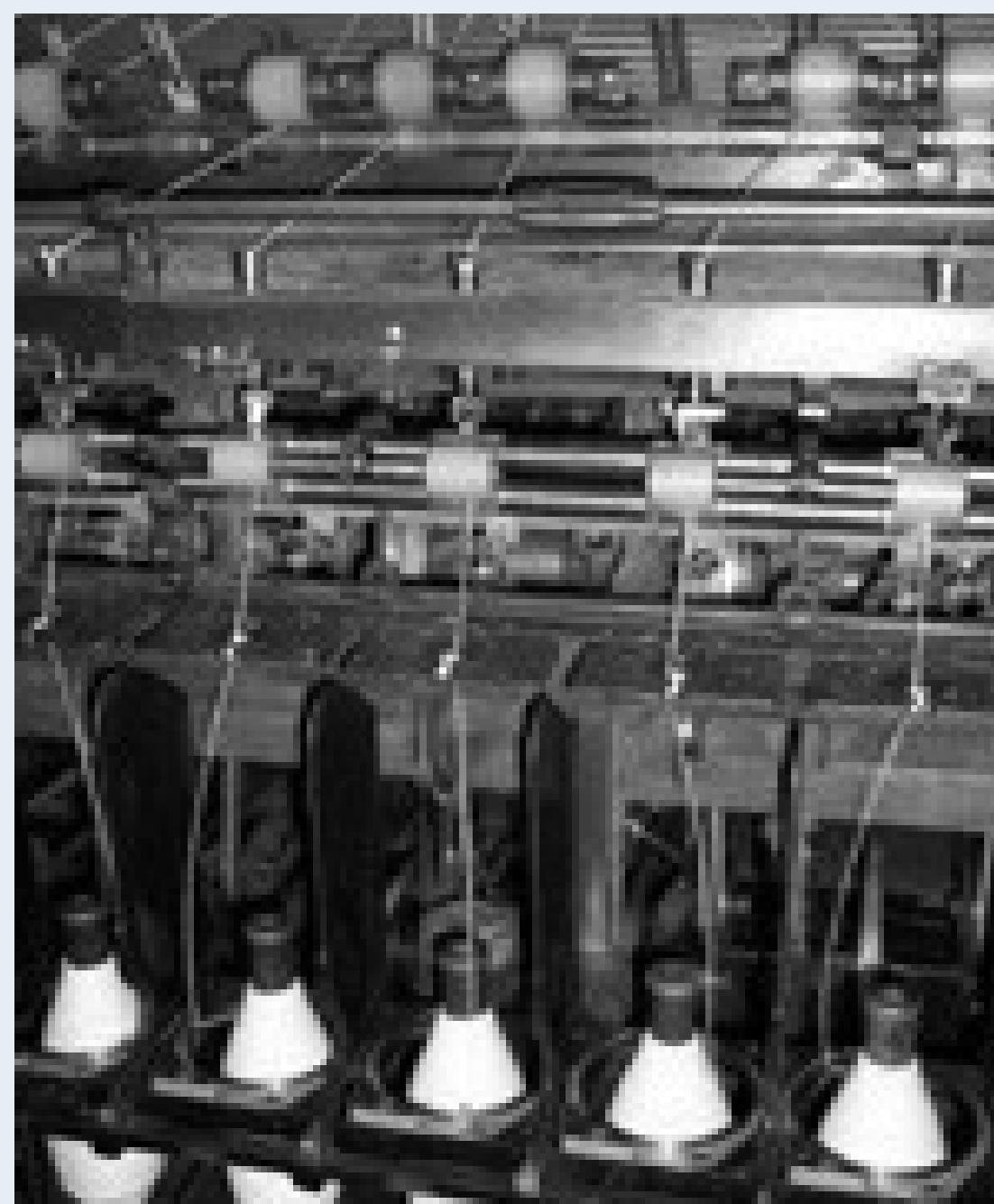
"Dunbar McMaster & Co., have been awarded the contract for both threads and Gillings twines for the Indian commission supplies. This being their first tender, and in the face of a peculiarly low market, which has prevented them offering their threads at the current prices, we congratulate them. The firm of Dunbar McMaster & Co., are asserting themselves, and are being recognized everywhere as the best makers of all goods furnished by manufactures of threads and twines." Greenwich Journal, May 26, 1881



Battenkill Knitting Mill



2008 Fiber Tour at Ensign Brook Farm, courtesy Devlin Kennedy



Saco Lowell plyer at Battenkill Fibers

Washington County Fiber Tour

2011 marks the 19th year that a dozen or more alpaca, sheep, goat, llama, and rabbit farmers open their properties to visitors. Each April, fiber enthusiasts and their families come from as far away as Boston and Philadelphia to Washington County to learn where the fibers they love to spin and knit with begin and to meet the farmers responsible for raising these high quality fiber animals.

Southern Adirondack Fiber Festival

Begun in 2009, the Festival has grown to over 125 vendors at the Washington County Fairgrounds the last weekend in September each year. Knitters, spinners, and weavers from all over the eastern US travel to Washington County to see fiber animals, shop for fiber products, and attend workshops.

Battenkill Valley Fibers Carding and Spinning Mill

Recognizing the need for value-added, custom carding and spinning services for fiber farms and others in the region, this mill was established to meet this demand and to also manufacture yarn and fiber products for wholesale and retail markets. Battenkill Fibers produces artisan quality natural-colored and kettle-dyed yarn using traditional semi-worsted milling machinery. The company embraces and respects the nature, history, and culture of their place on the land in the Upper Hudson Valley; and strives to sustain this rural heritage for future generations.