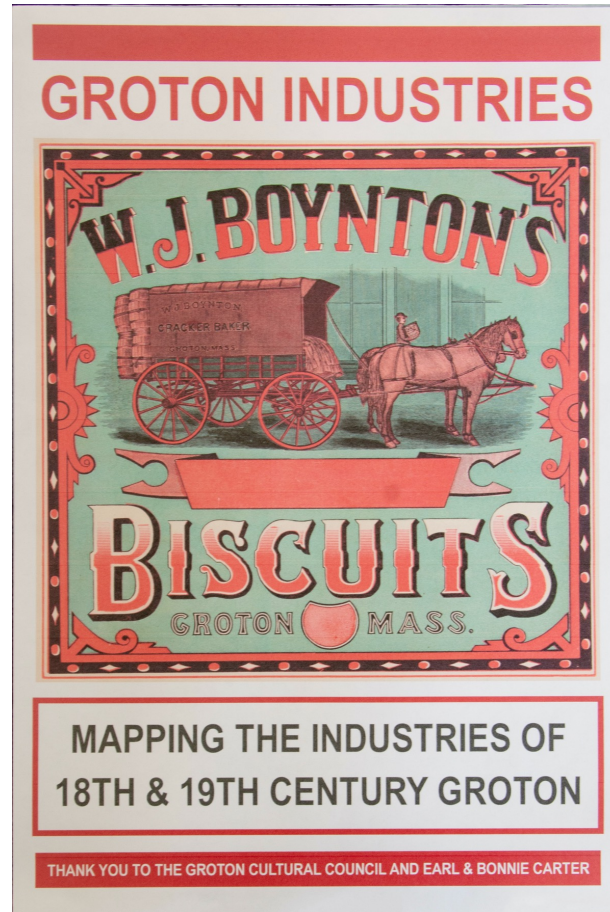


Groton Industry Exhibit, March-August 2023



The background features a light green to yellow gradient with a pattern of white and light green circles and vertical bars. The bottom edge of the image is torn, revealing a white background.

Leatherboard Factory

GROTON LEATHERBOARD COMPANY

Virginia May, Groton Tercentenary 1655-1955

“Records from 1662-1707 show the original proprietors of the land now owned by the Groton Leatherboard Company were Jonathan Morse, Thomas Tarbell Senior, and Samuel Woods. This property at one time took the name of one of these proprietors, and was known as “Tarbell’s Mills.”

“It is quite clear that a saw mill was established here on the Squannacook River prior to 1744. During the next one hundred and thirty years various types of manufacturing were carried on. The saw mill remained pretty consistently throughout this period, but at various times a dye houses, wool carding, and grist mills were established. These mills were located on both sides of the river, the westerly side being annexed to the town of Shirley in 1798, and more or less common use was made of the water power, the source of which was at the present dam location. About 1875 a strawboard mill was erected, and this was followed shortly by the manufacture of leatherboard, which was probably the first manufacturing in this country.

“The Groton Leatherboard Company was incorporated in 1899 for the purpose of manufacturing and selling leatherboard and leatherboard products. The mill was in continuous operation producing counter-boards, shank-boards, chair-boards, friction-bords, and heel-boards until July 23, 1914, when the buildings were destroyed by fire. The following year a new brick building was erected, the water power improved by the installation of two modern water wheels, and entire new equipment installed. Manufacture of leatherboard was resumed in the new mill in 1916.

“In 1924 the charter was amended so as to extend the nature of its business by adding to the corporate purposes “the manufacture and sale of mats for use in stereotype printing and any articles or products capable of manufacture in paper or board mills.” The company commenced the manufacture of stereotype dry mats and became the second company to produce this product in the United States. In 1926, 1928 and 1936 substantial additions were made to the plant and production was greatly increased.

“Since 1924 the entire product of the mill has been sold through the Certified Dry Mat Corporation, New York, who distributed it to newspapers and commercial shops throughout the United States and foreign countries. In 1946 control of the Certified Dry Mat Corporation was acquired by the Groton Leatherboard Company.

