



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

Earliest known photo of the village, c.1860

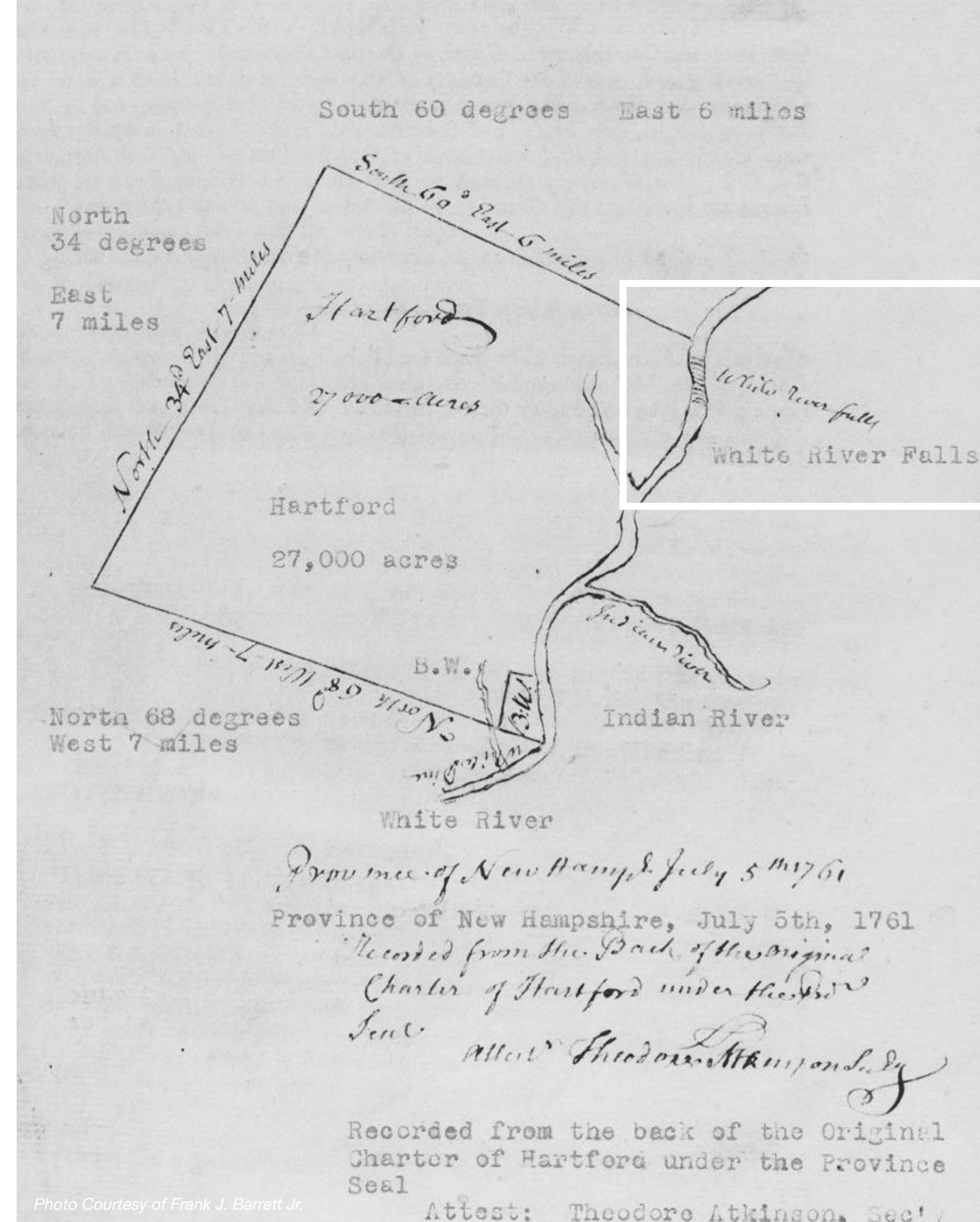


The History of Wilder, Vermont

Originally Olcott Falls, Vermont

The 1761 Charter

- On July 4th, 1761 Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor for the Province of New Hampshire, granted charters for the towns of Hartford, Norwich, Hanover, Lebanon, and Enfield.
- In the upper-right corner of the original charter map is “White River Falls,” which would eventually become Olcott Falls, and finally Wilder, Vermont.
- The Falls would play a central role in the development of the Upper Valley.





Photos Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

c.1860s

At “White River Falls,” the Connecticut River dropped 37 feet over a set of three naturally-occurring rock bars stretching over a mile along the river.

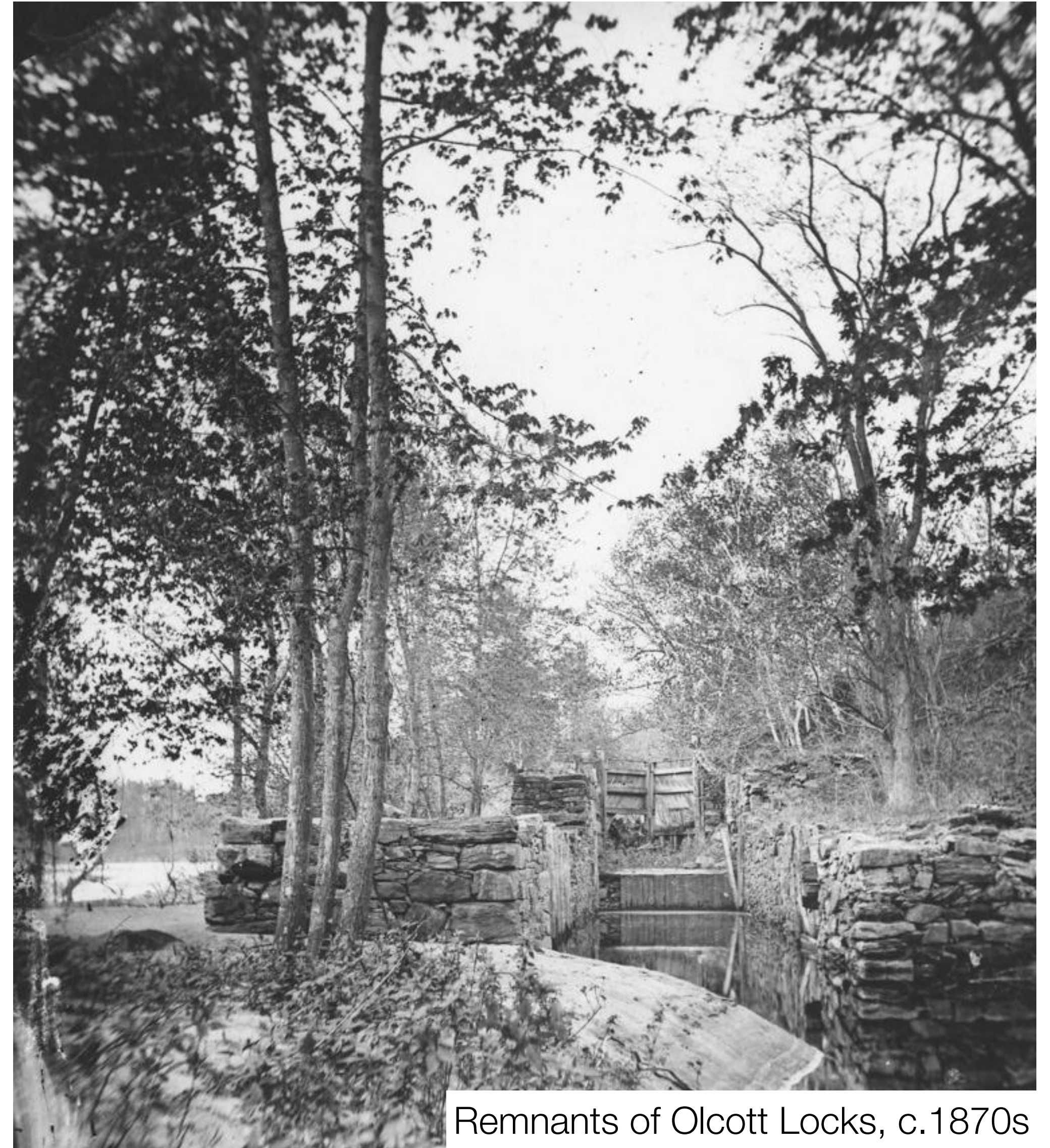


The falls were the site of early industry, including a gristmill and fulling mill (an early textile process) as early as 1779. Timber was already the major commodity of the Connecticut River Valley.

1882



Photos Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.



Remnants of Olcott Locks, c.1870s

The Falls were an impediment to river transportation until Miles Olcott built the first locks in the early 1800's, allowing boats to travel around the falls.

