



Boston Newspaper Illustrations of the Amesbury Carriage Making District, 1889-1891

by

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January 20, 2021

Amesbury Carriage District Newspaper Drawings

Tiny Amesbury had positioned itself as probably the 4th largest carriage producing town in America, so that during the booming 1880s a Board of Trade was established to promote the town and especially its carriage builders. The Board began holding spring “openings” in 1889 during which arriving groups of carriage wholesalers toured loaded repositories of carriages, placed orders, and enjoyed a banquet at the American Hotel. Between 1889 and the crash of 1893 the Board achieved notice of these carriage openings in Boston newspaper articles describing the business of the town and individual makers, accompanied by the Board of Trade’s catch-phrase claim of Amesbury as the “Carriage Capital of the World”.

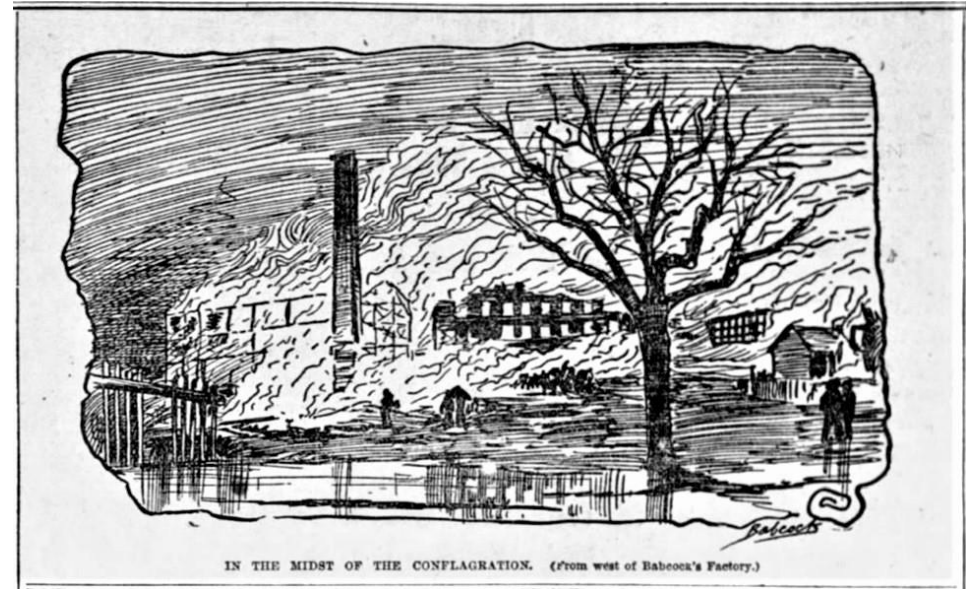
Because newspapers could not then print photographs, articles were accompanied by line drawings of Amesbury environs and the tightly packed group of carriage factories around the railroad and Carriage Hill. (Industrial density was the point, bypassing numerous neighborhood carriage complexes scattered around town.) These line drawings were copied from photographs in the form of either engraved or etched printing plates. Several examples are marked for the Boston Engraving Company.

Newspaper drawings herein were found by ACM volunteer, Ken Aspeslagh, and in most cases the underlying photo is also known and shown for comparison. Photos were provided primarily by the Salisbury Point Railroad Historical Society and Steve Klomps. In a few instances, a very similar photo is provided that shows the general details captured in the drawn image.

Late 19th Century Newspaper Illustrations

At right are two drawings published the morning after Amesbury's Carriage Hill fire of April 5, 1888. They seem to be relatively coarse woodcuts, usually done on boxwood plates. Skilled engravers could quickly produce such cuts, even from sketches rapidly made during such an event. Curiously, they are signed "Babcock", likely a coincidence, being as the fire started in the carriage factory of Frank A. Babcock.

Etched metal plates, usually of copper but sometimes steel, could produce more finely detailed images with a variety of interesting textures. Plates were thinly coated with a shellack-like masking that resisted etching acid. Fine lines were scribed in using sharp styluses, and other methods yielded types of "dappled" textures that would produce varied printed effects for backgrounds and/or emphasis. The plate was exposed to an acid bath to etch ink-holding impressions into the plate, after which the masking medium was removed prior to printing.

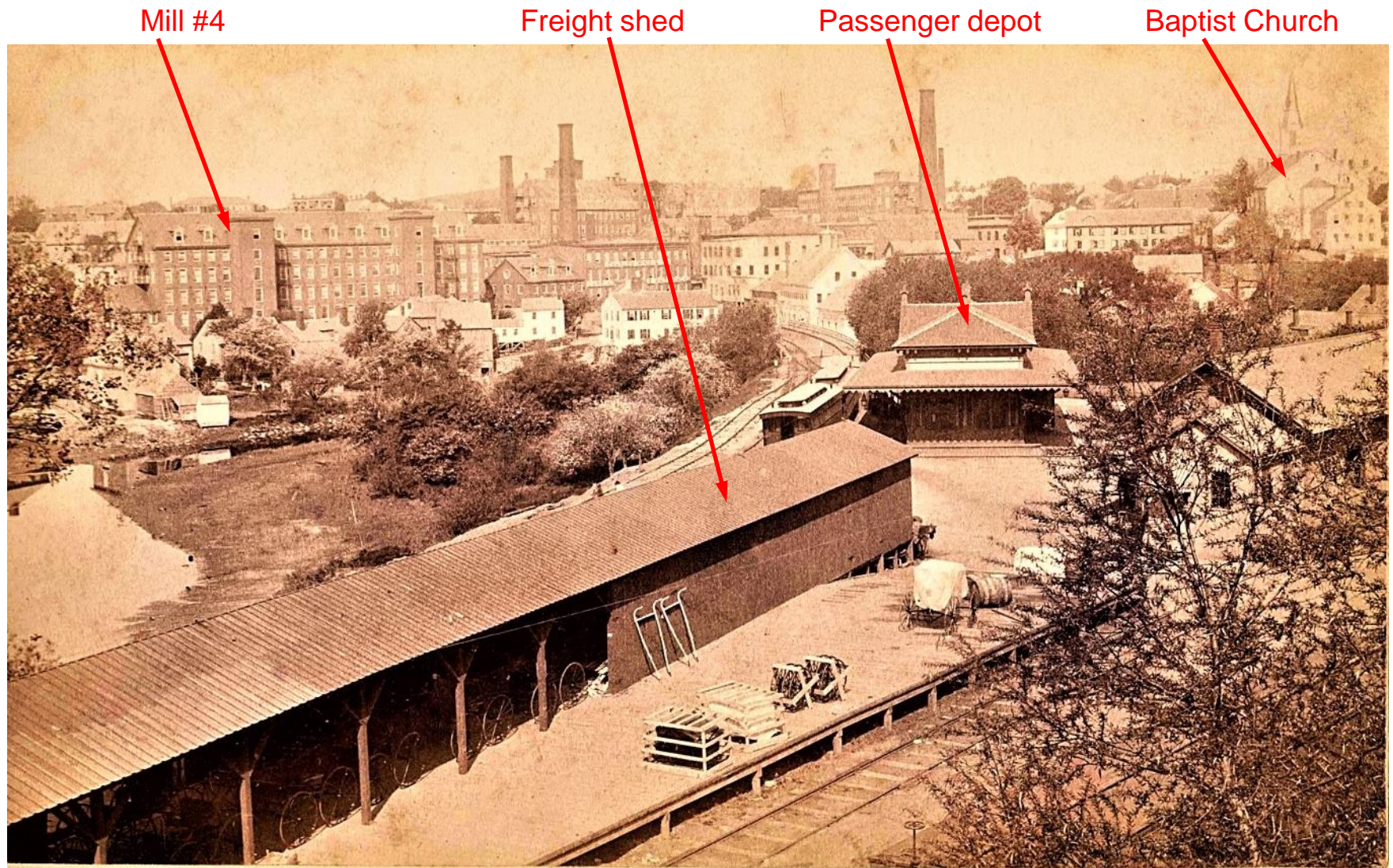


Appeared on pg. 1 of the Boston Daily Globe, April 6, 1888,
researched by Scott Dennis