“The management and ownership of the Groton Leatherboard Company has always rested in the citizens of the town.”

Groton at 350

“The abandoned mill site upriver of Hollingsworth and Vose is part of a state-owned conservation area, the Squannacook Wilderness Management Reservation. This 56-acre parcel of land was the original location of the Thompson mill. The other abandoned mill site is the highly visible dam and mill pond in West Groton Square where a new bridge takes Route 225 across the river into Shirley. On the south side of the road are red-brick Leatherboard buildings, which have been renovated and given new life as Groton’s first assisted-living complex for seniors, RiverCourt Residences. These buildings, considered representative of the late industrial period of a New England mill village, were officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 18, 2002, three months after the dedication of RiverCourt.”



GROTON LEATHERBOARD EMPLOYEES

FRONT ROW, Hugh Daley, Frank Sherwin, Daniel Sherwin, & Son

SECOND ROW, Jim Moran, John Winkler, Walter Rhines, Fred Bosley,

REAR ROW, George Parker, John Mcann, Elmer Small, Wm. Dawborn
Harold Sheedy, Charles. Balkom, Ferdinand Cheverette,
John Moulton, Pat Kane, Gilbert Wheaton,

app.

"1920"

0.2453







Historic Flood March 1936

FLOOD OF MARCH 1936



Nashua, New Hampshire

The winter of 1935-1936 was a severe one with lower than normal temperatures. As of early March it was estimated that the snowpacks in Northern New England averaged about 7.5 inches of water. In Southern New England, snow water equivalents of 3.5 inches were normal.

On March 9, a warm, moisture-laden front moved into, and stalled over New England resulting in increased temperatures as well as heavy rainfall during the period March 11-13. Rainfall amounts were significantly enhanced by the orographics of the White Mountains. Large areas of 5 inch rainfall in New Hampshire and Maine were reported.

The combination of heavy rain and melting snow resulted in flooding throughout New England. A most significant damage during this period resulted from the movement of ice on the rivers, and the resultant ice jams and breaks. An example of the severe ice damage occurred at Holyoke Dam. An ice jam above the dam initially resulted in the Connecticut River cutting a new channel on the east side of the river to get around the jam. When the jam broke, it moved downstream, over the dam in over 9 feet of water. In doing so, the ice sheared off 1000 foot wide by 5 foot high section of the granite dam.



View of Leatherboard Mill, across the river, during flood of 1936.



Jan 10, 1946



Jan 10, 1946

SMOKE STACK REMOVAL
AT
"GROTON LEATHERBOARD"
"1946"

0.2506

Ice Industry

The background features a vertical gradient from light green at the top to white at the bottom. A pattern of white and light green dots and vertical bars is overlaid on the gradient, creating a textured, abstract effect. The text 'Ice Industry' is centered in the upper half of the image.

Groton's Ice Industry

Virginia May, Groton Plantation:

The Gage Ice Co. of Lowell owned large ice houses at Forge Village on the north shore of Forge Pond close to the railroad. Ice was transported from these storage houses to Lowell over the Stony Brook Branch Railroad....

Somewhat smaller ice houses in and around Groton were owned by men who supplied townspeople with ice for their use. Ice carts were loaded from these storage houses, and ice was peddled from them daily or almost daily throughout the locality in warm weather.

The ice houses of this later type in Groton were situated one on the northside of Cady Pond and another near the dam by the pond to the east Cady, both owned by Kenny Fletcher, who lived in the Golf Club House. Also there were ice houses on Wattles Pond in the North part of Groton owned by Silas Noakes of Pepperell, on Sandy Pond in Ayer, near the swimming beach, owned by Frank Pierce, at a small artificial pond in a tributary of James Brook near the Ayer-Groton line owned by "old man Wood, the iceman", on Kemp's pond owned by George Pierce and on the west side of Flanagan's pond owned by Harlow and Parsons. Another building for the storage and sale of ice, though not located on a body of water, was attached to the farm building of William Harvey Whitehill on the Boston Road. Mr. Whitehall cut and hauled ice from Cady Pond and also Kemp Pond.