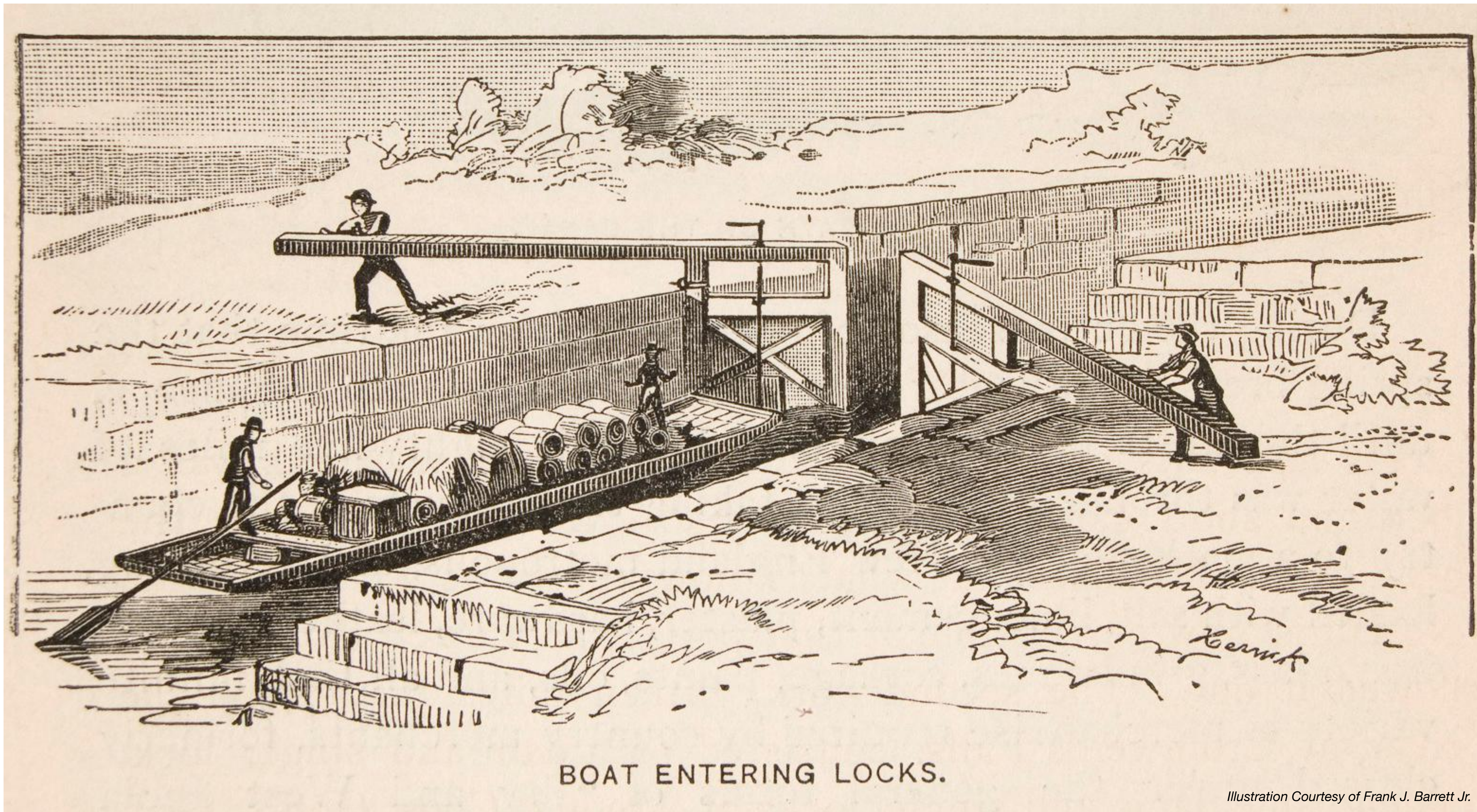


Illustration Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

Locks allowed boats to navigate around the waterfalls, entering a stone channel where the water level was raised or lowered. Olcott charged a \$2 toll for each boat, and \$1 per thousand feet of lumber or ton of merchandise.



Miles Olcott, c.1830s



Remnants of Crib Dam, late 1860s

The Falls and the town would take on Olcott's name, but the Olcott Falls Company would be devastated by financial problems and a series of floods, and it ceased to exist by 1845. The connection of three major railroad lines in White River Junction in 1848 made river travel a less important means of commerce.

