

Goshket produced by
Stephen F. Sena, at UHVTC-L
1987

F · O · R · W · O · R · D



DURING the frenzy accompanying the Winnepesaukee River Urban Renewal project, from the earliest proposals in the mid-1960's to the official completion in June 1975, the state-of-the-art wisdom of those days decreed that "old" was bad, should be torn down and removed to make way for "new," which was modern and good, and functional. Today, in hindsight, many disagree.

An unsentimental review of what Laconia's downtown actually looked like in the late 1960's discloses an overpowering number of appalling, run-down, rotten and decomposing, unsafe and unusable old buildings, most dating from the period immediately after the great fire of 1860 which started in the stables of the Cerro Gordo House (about where Melnick's is today) and, in short order, reduced the entire area of the old settlement known as Meredith Bridge from Water Street on the west and Mill

Street on the east, all the way down to the river to smouldering rubble, save only for the shops of the Laconia Car Company and the 1823 brick Belknap Mill building.

Nearly 130 years from that fiery catastrophe, which engulfed the heart of the fledgling town a scant five years after its chartering and renaming as "Laconia," we pay tribute to the brave men of Niagara Engine Company of Lake Village, whose heroic efforts saved the Car Shops on Water Street. "This accomplished, they started for Mill Street (which was) a roaring furnace, fierce flames on each side and the roadway choked with the debris of burning buildings. When the leaders of the ropes arrived at the corner, they hesitated...hardly daring to proceed. But Foreman James M. Foss shouted, sternly, "Take her ahead, boys!" and no second order was necessary. Through the inferno, over fallen timbers the boys plunged and succeeded in getting to the

rear of the Belknap Mills, where for the second time that day they showed the crowd how fires are fought by real firemen." (Historical Sketches of Lakeport, New Hampshire, by Horace G. Whittier, Lakeport: 1915). And so, the courage of the Niagaras resulted in the preservation of the structure we cherish today as the oldest largely unaltered brick textile mill in New England; and, by extension, in the United States.

To reiterate, urban renewal in the late 1960's and early 1970's was by no means all wrong. By the professional standards of the time, however, the governing philosophy was "demolish everything and start over." In the process, a number of imposing and graceful old structures were lost. Among them: the Moulton Opera House on Bank Square; the Smith Block (Oscar A. Lougee Company) at the south end of the Main Street Bridge; and the Mill's neighbor for over a hundred years, the 1862 Parker Block, with its graceful Mansard roof and dormer windows (home to Knight & Huntress, Knight & Robinson, the Smith Department Store, the Carrol and Lee's Cut Rate stores, and at the end the Emanuels' Quality Market).

Thanks to the stubborn persistence of a small band of volunteers, however, the Belknap and Busiel Mills were spared--though just barely from the wrecker's ball. There is high drama in the court injunctions obtained while the historically interesting outbuildings of both mills were actually in the process of being knocked down, and in the commitment of one local businessman who unflinchingly mortgaged his business to raise the funds necessary to meet matching grants required by the federal bureaucracy.

As you turn to the absorbing, inspiring story of the Belknap Mill, I think you will thrill to the narrative deftly woven by Esther B. Peters, another of the Mill Society's founders and a continuing, faithful supporter, mover and shaker in behalf of the

Mill throughout the years. Judith Buswell, Executive Director, has summarized the current activities and future aims, goals, and ambitions of the Mill Society in her customary highly competent, pungent and innovative manner. The photographs which illustrate this booklet are drawn from a number of sources, but mention should be made of the striking historical images from the Paul Morin collection on permanent loan to the Mill. It is impossible to list here all of the friends, benefactors, volunteers, staff, current and former trustees, and others whose devotion to the cause of the Belknap Mill Society has been responsible for the solid foundations, successful growth, and dynamic vision achieved by the Society. The contributions of Earl O. Anderson, Gilbert S. Center, Frank DeNormandie, Beth Ide, Bert Morin, and Robert St. Louis must, however, be mentioned, along with those of former executive directors Amanda Simpson Hoitt, Richard Gehrts, and Margaret Lindsey Markot, longtime trustee Malcolm Harrington, and security officer James Currier.

Finally, the Mill Society gratefully acknowledges the initiative, technical skills, and consummate patience of Stephen Sena, whose considerable abilities as a graphic arts craftsman are amply demonstrated by this booklet, undertaken by him as a senior graphic arts project at the Laconia branch of the New Hampshire Vocational-Technical College, and almost an entire school year in preparation.

We trust that you will enjoy the words and pictures of the Belknap Mill story as you admire Steve's typography and layouts. Won't you join in support of the Society's exciting plans for the future by becoming one of our members, one of our volunteers, or by making as generous a financial contribution as possible?

April, 1987

Warren D. Huse
Trustee





State of New Hampshire historical marker.

IN 1795, Daniel Avery built a dam on the Winnepesaukee River, just above the point where the old Province Road, which ran from Portsmouth to Canada, crossed the river on the Gilmanton-Meredith border. The Revolutionary War had been over for twelve years, and an increasing number of farms were appearing along the gentle slopes of the Lakes Region. A small but thriving settlement to serve their needs was growing at what was to be known as Meredith Bridge. In the area around the dam, several small mills were constructed, taking advantage of the water power of the river. A grist mill, for grinding grain, and a saw mill were known to be among them. These mills are not to be confused with the factories and factory system which came later.