Ice house on
Wattles Pond



Hollingsworth and Vose

HOLLINGSWORTH AND VOSE COMPANY

Virginia May, Groton Tercentenary 1655-1955

“In 1843 the brothers, John Mack and Lyman Hollingsworth, were granted a patent by the U.S. patent office for the manufacture of paper from manila fiber. The patent was the result of the discovery by the Hollinsworth brothers, during the depression that followed the panic of 1837, that they could utilize a scrap pile of manila bolt ropes which they cut from old sails.

In 1852, Lyman Hollingsworth purchased a paper mill from Jephthah R. Hartwell on the site of the present West Groton Mill of Hollingsworth and Vose Company. This mill, which was originally a starch factory, had been in existence since before 1832, and during the ensuing twenty years passed through numerous hands. In 1846, while in Hartwell’s possession, the mill burned down and was rebuilt. After its purchase by Lyman Hollinsworth, and until 1881, it was used to manufacture paper from jute and manila fiber.

In 1871, Zachary T. Hollingsworth, a nephew of Lyman Hollingsworth, purchased the mill in East Walpole. Charles Vose entered Mr. Hollingsworth’s employ as salesman in 1875, and formed a partnership with him under the name of Hollingsworth and Vose in 1881. During that year they purchased the West Groton mill from Lyman Hollingsworth and continued to make paper there.

A major change in the organization of the firm occurred in 1921 when Zachary Hollingsworth and Charles Vose retired. Valentine Hollingsworth and Louis E. Vose, sons of the retired partners, became President and Vice President respectively.”
From Groton at 350:

“As recently as 1955, the West Groton division of Hollingsworth and Vose manufactured approximate twenty-five tons per day of highly specialized papers for industrial use. The papers were used for automotive and diesel oil filters, electrical and cable insulation, artificial leather, wallet papers, and various filter papers for liquids and gases. Over the years, the parent corporation, which has its headquarters in East Walpole, has bought up other paper manufacturers and expanded its product line of specialty industrial papers. The mill in West Groton has remained in continuous operation since its founding in 1852.”



Photograph of
Hollingsworth & Vose Workers, West Groton,
Approx. 1910.