Courtesy of Scott Dennis

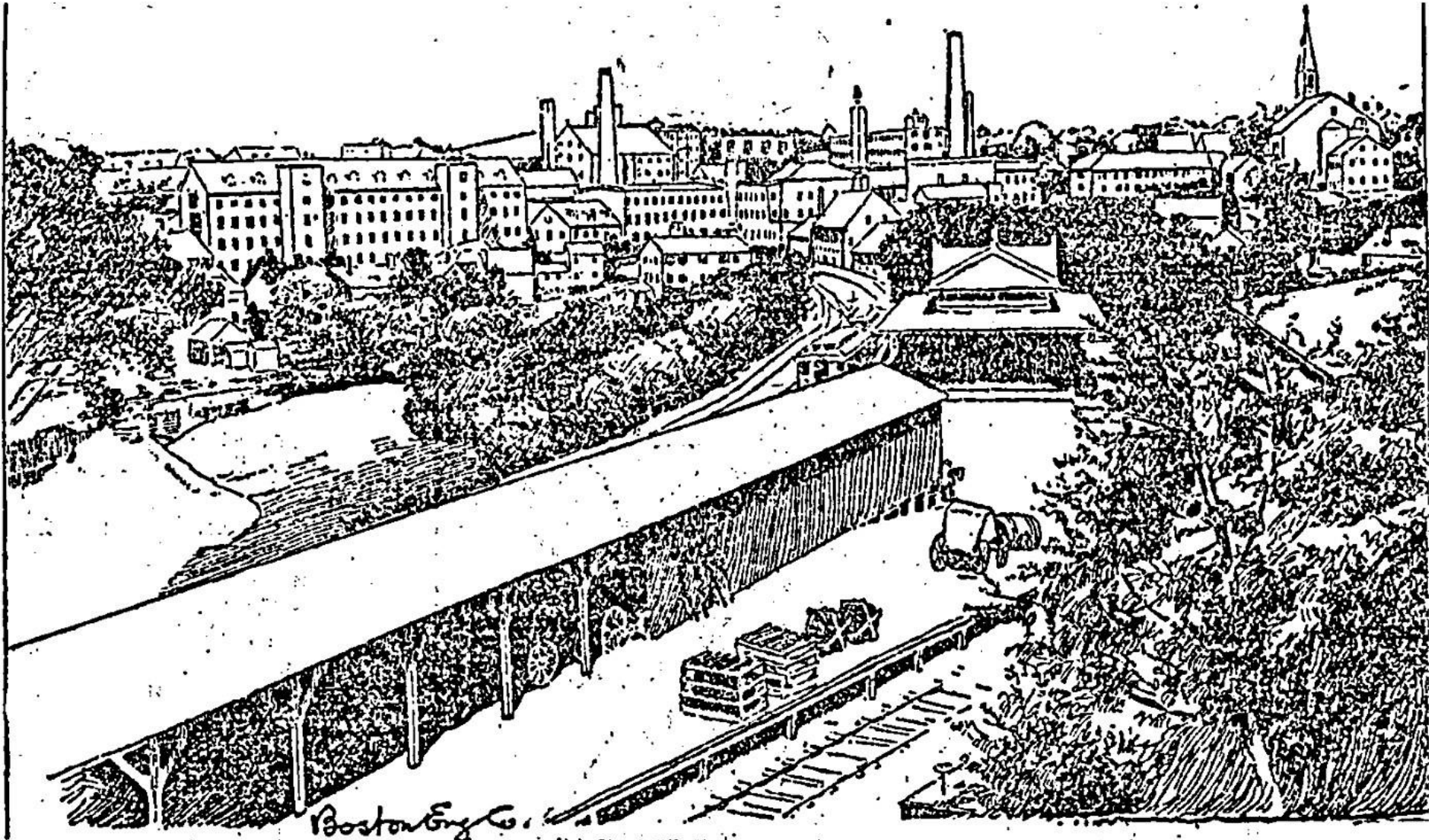
Inbound View of Original Passenger Depot Location, 1885



The passenger depot in its original location across Back River near Railroad Avenue, before being moved in 1887 to its current location off Water Street, where it now houses Crave Restaurant. There are carriages in the freight shed, a muslin-covered carriage on the platform, plus wheels and carriage components.

Inbound View of Original Passenger Depot Location, 1885

Boston Post 3/16/1891



This image is based on the photo from the previous page. Railroad track in the foreground runs up Railroad Avenue to Dodge & Gott steam gristmill. The plate is signed for the Boston Engraving Company.

