

Water Power and a Safe Harbor

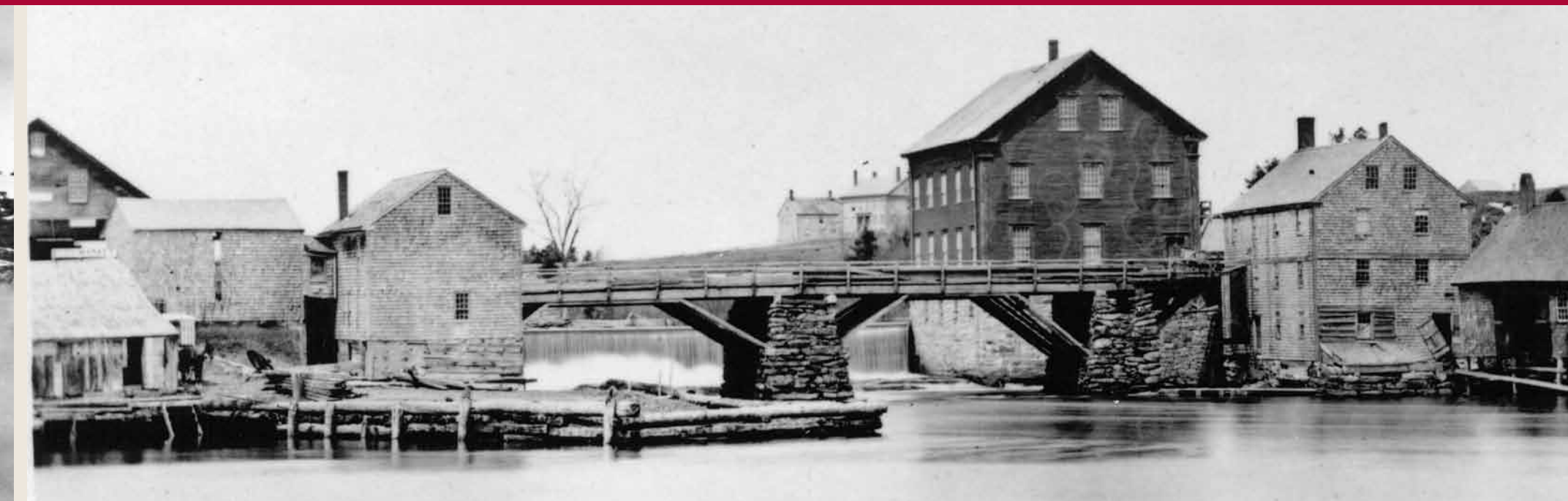
The First Falls



An electric power plant was built in 1893 on the site of Craig's saw mill, pictured below.



This 1864 view of the harbor shows the Lyman Walker shipyard on the left and the Blanchard Brothers shipyard center. Yarmouth shipyards were known for their quality workmanship.



About 1874, the East Main Street bridge was flanked by a grist mill, saw mill, store and a carpenter's shop that fitted out ships built in the harbor.



Craig's saw mill circa 1820. The grist mill, on the east side of the bridge, is visible in the background.

Location, Location

Over the last 300 years, many mills and factories stood along the shores of this river. Four natural waterfalls provided power for grain, lumber, pulp and cotton mills, which played a crucial role in the development of Yarmouth.

From the time of the first settlement, the lower falls (or First Falls) powered a saw mill. Native Americans drove settlers out twice, but they returned in 1715 to establish a permanent community.

Salt Water to Fresh Water

The Native Americans called the First Falls "Pungustuk" which means head of tide. The river appealed to settlers because its four waterfalls and sixty-six foot rise within a mile of navigable water provided four potential water power sites.

