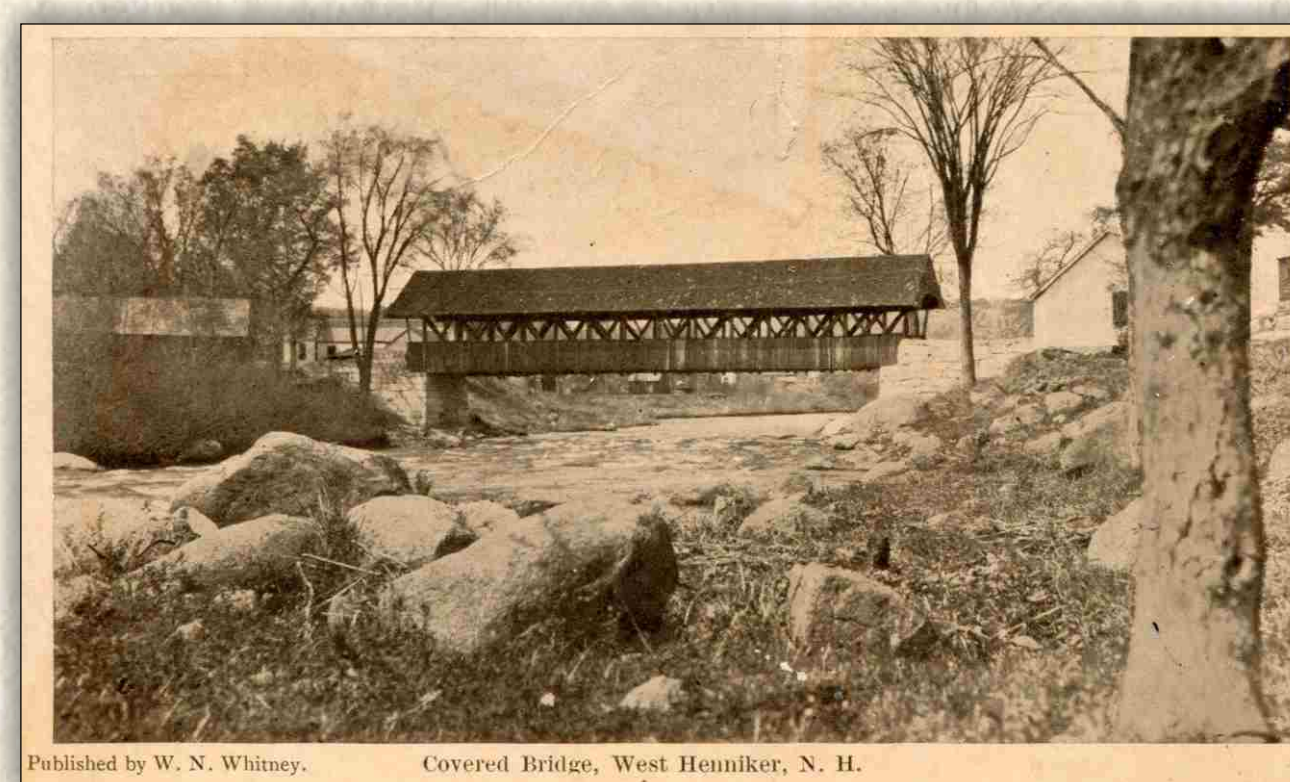


HISTORIC WEST HENNIKER

1778

CONTOOCCOOK RIVER HARNESSSED

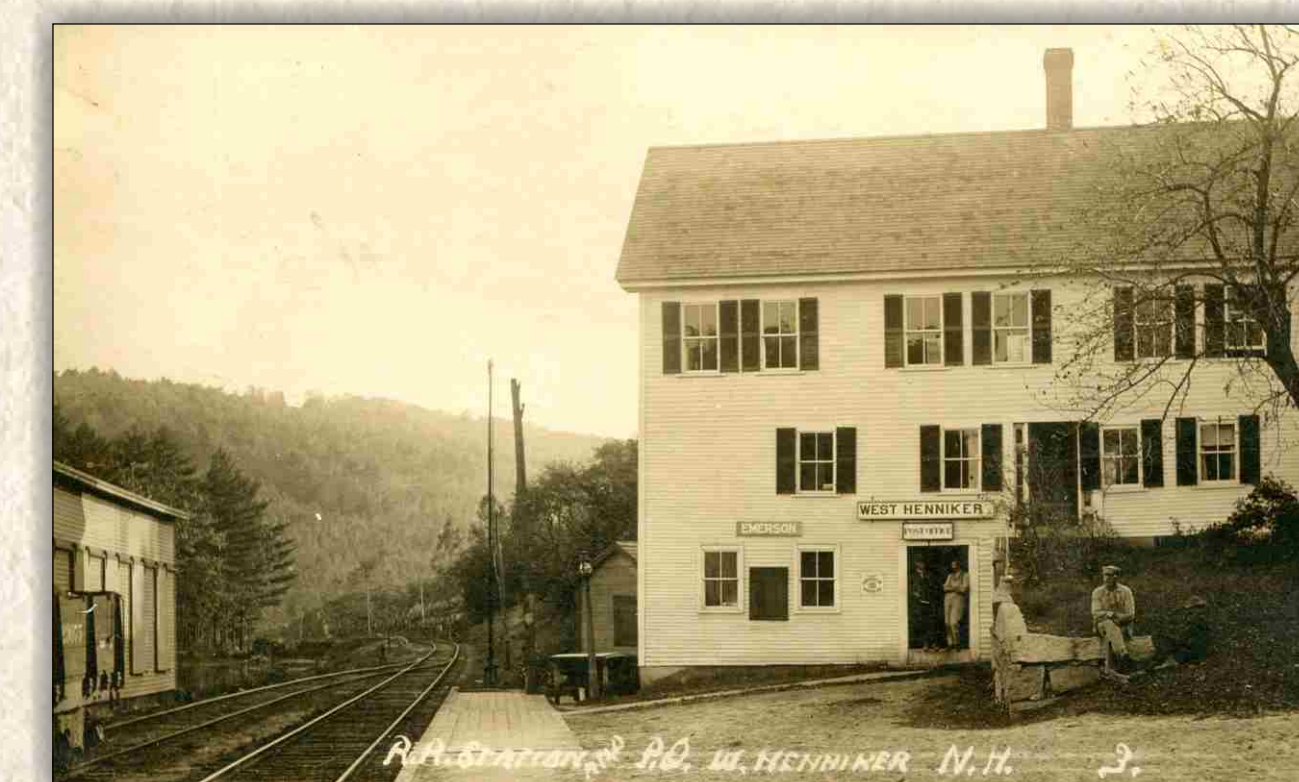
West Henniker was established as an industrial center in the late 1770s by brothers Uriah and Joseph Amsden who built a saw mill, grist mill and cloth dressing mill on the west channel around an island in the Contoocook River. About 1817, Imri and William Woods bought the mills. In 1825 Imri built a fine brick house in the Federal style that stands today at 118 Western Avenue. A woolen mill was added in 1840. About this time a dam and power canal was built to supply the mills with more reliable water power. Fire destroyed Woods' woolen factory in 1861 along with the grist and saw mill then owned by Ammi Smith. Moses Cheney bought the water power rights in 1863 built a paper mill that operated until 1869 when it too burned from unknown causes. In 1872 a new larger paper mill rose in its place.



West Henniker Covered Bridge
Postcard of Contoocook River Bridge built by Frederick Whitney in 1852, also depicted on the Bird's Eye View map below. Whitney's impressive house still stands at 777 Western Avenue, just north of the crossing now spanned by Patterson Hill Road bridge. Whitney learned bridge building from Horace Childs and also became a renown builder of railroad bridges in New Hampshire.



Mill Pond at West Henniker
Postcard of mill pond, also depicted in the Bird's Eye View map below. Bridge builder Frederick Whitney's house, still standing, seen at left. B.H. Whitcomb's blacksmith shop, later a wood working shop, no longer existing, at right.

