

23 Springfield Historic District

Routes 11 & 106, Springfield, Vermont



The list of machine tool inventors and entrepreneurs who honed their skills and made Springfield, Vermont their base of operations along the Black River's natural waterfalls, during the Industrial Revolution, reads like a "who's who" of American ingenuity.

Springfield's industrialization began in 1774 when William Lockwood bought land along the Black River's natural waterfalls to build the first water powered sawmill. William Griffith built the town's first fulling mill in 1791, and was then followed by the establishment of a spinning wheel shop and gristmill. When Isaac Fisher moved into town in 1808, he quickly established himself as the father of industrialized Springfield by securing most of the mill rights along the Black River, harnessing the water power to operate a cotton mill, oil mill, carding shop, woolen mill, and machine shop.

Within time, the area included the 1820 Black River Manufacturing Company, building cotton and woolen machinery; the 1829 Parks and Woolson Machine Company, manufacturing shearing and cloth-finishing machinery; the Smith, Burr and Company, manufacturing "hames"; the 1854 Gilman and Son Company, manufacturing reverse lathe and inventing several lathe improvements; the 1858 Vermont Novelty Works Company, manufacturing toy carts, toy doll carriages, and baby buggies; the 1882 Cobb and Derby gristmill; the 1875 W. H. H. Slack and Brothers Corporation, pioneers in wool reclamation that eventually produced 800 different grades of reworked wool at what was considered to be one of the largest Shoddy mills in the world; the Slack Chimneystack; the Textron plant; the 1841 Springfield Marble Works polishing company; the 1868 Vermont Snath Company, manufacturing stoves, mill machinery, and brass and iron castings; the D. M. Smith and Company, manufacturing clothespins; the 1896 Fellows Gear Shaper Company, for the manufacture of Gear Shaper and Gear shaper cutters which were produced at the plant between the Black River and Pearl Streets until 1967 when the company moved to expanded quarters in North Springfield; the 1888 Jones and Lamson Machine Company; and, the Lovejoy Tool Company for the manufacture of small tools.

Today, the Springfield Downtown Historic District is comprised of the downtown Springfield Village, the central business district on Main Street, the mill structures along Mineral, Park Pearl and River Streets, as well as parts of Valley and Elm Streets. The industrial buildings remaining along the falls of the Black River, the commercial district, the high-style public buildings which reflected the prosperity and the civic pride of local residents, and the residences occupied by managers from the mills and other local professionals, combine to form a region that conveys a strong sense of historical time and place.

Sources:

<http://www.crjc.org/heritage/V07-4.htm>