



Traveling Main Street Vergennes

Using original photos and postcards circa 1890-1940

Crosby Digital Collection- Bixby Memorial Library



The Crosby Collection

For decades, post cards and photos have been ways to capture memories of places we have traveled and sites we have seen. From a historical perspective, they offer a window into how the Main Street developed over time. From the Crosby Collection, we offer you a look at postcards and print of the Vergennes Main Street and Otter Creek Basin circa 1890- 1950. This was compiled in summer 2022 with local historian Cookie Steponaitis.





Vergennes Franklin Block Early Photo Circa 1880's

Taken in the late 1880's the Vergennes Park is shown on the left and on the right is the Foote block. Looking north, dirt streets and side walks are busy with people engaging in commerce.



Vergennes Main Street Post Card Circa 1950

This postcard shows the Grand Union, Steven's Drug Store, The Park Diner, Ryan's Hardware and other businesses of the era. Ryan's is one of the oldest continuous family operated business on Main Street. Horse Power has now given way to automobiles and the trees from the past show considerable growth over time.



The Samuel Strong House Postcard Circa 1910

This circa 1910 postcard shows one of the oldest homes in Vergennes- The Samuel Strong House. Built in 1796, this was the home of the Strong family for many generations. Several family members played key roles in the history of the region.



Early Photograph of Main Street and Bridge Circa 1880

This very early photograph of Main Street and the bridge in Vergennes includes many buildings that are no longer standing, except for the Shade Roller and looks east toward leaving town and heading for Addison.



1890 Photo of Otter Creek Basin by Stoyt Brothers Photography

This early photo captures the Otter Creek Basin in Vergennes that served as the business hub of the city. Located 7.7 miles down stream from the mouth of Lake Champlain, this site was not only the downtown of the early city, but the building site of the Fleet of Ships that beat the British in the Battle of Plattsburgh in 1812 and both steamship and railroad industry for long periods of time. Even today, it is a source of commerce and a waterway access for generations that call this city home. L-R is Falardo Shop, Vergennes Pump House, Norton's Mill, and the Shade Roller Factory.



