



## NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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## NEW HAMPSHIRE'S INDUSTRIAL LEGACY

**N**ew Hampshire's nineteenth-century mills, dams, reservoirs and power canals are characteristic elements of our landscape. They are a physical record of our transition from an agrarian to a manufacturing state. They are embodiments of the social and family history of our people. They represent the largest and most technically sophisticated engineering works of their time.

The creation of our extensive system of factories, worker housing, dams and canals began in the 1820s. This great enterprise made New Hampshire a leader in the planning and construction of buildings and industrial complexes on a scale that had never before been seen in North America. The need to harness the latent energy of water for large-scale manufacturing propelled the state into the forefront of hydraulic engineering. The building of our manufacturing cities demanded immense growth in the production of bricks, the quarrying of granite, and the milling of wood, helping to transform these traditional trades into major industries.



*Belknap (right, c. 1823) and Busiel Mills (1853, 1878), Laconia, New Hampshire*

New Hampshire's industrial success made our state an internationally-recognized center of textile manufacture on an unprecedented scale. Mastery of the many skills needed in textile production also earned New Hampshire a high reputation in engineering and invention, in the production of foundry products, machinery, and machine tools, and in power generation and transmission. The capital generated by our mills helped to make New England a financial center of great power and influence.

This same enterprise transformed our society. The bells of our mills taught an agricultural people to work by the clock rather than by the sun. By 1870, New Hampshire employed 46,500 people in manufacturing—virtually the same number working in agriculture. From that point on, New Hampshire became, and

remains, one of the nation's most heavily industrialized states in proportion to its population. Industry's ever-increasing demand for labor brought wave after wave of immigrants to New Hampshire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, diversifying our population.

Today, reservoirs that were created to drive industry enrich our landscape, providing beauty, recreation, wildlife habitats, and ample stores of clean water. Even our greatest lake, Winnepesaukee, was enlarged and deepened in the nineteenth century for the needs of manufacturing, and today remains as industry transformed it. New Hampshire's mill buildings enrich our landscape as well, still impressing the viewer with their immense size, beautiful proportioning, solid construction, indigenous materials, and their powerful and symmetrical repetition of wall openings and structural details.

New Hampshire's industrial legacy has transformed the state and its people, becoming inseparable from our identity as a society.

James L. Garvin  
State Architectural Historian