

Brookside waterfall key to mill

By Gordon B. Seavey

This century-old sketch of the George C. Moore mills at Brookside revives much history.

Located on Stony Brook about five miles downstream from Forge Pond where it originates, its water power has been used for various purposes since 1724. From Forge Village mills to Brookside, the fall of water is 62 feet.

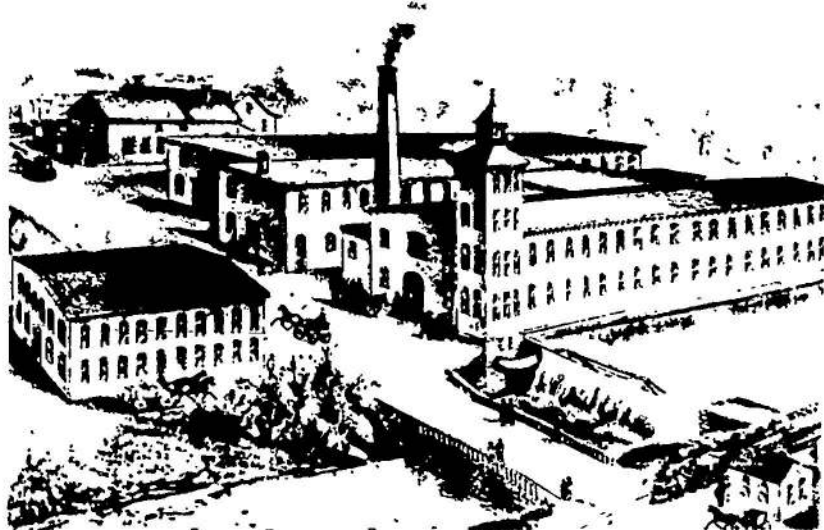
William Chandler of Andover, and later of Billerica, that year purchased 20 acres of land in this area, bordering the brook. A dam was established for grinding grains and later to establish a fulling-mill, a process to dress cloth. This business went on for 140 years.

During the industrial revolution, George C. Moore established his mills here, using water power as well as steam, for processing raw wool into yarns. This product was used by Lawrence woolen mills and others using this type of material.

Now the buildings are being used for a variety of other types of business...and its huge water wheel is silent.

At the lower right of the picture, one may see a passenger train of three coaches, a mixed smoking-baggage car stopped at the tiny railroad station. The building at its right is the freight house. Here the artist made a mistake. Note the prancing horse about to draw the buggy across the tracks in front of the belching locomotive. No horse, then nor today, would ever do that.

The artist failed, too, to sketch



AN ENGRAVING OF the Brookside Mill owned by George C. Moore depicts the bustle of activity during the Industrial Revolution period. (Courtesy Gordon B. Seavey collection)

a boy or man fishing over the bridge downstream, as they still do today.

At the left of the falls is the huge duct which carried the water to the turbine spinning beneath the tower, furnishing cheap water power to the looms and other machinery. When the water in the mill pond receded in the summer because of overusage, steam was generated....but no smoke comes from the stack today.

The little electric street car that started at Westford Common finished its three-mile run (fare, 7¢) on the bridge — it was too dangerous to cross the tracks — and passengers were required to change to cars on the other side of North Chelmsford.

Here the artist was correct in

not sketching the trolley inasmuch as the line didn't exist until a score of years later.

We oldsters, when we congregate, often speak of the old times, the changes, etc. "How Westford has changed over the years," they say immediately. Yes, they have.

And I wonder if Walter Nawrocki, a schoolmate of mine at Westford Academy, remembers the time he asked for more money to start the pot-bellied stove early mornings in the little railroad station? The president of the Boston & Maine, or some other official, replied if Walter didn't like the job and the pay, they'd get someone else. Walter didn't complain again.

Westford native Gordon B. Seavey is a historian and staff member of the *Westford Eagle*.