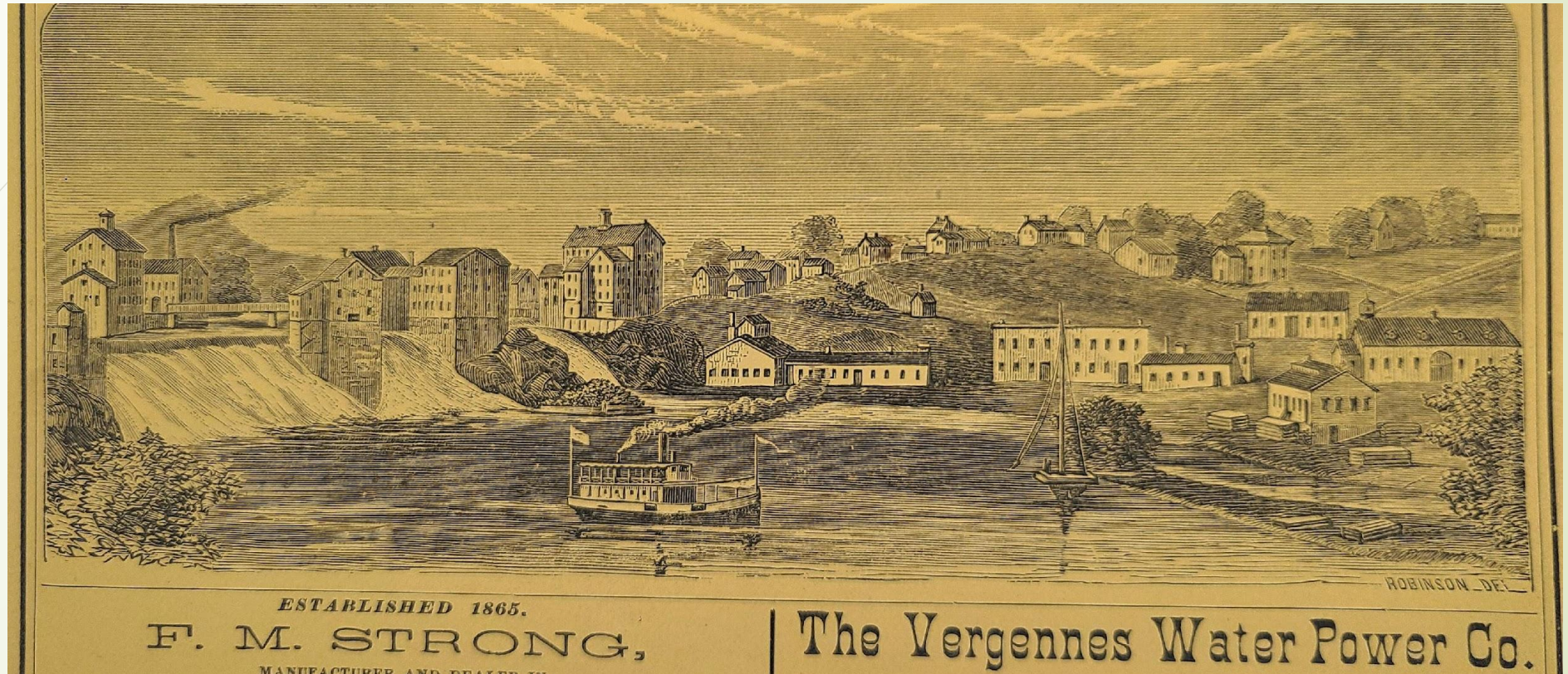
Shade roller Plant Post Card Circa 1890

With buildings located on both sides of the falls, it was a major employer for the area and made window shades and rollers.



April 9, 1896 Photo of Vergennes Fire

Fires have played a key role in the story of not only of Vergennes, but of the development of the Fire Departments and fire fighting techniques. This