“Ghost Trains” along RR Ave. Freight Sheds – 1880s

1882 or later, but prior to the 1887 removal of the passenger depot

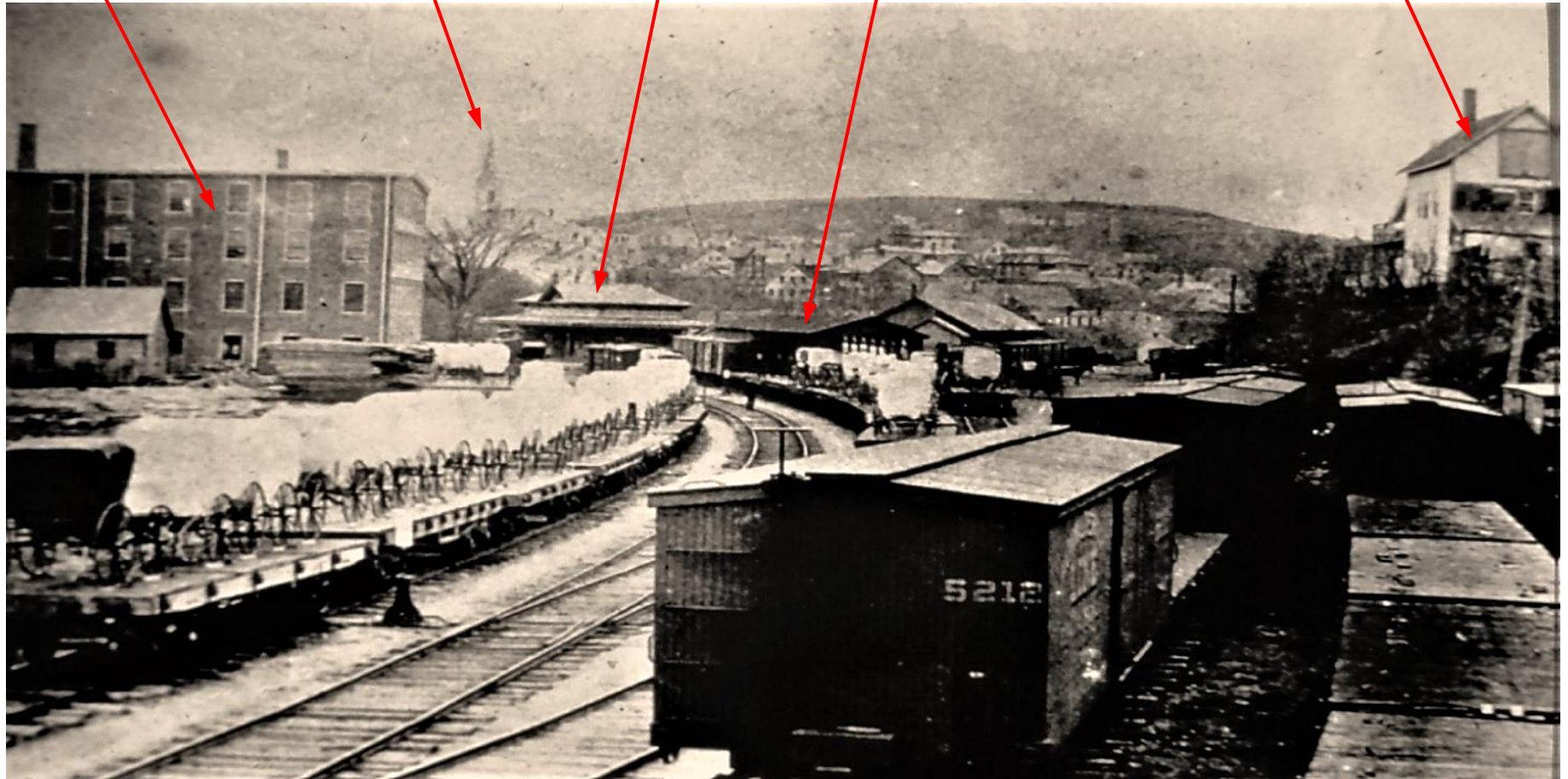
1882 factory

Baptist church

Depot

Freight shed

Factory at foot of Carriage Hill

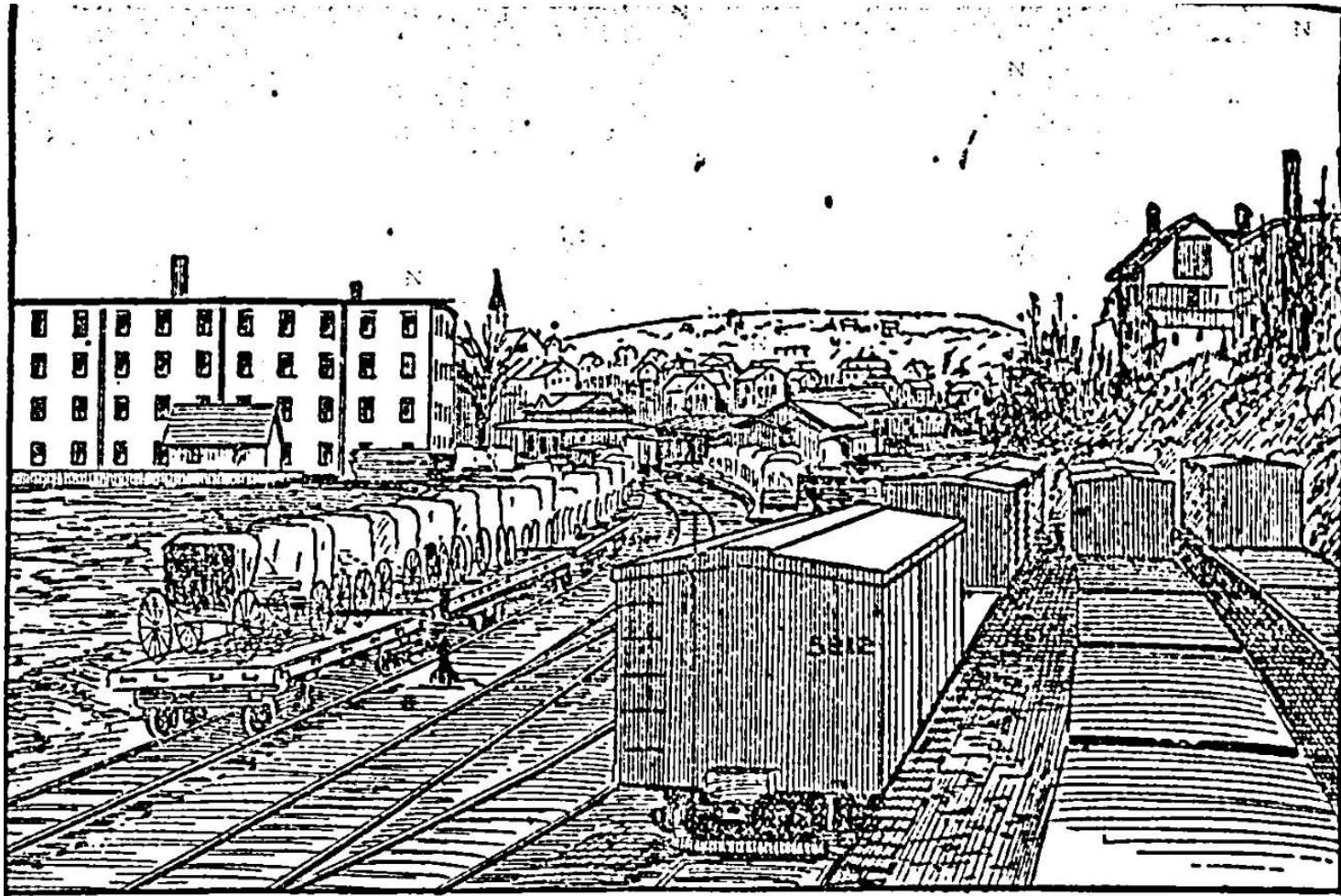


Courtesy of Salisbury Point RR Historical Society

Muslin-covered carriages on flatbed rail cars formed parades of “ghosts” quietly moving through the morning countryside along the Salisbury branch rail spur, on their way to Boston and other transfer centers for national wholesale distribution.

“Ghost Trains” along RR Ave. Freight Sheds – 1880s

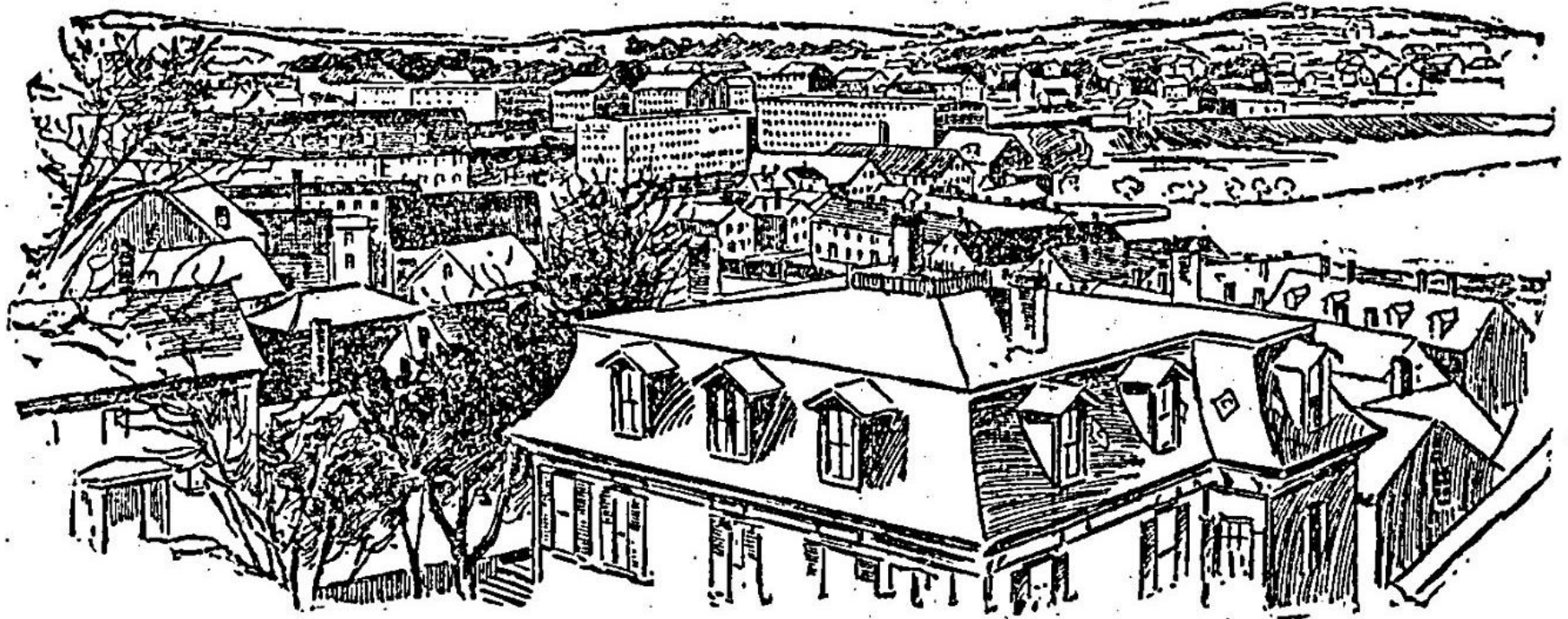
Boston Sunday Globe 1/6/1889



This image is based on the photo from the previous page. While there has been a little casual license with some proportions and positions, all details are identical, such as populations of both the rail cars and their onboard carriages, including the car number on the end of the large near boxcar.

Looking East Toward Water St. from In-Town, ca. 1887

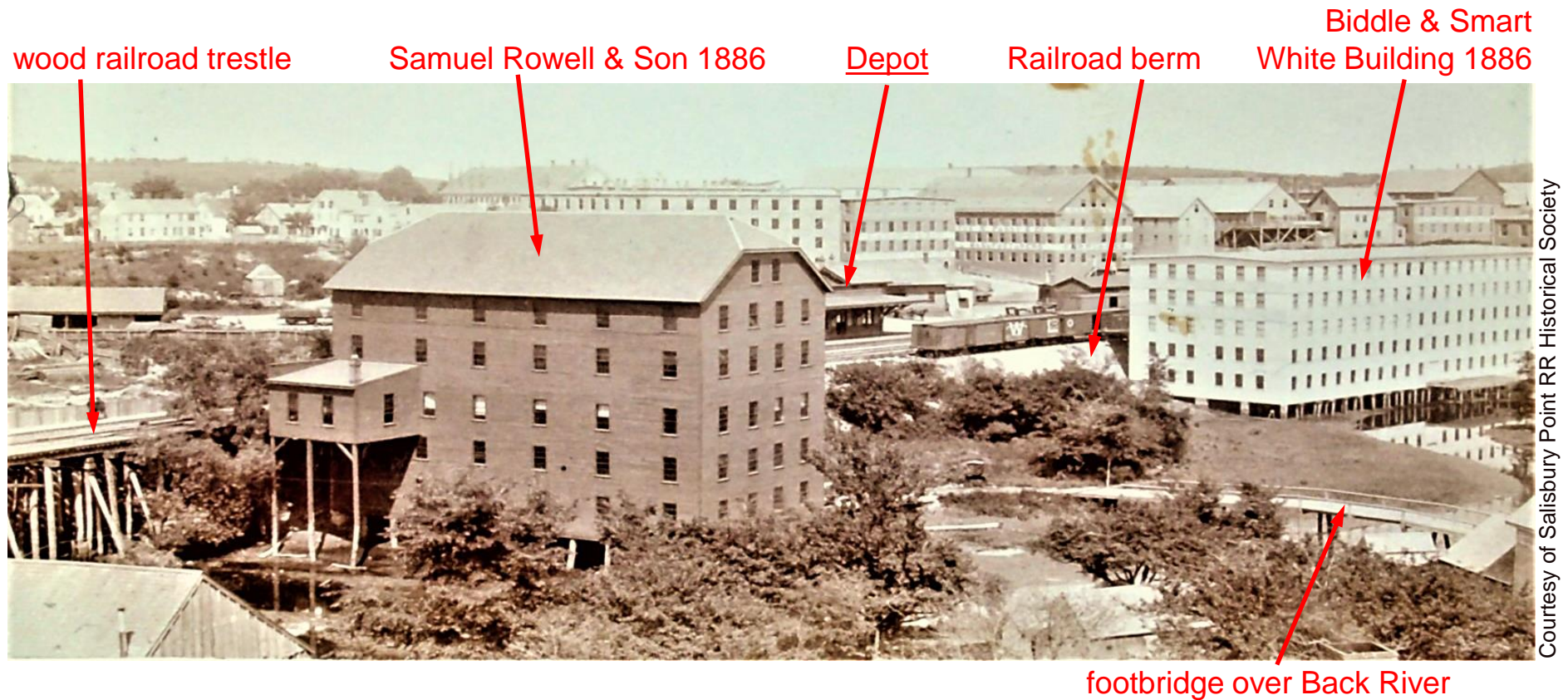
Boston Post 3/16/1889



VIEW LOOKING EAST FROM BEACON HILL.

The author is aware of no Amesbury feature called Beacon Hill. This view is from close to town center where the hill seen descending away from the viewer to the right is sloping from Main Street down into Patten's Hollow. Beyond are factories on Water St. and Carriage Hill, the latter being from before the 1888 fire. The Mansard building filling front center is a business block at the corner of Main & Aubin Streets. This building is pointed out at upper left in the photo on page 16. The above view appears to be from the tower of St. Joseph's church at School & Sparhawk Streets.