Shipbuilding

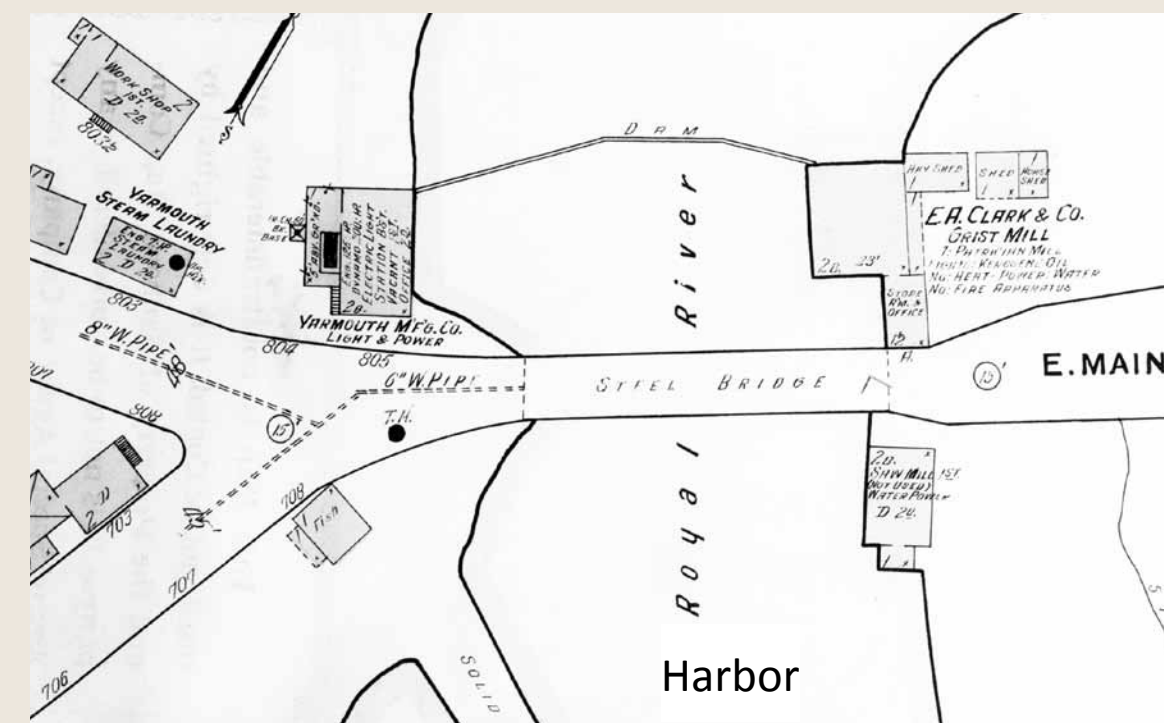
Shipbuilding has been part of Yarmouth's history from its founding. From 1740 to 1890, this industry dominated the harbor.

The shipyards built vessels for three kinds of trade: sloops and schooners for coasting, brigantines and barkentines for trade with the West Indies, and barkentines and ships for world trade.

As early as 1872, the channel in the Royal River was dredged so larger vessels could navigate its waters.



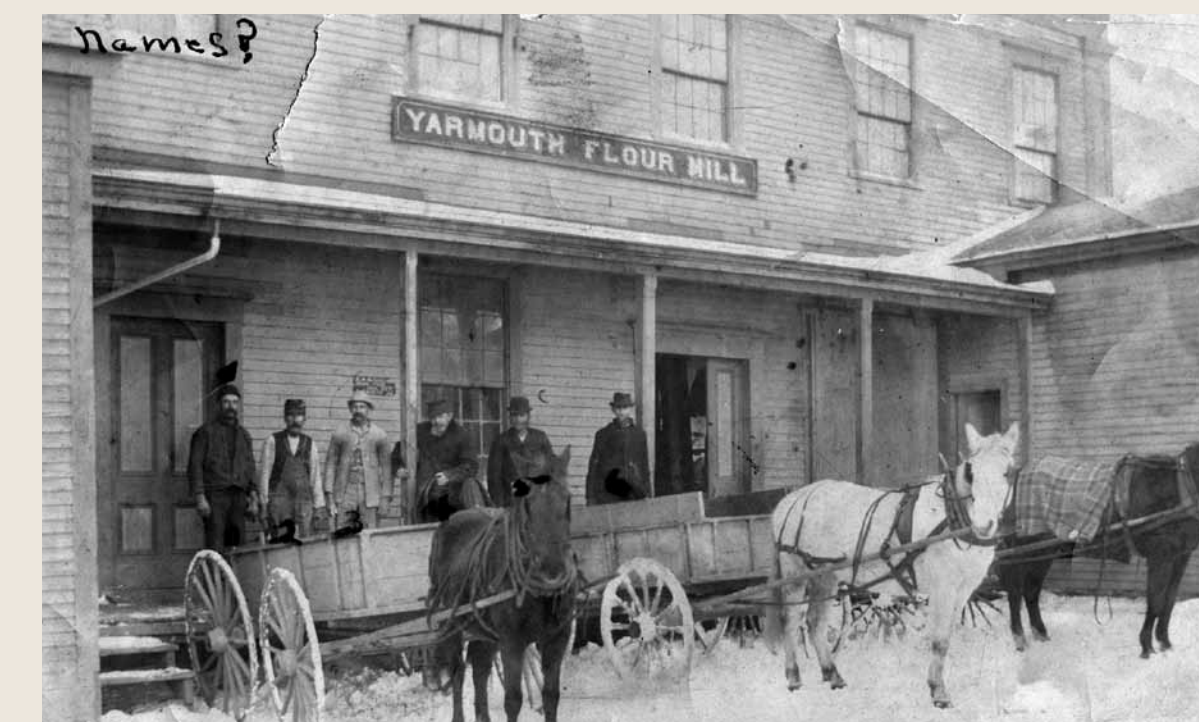
East Main St. hill (Route 88) circa 1874. The foundation of Loring's grist mill on the left supports the overlook in today's Grist Mill Park.



This 1911 map shows the dam at the First Falls which provided power for both the Yarmouth Manufacturing Co. electric power plant and the grist mill.

The Grist Mill

In addition to a saw mill, this was the site of the first grist mill built in 1813. The mill ground wheat and corn into flour using power generated by turbines set in the swift-flowing river. Belts and pulleys transferred power from the turbines to the grinding machines.



Ansel Loring's grist mill circa 1890.