photo of the April 9, 1896 fire shows devastation and identifies for the town leaders the need for increased techniques and services for fire protection. A second fire again in 1958 would revolutionize fire fighting not only in Vergennes but in Vermont, New England and Canada.



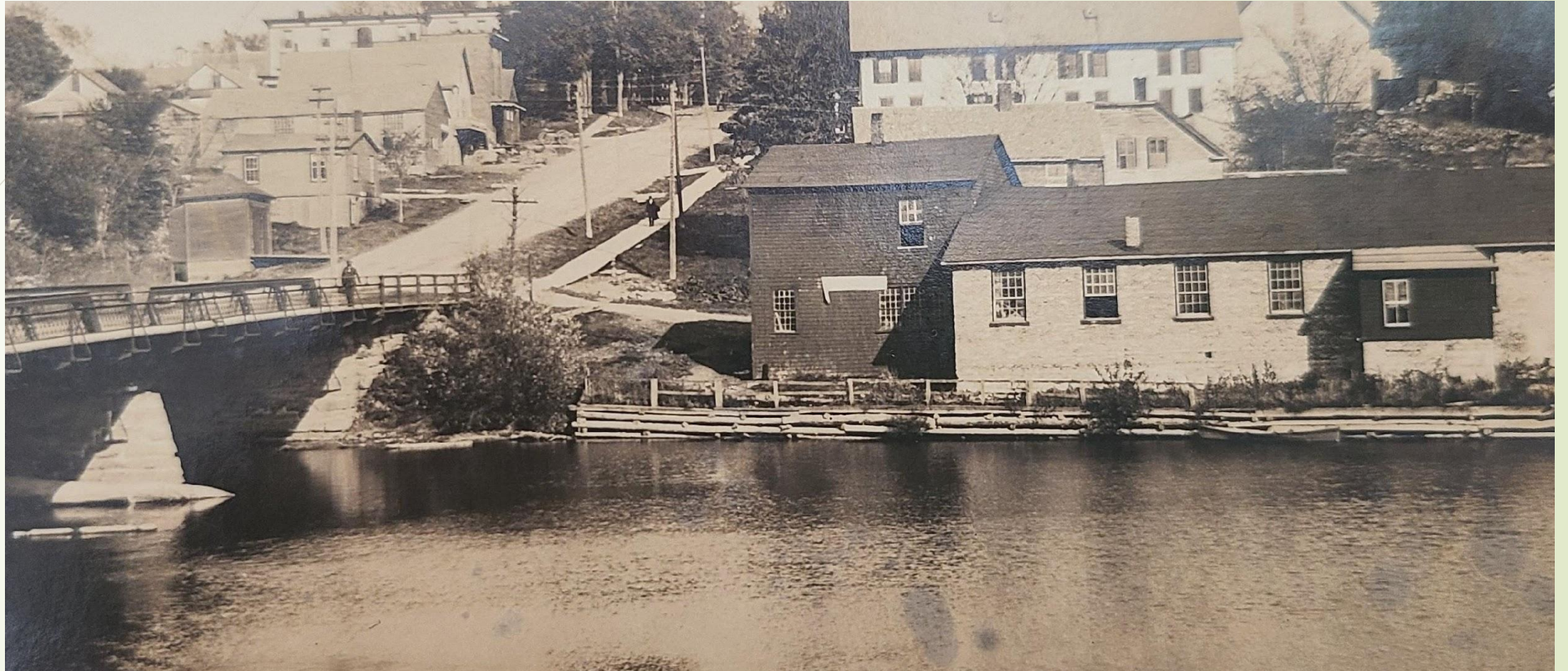
Rare Vermont Business Directory Image 1880-1881 of Otter Creek Basin