Railroad Avenue & Carriage Hill, Pre-1888-Fire, 1886-7

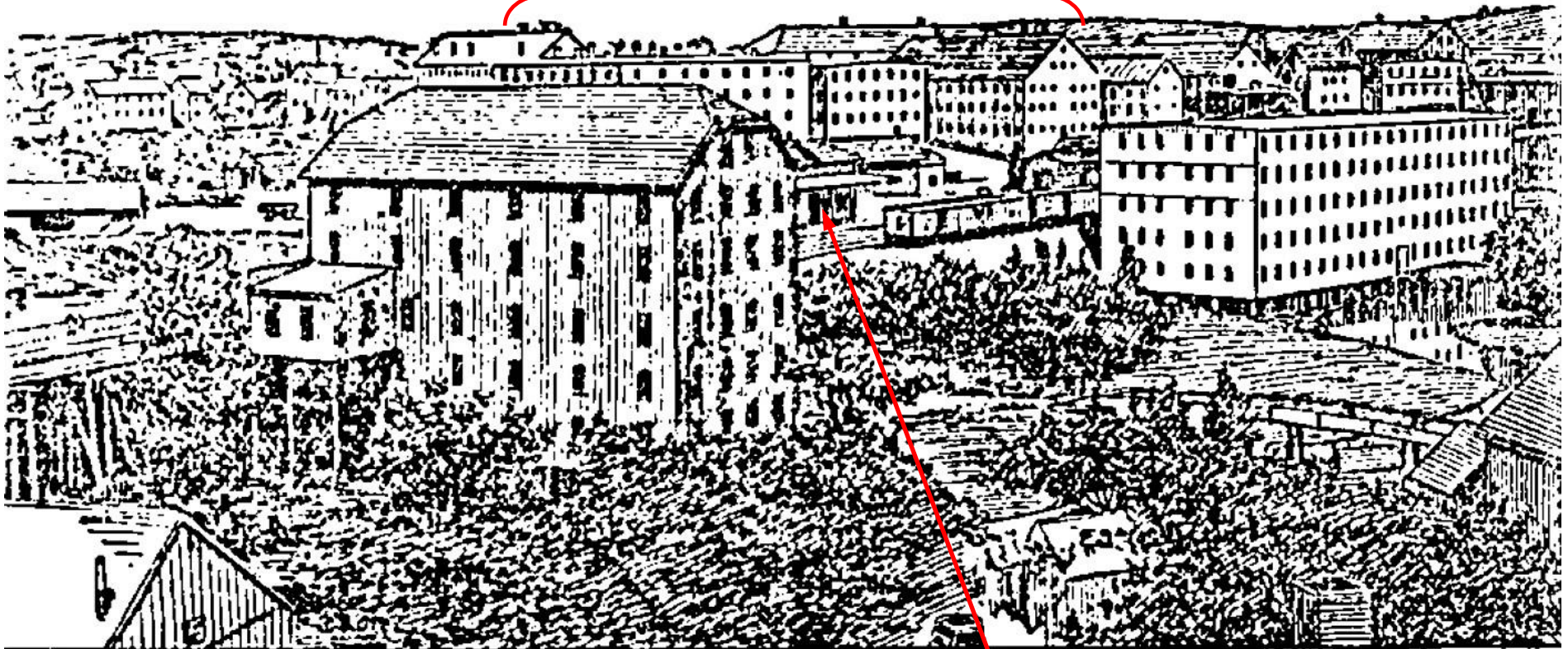


In this photo the passenger depot is still across Back River near Railroad Avenue. Meanwhile, the Samuel Rowell building and Biddle & Smart White Building had been built in 1886. This photo captures the relatively brief period during which this configuration of these three buildings existed, prior to moving the depot.

Railroad Avenue & Carriage Hill, Pre-1888-Fire, 1886-7

Boston Sunday Globe 1/6/1889

See remains of these three buildings on next page



VIEW OF CARRIAGE HILL, AS IT APPEARED BEFORE THE FIRE OF APRIL 1888.

Passenger Depot

This image was based on the photo from the previous page. In addition to the general layout and perspective angle being identical, so are such passing details as the background buildings, the railroad cars, shadow of the White Building on the railroad berm, and the exact arrangement and fullness of foliage throughout the landscape.

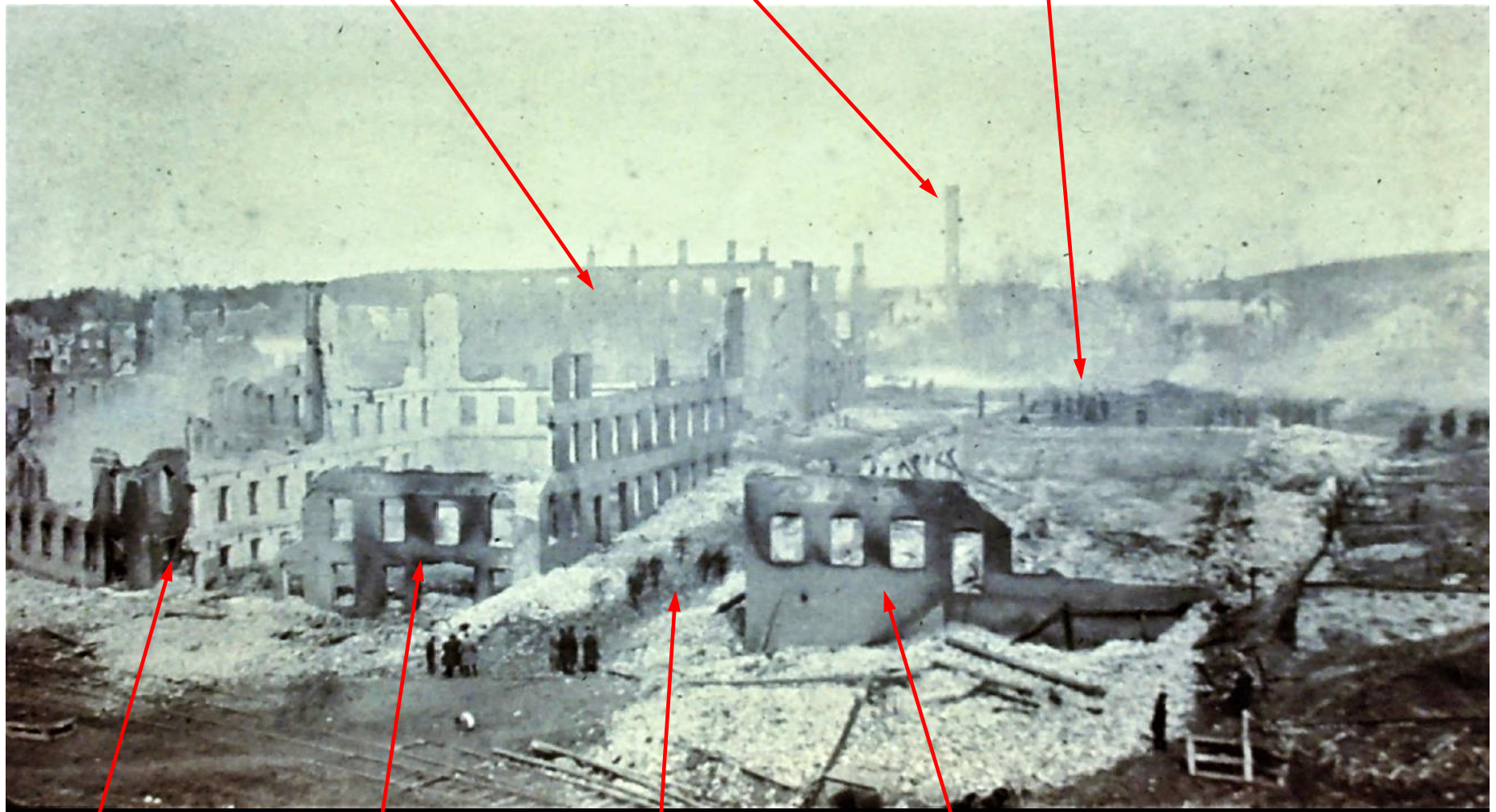
Morning After Carriage Hill Fire of April 5, 1888