Events in faraway places tend to have a ripple effect. The Industrial Revolution had already begun in England, and under the Mercantile Policy all raw materials were shipped to England and returned to the Americas as finished goods. However, in the titanic struggle between England, and France under Napoleon, each side sought to keep the other from trade with the then young United States. President Thomas Jefferson's embargo policy of 1807 further complicated affairs, and the War of 1812 forced the new

state to be dependent on what goods it could produce. This encouraged the construction of cotton, woolen and linen mills throughout the United States. New England's abundance of rivers, offering potential water power, made it a prime location for daring entrepreneurs to form companies and build factories.

On Friday, January 23, 1970, Gilbert S. Center, a local historian, spoke at a Laconia Chamber of Commerce Luncheon. The subject of his discussion was the early history of the mills in Laconia. The following is quoted from his speech: "According to the Baldwin papers, a series of recollections written in the 1880's, a local lawyer, Henry Orne, returned from the South in the early 1800's with the idea that American capitalists could make money by investing in cotton machinery. His suggestion bore fruit in the formation of the Meredith Cotton and Woolen Manufacturing Company in 1811. (Note. The first successful cotton mill in America was founded in 1790 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island by Samuel Slater. The first in New Hampshire was formed by Charles Barrett, a former employee of Slater in the town of New Ipswich, in 1805. Before that time cotton had not been used to any great degree in New Hampshire.) Attached to the warrant dated July 3rd which called for the first meeting were the names of Stephen Perley, Daniel Tucker, and John A. Harper. The meeting was held on August 5th, and on the site of the present brick mill they constructed and equipped a wooden mill. A great deal of the supplies were procured from local resources. During the summer months goods from Boston, for example, had to be boated via the Middlesex Canal to Lowell MA., and from there up the Merrimack River to Concord where they were brought to this location by teams. During the winter, with the waterways closed goods were brought in by teams from Dover and Portsmouth. The Mill did not begin full operation until 1815. The Merrill Gazetteer printed by the state of New Hampshire in

1817 described Meredith Bridge as "A handsome village containing about fifteen dwelling houses, several stores, mechanic shops, and a cotton factory." (It is interesting to note that, under the leadership of Henry Clay and James A. Calhoun, Congress passed the first tariff act to protect textiles. This was done in part because, the Napoleonic Wars now over, foreign manufacturers were exporting their goods into the United States.) The original wooden mill was destroyed by fire on February 13, 1823. Some confusion seems to have arisen about exactly when the present brick mill was constructed. Some give the date as 1823, while others give 1828 as the date. At any rate, by 1828 the mill was ready for occupancy. Much of the timber used in the construction was taken from the surrounding neighborhood. At that time the south side of the river, from what is now Union Avenue to the foot of Prescott Hill was heavily wooded, and it is from those trees that the beams were made. It would have taken a 125 ft. tree to make a beam the size and length of those in the mill. The latest fire-preventing construction techniques were used in the new mill. Square corners of the beams were shaved off, and another important feature for those days was the separate

brick-enclosed staircase which traversed the four floors. The Baldwin papers point out that the brick used in construction was produced on an island where the railroad later crossed the river. The original bell, (made by George Holbrook former apprentice to Paul Revere and former Meredith Bridge resident) having been destroyed in the fire, was recast by him. Mr. Holbrook was then living in Medway, MA., and local citizens donated fifty silver dollars to go into the recasting in order to enhance the bell's tone.

The new tariff law helped the infant industry prosper, and single women from family farms in the hills found the life attractive; in contrast to the isolation of the farm, there was the sociability of an "in-town" life, plus a cash income and to quote the Pageant of America, "The American factory girl in the early days belonged to the same type that now (1928) fills the ranks of the school teachers or stenographers."

In 1842 the railroad reached Concord, and in 1848, Boston, Concord, and Montreal rail service reached Laconia, then still Meredith Bridge (it became Laconia by an act of the legislature in June 1855, and included not only the west, or Meredith side of the river, but also parts of Gilford, and thus the county seat). In 1843 there had been