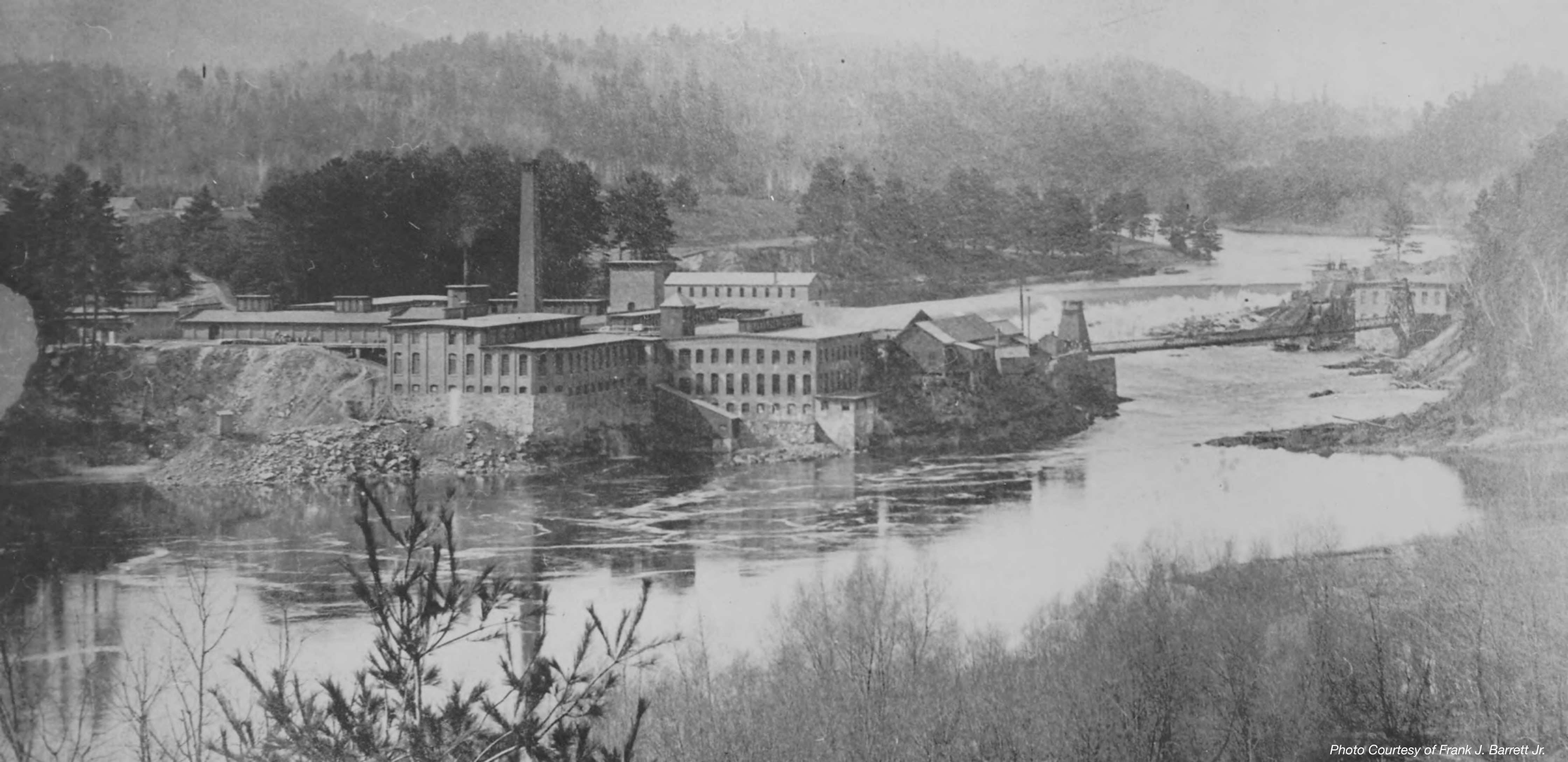


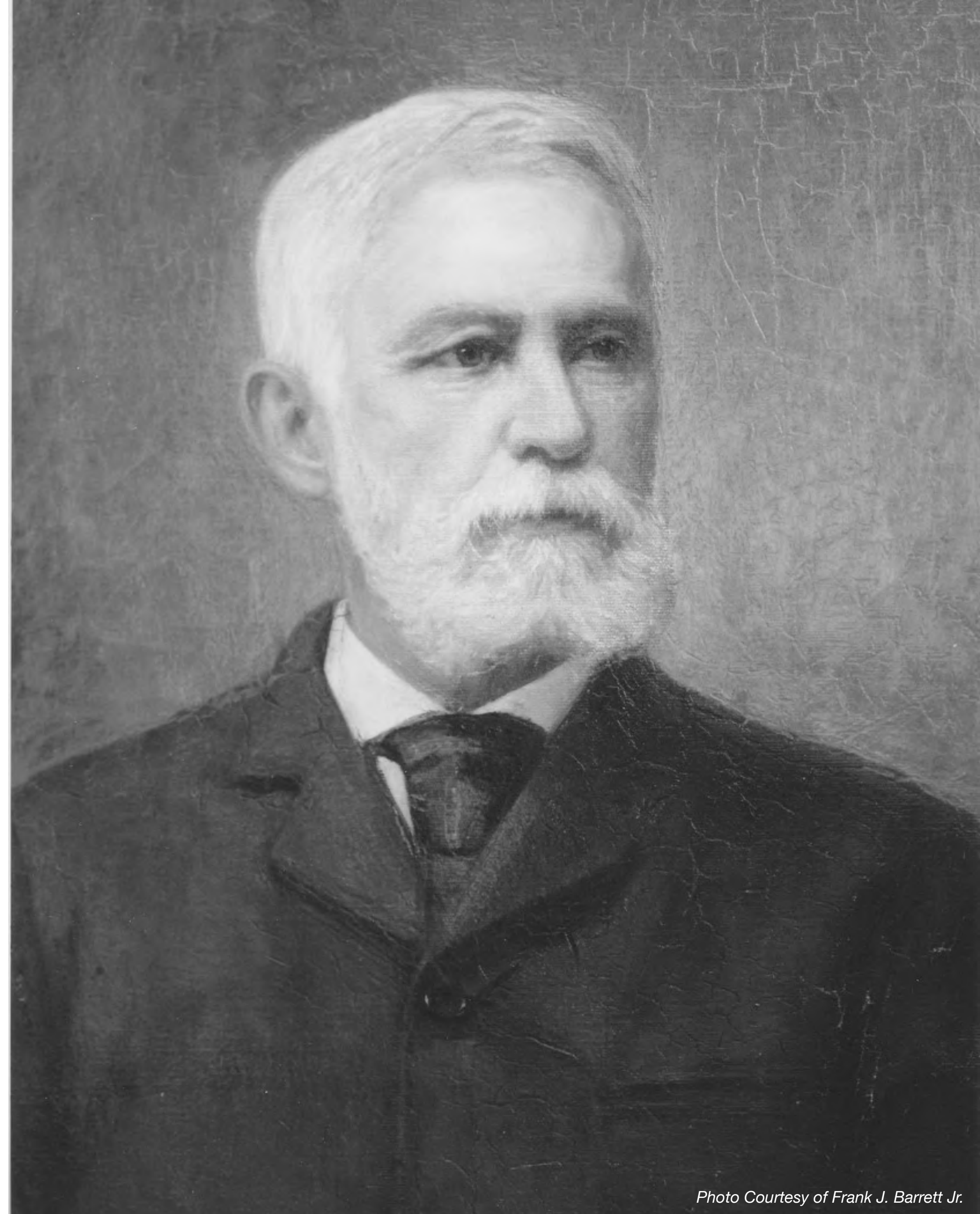
Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

Wilder Brothers' Paper Mill

On the Connecticut River,
at Olcott Falls, Vermont.

Charles T. Wilder

Originally from Wellesley, Massachusetts, Charles T. Wilder and his brother Herbert moved to what was then Olcott Falls in 1882 after purchasing the water rights to construct a paper mill. He would forever change the landscape of the Upper Valley, and leave a lasting legacy on the town that would eventually be re-named for him.





Photos Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.



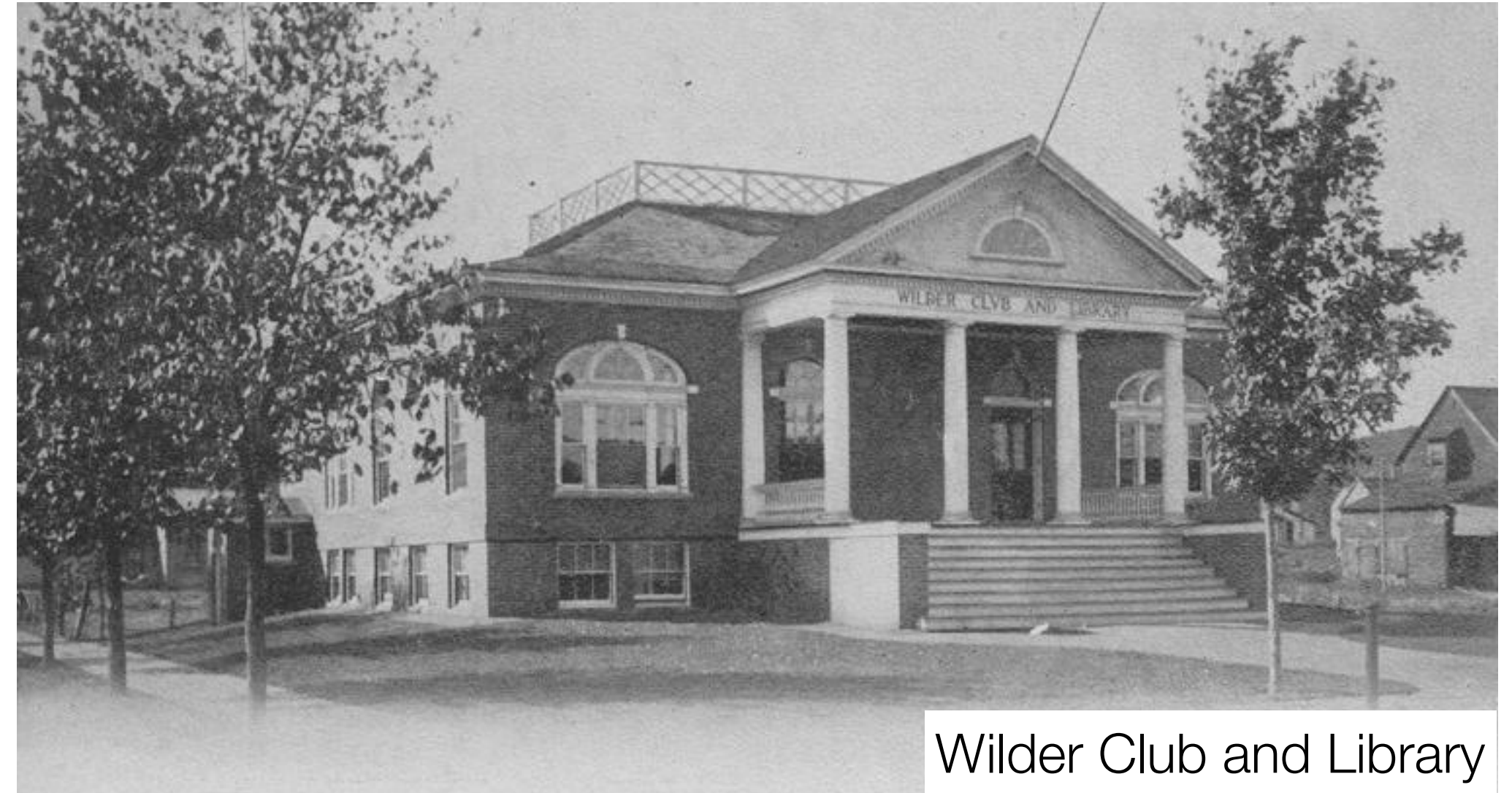
In 1882, the Wilder brothers hired S. S. Ordway & Company of Worcester, Massachusetts to build the Mill. The brick pulp mill was completed in 1883, and would continue to be expanded as demand increased. S. S. Ordway would go on to build many of the town's buildings at the behest of Charles T. Wilder.

c.1884



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

At the end of the 19th century much of the newsprint used throughout New England was being produced by the Wilder Mills. The Mill operated 7 days a week, 365 days a year processing logs that were floated down the Connecticut River.



Charles Wilder's vision resulted in one of the first "planned cities" in the USA, and S. S. Ordway built many of the iconic Wilder buildings, including the Congregational Church and the Wilder Library. A major portion of the village is now on the national historic register.