This image shows the amount and diversity of business in the Otter Creek Basin.



Young Attendant and The Gladys

This 1892 image shows that one local family not only had the means to have a steamboat, but to have an attendant on duty. The image was taken at Dead Creek and The Gladys was in safe hands.



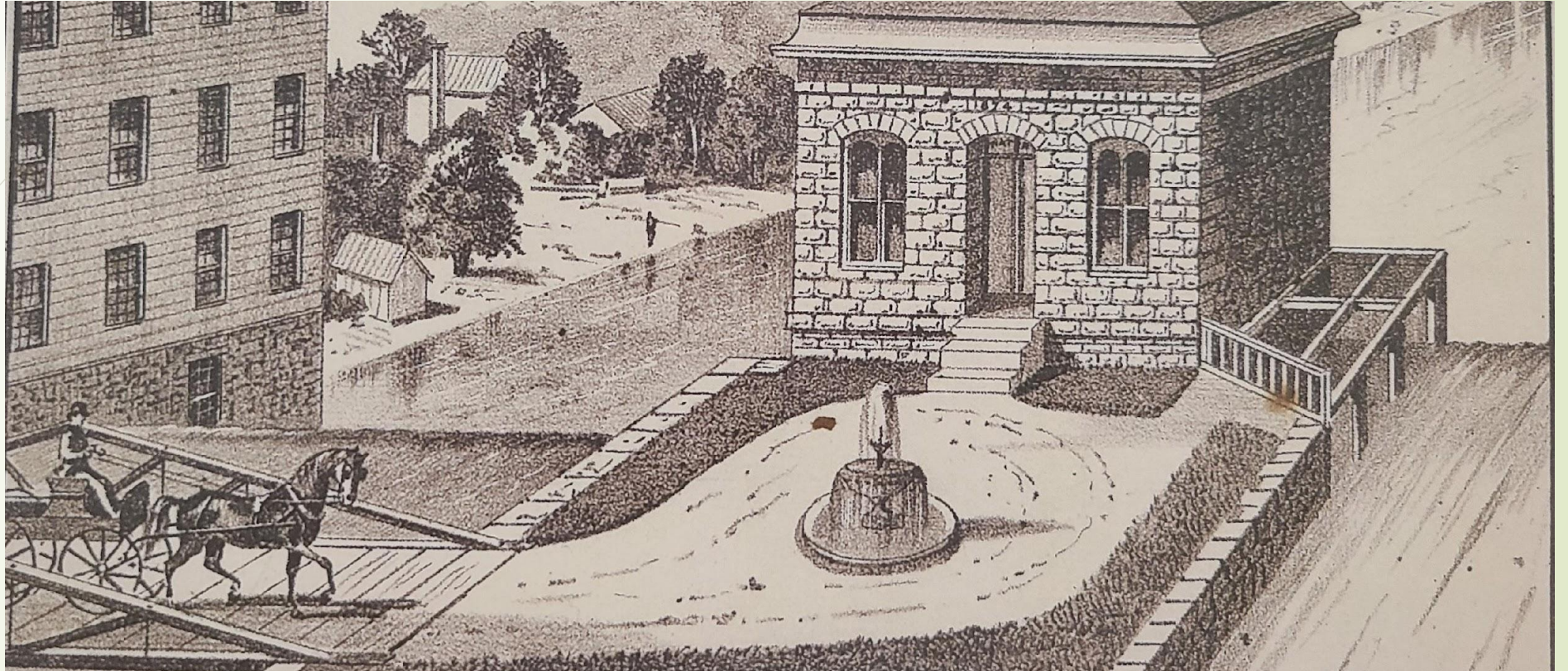
1909 Post Card Above the Falls