looking up Chestnut St. from across the railroad tracks

Post-1885 Babcock large brick building

Powerhouse smokestack at upper end of Babcock property

Crowd of people along Carriage Ave., now Oakland Street



Courtesy of Salisbury Point RR Historical Society

Post-1885 Babcock brick building

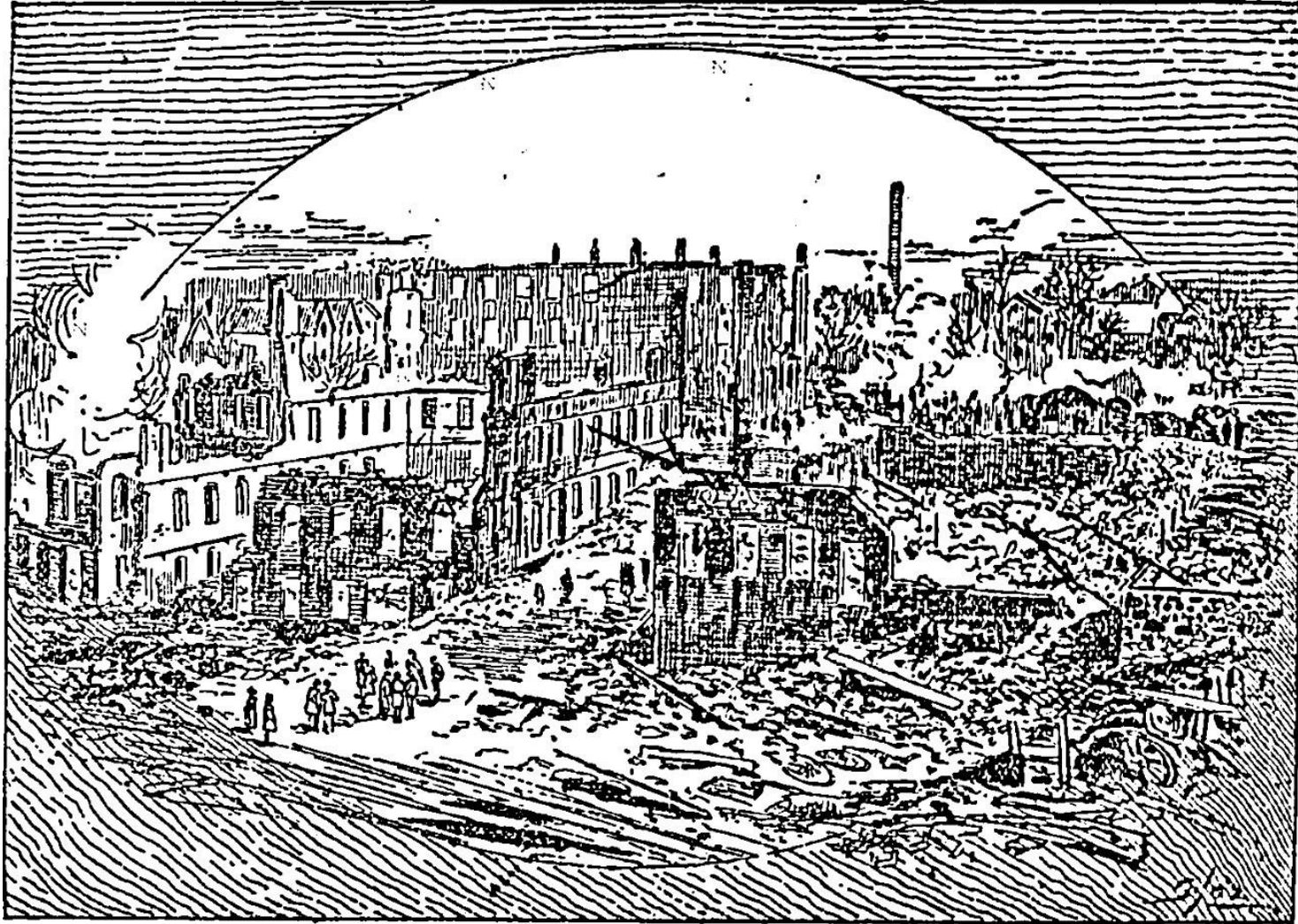
1885 Babcock brick building

Chestnut Street

A. N. Parry building at #1 Carriage Avenue

Morning After Carriage Hill Fire of April 5, 1888

Boston Sunday Globe 1/6/1889



This cut is based on the photo from the previous page. Discernable features exactly match those of the photo, including passing details of smoke plumes and people in the streets. The elevated view of the fire aftermath was photographed from the 1882 Biddle Smart & Co. building previously seen in the 2nd photo.

Water Street & Carriage Hill, Post-1888-Fire, ca. 1890

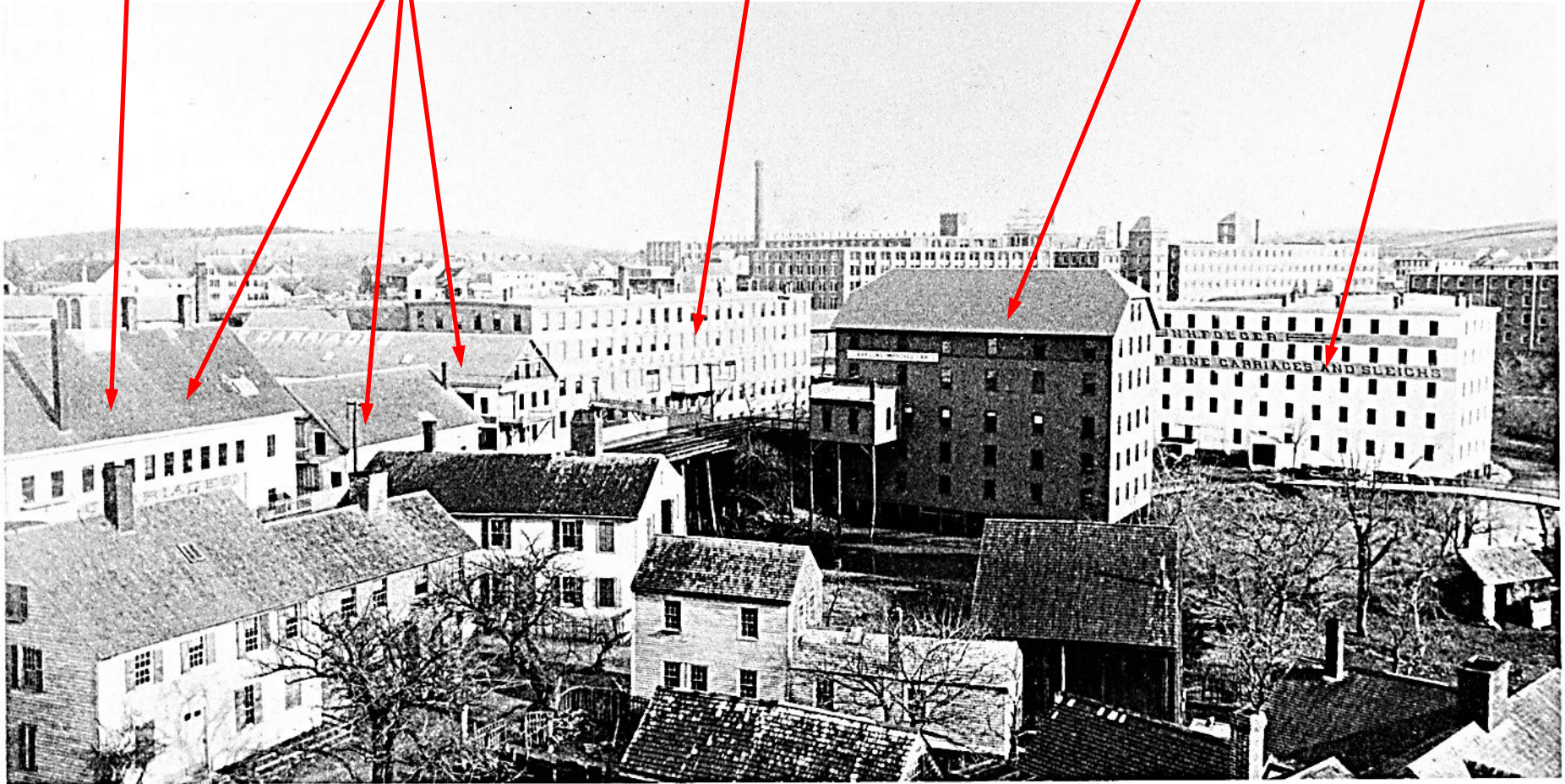
now The Barn
restaurant

C. W. Long
Carriages

Folger & Drummond (1887)

S. Rowell & Son
off Water St. (1886)

N.H. Folger
(1889)

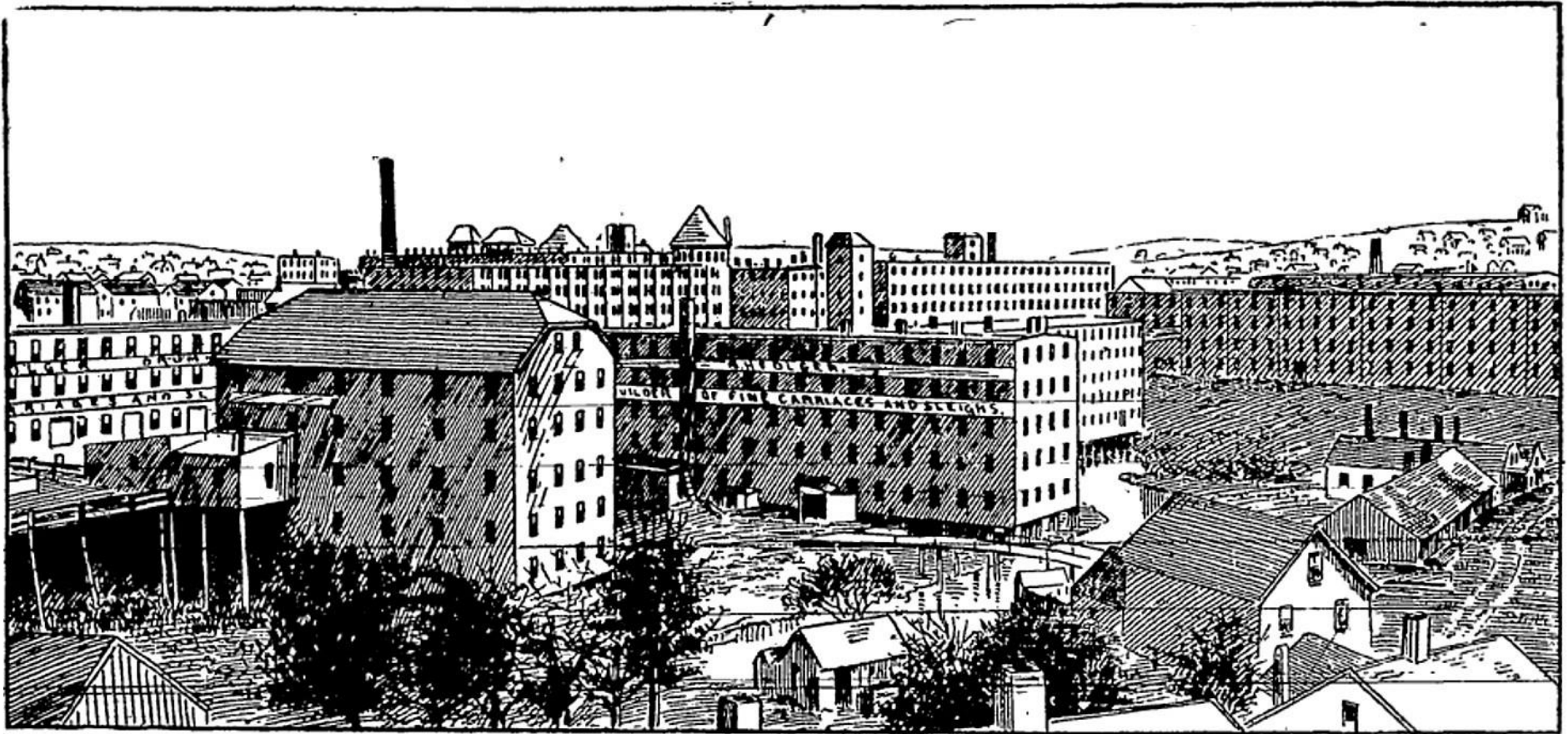


Courtesy of Rick Bartley

This photo shows the industrial landscape of carriage industry buildings from Water Street at lower section, across Back River and the railroad trestle at middle, on down through the east end of Carriage Hill, upper middle and upper right.

