

A Program for Teachers, Students and Families

An educational resource developed by the Amesbury Carriage Museum,
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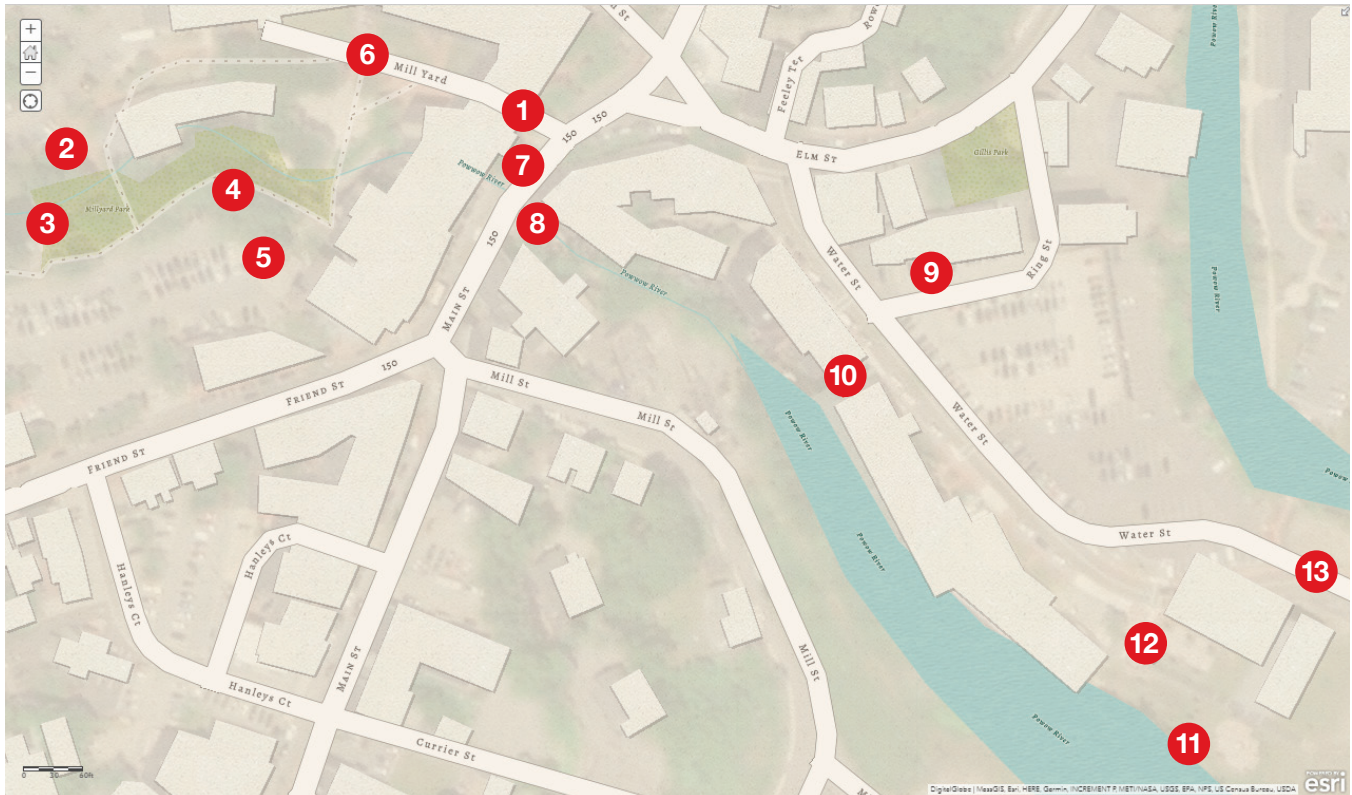
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INTRODUCTION

This resource supports self-guided visits to the Amesbury Upper and Lower Millyard. We invite you to take the tour as if you were visiting an exhibit—think of the Amesbury Millyard as a gallery or “a museum without walls.”



At each stop we will highlight a historical artifact and ask you to think like a museum curator—what do these artifacts tell us? How do these artifacts connect us to the past?

Amesbury’s industrial story begins with the Powow River which is at the heart of the Millyard. From the upper dam to the Lower Millyard, the river drops 80 feet. This change in elevation created the potential for water power. As water flowed down the river, it carried opportunity to power the waterwheels used in the mills. This water or hydro-power was harnessed by Amesbury’s industries as early as 1640—a period over 350 years.