This image was taken from the south side of the bridge and shows the CD Keeler Tannery on the right.



Horse Nail Factory Lithograph

This image was created from the vantage point of standing on the city dock and looking south at the Horse Nail Factory.



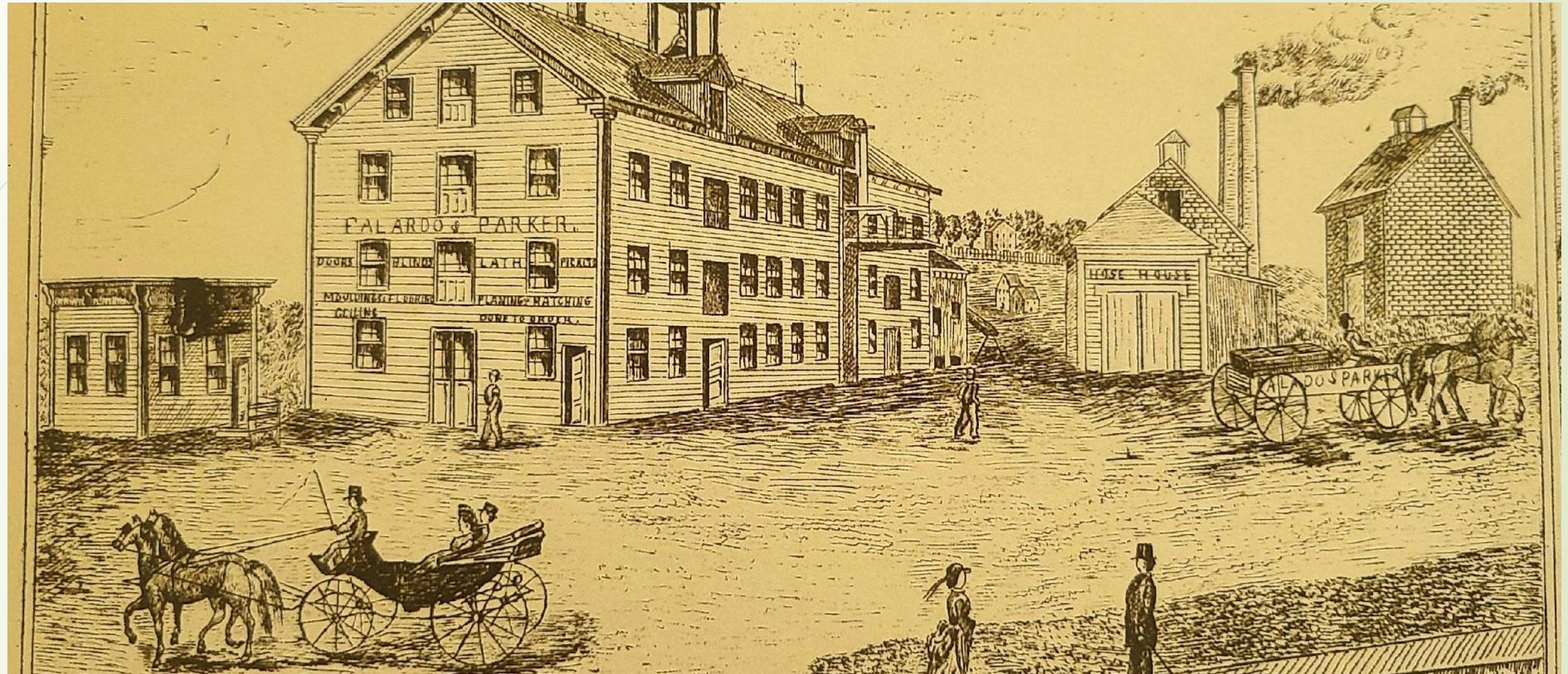
Vergennes City Waterworks Lithograph (Circa 1890)