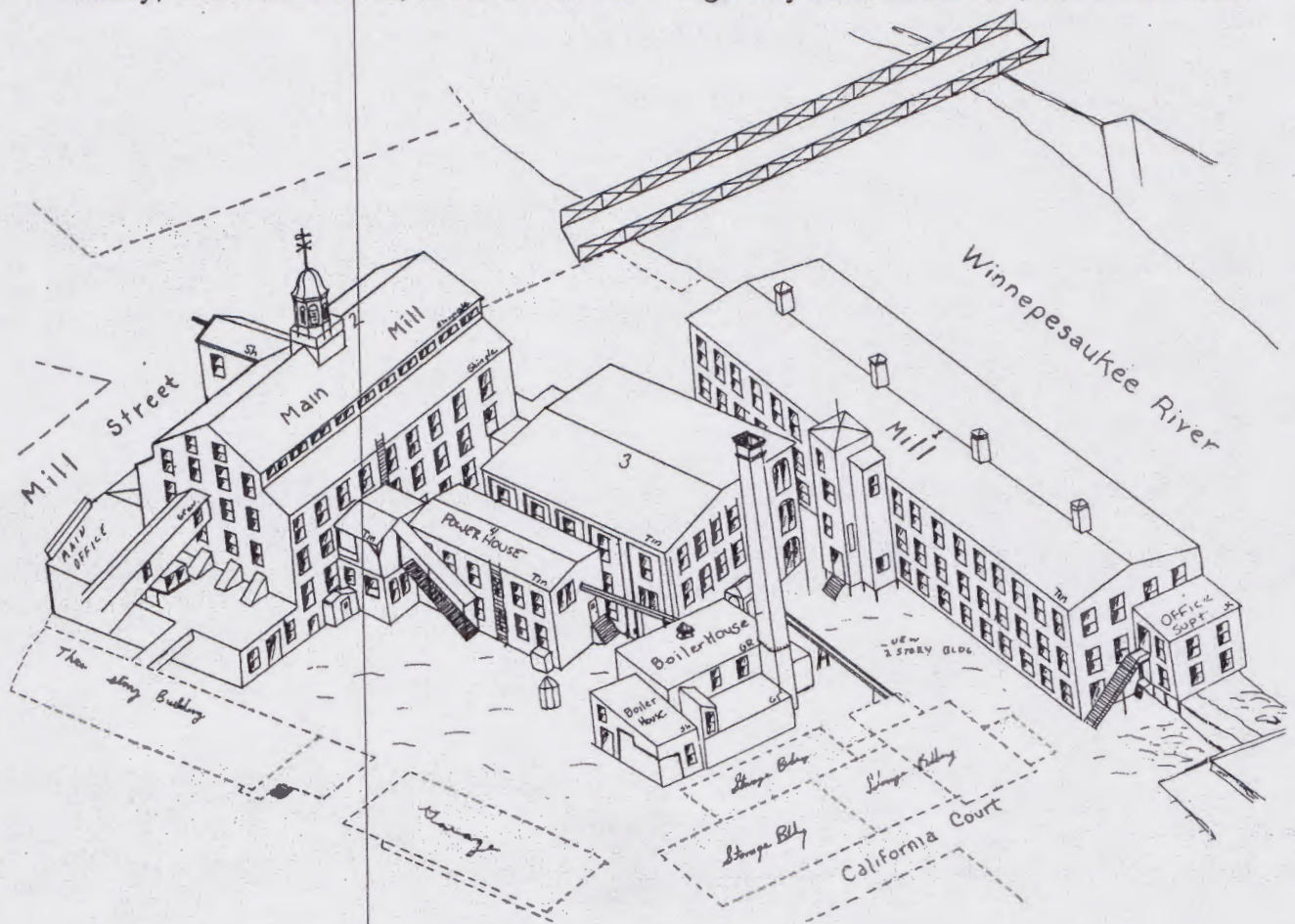


Women factory workers at the Mill in the early 1900's.

financial panic and the mill went under the auctioneer's hammer for \$12,000. The mill evidently was reorganized and business went on, for the Gazetteer, "New Hampshire as it Is" published in Claremont in 1856, states, "Meredith Bridge is the principal village (of Meredith). It is connected by a bridge over the Winnepesaukee River with Gilford Village, and both are called Meredith Bridge. This is a flourishing manufacturing village, and the seat of much business. On the Meredith side are a large, well constructed and handsome hotel, a meeting house, belonging to the Congregational Society, a large car factory in which are employed about 75 men, a pail and bedstead factory, two textile mills, a cotton mill in

which 70 operatives are employed, the property of which is estimated at \$30,000, and a woolen factory in which 30 hands are employed, capital \$10,000. There are also ten stores, two jewelery shops, and two furniture warehouses. The county of Belknap has recently purchased a farm on the Meredith side, and has erected upon it spacious and convenient buildings for the support and employment of county paupers. A county jail, to be built of granite throughout, is also in the process of erection on the same grounds."

In the meantime, a very important development was taking place in the valley of the Winnepesaukee River. Fabled Yankee ingenuity came to the fore, when the Aikens



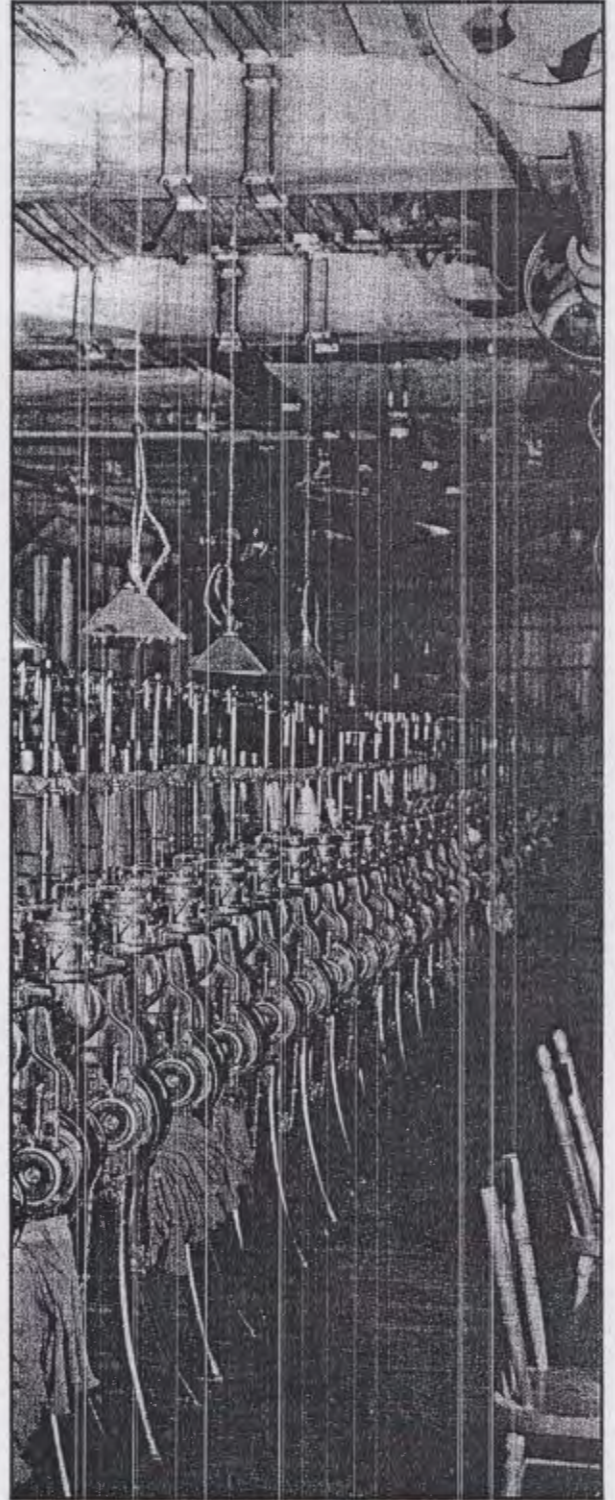
The mill complex as it looked according to insurance papers dated 1913 with 150 workers.