MAP KEY

1. Counting House
2. Grist Mill Stone
3. Upper Dam
4. Middle Dam and Mill 12
5. Perkins Nail Factory
6. Mill 2
7. Counting House
8. Main Street Bridge
9. Amesbury Railroad Station
10. Between Mill 4 & Mill 17
11. Heritage Park
12. Salisbury Point RR Station
13. Biddle & Smart Factory

MUSEUM VISIT *and* WALKING TOUR

1. THE GATEWAY ARCH INTO THE AMESBURY MILLYARD.



For over 350 years industry flourished along the Powow River. At one time in the 1790s there were five sawmills that sawed lumber and seven grist mills for grinding grain. There was an iron foundry to make metal hardware, a nail factory, and a fulling mill where woven woolen cloth was washed and thickened. It was the construction of a group of mill buildings used for textile making that created the area we now call the Millyard.

Imagine 160 years ago in the 1850s. At that time the Millyard was owned by the Salisbury Manufacturing Company and the brick buildings lining the Powow River were used for making textiles. In spring and summer,

Amesbury's industrial workers began their day at 5 in the morning by walking through this gateway. Their day ended at 7 pm. At the end of the week, this is where they stopped to get their pay. At the peak of textile production in the 1870's, nearly 900 people (10% of Amesbury's population) worked in the mills.

After textile manufacturing ended in 1912, various industries, including automobile body makers, occupied the factory buildings. In more recent years, this formerly dense industrial area was transformed into an urban park. A visitor to the Millyard today sees only a portion of the original mill buildings.



2. THE GRIST MILL STONE

This round stone is approximately 200 years old and is a historical artifact. It is so big and heavy, it can't easily be examined. If you could see the bottom, you would see a pattern common for grist stones used in mills for grinding grain or corn to make flour or cornmeal.

Around 1980, this stone was discovered buried in the Millyard. We believe it came from one of the grist mills located nearby along the river.

3. THE UPPER DAM



A dam has been at this location since 1710, and perhaps even earlier. This “timber crib” dam was built with wood frames and planks. The planks were packed with dirt and clay to hold back water and create a small pond.

Water from the pond was diverted into a raceway where it was used to power a

waterwheel. When the waterwheel turned, energy was carried to machines by gears and shafts.

In 1796 water from this dam powered the Perkins Nail Factory. And 29 years later water powered Mill 2, which is now Amesbury Industrial Supply. The dam was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. MIDDLE DAM SITE AND THE DYEHOUSE (MILL 12)



Over the course of the river, mill owners built additional dams to capture the flow of the water and to provide power for their waterwheels and turbines. An 1825 map shows there were five dams along this portion of the river.

Mill 12 served as a dye house; yarn and woven

cloth were brought here, placed in dyeing vats and, with water from the Powow, fabric from the mills was colored, prior to sizing and finishing. The river also served as a sewer; dyes and chemicals were flushed into the river and eventually washed all the way to the Merrimack River.

5. SITE OF PERKINS NAIL MANUFACTORY



No evidence of the Nail Factory remains today. Almost 250 years ago, this was the location of the Jacob Perkins Nail Manufactory. It was the first mill in the United States that used waterpowered machinery to make cut nails. The nail factory was powered with an enormous 30 foot diameter waterwheel.

In 1862 the Perkins Nail Mill was replaced with Mill

8, one of the largest mills in Amesbury and an important part of textile making operations. The building was constructed during the Civil War; woolen cloth for uniforms and blankets was made here.

The building was destroyed by fire in 1950. Today's Newburyport Five Cent Savings Bank is built on a portion of the foundation of Mill 8.

6. IN THE AMPHITHEATRE, LOOKING AT MILL 2



Originally Mill No. 2 was a textile mill, which initially made woolen cloth and then cotton. Bales of raw wool or cotton were first delivered to the mill. Inside, machinery powered by waterwheels in the basement processed these raw materials into cloth. The cloth was then shipped to other cities and used to make clothing.

As was true throughout New England, women comprised two-thirds of the textile workers during this period.

The textile mills operated from 1825 until 1912 when the Hamilton Woolen Company closed its doors. In later years the mill had a variety of industrial uses. Automobile bodies were made here in the 1920s; then the Bailey Company made their patented window channel here. The Jardis family bought the building in the 1980s and continues to operate a hardware business here, Amesbury Industrial Supply. In late 2018, Greg Jardis offered permanent space in Mill No.2 to the Amesbury Carriage Museum for its headquarters.

7. THE COUNTING HOUSE



With the building of mills and factories, worklife in Amesbury changed from routines influenced by farm life and rural activities, to schedules that were driven by the clock - industrial time. Even today, the noon-whistle can be heard throughout town, a reminder of these work schedules and management-employee relationships. The Counting House was the administrative headquarters and pay office for the textile company.

In 1852 the Amesbury Millyard was the site of a major labor strike. Mill workers contested a change to a longer work schedule put in place by new management. George E. McNeill, a young mill worker, was among a group of workers who walked out during this dispute. He later became an important advocate for workers' rights and the establishment of an 8-hour workday. To honor him, McNeill Square is found at the corner of Friend and School Street in Amesbury.