The history of Vergennes can not be separated from the location and use of water.



View of the Commercial Area from Comfort Hill (Pre 1900)

This image show the Pump House, Cataract House (on the hill), Horse Nail Factory and other businesses.



View of Falardo & Parker Factory on Main Street (1880)

This image was taken circa 1880 and shows another angle of the busy center of business on the bottom of the hill just before the bridge.



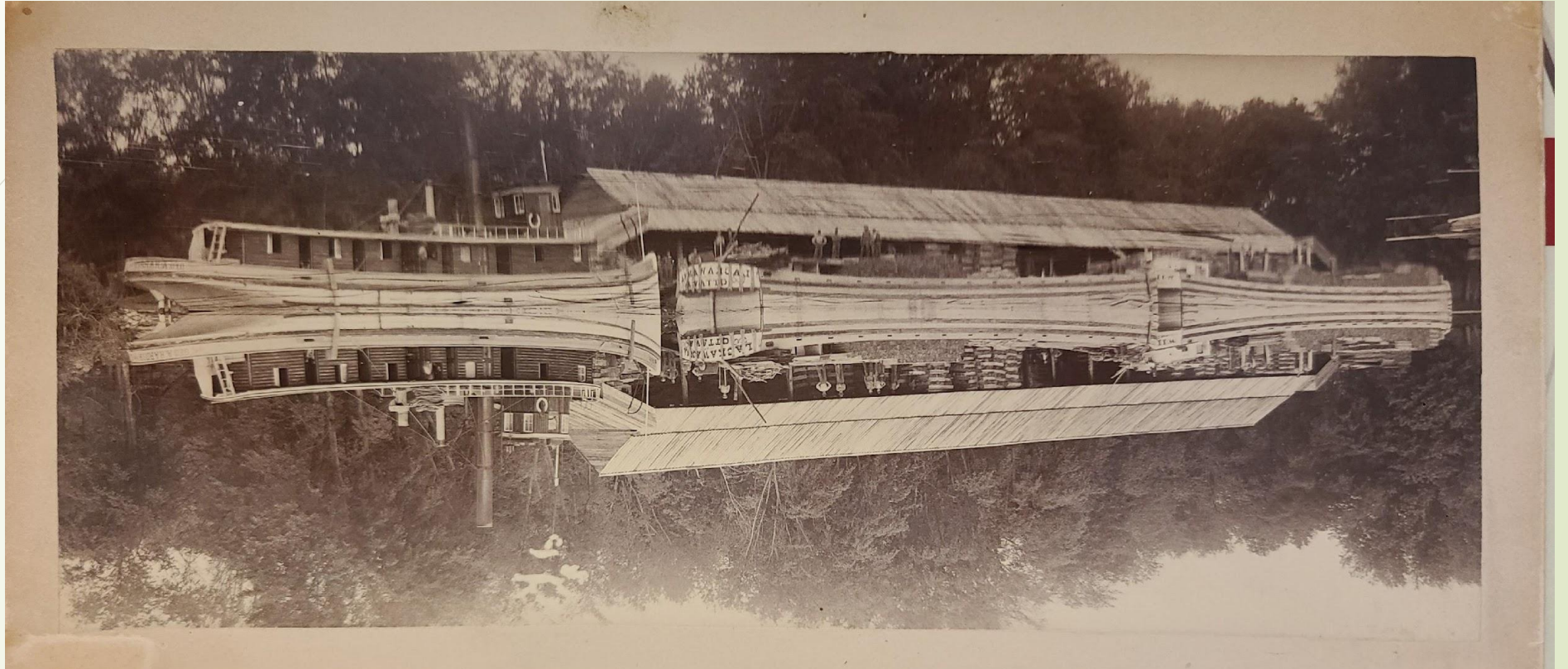
Steamboat Oliata

Taken by Photographer W.M. Crown, who had a business at 25 Main Street in the 1890's, this steamship shows the variety of water transportation that was common in the Otter Creek Basin.



The Daniels Steamboat Line

Ready for a Sunday excursion on the water? The Victor was one o three steamboats owned and operated by the Daniels Family. Not only were the ladies dressed in their Sunday best, so was the captain. Philomene Daniels was perhaps the world's first licensed female steamboat captain and her daughter in law Helen became the second. Known for getting her clothes from New York City, she dressed like a lady, but worked like a man!



Tied up at City Dock (1892)

These lumber boats were tied up at the docks. This image was taken standing at the falls looking east- across the Otter Creek.



The Pump House (1907)

Located on the falls, the Pump House has its own revolutionary story and supplied water to the city.



Schuyler Island Excursion 1893

This 1893 photograph captures not only the Daniels Steamboat the Water Lily, but a group from Vergennes, stopping while on a Sunday Excursion- Some names for the people are included. Left to right: Alice Hinman, William Nash, Carrie Nash, Hattie Chapin, George Fitts, William Fitts, Alice Fitts, Mrs. Simmonds, Robert Simmonds, Herb Powers, Jon Conoe, Wallace Forte, Mrs. Forte, Helen Daniels, (On the boat) Minnie Roscoe, Fred Roscoe, Lottie Roscoe, three unknown, Mrs. .Daniels, Mr. Fred Daniels – owners and boat Water Lily.



Logs on the Otter

This image shows a group of logs being floated down the Otter Creek. Water Street is on the top left of the image.