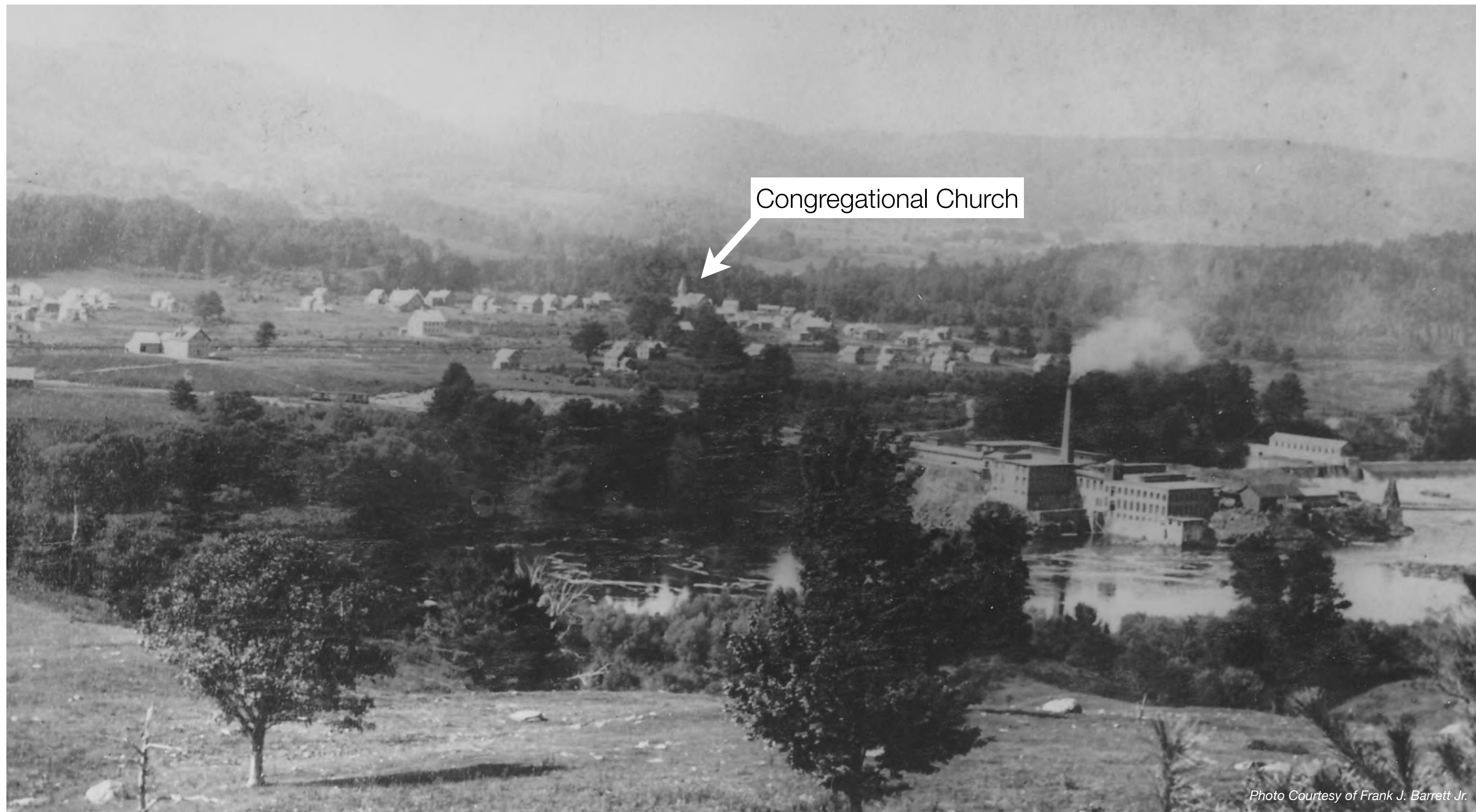
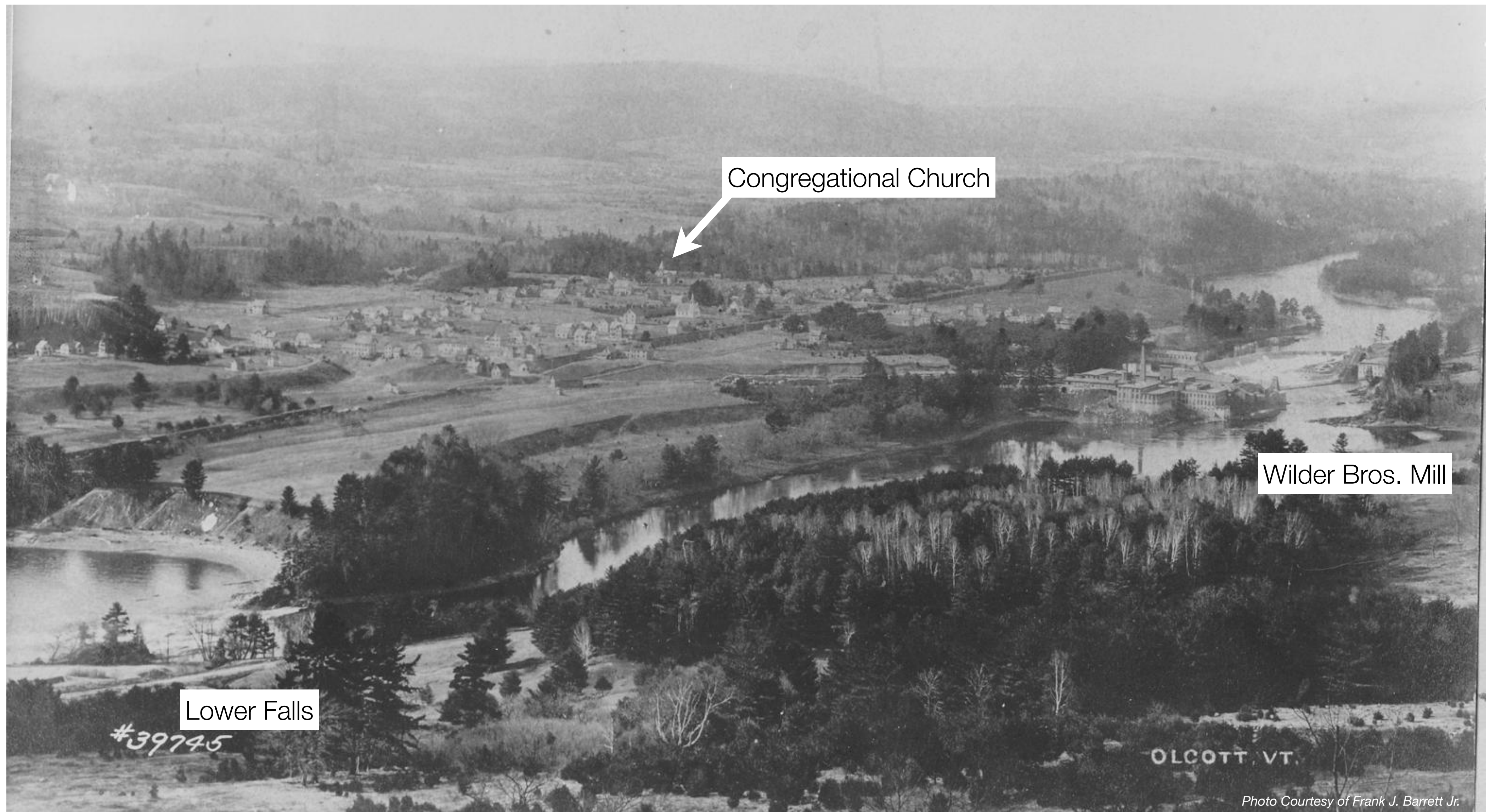


Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

An early photograph of Olcott Falls showing the Congregational Church in relationship to the Mills.

c.1890



Late 19th Century view from Lebanon, showing the Mill in relationship to the Lower Falls, where the Wilder Dam is now located. The Congregational Church can be seen in the distance.

Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

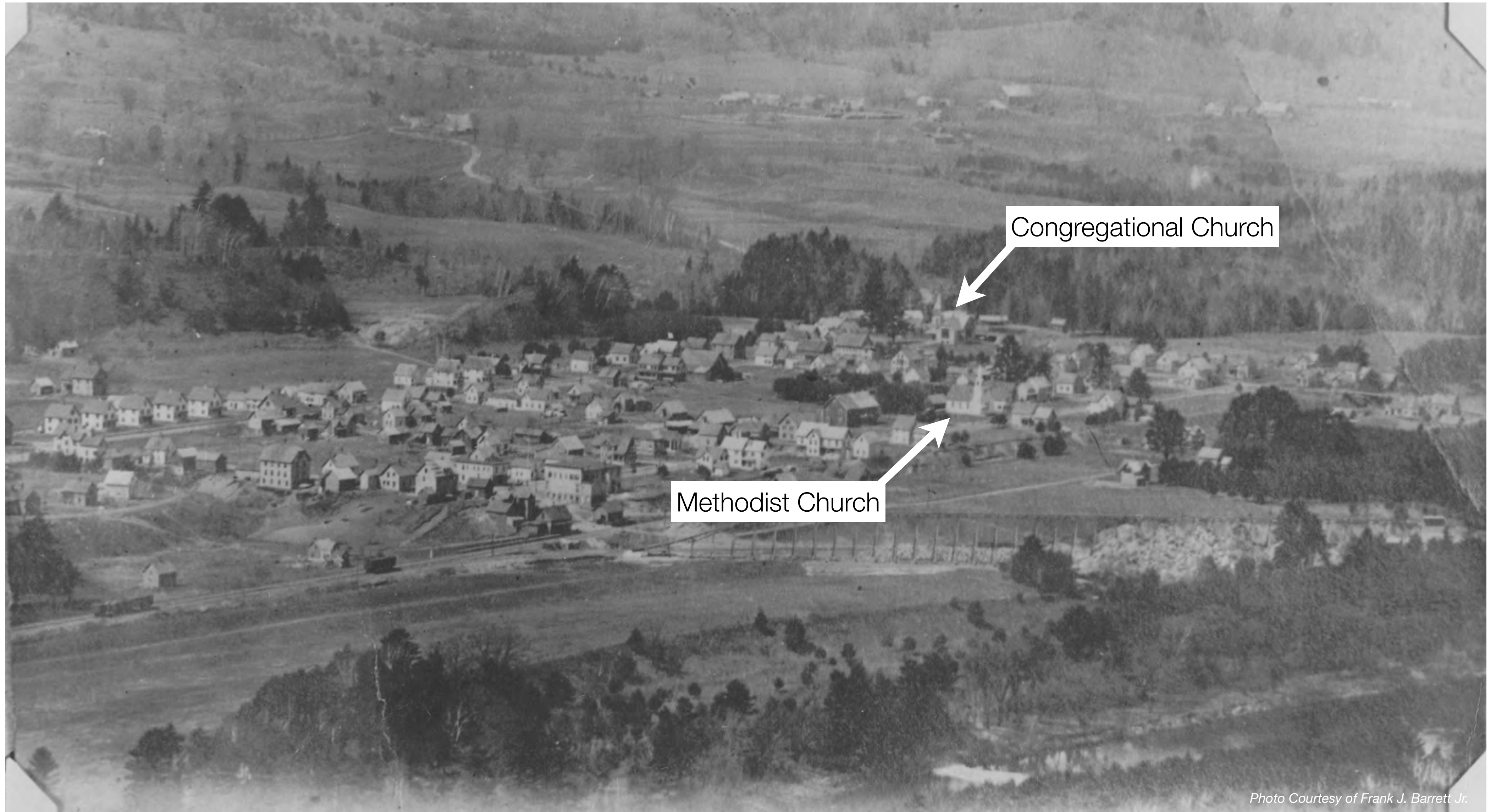
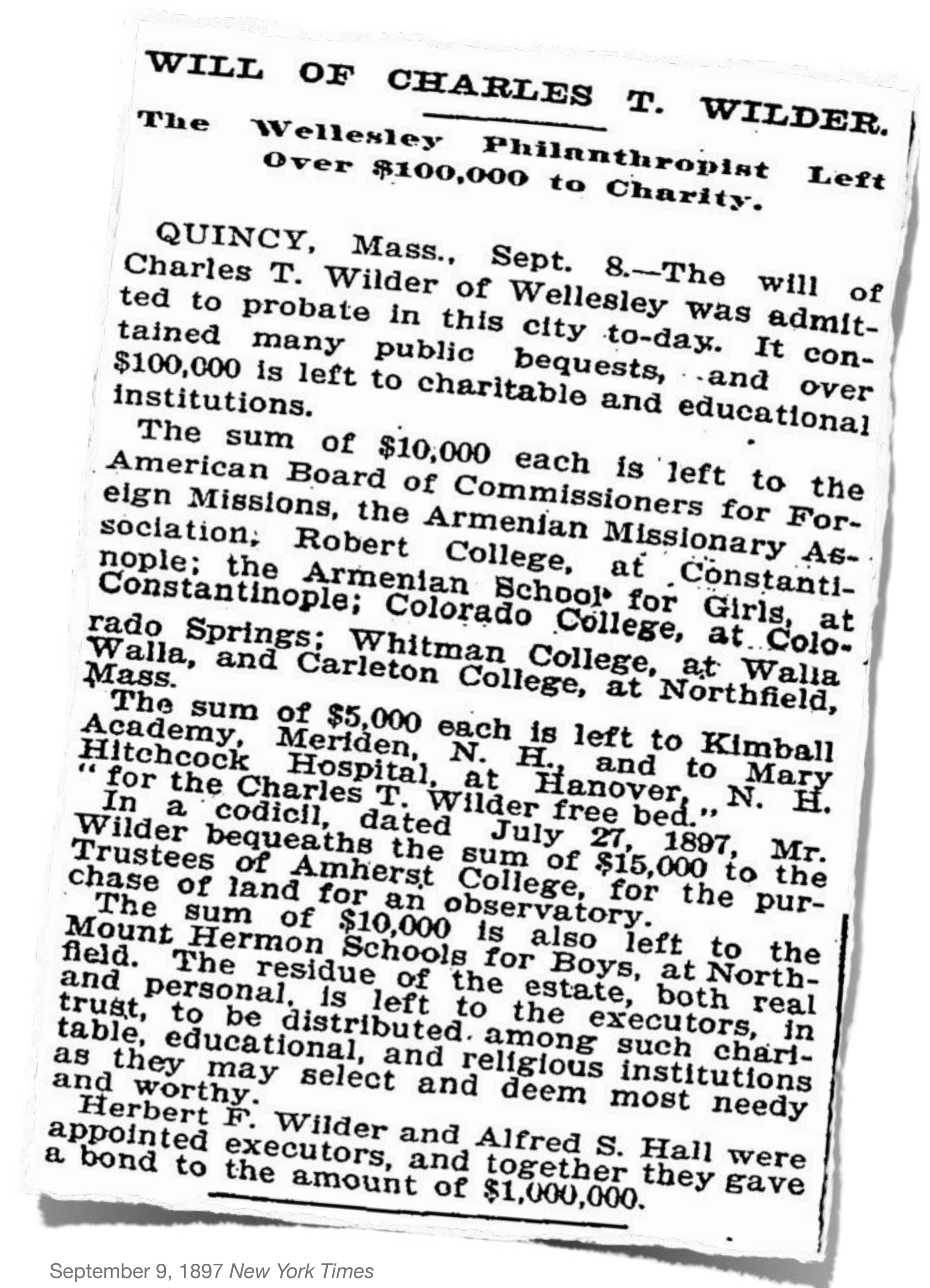


Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

By the turn of the 20th century the town was bustling, and Charles T. Wilder's vision for the town was becoming a reality. The Wilder Methodist Church is also visible, which was later converted to residential use and the tower removed.

The Death of Charles T. Wilder in 1897

- Mr. Wilder's death in August of 1897, and his generous contributions to the town, Dartmouth College, Mary Hitchcock Hospital, Kimball Union Academy, and other institutions was covered in the September 9, 1897 edition of the *New York Times*
- He bequeathed \$12,000 for the construction of a new bridge to New Hampshire, with the stipulation that the town be re-named after him. The vote was unanimous, and Olcott became Wilder, Vermont in the fall of 1897.