of Franklin developed the first practical knitting machine in 1856. In the thirty years following, patents were awarded to six Laconians, including Walter H. Abel, who has been called the most prominent inventor of straight-latch knitting machines. Knitting machine needles were also improved, and by the turn of the century nine local residents were issued patents on these.

In 1885, three years after the Laconia and Lake Village Horse Railroad was started, Grover Cleveland became President and the Statue of Liberty arrived in New York harbor. This same year J.P. Morin organized the Belknap Mills Corporation in Lakeport and purchased half interest in the mill. Business data from this era is scarce, but the town was growing so that by 1893, with the strong backing of the Jewetts and others, a charter was granted to the *City of Laconia*, which had enlarged itself by annexing Lake Village (until then part of Gilford), and the strip running up to the Weirs, where the old Indian fishing village of Aquedoctan had become a flourishing summer resort.

By the end of the century, Warren D. Huse and John S. Crane had developed several important improvements in knitting machines, and in 1907 the Laconia Needle Company was founded under the management of Huse and his two sons. The Winnepesaukee River Basin area had become the center of the knitting machine industry, and in 1910 the Scott & Williams Company moved to Laconia from Philadelphia. This company is said to have contributed more inventions to knitting machines than any other company in the world. By this time J.P. Morin had purchased the entire plant. Not only the mill, but all the ancillary brick and wooden buildings that had grown up around it, including the land and water rights. The whole business was incorporated as the Belknap Mills Corporation under the laws of the State of Rhode Island.

Those were balmy days for the country and for the growing city of Laconia. The genial William Howard Taft was President