West Groton Mill



West Groton Mill



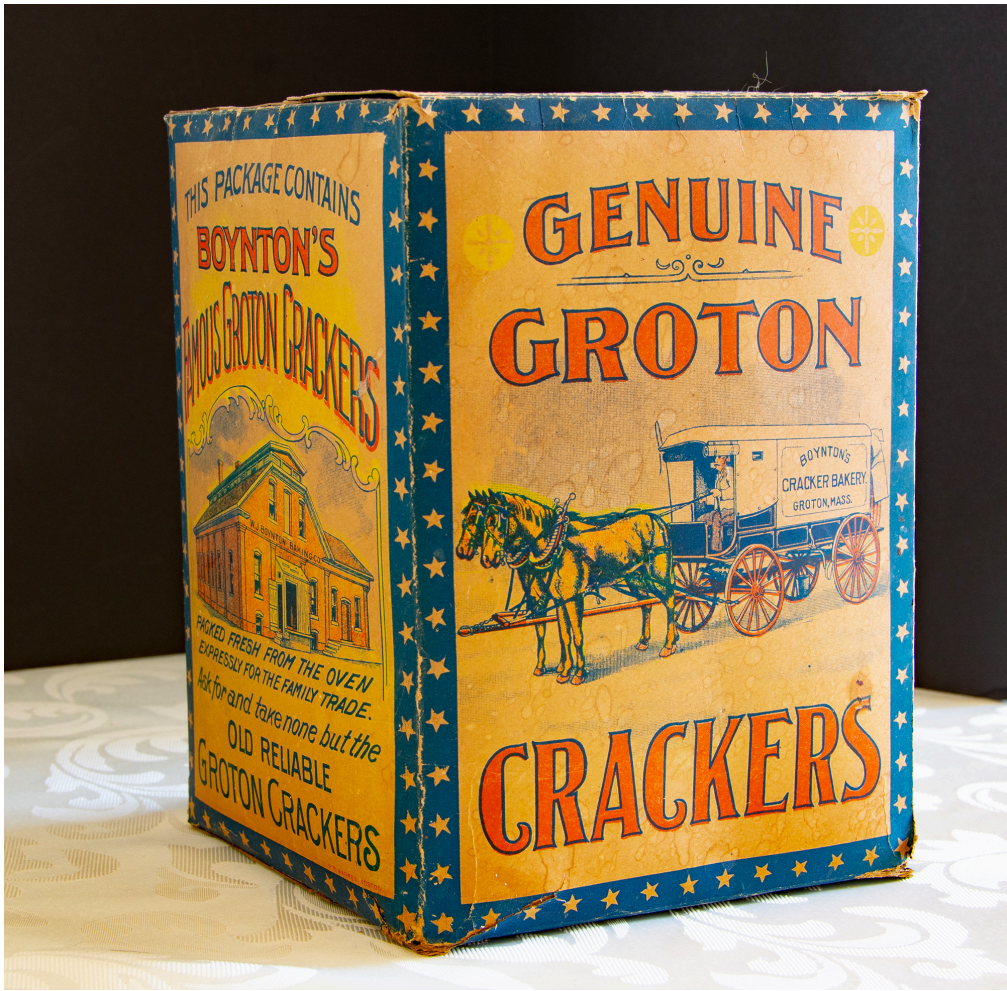


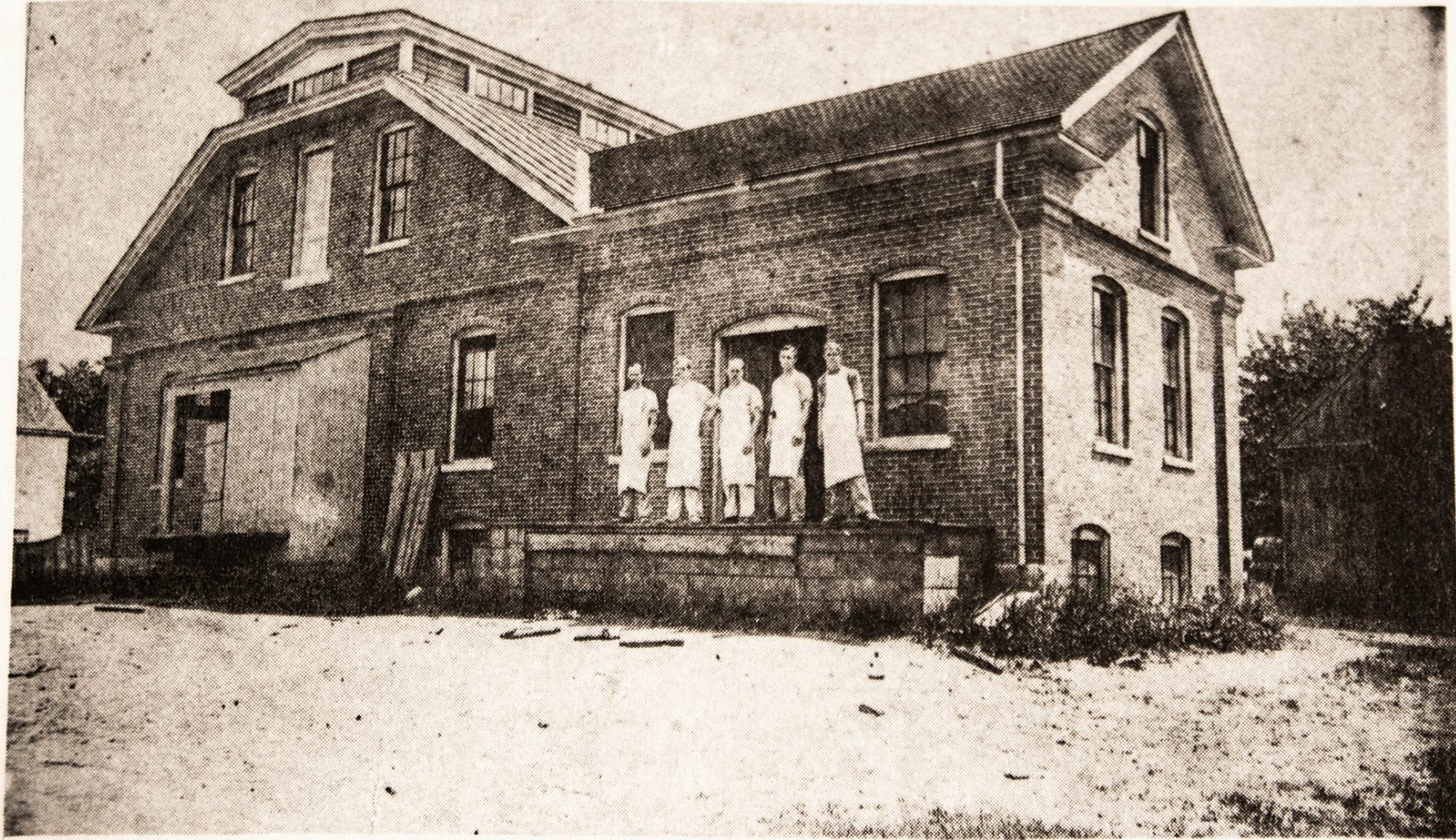
W. J. Boyton Bakery

W.J. Boynton Bakery

Virginia May, Groton Houses:

On the site of the Elm Street Garage a bakery was built in 1851. The business was conducted by Boynton and Brown, and afterward Mr. Gates, presumably George S. Gates, though he left it when it was burnt on April 24, 1874. In just two months to a day from that time another one of brick was put in its place, where an extensive business was carried on by William J. Boynton. W.J. Boynton died and his brother John carried on the business for many years making crackers. It was known as the cracker bakery. There was another bakery run at the same time by family members in the back part of the Groton Drug Store building. About 1921 the cracker business closed down and the building was bought by James Madigan of Harvard and Dudley Whitney of Ayer. They modeled the building into a garage, made their homes in Groton and were still operating the garage at the same place in 1968.





Bakery Building on Elm Street, now an auto repair garage.



A. H. Thompson & Sons Mill

A. H. Thompson and Sons

Groton 350

Virginia May's description of the company that became A. H. Thompson and Sons begins with the story of another old mill site on the Squannacook River, farther north up the river from Hollingsworth and Vose. "many years ago," she says, "a small sawmill and stave mill, run by waterpower, were doing business in the northwest corner of West Groton in that locality known as Thompsonville. They were owned for almost seventy years by John Scales and later his sons."