Water Street & Carriage Hill, Post-1888-Fire, ca. 1890

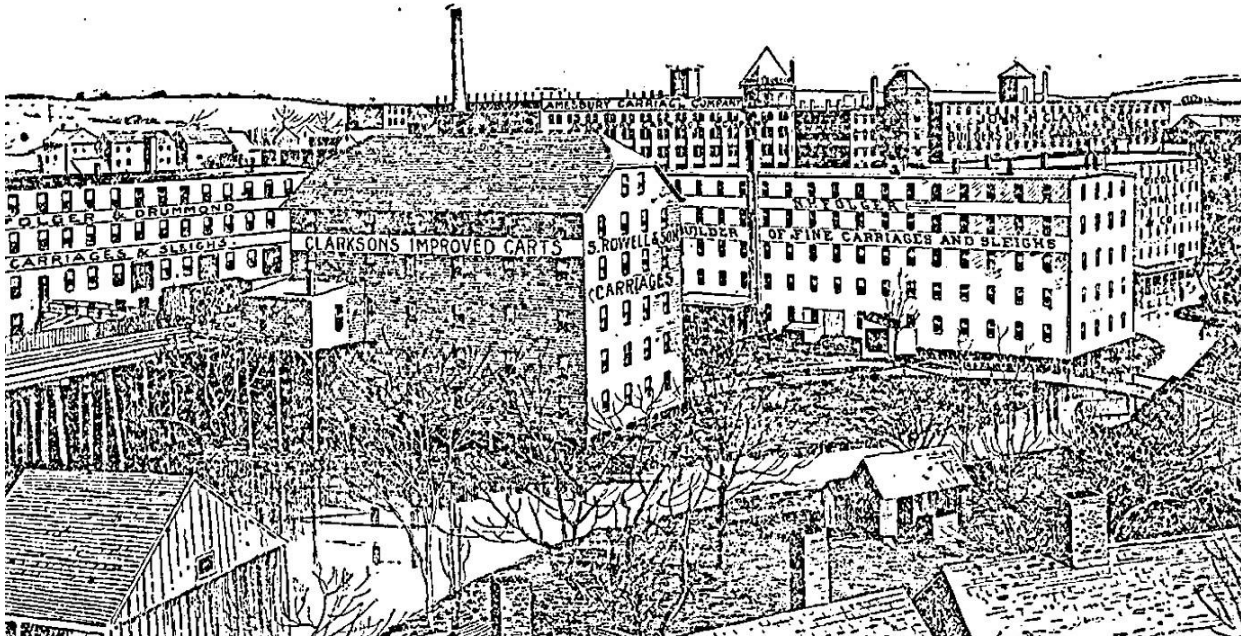
from the Amesbury & Salisbury Villager, Jan. 17, 1889



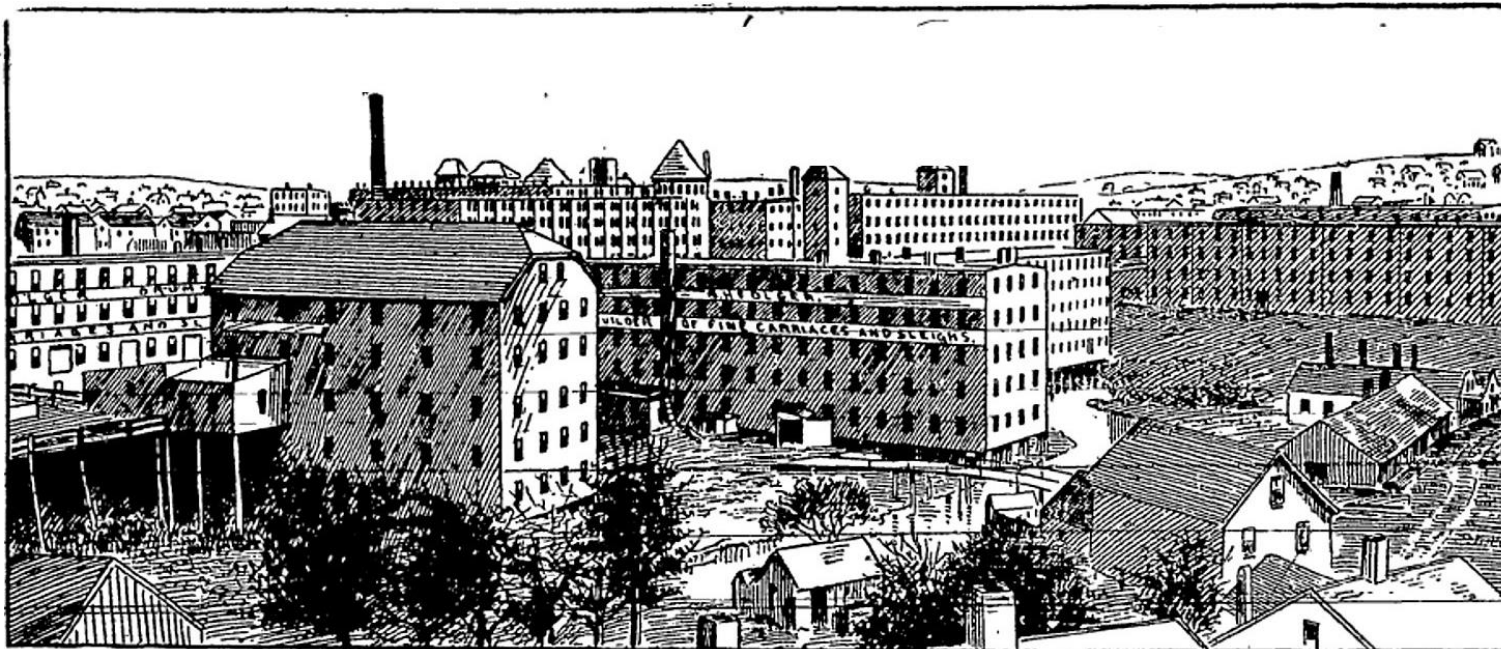
A FEW OF AMESBURY'S CARRIAGE MANUFACTORIES.

This image captures the same landscape as seen in the similar photo on the previous page, but from the slightly different perspective angle of a slightly different photo. The same Water Street buildings can be identified at lower right. Names of some companies appear on their buildings, which in this case really were written on the buildings as shown. The picture above shows more of the Biddle Smart & Co. building seen at mid-height far right.

Two Separate Renderings of the Same Photo

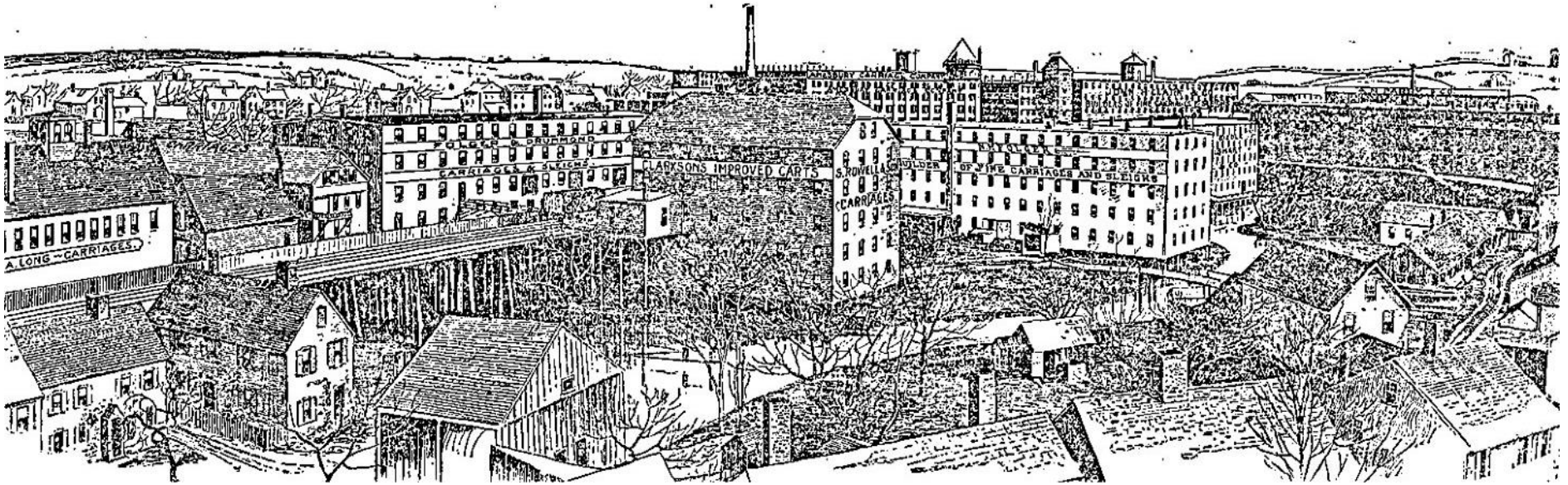


The bottom picture is from the previous page; both are based on the same photo. Perspective angles and small details are identical. Features on a given building align exactly with those on adjacent buildings. Foliage is placed the same in each but is bare of leaves in the top picture. Only artistic styles differ.