Wilder Hall, Dartmouth College



Wilder Hall, Mount Holyoke College



Wilder Hall, Oberlin College



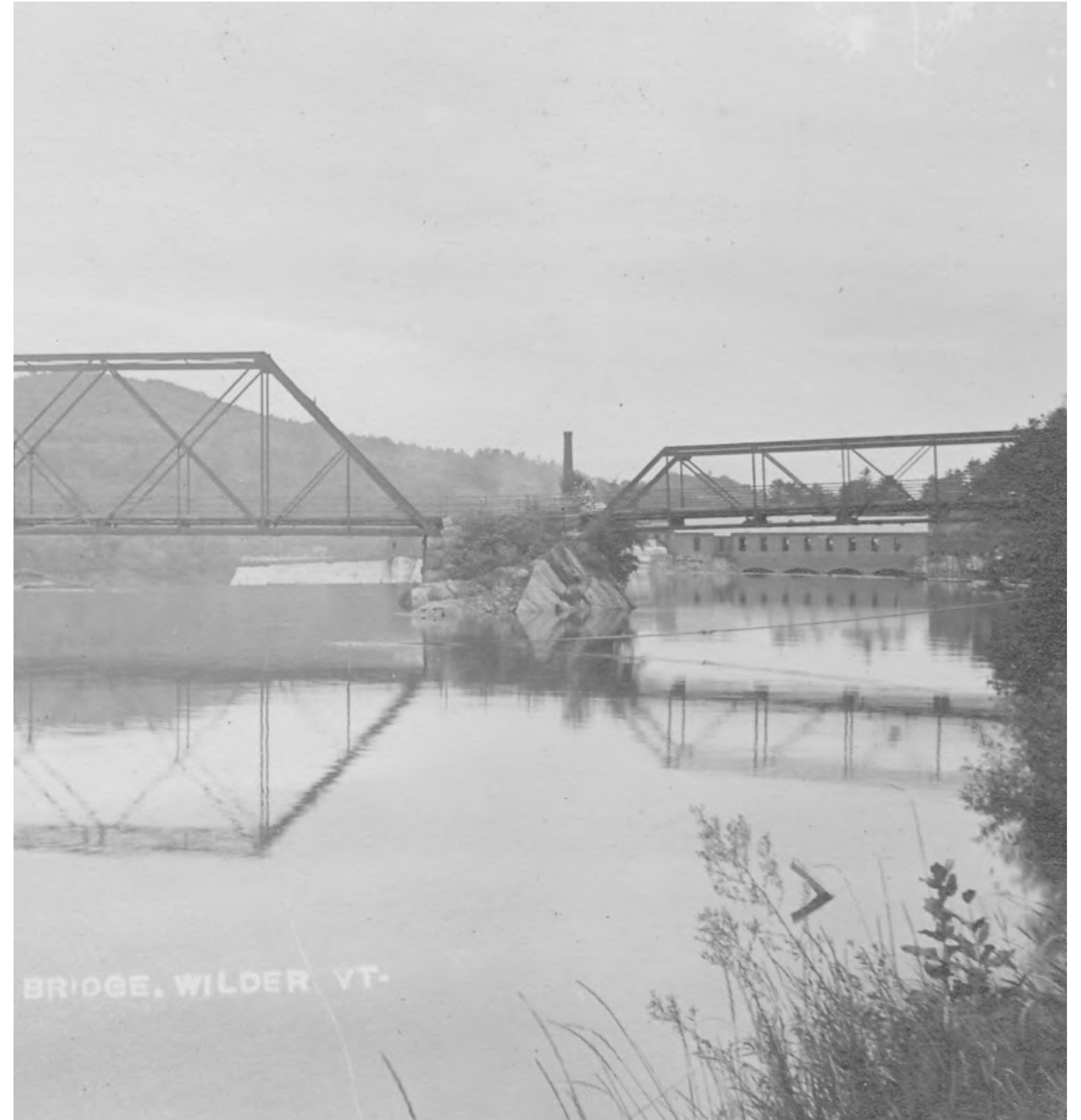
Wilder Hall, Wellesley College (torn down c.1930)

The Wilder's gifts lead to impressive buildings at a number of prominent academic institutions.



Photos Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

Before the Bridge, From Olcott, Vt.



Bridge Completed, Town Renamed Wilder, Vt.

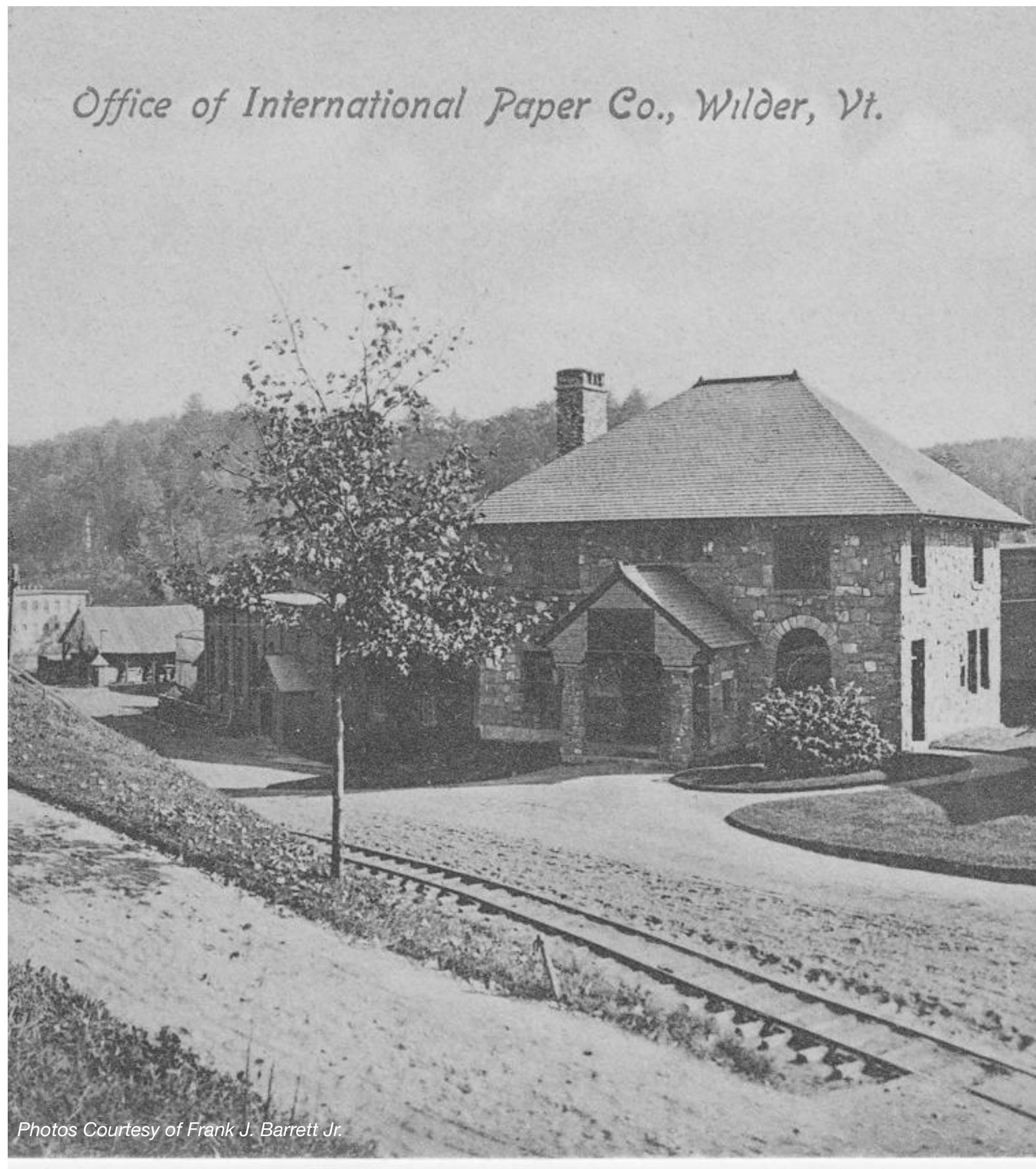
The bridge was constructed across Goat Island, just upriver of the Wilder Mill.



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

Circa 1910

The bridge connected Wilder, Vt. to Lebanon, NH, and the Charles T. Wilder Mansion, which still stands in Lebanon. The bridge would link the two towns until the construction of the Wilder Dam in 1947–1950.