Groton resident George E. Wheatley, who married the daughter of one of A. H. Thompson's sons, Clarence L. Thompson, continues the story:

"Asa Howard Thompson came to West Groton about 1883 and located a settlement on the Squannacook River upriver from the Hollingsworth & Vose mill. In 1885, with his uncle Granville T. Shepley, he bought a saw mill known as Scales' Mill that for seventy years had belonged to John Scales and later his son. The mill was on a tract of land of about 58 acres situated in the westerly part of Groton, northerly part of Shirley, and southwesterly part of Townsend. Mr. Thompson later bought Mr. Shepley's interest and started a box and reel factory. By 1891 the property consisted of five houses, a barn, and mills, and was known locally as Thompsonville.

Around 1896 Mr. Thompson purchased land in the village of West Groton and built a steam powered mill where he manufactured wooden reels, cores and frames. In 1919 Mr. Thompson incorporated the business under the present name, bringing his two eldest sons, Clarence L. and David B. into the company. Mr. Thompson died in 1926, and his son Clarence continued the operation of the business. The plant was enlarged at the beginning of World War II and ran three shifts during most of the war years."

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“Gradually Thompson’s reel business superseded the box business,” says May in *Tercentenary*, “and it became the chief product. Sizes of reels ranged from 14 inches to 96 inches in diameter. Early in the 1940s the plant was considerably enlarged. By 1955 the plant was able to consume over 2,000,000 ft. of lumber and to manufacture material for more than 31,000 reels yearly.”