Water Street & Carriage Hill, Post-1888-Fire, ca. 1890

Boston Post 3/22/1890



The narrower top picture on the previous page was simply isolated from the center of this larger view above for comparing the identical nature of the two drawings.

This picture captures a wide landscape of carriage industry buildings from Water Street, lower right, across Back River and the railroad trestle at left, on down to eastern Carriage Hill, plus the large Biddle Smart & Co. building on lower Water Street at mid-height far right (difficult to discern in detail). The building above the tracks at mid-height far-left is now The Barn restaurant.

Inbound View of Folger & Drummond ca. 1890

At bottom are carriage loading sheds along Railroad Ave. tracks

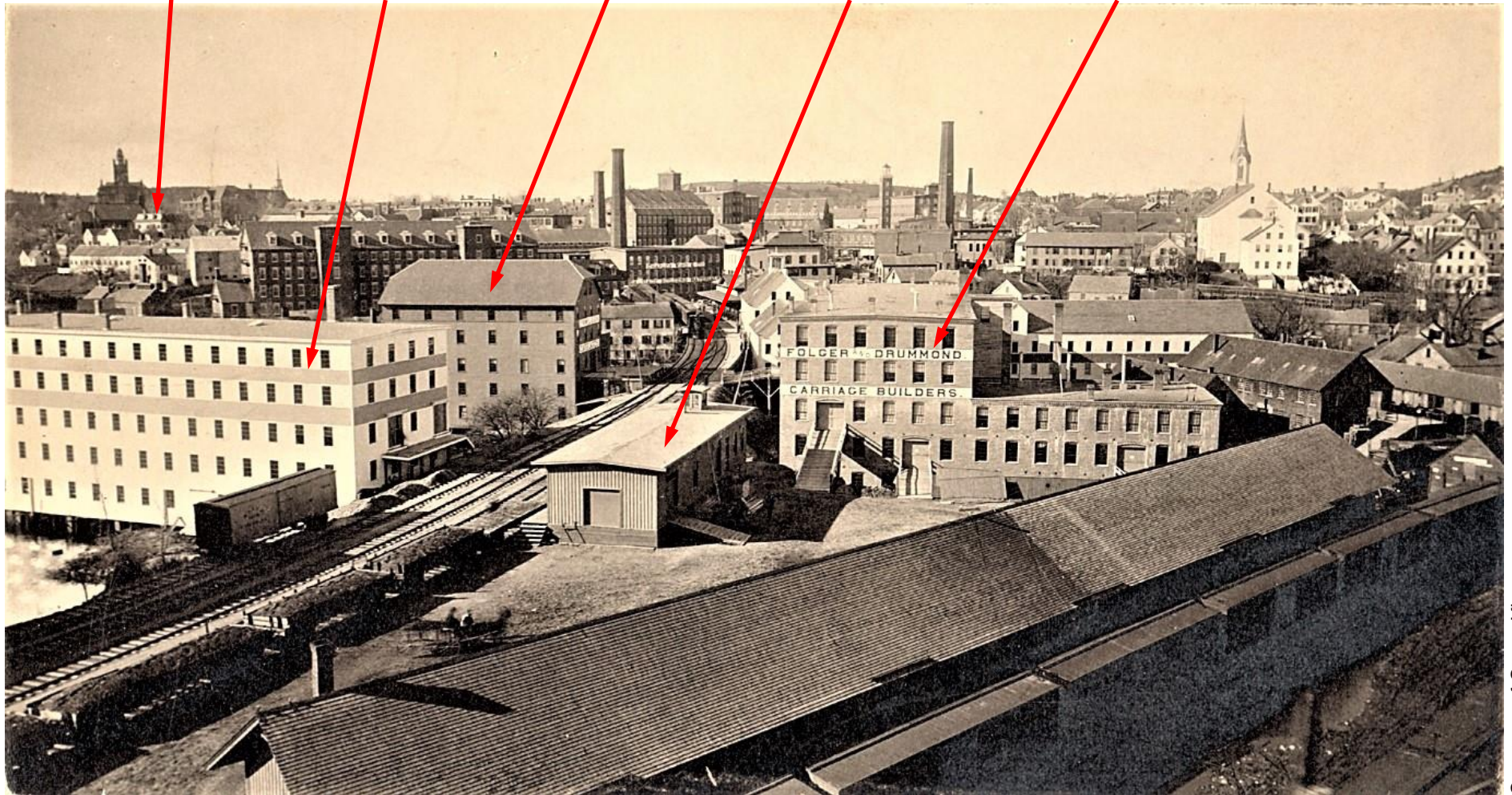
Large Mansard
building (pg. 7)

N. H. Folger (1889)

S. Rowell & Son
(1886)

B&M freight shed

Folger & Drummond (1887)

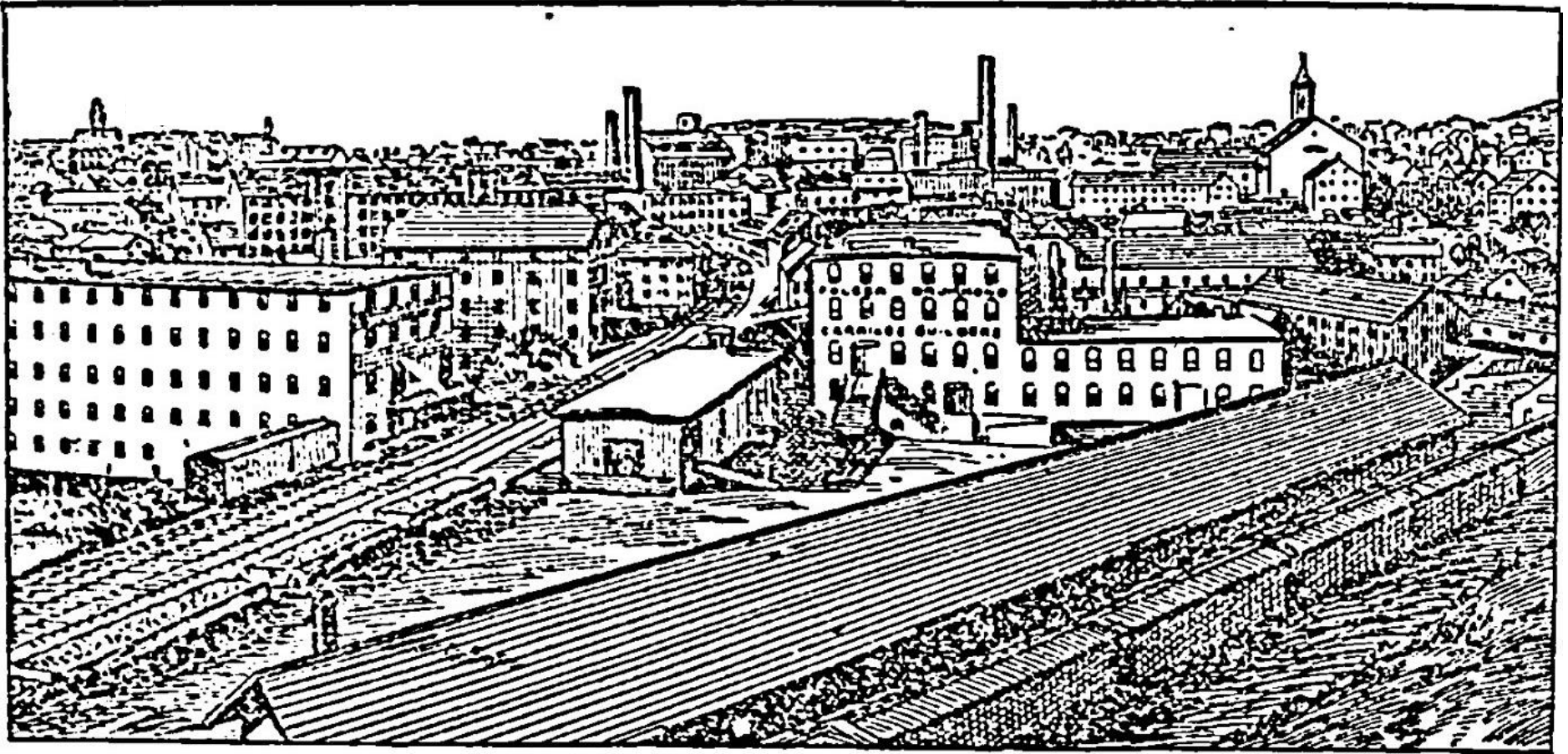


Courtesy of Steve Klomps

This photo shows the elevated railroad bed now surrounded by carriage factories. Far in the background (upper left just below St. Josephs church) is the large Mansard-roofed building at Main & Aubin Streets that dominates the drawing on page 7. Folger & Drummond was located in what is now the back parking lot of the Senior Center.

Inbound View of Folger & Drummond ca. 1890

Boston Sunday Globe 1/6/1889



VIEW FROM CARRIAGE HILL, LOOKING WEST, SHOWING FACTORIES ON THE LINE OF THE BOSTON & MAINE R. R.