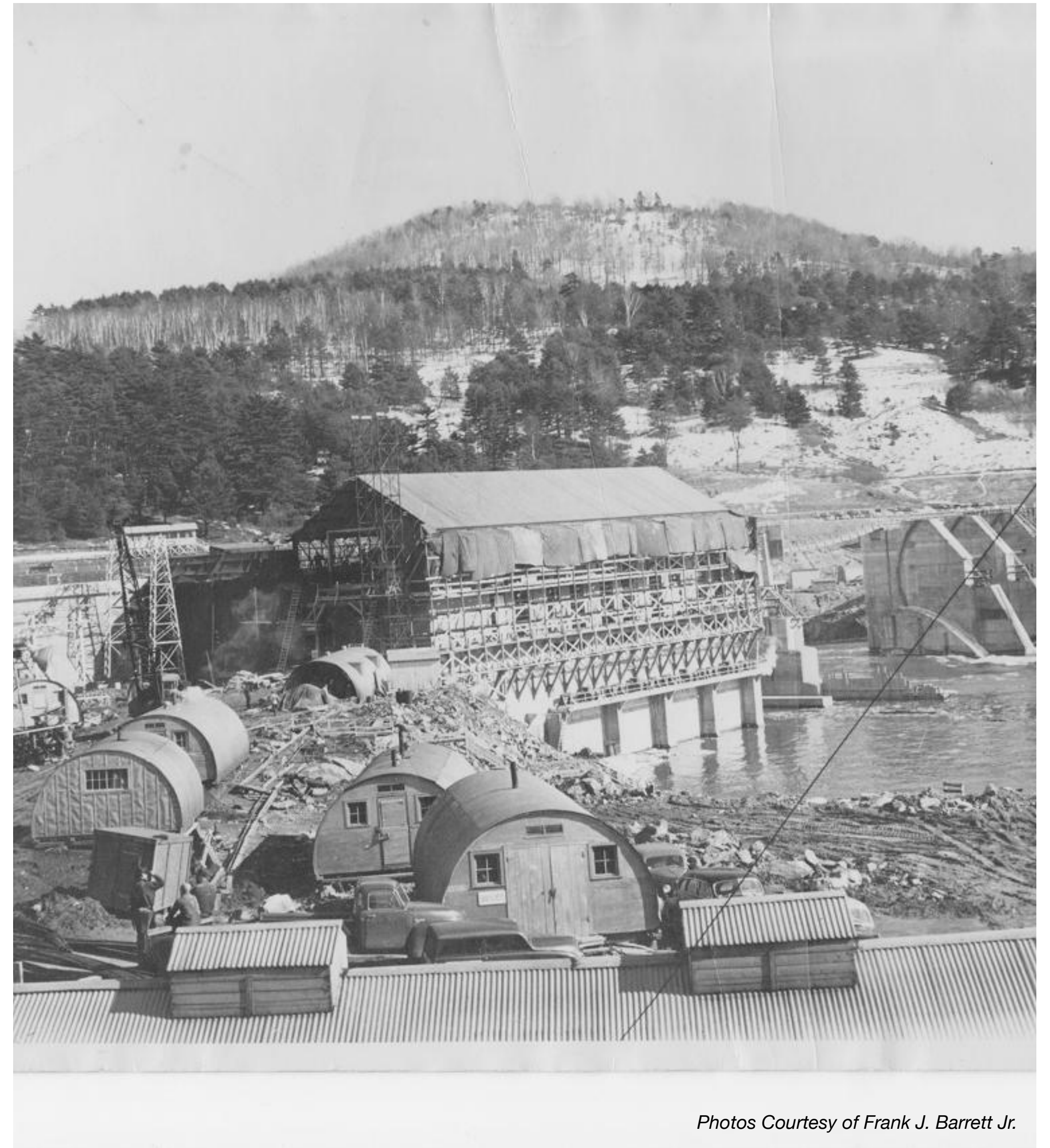
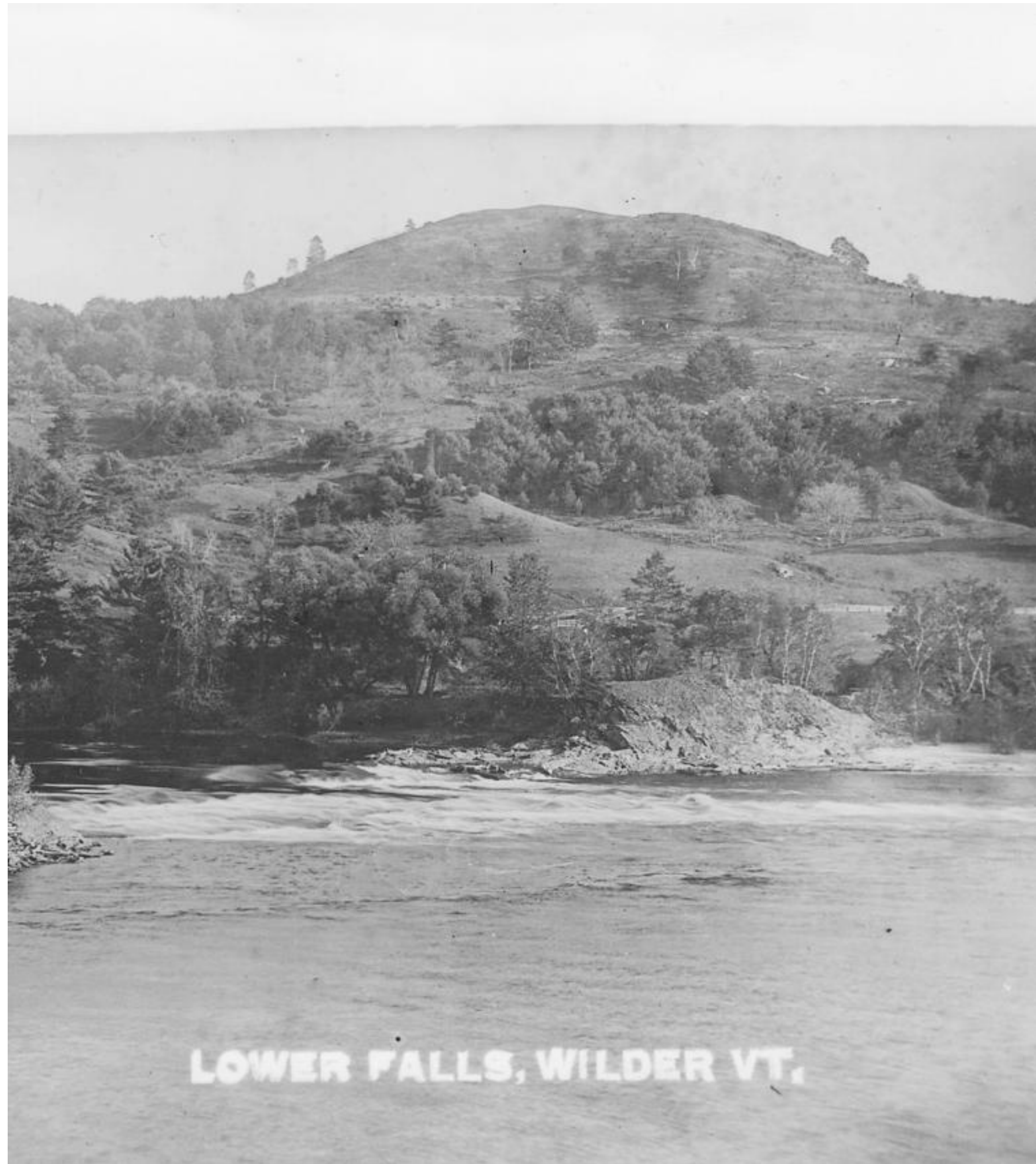
In 1899 the Wilder Bros. mill was sold to the International Paper Company, which expanded the mill between 1905 and 1907, adding hydroelectric power generators in 1910 and 1912. The mill would continue to generate power after paper production ceased in 1928.

1907–1909



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

After paper production ceased in 1928 the mill was sold to the Olcott Falls Power Company, which added a third generator in 1937. In 1942 the site was sold to a subsidiary of the New England Power Company, which began planning for a larger dam down-stream.



The Wilder Dam was sited at the Lower Falls of the Connecticut River.



International Paper (Wilder) Mill

Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

The Wilder Dam would stand 39 feet tall, and raise the water level 21 feet at the Ledyard Bridge between Norwich, Vt. and Hanover, N.H. The former Wilder Mill site was submerged almost entirely.



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

1950

The Wilder Brothers Paper Mill was demolished during the Wilder Dam construction; the short span of the Wilder bridge is still standing in this photo.