The Thompson mill closed in 1966, and the space was used briefly by Rocky DeRico for his custom woodworking business, Groton Wood Products. His business was in bankruptcy in 1970 when Carl and Carol Canner bought the Thompson Mill for their home and business, the Carvers Guild.”



SEPTEMBER 1947 A.H. THOMPSON MILL WEST GROTON







CLARENCE L. THOMPSON
OWNER
OF
A.H. THOMPSON MILL
WEST GROTON
APP
"1929"

Soapstone Industry



Soapstone Quarry

Groton at 350:

The presence of soapstone had been discovered accidentally in 1828 by John Fitch on his farm on Common Street. “ Mr. Fitch owes his discovery to the fact that part of a stone adhered to his axe, as he struck it inadvertently, while cutting wood.” Says Virginia May. Fragments of the stone were scattered over the surface of the ground, but apparently they had never caught his attention until that day. Soapstone was a prized “soft material” useful as fireplace hearths, sinks, stoves, bedwarmers, inkwells and soap dishes. John Fitch had the makings of a small industry on his own property, and May describes it in some detail:

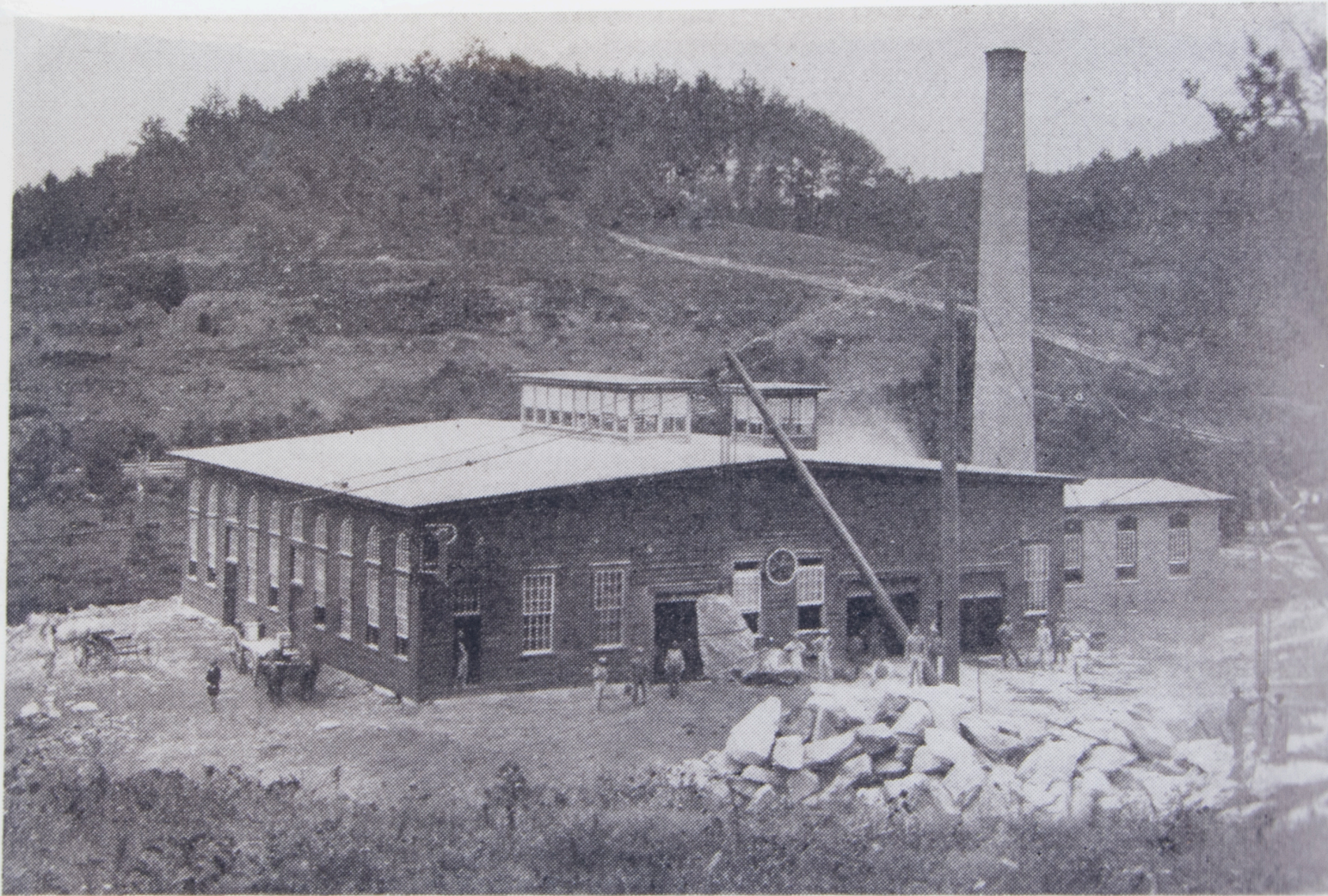
Mr. Fitch worked the Quarry in a small way for several subsequent years, sawing the stone by hand at a shop by the roadside, near his house, but afterward he built a steam mill at the quarry, forty or fifty rods away. In the year 1855 the establishment was bought from the Fitch heirs by Samuel Adams of Townsend and Daniel McCaine, and during 1857 the quarry was worked by Mr. Adams.