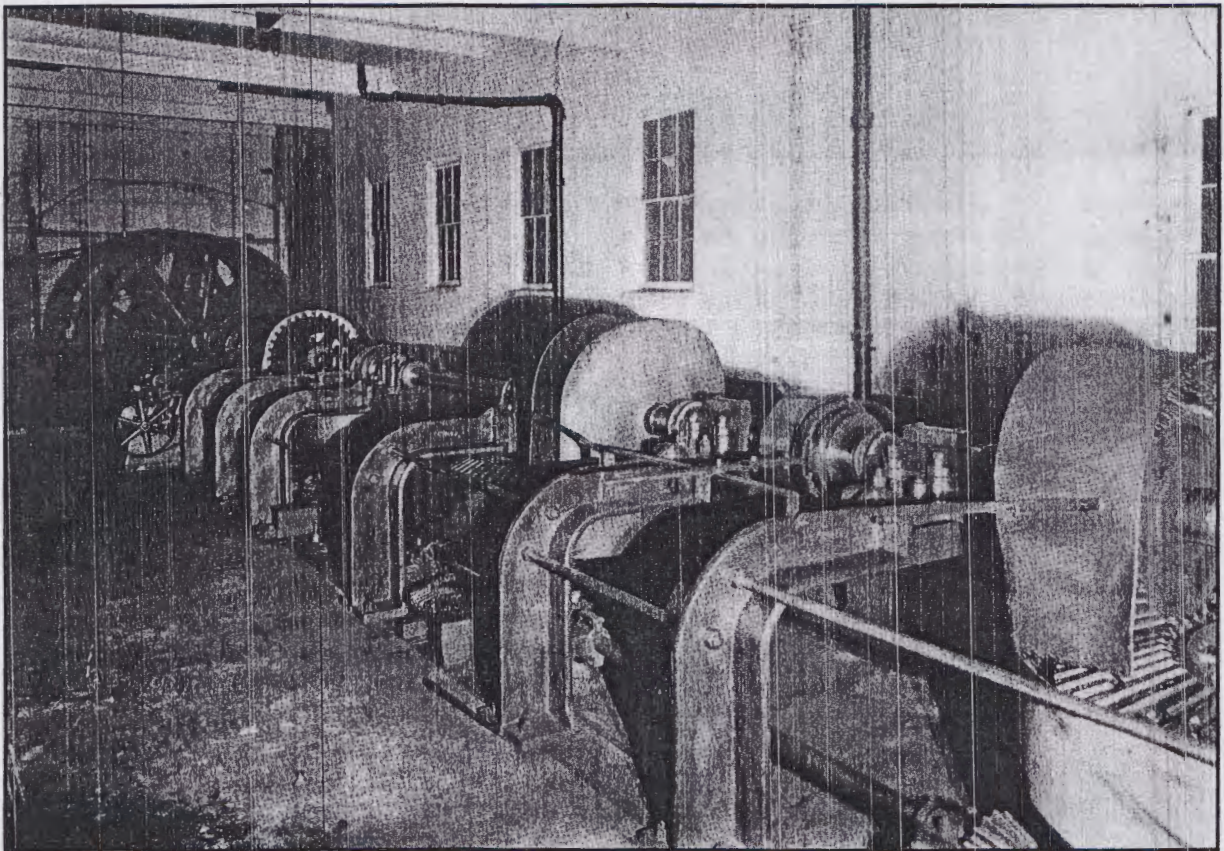


Knitting machinery in the Mill in the early 1900's.

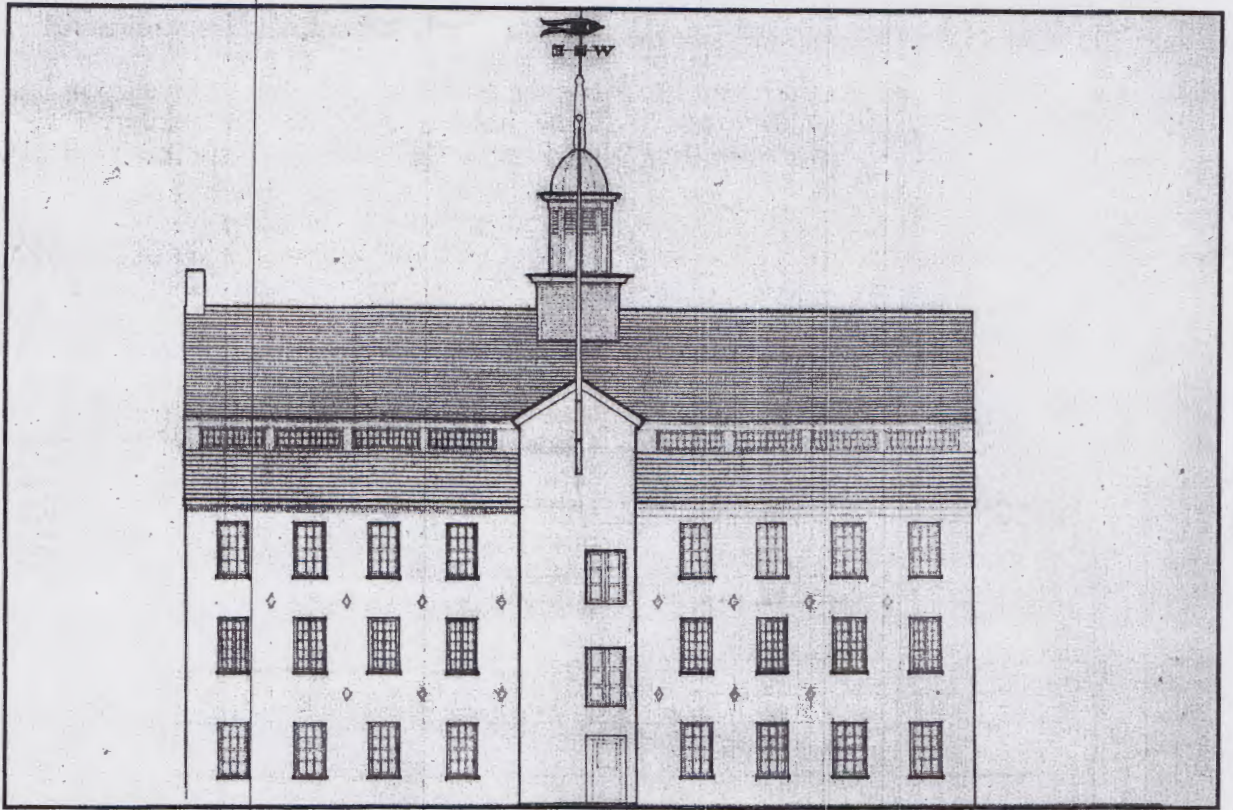
and the honorable Henry B. Quinby of Laconia was the governor of New Hampshire. In 1912, Mr. Morin repurchased the entire stock of Belknap Mills Corporation and mechanized the entire plant, installing the latest state-of-the-art hydraulic power equipment. This equipment, with its three-turbine, mortised-gear generating system is of a type which is now virtually non-existent. The electric generator was capable of producing more than enough power necessary to run the plant and for a time the company sold the excess power to neighboring businesses. These generators, which were in operation up until 1969 can currently be viewed at the Mill, and could still be activated should the need arise.

For more than 15 years the Morin family held controlling interest in the corporation. J.P. Morin was president, his son Frank C.

Morin vice president and superintendent, and a second son Alphonse J. Morin held the secretary and treasurer positions. In 1929, however the controlling interest was sold to the Contoocook Mills and its president, W.B. Weisblatt, took charge of the joint corporation. This new company soon merged with the Sulloway Mills of Franklin and became the Belknap-Sulloway Mills Corporation. For a number of years ownership of the Mill was also held by a New York corporation. Information concerning the actual years and nature of these mergers and takeovers is vague. It is understood that throughout the years from the late 1920's up to the mid 1960's the Mill continued its operations, producing high-quality yarn and hosiery products known throughout the industry.