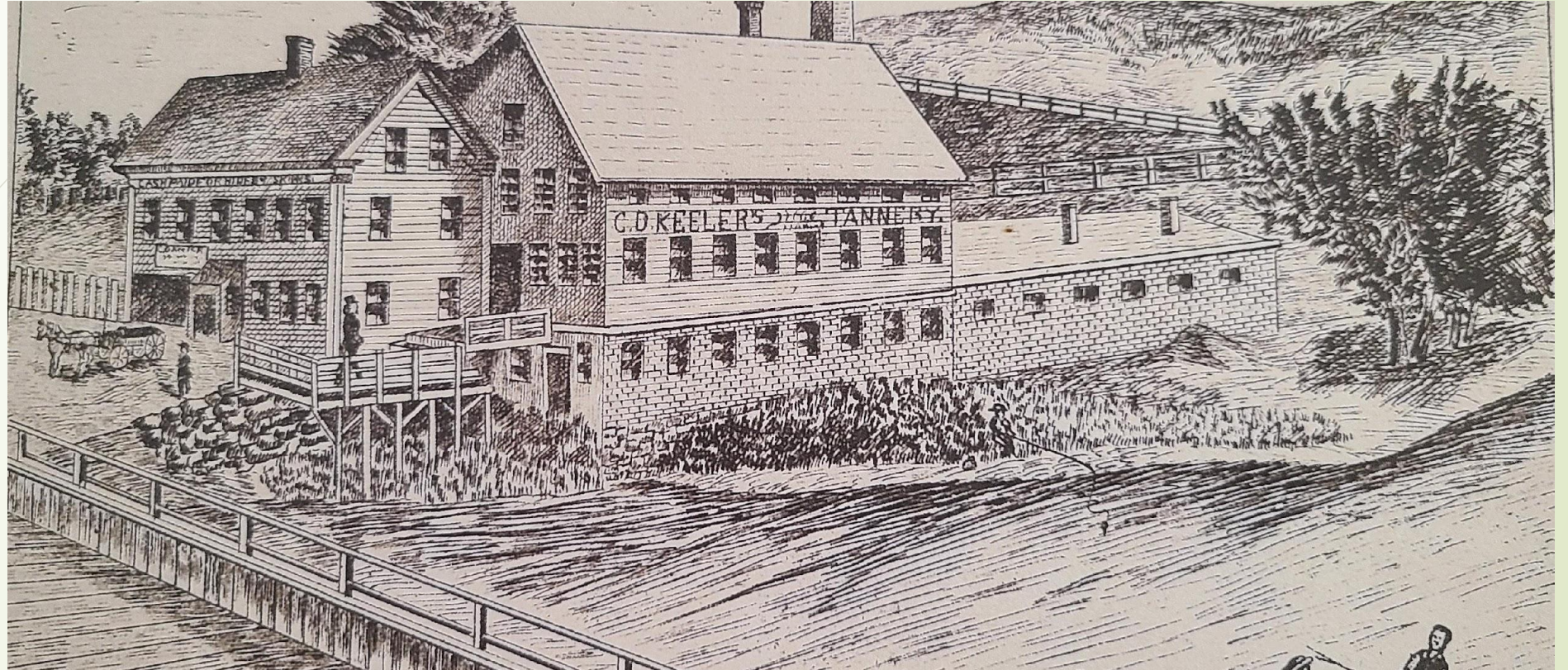
Main Street Looking East

Looking down the Main Street circa 1910, this image captures some homes that still stand, but many trees that don't!