This image was based on the photo from the previous page. In addition to the general layout and perspective angle being identical, so are all details and background.

Bottom of Oak Street, ca. 1888

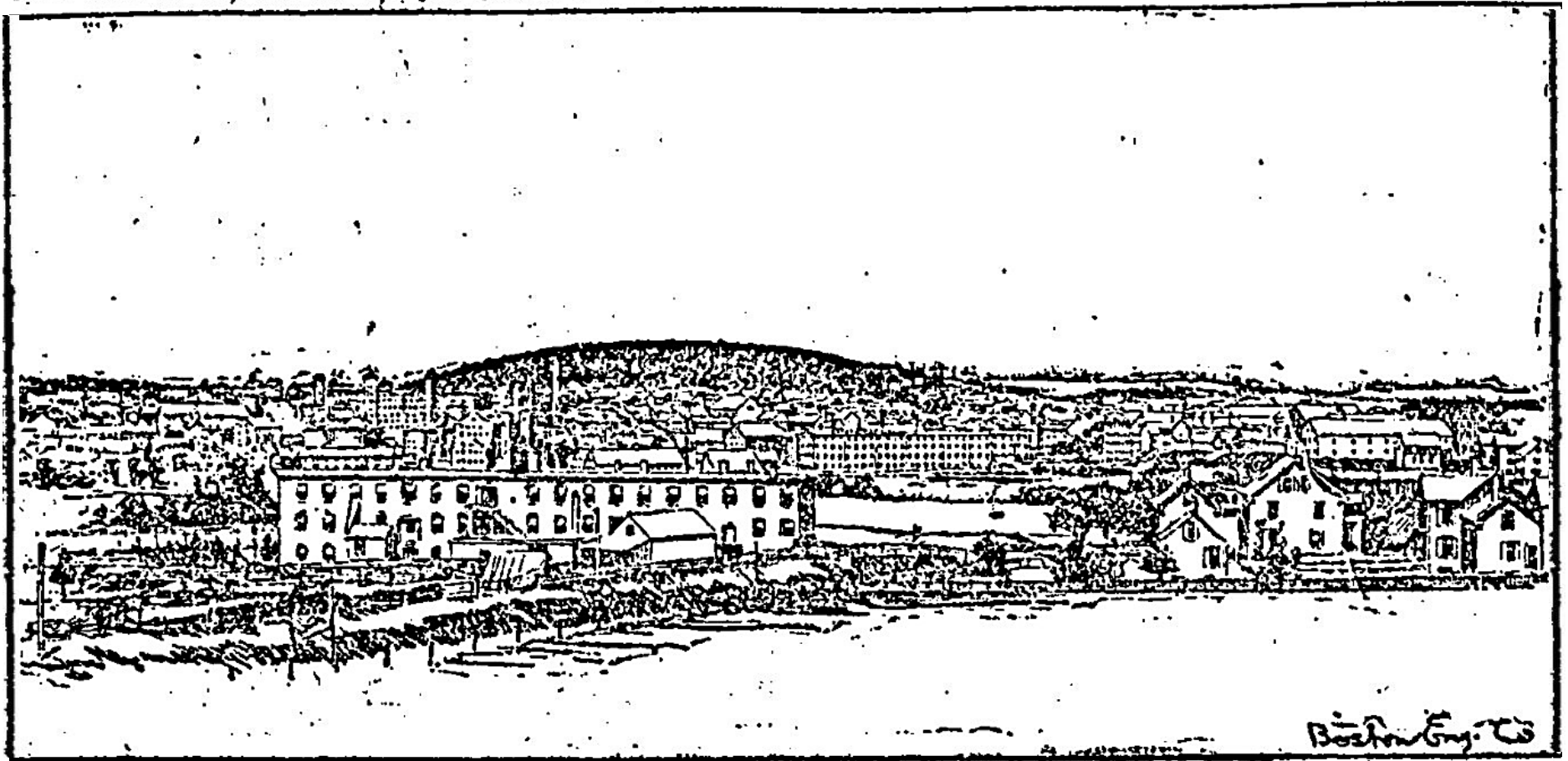


Courtesy of Salisbury Point RR Historical Society

This photo was taken from the general area behind Mount Prospect Cemetery looking toward town, showing the period trend for treeless landscapes, trees being the universal heating fuel. The near long brick building at left, still extant at the bottom of Oak Street, was then called the Electric Light Building, built in 1887 and accompanied by an electric generating plant down the hill behind it along the Powow River. The railroad resides in the dark cut through the hillside at left, with the Oak St. bridge crossing over it. The long brick background building in the middle of the picture is the 1882 Biddle Smart & Co. factory. Houses at mid-height far-right remain on both sides of Oak Street adjacent to the bridge over the rail bed.

Bottom of Oak Street, ca. 1888

Boston Post 3/16/1891



This image was based on the photo from the previous page. In addition to the general layout and perspective angle being identical, so are all details and background. This is one of the drawings signed by Boston Engraving Company

Moses M. Dennett House Near the Top of Powow Hill



House of carriage maker Moses Dennett up Powow Street just below town water tanks.

Looking Southerly Over Town From Powow Hill

Boston Post 3/16/1891

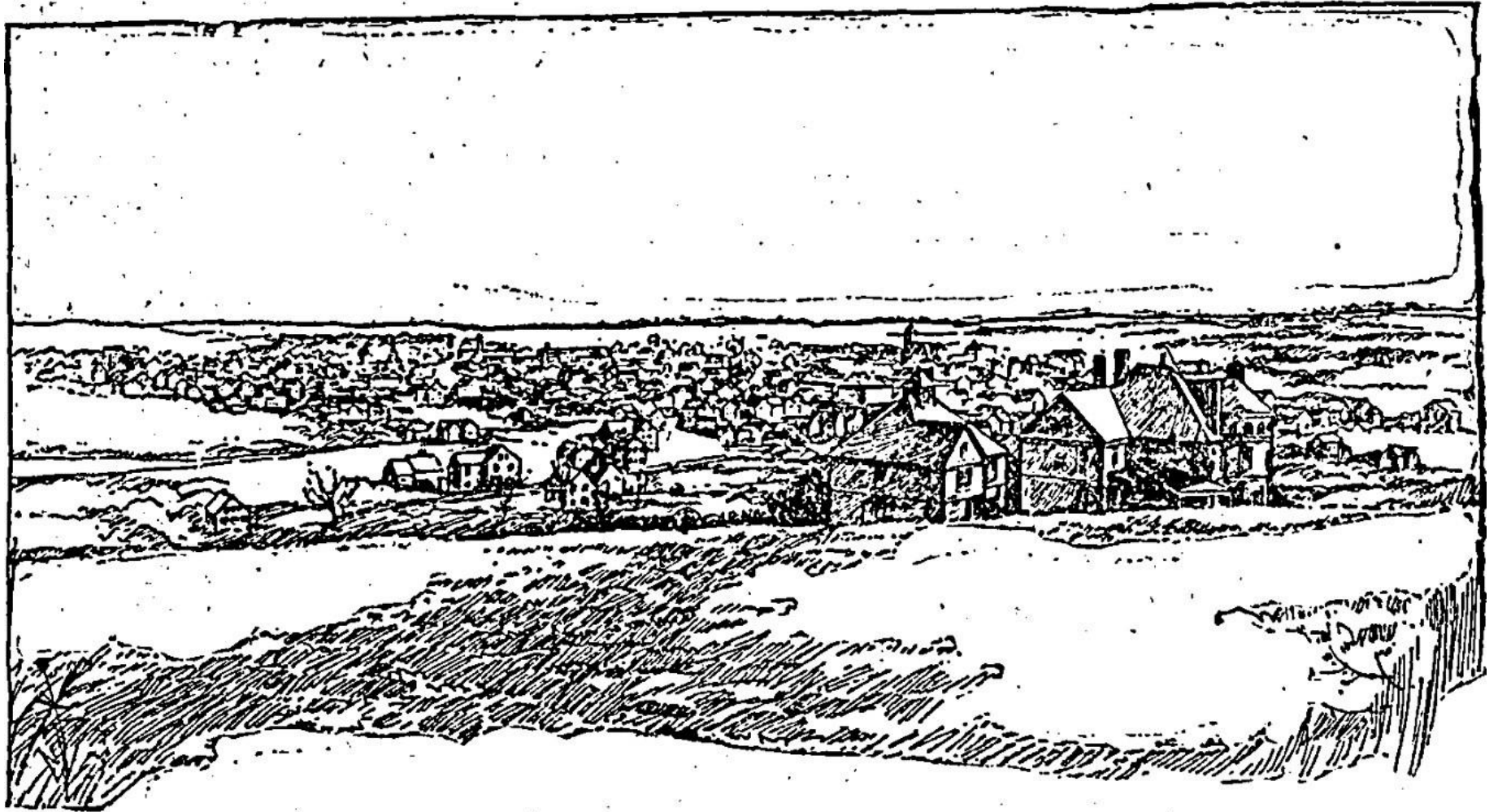


VIEW FROM POWOW HILL.

Looking past the Moses Dennett house to the town below. This area was relatively remote and empty at the time, making a peaceful picnic spot. Period lack of trees allowed a panoramic view from where Moses saw the glow of the 1888 Carriage Hill fire approaching his carriage factory.

Whittier Hill, 1880s

Boston Post 3/16/1889



VIEW FROM WHITTIER HILL.

Whittier Hill rises up at the end of Maple St. and Witcher Court off of Friend Street beyond Whitehall Road. The near houses shown above were likely on upper Maple St. where one such house still exists.