Hydraulic power generating equipment in the Mill as it looked in 1919.



• RESTORATION •

FOR more than 100 years the Mill withstood harsh New England weather and constant use with no structural damage. Standing boldly along the edge of the river, the Mill could have continued changing ownership, or slowly slipped into decay were it not for the arrival of urban renewal in Laconia in the mid 1960's. Urban renewal saw a place for both the Belknap and neighboring Busiel Mill in a major rebuilding of the Laconia downtown area. Initial plans were drawn up under the supervision of then city planner, Robert Kitchell. These plans called for the restoration of the two mills, the Busiel possibly being converted into a new city hall, and the Belknap to become a community center. This plan was enthusiastically supported by those in favor of preserving the mills, but not by a large part of the population who

considered the buildings unsafe, ugly reminders of the "sweat shops" they had at one time been. The condition of the exteriors of the buildings at that time caused them to be considered virtual eyesores. For these people the "new" Laconia proposed by urban renewal could never come to pass with these two reminders of a past that many felt should have been forgotten.

The first two years of restoration were times of obvious public resentment and controversy, but urban renewal continued to carry out its plans as instructed by the city council and the mayor. The winds of change can blow, however, and they certainly began to stir things up in 1969 when Kitchell left his position to be replaced by his deputy, David Lafond. The next year, Donald Tabor was elected mayor and with him came a new city council, and to the dismay of many,



new plans for renewal. These plans called for the razing of the two mills to make way for a completely new city hall and a parking lot. These plans saw no future for the mills, and they now faced serious danger. Members of the community wishing to see the mills saved now realised a sense of urgency they never had before. This urgency sparked the formation of the Save The Mills Society by local businessmen Peter Karagianis, Norman Weeks, Richard Davis, and Lawrence Baldi, with its goal to preserve these two fine mills.

The first step was to convince the community that the mills were historically significant and structurally sound. This was accomplished by summoning Richard Candee, a researcher of industrial buildings for Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. Candee saw great potential in the two mills and recommended trying to have the mills placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This was done successfully, and was very effective in stalling the opposition, but much more needed to be done. The Save The Mills Society could not afford to sit and wait for the next move to come. Candee recommended they call in Ted Stahl from Boston, who had a nationally-known reputation for restoring old buildings to a like-new condition. Stahl came up, liked what he saw, and joined the battle to convince Laconians that the mills were indeed structurally safe and gifted with great potential for serving the community.

The fight was on.

The two sides battled. The new mayor and part of the city council wanted to see the mills demolished to make way for the new city hall and parking lot. The rest of the city council favored the Society and its goal of restoring the mills.

Society member Richard Davis, an engineer, thwarted the parking lot idea by suggesting that a parking garage go under or above the proposed Laconia Downtown Mall. With pressure to tear down the mills still increasing, however, the Society sought

a legal injunction against any aggressive action taken to demolish the mills, thus putting the two sides at a virtual standstill. In February 1971 the court came to a decision. The judge ordered the city and the Society to resolve the dispute and come up with some sort of an agreement. The results were that the Society would have to come up with specific plans and appropriate funds by September, 1972. The court ruled that if the Society could come up with \$110,000 by the deadline, it could consider the mills saved.

In the winter of 1970, Robert Vogel, a Smithsonian Institution architectural researcher, Stahl and Candee attended a joint meeting and presented a strong case against the destruction of the two mills, citing that they were quite sound structurally, and historically valuable to the city. This presentation resulted in a first time shift in tides in favor of the Society. The Society now moved confidently towards its September 1st goal. Urban renewal accepted the Society as a tentative developer, based on the condition that it met the court-ordered deadline. The city at this time abandoned plans for moving into the Busiel Mill and began construction of a new city hall on property adjacent to the mill. Coincidentally, Laconia attorney Arthur Nighswander was looking



The Mill as it looked before urban renewal.

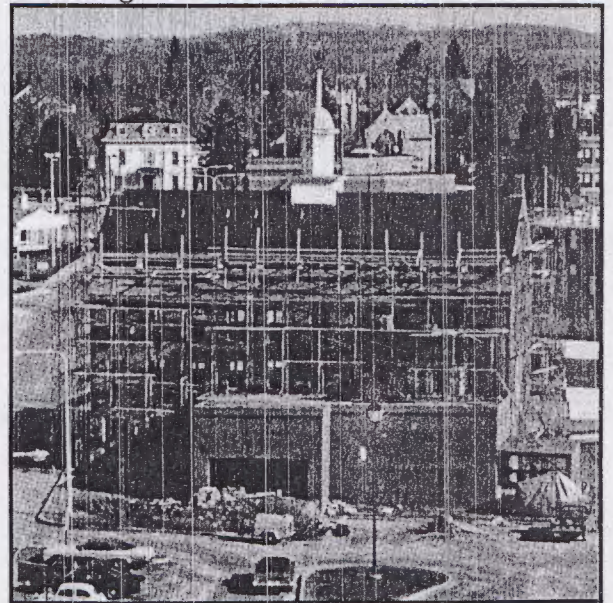


The Belknap Mill before restoration had started. for office space and eyed the Busiel Mill as a possible site. Nighswander was aware of what was going on with the Society, and had heard experts discuss the value of the two buildings. After having son-in-law and architect Brian Larson inspect the mills he decided to purchase the Busiel Mill from urban renewal.