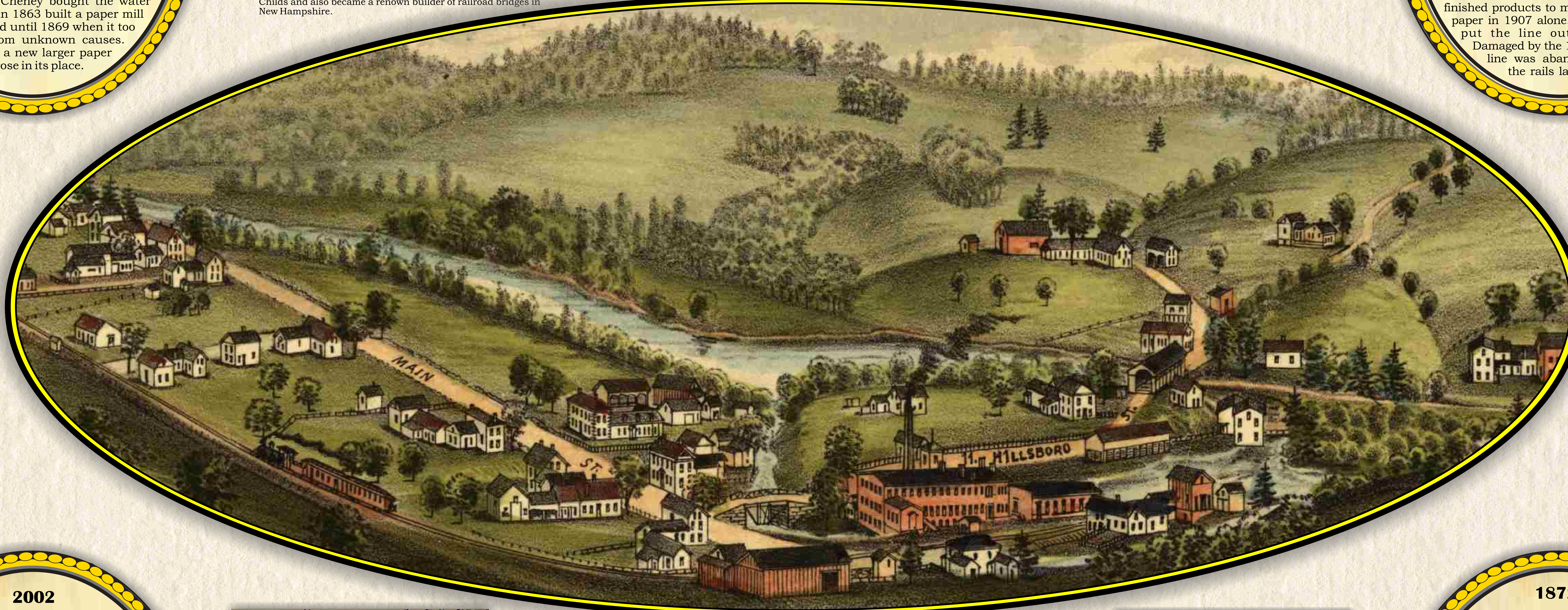


Boston & Maine Railroad West Henniker Station
Postcard, circa 1915, of combined station, post office and station master's residence at the foot of Old Hillsboro Road. The Contoocook Valley Paper Co. rail-siding warehouse is across the tracks at left. The station survives today as a residence.

1849

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY RAILROAD

This 14.7-mile line branched off the Concord & Claremont Railroad at Contoocook and ran through Henniker along the river to Hillsboro. It was completed in December 1849 with depots in Henniker and West Henniker. Its bridges were built by Horace Childs of Henniker, one of New England's preeminent bridge builders. It was reorganized as Contoocook River Railroad and leased to Northern Railroad in 1858, to Boston & Lowell Railroad in 1884 and sold to Boston & Maine Railroad in 1890. West Henniker Depot operations were moved from Emerson Way to a new building next to the Contoocook Valley Paper Co. Freight cars delivered raw materials and carried the finished products to market - 900 tons of paper in 1907 alone. Cars and trucks put the line out of business. Damaged by the 1936 flood, the line was abandoned and the rails later torn.