8. MAIN STREET BRIDGE



Market Square was the center of an industrial complex that has evolved into civic and commercial space that we enjoy today. Ovedia Artisan Chocolates, The Coop, Yogasmith, and Code & Circuit are all housed in a building once known as Mill 7, originally part of the Hamilton Woolen Company.

This area also marks a transition in Amesbury's industrial

history, as you move toward the Lower Millyard. While the Powwow River flows beneath your feet, to your left is one of the three Amesbury Heritage Murals. This mural by Jon Mooers celebrates Amesbury's worldwide impact in the carriage industry. A local artist, Mooers completed this mural in 1999. He included the railroad and trolley service which had an immense impact on the growth of the town.

9. AMESBURY RAILROAD STATION



In 1848 the Eastern Railroad opened a 3.85 mile spur line to Amesbury, then part of Salisbury. Forty years later when the Amesbury-Salisbury boundary line moved, the station's name changed. Today, Crave Restaurant occupies the restored railroad station. As you look at Crave, try to imagine this general location at the turn of the 19th century. A busy railroad yard grew to respond to the explosive growth of industry including the carriage-making factories. Wooden and brick multi-story buildings surrounded this area. The railroad station bustled with platform cars carrying muslin-covered carriages to buyers

all around the world. Box cars brought raw materials into the mills and finished goods out to markets. The railyard also serviced daily passenger and baggage trains bound for Boston or Portsmouth.

In 1888, Boston & Maine Railroad bought out the Eastern Railroad. Over the next century, the railyard experienced rapid growth as well as the rise and fall of carriage and auto body-making industries. Train service continued until 1970.

10. BETWEEN MILL 4 AND MILL 17



Every city is an artifact. Reading the landscape helps us understand the city's history. At this location, you can see evidence of different types of power sources that represent the progression of industry in America.

1) Waterwheels and turbines were part of Mill 4 built in 1854. This building today has been renovated and repurposed as the "Carriage Mills," which offers innovative office spaces for artists, lawyers, and other professionals. This new type of mixed-use environment creates a place for creative exchange of ideas and work methods.

2). Steam was generated in the Boiler House, built in 1872. Boilers, fueled by coal, provided steam for the large steam

engines, which, through a network of gears, shafts, and leather belting, powered machines on every floor of the factories. Consistent with Amesbury's industrial history, today's popular Brewery Silvaticus has responded to market demands and conducts business in the Boiler House.

3) In 1916 water drove turbines, turned generators, and made electricity, as evidenced in the concrete structure and transformers we see across the river. While sitting in the beer garden at Silvaticus, you can see remnants of the Amesbury Electric Company hydro station through the metal fence. The transformers carry electricity through a network of power lines established when the hydro station was built in 1916.

11. HERITAGE PARK



Here, in our recently designed park, community members can gather to rest at a beautiful site, bounded on the west by the Powow River. By contrast, nearly 150 years ago, the area was immersed in work and crowded with industrial buildings, including the Biddle & Smart carriage company, a shoe factory, and a casting and plating company, to name a few. Also in Amesbury's early history,

barges traveled up the Powow River to deliver raw materials to wharves. After 1848 the railroad reduced the importance of the river for shipping, but goods, especially coal, were shipped by water until the early 20th century. Across the river was an early brickyard and clusters of workers' houses, the last group built in the 1880s. No above-ground evidence of these structures survives.

THE BUILDINGS IN HERITAGE PARK

12. SALISBURY POINT



This tiny station, built around 1870, was originally located on Rocky Hill Road nearly a mile away. While measuring a mere 11 feet by 20 feet, the station was called a "whistle stop" and served as a depot for mail, the daily newspaper, and passenger service.

Local businesses could ship finished products, including dories made at the boat shops along the Merrimack River. Restored in the 1980's after being used as a shed, this station was moved to its present location in 2014.

14. BIDDLE & SMART OFFICE AND WORKSHOP



Built around 1880, the brick building at 29 Water Street was part of the original carriage works of the Biddle & Smart Company, one of Amesbury's more than 50 carriage manufacturers. Biddle & Smart began operations in 1880. Within a decade the company employed 270 workers and built 4,000 carriages that year with sales nearing 750,000.

As the market demand for automobiles grew in the early 1900's, the firm transitioned to this new market and became a major producer of autobodies. By 1926 Biddle & Smart employed 4,000 workers, operated 10 manufacturing plants in Amesbury, and produced 40,000 bodies for Hudson and other automobile companies. The company closed in 1930 when it could no longer compete with assembly line production of Detroit's automakers.

A WALKING TOUR OF THE AMESBURY MILLYARD

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Visit the Amesbury Carriage Museum website to view additional information and an on-line version of this tour. Join us—become a member!

www.amesburycarriagemuseum.com

Cover Engraving:

"Southeast view of Mills Village, in Salisbury and Amesbury"

John Warner Barber, 1839