In spite of this significant victory for the Society, talk of the Belknap development continued in heated fervor. Meanwhile, the price for full restoration leaped \$70,000 to a total of \$180,000 and an extended due date of February 28, 1974 was set. This was not all that terrible, for if the deadline was met, urban renewal had agreed to turn the Mill over to the Society. This move would enable the Society to be eligible for \$92,000 in federal funds which would have to go through the city council. On the morning of that fateful day, all seemed to be in order. The appropriate sum of money had been raised, and documents confirming this fact were ready to be signed by the city officials, giving the Society full possession of the building and the federal funds. Politics intervened again, however, when a city solicitor with ties to the opposition walked in and demanded that nothing be signed.

This was due to the fact that a new city council, with new ideas and strategies for opposing the renovations would take office that evening. That night the city council passed a resolution rescinding its earlier agreement with the Society. Urban renewal stuck to its agreement, however, and sold the Mill to the Society for \$5,000; it now held the title to the building. With the city's refusal to sign the papers the much-needed federal funds could not be procured. Backed into a corner the Society had no choice but to once again go to court. In the New Hampshire Supreme Court the case against the city was dismissed by the judge.

Since the city council and the local courts refused to do anything, the Society went to the county for help. County officials expressed interest, and the federal government was willing to have the county receive the funds on behalf of the society. In order to do this, a change in state law was necessary. The county delegation to the legislature, under the leadership of George Roberts of Gilmanton, then Speaker of the House, and his assistant Esther Nighswander of Gilford, pushed the change through. The stage was set.



The Mill in the early 1970's, during exterior work.

Still, the city refused to move. Finally the regional head of HUD ordered the city to act within 30 days or relinquish the funds. It relinquished, the County accepted them, and the Mill Society finally had a home.

In the meantime, the Society had already started the restoration of the Mill with its own funds, completing the exterior work. One hundred and fifty replicas of the Holbrook Bell were cast in 1973 one for each year of the mill's existence until then. One of these bells is given to donors of \$2,000 or more, while the supply lasts. The growth of activity and community participation has been on-going since this time, and will be mentioned later. Fund-raising to complete

the interior restoration and generally improve the facilities are a continuing endeavor.

In 1976, the Belknap Mill was designated "The Meeting House of New Hampshire" as part of the Bicentennial Celebration, and in 1981 the Belknap Mill Society was given a national honor award by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The citation reads: "For recognizing the architectural, historical, and economical merits of restoring the Belknap and Busiel Mills in Laconia and for surmounting many legal obstacles to save these industrial buildings, primarily through a grassroots effort."



The Belknap Mill in the early 1970's with exterior renovations complete.

A · C · T · I · V · I · T · I · E · S

WITH the long conflict of actually saving the Mill behind them, the Society felt a need to determine and define exactly what its goals and objectives should be. Community interest and cultural expression were a major concern of these goals and objectives. Completion of the restoration process (the basement and top floor have yet to be completed) and maintenance of the building were self-evident needs.

The story of the Mill made obvious its connection to history, as was underlined in 1976 with its designation as the Historic Meeting House of New Hampshire (The National Bicentennial Commission named one such meeting house in each state). It had also been a major part of the lives of the people during the Industrial Revolution and the rise and fall of the textile industry in New England.

From the beginning of the struggle to save the Mill, it had been envisioned as a community center. Seeking to guide its course, and yet to provide enough leeway to accommodate the growing needs of the community, the Mill Society developed and adopted the following broad statements of its mission and goals.

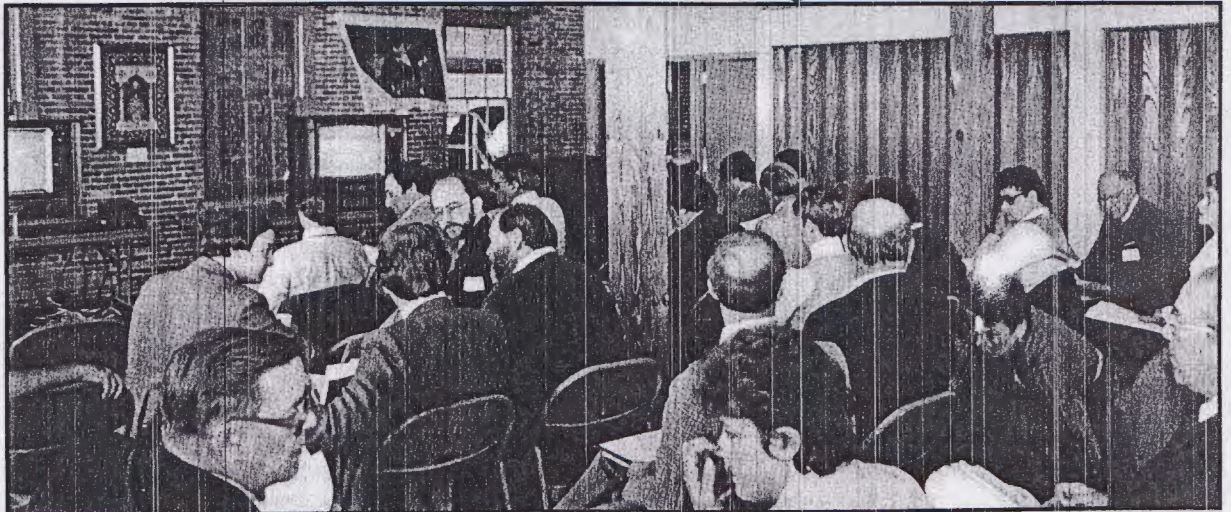


• MISSION •

The mission of the Belknap Mill Society is to strengthen and expand the cultural identity of the Lakes Region, based on our distinctive and unique heritage. All who wish to widen their horizons, stretch their minds and share their experience are welcome.