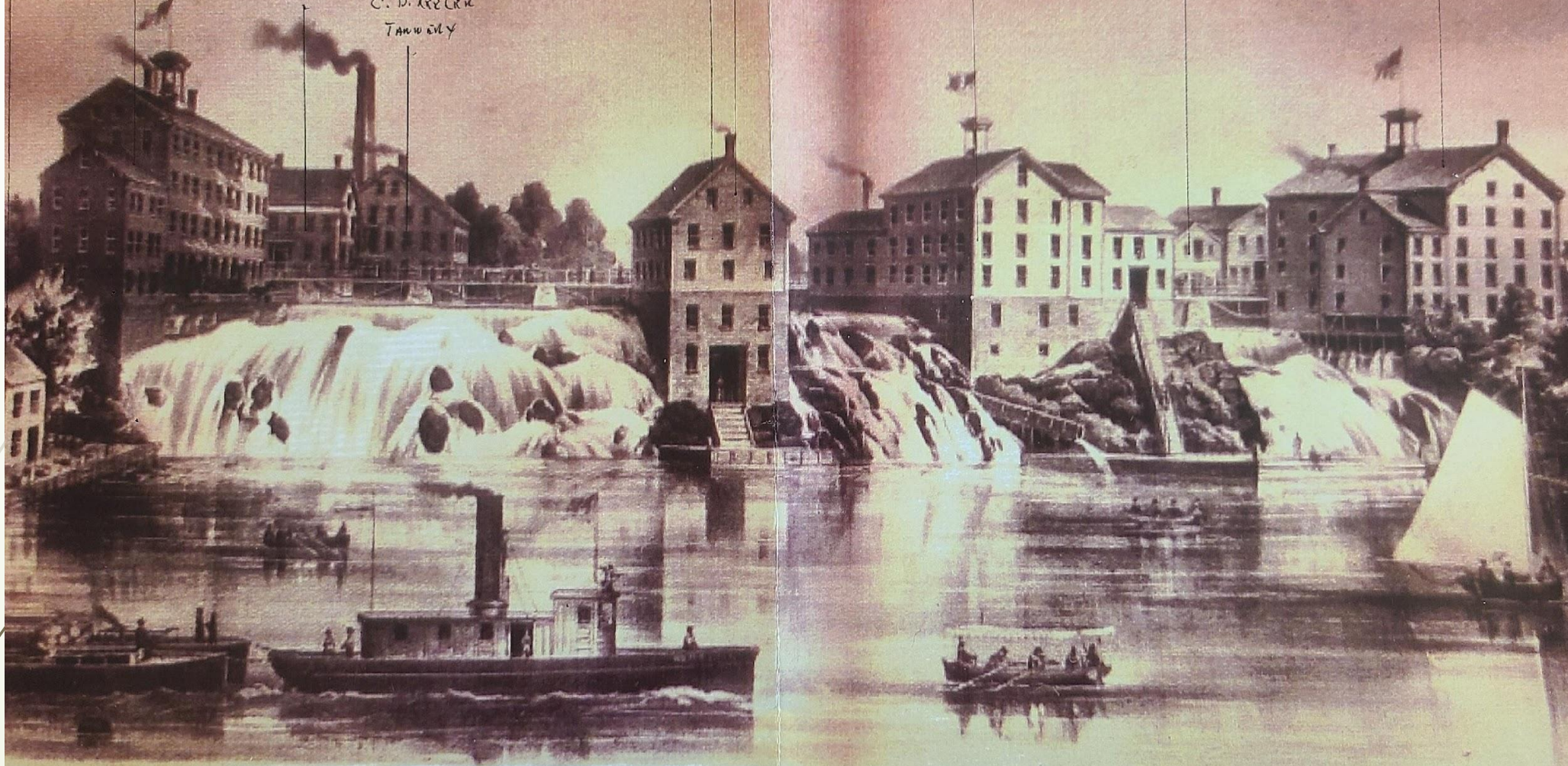
The Steamship Reindeer (Circa 1900)

The story of steam power is a part of the story of this region. This steamship left Burlington weekly and moved people to Vergennes.



C.C. Keeler's Tannery Lithograph (Circa 1890)

This local business employed people to tan animal hides and make leather products.



The Otter Creek Basin in Full Swing (Circa 1889)

This copy of a locally owned image includes the following business: L-R Strong & Ross Wagon Spokes, Woolen Mill, Hayes & Falardo Woodworks, Pantan & Seaville Printers, CD Keeler Tannery, WS Hopkins Saw Mill, SQ Southward Frames, Island Mills Feed & Plaster, FM Strong, W Ross Machinist, W Bixby Manufacturing and Sons, N & H Jaquay Furniture, JW Hawley, Frame Factory.



Main Dock at Otter Creek Basin (Early 1900)

This image shows warehouses and docks which saw daily use by steamboats carrying cargo, lots of coal, the mail and on weekends families and people. The routes were continuous and went to Westport, NY and other locations on both sides of the lake.



Doctor Bottomini House (Circa 1910)

Located across the street from City Hall, this residence served as a doctor's office for close to fifty years.



City Hall & Opera House (1907)

This building served as the site of local government, local entertainment and in 1907 housed the Fire Department and Post Office in the basement.



The Steven's House

Located at the center of town, this building as served as a hotel, gathering point and meeting place. Lots of stories about people working, traveling and passing through these rooms.



One of Many Houses of Worship

This 1909 Post Card shows Saint Peter's Catholic Church, just one of many houses of worship in the Little City.



The Arsenal

This 1908 showcases the Arsenal that at one time stored weapons and supplies.



Traveling around the Little City

As you tour the Little City of the past, remember that transportation was both on land and water.