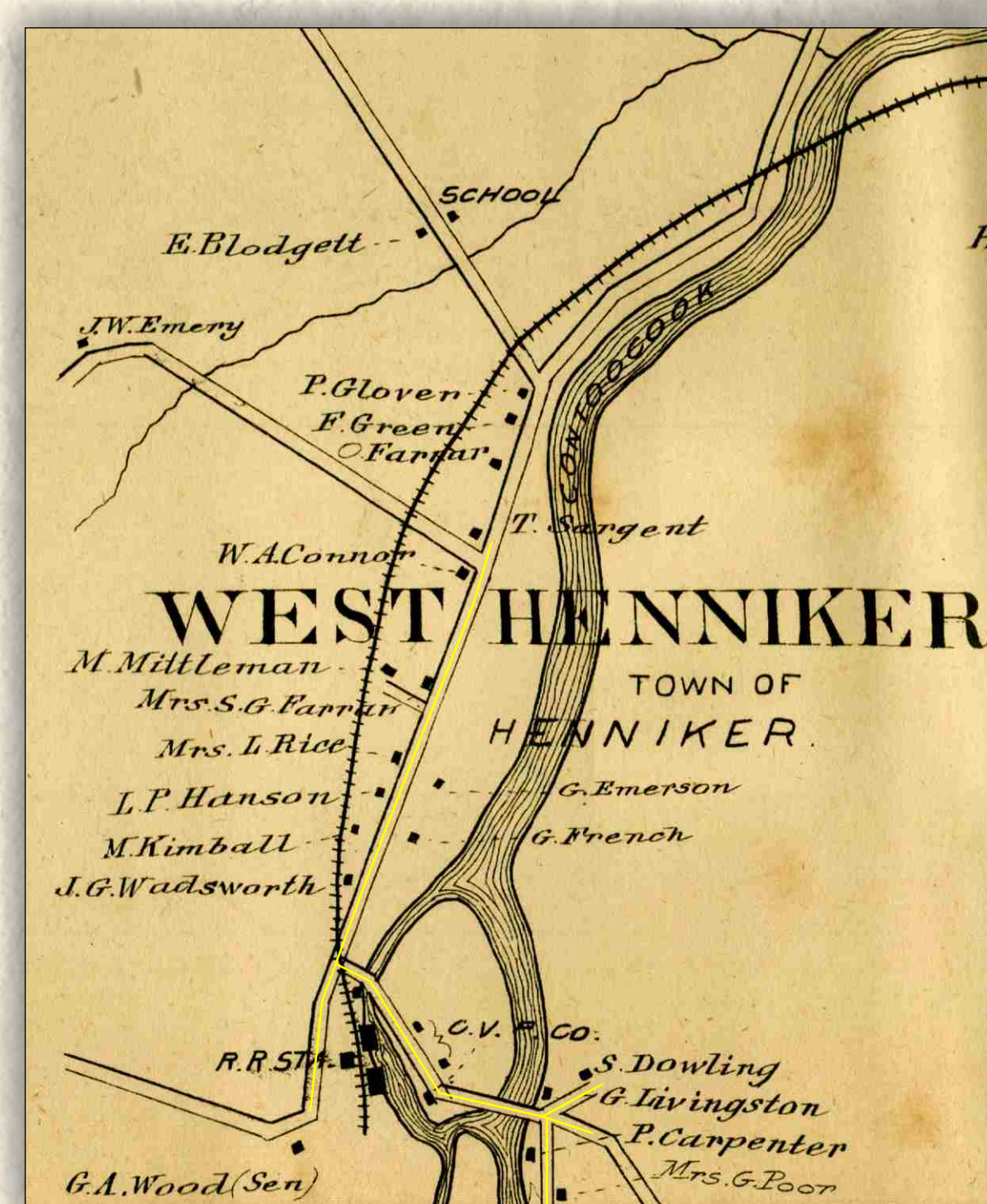


1889 Panoramic Map of Henniker by Geo. E. Norris

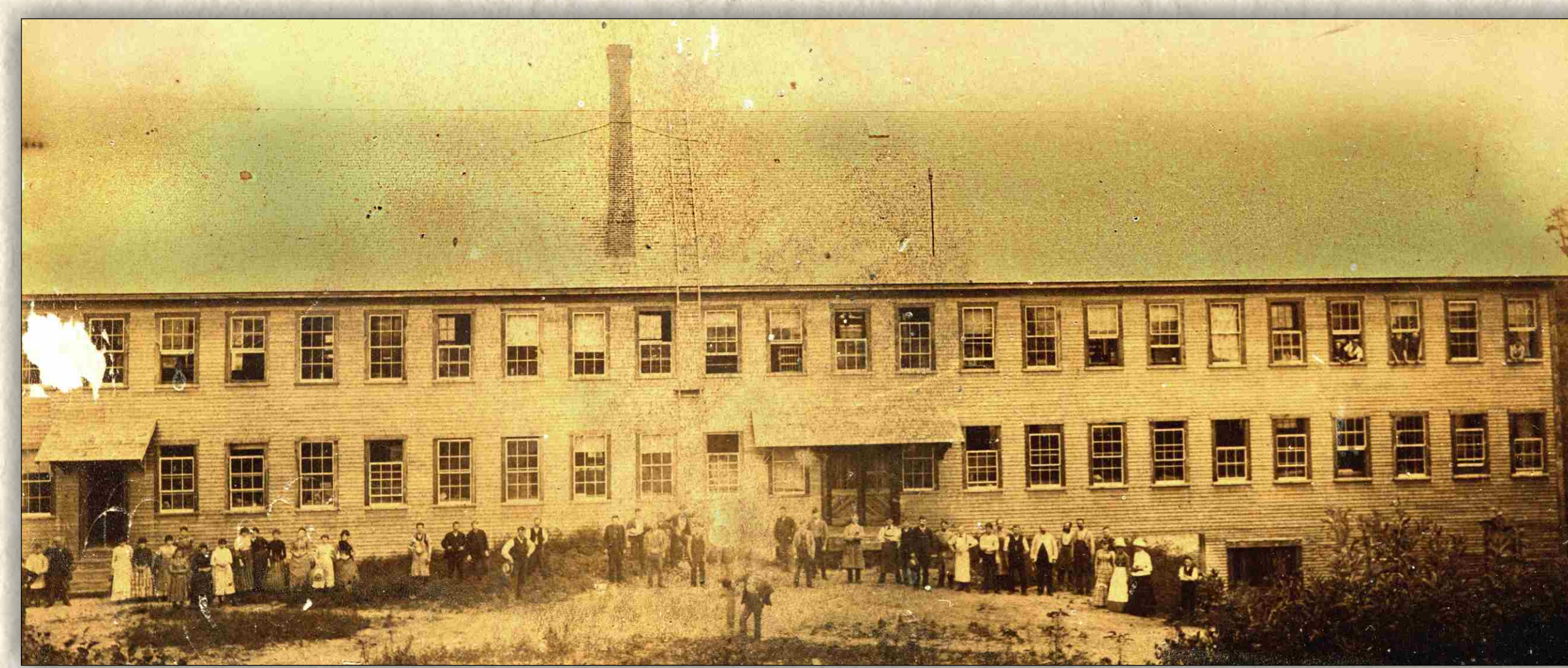
2002

WEST HENNIKER HISTORIC DISTRICT

Following the closing of the paper mill in 1987, cultural resource studies of the area were conducted to identify historic properties potentially affected by environmental remediation of the industrial site. In 2002 the NH Division of Historical Resources determined that West Henniker is a significant and distinguishable historic district eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The surviving architectural, industrial and archeological resources represent the town's earliest water-powered industry and associated village development. In 2013 a district boundary was established based on studies for the replacement of the Western Avenue Bridge, a resource contributing to the significance of the district. The new bridge was designed as a steel truss to maintain the historic integrity of the setting.



West Henniker in 1892
Portion of the E. H. Hurd Atlas of New Hampshire, 1892, with yellow line marking the limits of the designated West Henniker Historic District along Western Avenue, Old Hillsboro Road and Patterson Hill Road.



Cheney Paper Mill West Henniker
It is believed this photo shows the paper mill built by Moses Cheney in 1863 on the site of Wood's woolen mill that burned two years earlier. The Cheney Mill burned in 1869 and was replaced by the Contoocook Valley Paper Mill. Photos suggest that portions of the old mill were rebuilt and the structure given a new lower pitch roof and new windows.



Paper Mill Workers at West Henniker



Contoocook Valley Paper Mill
Postcard view of the mill from Western Avenue looking northwest in the early 20th century. The railroad depot is just visible at left beyond the one-story warehouse.

1872

CONTOOCCOOK VALLEY PAPER COMPANY

After the Cheney Paper Mill fire, Cheney and two partners formed the Contoocook Valley Paper Company, promising to build a new mill, fix the dam and enlarge the canal if the Town waived taxes on the improvements for ten years. Voters approved and in 1872 the mill, dam and canal were complete at a cost of \$50,000. In 1880 the mill employed 35 hands at a monthly payroll of \$1000 and produced 600 tons of paper annually. A railroad siding and warehouse with doors designed to mate with box cars was built along with a new railroad depot and post office (see Station photo above). The mill closed in 1987 after 115 years of operation. The buildings were later demolished, the dam removed and the site remediated by the Environmental Protection Agency and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services in 2004.