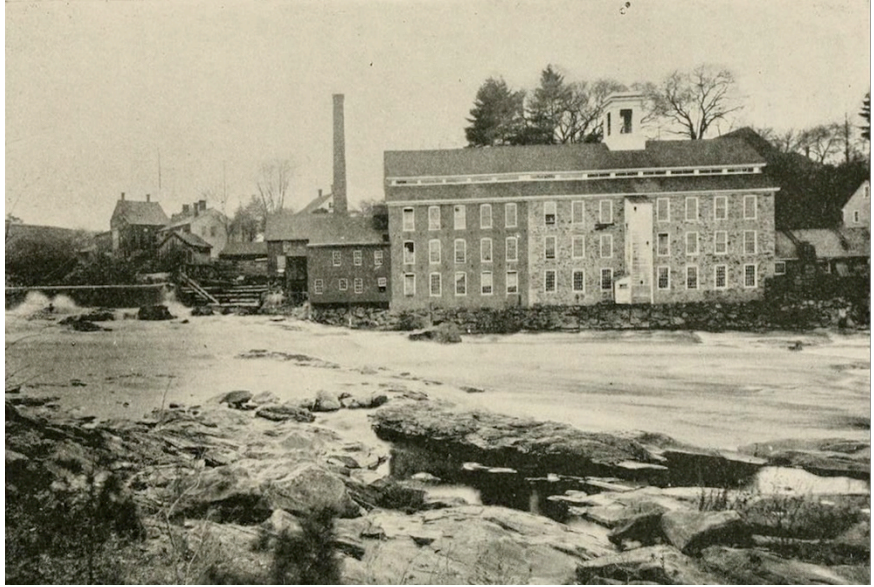


A Brief History of Commercial Street, Boscawen N.H.

It was about 1790 when Jeremiah Chandler built the first gristmill at the lower falls of the Contoocook River near its confluence with the Merrimack River. Located on the south end of Commercial Street between the dam and the future site of the Harris woolen mill. It was only ten years later that Richard Kimball and Jeremiah Abbott introduced the first woolen processing mill in the area, a carding and cloth finishing mill. In 1847, Almon Harris purchased the land these mills occupied and built the three story 75' x 40' stone building pictured here¹.

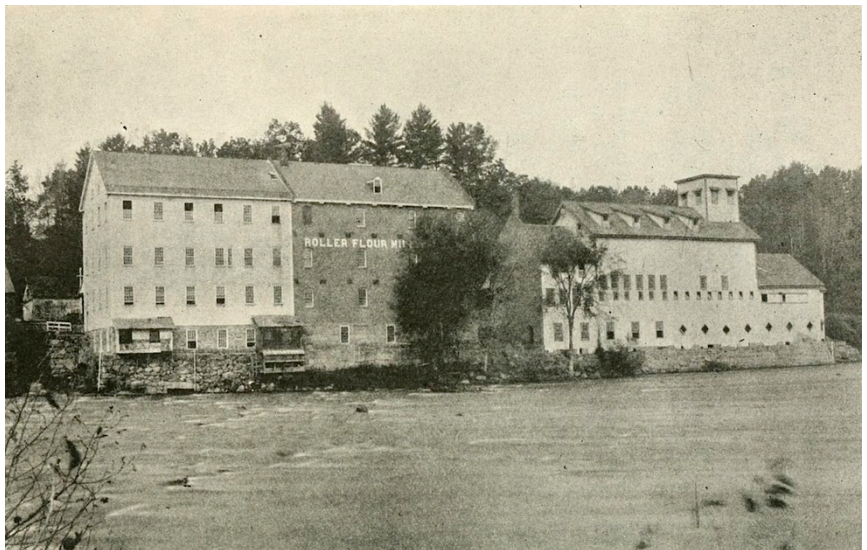


In 1893, his grandsons, Robert Lincoln Harris and Almon Greene Harris made extensive improvements to the mill and incorporated it under the name

Dustin Island Woolen Mills. In 1906 Arthur B. Emery became a partner in the business and by 1911 had formed a new company, Harris-Emery Company, which then purchased the holdings of the Dustin Island Woolen Mills².

In 1820, a sawmill was built a short distance downstream from that first gristmill on a site that would one day become the Stratton & Company flourmill. It's owners, William and Richard Gage, Job and Timothy Abbott and John Eastman would operate the mill in turns. The Gages would run the mill for two weeks, then the Abbott's for a week and then Eastman for a week.

The first flourmill was built in 1857 by Calvin and John C. Gage at the north end of Commercial Street. Within two years of its construction it was sold to John H. Pearson & Co. of Concord. He operated the mills and a warehouse until 1867 when he sold the business to Barron, Dodge & Co., who ran the flour business until 1871, when the Whitcher & Stratton Company was formed. Upon the retirement of Mr. Whitcher, Henry C. Merrill of Manchester joined George L. Stratton and William K. MacFarland to form Stratton, Merrill & Co.; they rebuilt and modernized the mills.



At the turn of the 20th century the Stratton & Company mill was the largest flourmill in

New England, producing three hundred barrels of flour and five hundred bushels of corn meal daily. The land and buildings of Stratton & Company were sold in 1953 to the Boscawen Development Corporation.

In 1942, Nathan Brezner acquired the old New Hampshire Spinning Mill on East Canal Street in Penacook and converted it to a modern tannery. The Brezner Tanning Corporation was New Hampshire's largest and most successful tannery from its establishment in 1942 until 1987 when production ended at the facility. In 1952 the company was sold to the Allied Kid Company of Boston, a large conglomerate engaged in the manufacturing and tanning of goatskins, in Wilmington, Delaware. At the time of the Brezner purchase, Allied Kid had plans to expand production to include upper leather sides, a higher quality leather made from cowhides. To find the space necessary, the old Stratton & Company buildings and the Harris Emery Woolen Mill on Commercial Street were purchased. The Stratton property was used as a hide receiving station while the preparation of split leathers took place in the former Harris woolen mill.

In 1972 the Allied Kid Company and Brezner Tanning Corporation merged to become Allied Leather Company and by the mid 1970's had become a part of the General Hose Company of New York. In 1978 Lowengart Corporation, a subsidiary of Feuer Leather Corporation of New York acquired Allied Leather. Through the early 1980's millions of dollars was spent to increase production and modernize equipment, only to end in bankruptcy in 1987. Allied cited a tight labor market and state environmental regulation as reasons. The buildings were left abandoned for more than ten years during the bankruptcy proceedings.

On April 8, 1997 the Allied Leather Corporation filed a quitclaim deed transferring all Commercial Street properties and buildings to the Hannah Dustin Holdings, LLC. On December 6, 1999 Hannah Dustin Holdings and the State of New Hampshire entered in to a "Covenant Not To Sue" agreement, contingent in part upon the Covenant Holder's participation in the Brownfields Program.

Today the Town of Boscawen owns much of the property along the south side of Commercial Street.



**View from Dustin Island – Stratton & Co. on the right, Harris-Emery Woolen Mill on the left
c. 1890**



View from Dustin Island Harris – Emery Company c. 1940's



Looking south on Commercial St. Harris - Emery Woolen Mill c. 1940



Stratton & Co. Flour Mill, Penncook, N. H.

Looking south on Commercial St. Stratton & Co. Flour Mill



Stratton & Co.



Stratton & Co.



Stratton & Co.



Stratton & Co.



Stratton & Co.



Harris Emery Woolen Mill c. 2014



Harris Emery Woolen Mill c. 2014