Three years later, after Mr. Adams’ death, Mr McCaine with his twin brother, David, and another Brother, William, removed from Francestown, New Hampshire, to Groton, took charge of the business. They enlarged the shop, improved the machinery, and worked the quarry on a grand scale. In the Spring of 1859 the building burned down, and on the same site another and larger one was put up.

In 1861 the Adams heirs sold out their interest to the McCaine brothers, who continued the business till 1864, when the mill again burned down. The property was sold to a stock company known as the Groton Soapstone Company, which represented a capital of \$100,000, and the next year the new company completed its new mill, which was 80 by 50 feet with engine house attached. It was run by a Corliss engine of 75 horsepower, and contained six gangs of saws. It had the latest improvements in machinery and was considered the best equipped and largest factory of its kind in the country.

The McCaine brothers invented and patented a process for making artificial stone. The patent was subsequently sold to the Groton Soapstone Company, which soon afterward became the Union Stone Company. For a while the new process was used in connection with the soapstone and finally became the exclusive business of the company. The affairs of the corporation, however did not prosper, and the establishment was abandoned and dismantled. The capital stock was then increased, and another mill built in Revere, Massachusetts where the artificial stone was made.

That was the end of the soapstone industry in Groton but not of the quarry, which is now a part of the Shepley Hill Conservation Land owned since 1990 by the Groton Conservation Trust.



GROTON SOAPSTONE MILL



Blacksmith Shops, Main Street

Blacksmith Shops, Main Street

The house at 228 Main Street was built c. 1821 by the blacksmith Calvin Childs, although it is not depicted on the Butler Map of 1832. The date of construction and first owner are derived from remarks written c. 1910 on a copy of the 1886 Burleigh bird's eye view of Groton that include former owner names and construction dates for some Groton Center house.

In his field notes for the 1832 map, Butler lists Calvin Child (spelled elsewhere as Childs) as the occupant of the house which was painted white at the time. Mr. Childs is also depicted as the owner on maps and atlases from 1847, 1856 and 1875, the year he was taxed for ownership of a house, barn and blacksmith shop. His wife, Mary and three boarders who worked as blacksmiths were recorded in his house in the 1855 census. The 1865 census reveals that he was born c. 1795 in NH, kept a housekeeper and lived with his relative William, also a blacksmith. Mr. Childs' shop was demolished in the 1960s but stood northwest of the house at the current site of 232 Main Street (a modern dry cleaning store). The Sanborn fire insurance map from 1906 shows the house to be connected to the blacksmith shop as well as a wheel wright shop to the north. The 1889 atlas depicts the property as belonging to the Calvin Childs estate, indicating he had died by that time.