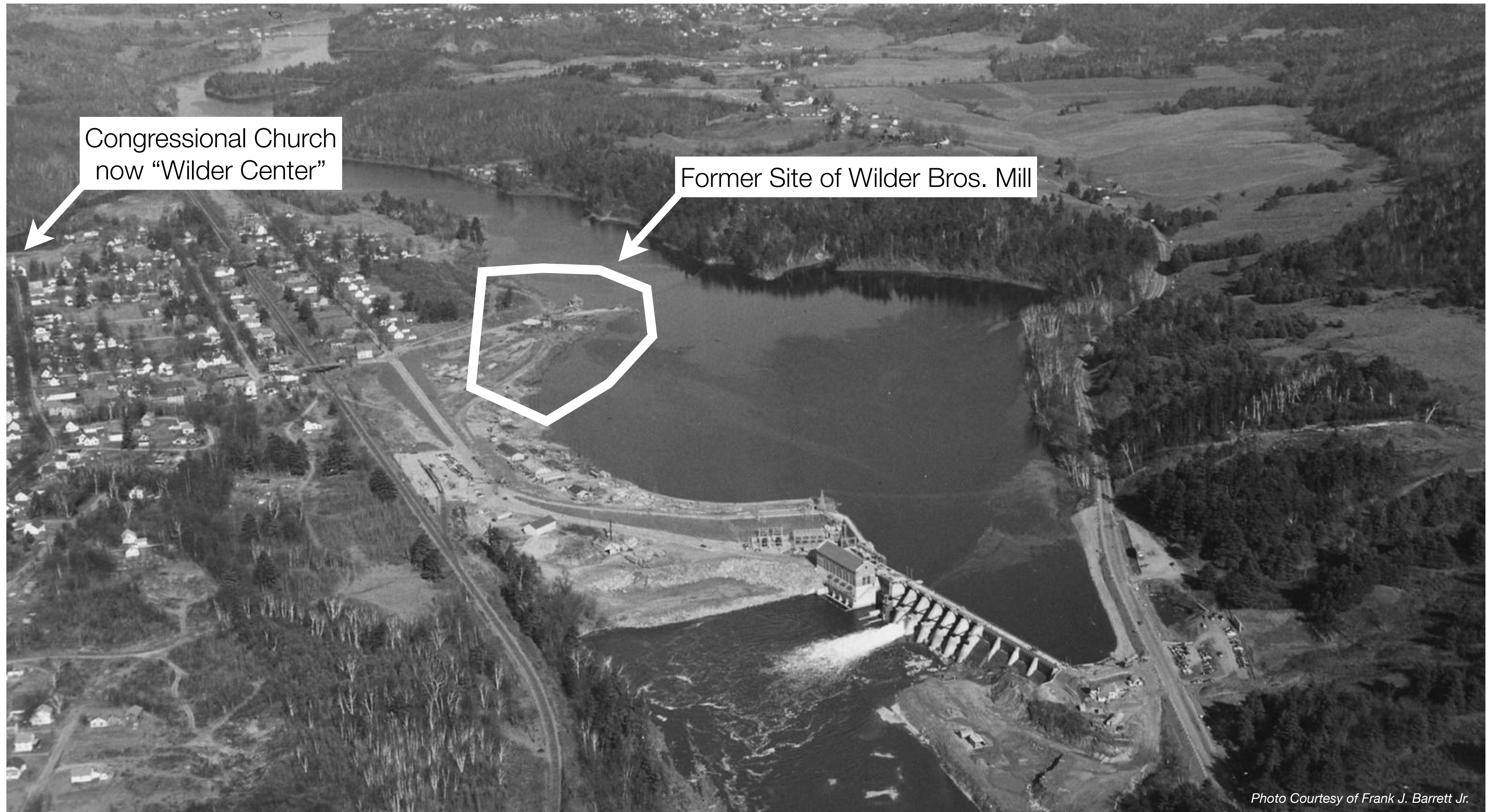
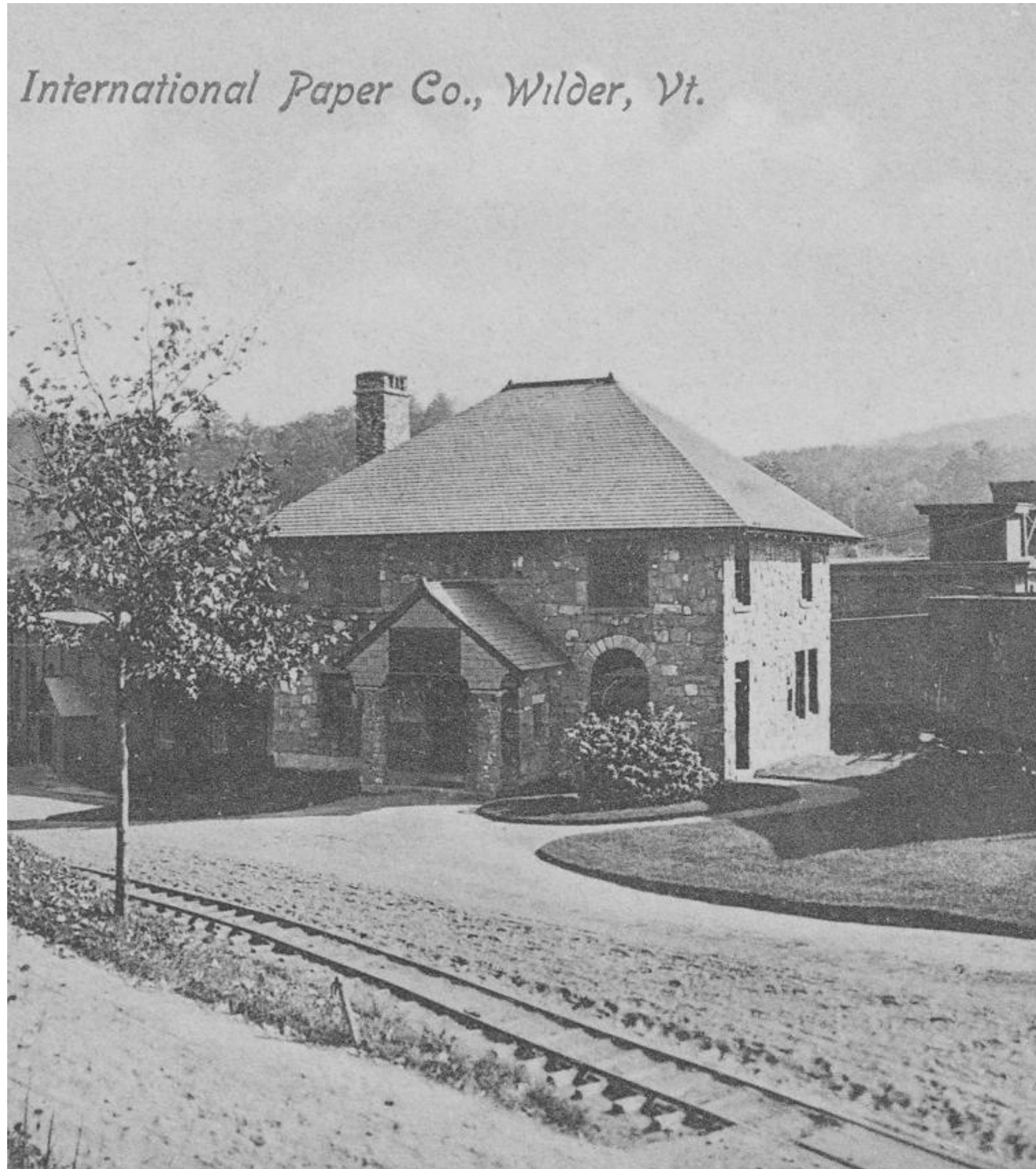


Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

1951

Wilder, Vt. following completion of the Wilder Dam in 1950. Remnants of the Wilder Mill can be seen in what is now Kilowatt Park.



1951

As the Wilder Dam reservoir filled, the Office Building was intentionally burned to the ground, at the northern edge of what is now Kilowatt Park. The foundation remains today.



Fortunately, many of the community buildings envisioned by Charles T. Wilder remain today, and Lyme Properties is pleased to be part of preserving his legacy. For this reason, the building has been rededicated as the Charles T. Wilder Center.

Special Thanks

- Our Wilder Neighbors
 - A. David Moore Inc.
 - Collamer Abbott
 - Accessibility Systems, Inc.
 - Ace Blueprint
 - Alliance Mechanical
 - Ken Alton
 - Barden's Concrete, Inc.
 - Frank J. Barrett Jr.
 - Bath-Boule General Contractors, Inc.
 - Bluehouse Group
 - Ed Boadway
 - Bonardi Steel LLC
 - Jack Candon
 - John L. Carter Sprinkler Co., Inc.
 - Centurion Insurance Group
 - Sean Clauson
 - Kathy Clem
 - John Clerkin
 - Co-op Food Stores
 - Comcast, Andy Thornburn
 - Cramer Electric Company
 - Daddy's Sound Solutions
 - Datamann
 - Dayco, Inc.
 - Dickinson & Son, Inc.
 - DMS Machining & Fabrication
 - Downeast Structural Consulting
 - Matt Doyle
 - DuBois & King, Inc.
 - East Coast Flooring, LLC
 - Jon Gilbert Fox
 - Brian Gardner Carpentry, LLC
 - Geotechnical Services
 - Gnomon Copy
 - Granite State Glass
 - Green Mountain Power
 - Hartford Historical Society
 - Hartford Planning Board
 - Hartford ZBA
 - Hayward Slate & Copper Roofing
 - Beth Hinchliffe of Wellesley, Mass.
 - Henniker Directional Drilling
 - HOME Partners, Inc.
 - Kamco Supply Corp. of Boston
 - King Arthur Flour Co.
 - James LaMontagne Landscape Co., Inc.
 - Donn Haven Lathrop
 - W.B. Mason
 - Peggy McDerment
 - M&W Soils Engineering, Inc.
 - Buff McLaughry
 - New England Kitchen Depot
 - Nott's Excavating, Inc.
 - r. k. Miles, Inc.
 - Rice Tree Service
 - Rule Signs & Graphics
 - Sound Solutions
 - Springfield Fence Co., Inc.
 - Pat Stark
 - TF Moran Inc.
 - The Studio
 - The Town of Hartford
 - Trumbull-Nelson Construction Co., Inc.
 - UK Architects, P.C.
 - Upper Valley Drywall Systems, Inc.
 - Upper Valley Food Co-op
 - Valley News
 - Bill Wittik
 - Young's Propane
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- John Billings
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