Dr. David R. Steere lived in the house c. 1910. A subsequent owner named Thomas Bywater also ran the smithy according to the resident directory from 1918. Previous GHS research indicates the house remained in the Bywater family until at least 1967.



The Blacksmith Shop, Groton, Mass.,



" BLACKSMITH SHOP "

MAIN STREET, ACROSS FROM, THE OLD BRUCE DRUG STORE
HERBERT SHATTUCK = LITTLE BOY
BLACKSMITHS, TIMOTHY HAYES W/ OVERALLS, JOHN HAYES W / SUSPENDERS.

0.2474



Smaller Industries

Britt Airways

According to Virginia May:

Britt Airway, in 1942, bought land in the Northwest part of town and established the first airport in Groton near the Townsend and Pepperell lines. A large level tract of land west of Townsend west of Townsend road out of West Groton between the railroad and road. Formerly an old farm, once owned Ole Anderson and later by a group of men from Littleton, who grew asparagus.

Purchased by the Britt Airway, who operated it as a commercial airport, which was a very busy place during and following World War II. Since 1951 it was dormant and eventually deactivated.

Marshall C. Britt, the leading promoter of Britt Airway came to Groton from Burlington, MA at the time the airfield was built and lived in a house just across the road from the airfield. He went in the well drilling business once the airfield was deactivated.

Image below is a stock photo not taken at Britt Airways.



Tin Shop

This building was part of the oldest known tavern, Richardson Tavern, in the town, that stood where the old Baptist church stands. It was cut up and moved to different parts of town. In 1840 this house is part of one wing that was moved to Hollis Street. One half was a slaughter house and the other half was a tin shop. The Tin Shop was owned by Frank M. Blood. The property was sold in 1941 and the building was moved back, remodeled and turned into a house.



US Patent: 398,350

Drive Saw

Patentee:

[Granville T. Shepley](#) - Townsend, MA

Patent Dates:

Applied: Oct. 03, 1888

Granted: Feb. 19, 1889

USPTO Classifications:

[30/502](#)

Tool Categories:

[handsaws](#) : [compass saws](#)

Assignees:

None

Manufacturer:

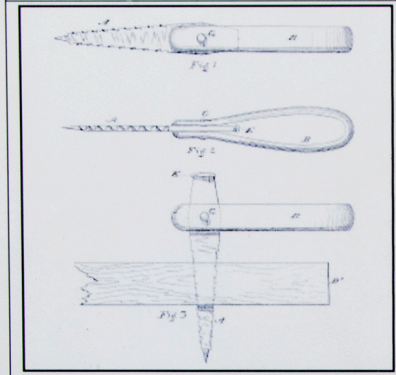
[Lewis E. Williams](#) - West Groton, MA

Witnesses:

[Francis M. Boutwell](#)

[Harry A. Stone](#)

Patent Pictures:



[USPTO Images](#)
[Google Patents](#)
[Report data errors or omissions](#)

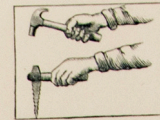
Description:

A keyhole style saw that allows the user to use a hammer to drive the blade into a board, withdraw the blade, and then saw whatever opening is required without having to drill a starting hole. Advertisements claimed that it could be driven through a two-inch board, cross grain or with the grain, without breaking.



No. 1.

PATENTED FEB. 19, 1889.



No. 2.

SHEPLEY'S PATENT DOUBLE-EDGED DRIVE SAW

—FOR—

*Plumbers and Carpenters' Use, or for any occasion
where Holes are to be Bored.*

No. 1 Cut shows the Saw and Handle in a straight condition. While No. 2 shows the position for use. By shifting a slide on the handle puts it into position for driving, as seen in cut No. 2. After having driven through your board or plank, take a claw hammer and withdraw it. The hole having been made you can proceed to saw any way you may desire.

This Saw is peculiarly adapted for Plumbers and Carpenters' use and can be used where a common brace and bit cannot. It is made of the best steel and can be driven through a two-inch board, either way of the grain, if necessary, without breaking.

Manufactured by LEWIS E. WILLIAMS,

WEST GROTON, MASS., U. S. A.