• GOALS •

- ◆ To maintain a fund for the completion of the restoration and maintenance of the Belknap Mill Society property.
- ◆ To encourage and coordinate the arts and humanities in the Lakes Region.
- ◆ To create and maintain an endowment for the visual and performing arts, with special attention to area talent.
- ◆ To bring Mill Society activities to Lakes Region citizens in a variety of places and ways.
- ◆ To encourage interest in the history of this region and its people.
- ◆ To keep in touch with the pulse of the community by developing and maintaining an active core of volunteers.
- ◆ To cooperate with established organizations having mutual interests.



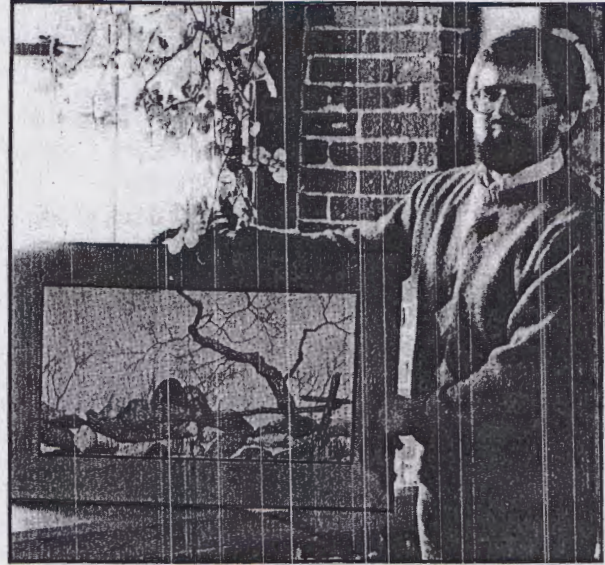
A board of 21 trustees, elected by the Society membership, governs the affairs and shapes the policies of the Belknap Mill Society. Each trustee is a committed citizen of the Lakes Region, with a solid and demonstrated interest in the community and in maintaining the Belknap Mill as an historical monument and an active, year-round cultural center.

It is estimated that annually over 26,000 people benefit from activities generated by the Society. 18% of them attend as a result of programs sponsored by tenant agencies; the Lakes Region United Way, the Lakes Region Family Services, and the Belknap County Extension Service are examples of these programs. Another 18% of the visitors come to mill facilities which are rented for a variety of functions, such as craft and book fairs, wedding receptions, birthday and office parties, workshops, seminars, and conferences, among others.

The vast majority of Mill visitors, 64%, attend for reasons related to the comprehensive, Society-sponsored, cultural programs, including visual and performing arts, and humanities events and presentations.

• VISUAL ARTS •

The interior of the Belknap Mill houses a charming gallery. Located on the first floor of the mill, just yards away from the gently-flowing Winnepesaukee River, the red brick walls and handsome showcases offer an attractive background for exhibits. Not only showing the work of many established artists, the Society also encourages emerging talent and has hosted the "First Exhibit" for many promising new-comers. Exhibits are also lent to the Society from other institutions, such as the New Hampshire Historical Society and the New England Foundation for the Arts. Recent exhibits by New Hampshire residents have included watercolors, oil paintings, portraits, photographic works, pen and ink drawings, ceramics, sculptures, and works in gold and silver.



Gene Matras in the gallery with some of his work.

• PERFORMING ARTS •

The third floor of the mill, where mill operatives once worked at whirring machinery, is now the setting for numerous music, dance, and theatre presentations. The brick walls, original wooden floor, and hefty ceiling beams create an attractive environment for performing artists.

Concerts are grouped into a four season series. The Summer Series is named in memory of the late Doris Schuster, an accomplished New Hampshire pianist.

Performing artists appearing recently have included the African American Drama Company, the Granite State Youth Orchestra, Whetstone Run (Bluegrass Ensemble), Sukanya (performer of classical dances of India), Wesley Fuller, computer musician and instructor at Clark University, Worcester, MA., The Boston Ballet, and numerous other groups and artists.

• OUTREACH ACTIVITIES •

The Belknap Mill Society also extends the arts experience outside the brick walls of the mill. Artists and their exhibits are presented in schools, nursing homes, and senior citizen centers throughout the region.

• CHILDREN & FAMILY •
• ACTIVITIES •

The Society also offers quality programs specially designed for children and their families. Artists appearing for these programs in the past have included magicians, clowns, mimes, puppeteers, jugglers, storytellers, and musicians, to name just a few.

• WORKSHOPS •

The Mill Society organizes workshops and masterclasses in the arts and humanities of potential interest to a wide cross-section of the community. These seminars are often scheduled as residency activities of the artists. Such workshops have included choral conducting, vocal production and repertoire, children's theatre and arts, and mask making.

• HUMANITIES •

As the Belknap Mill has roots deep in local, state, and national history, the Society fosters projects emphasizing history and the humanities. Resources of the New Hampshire Historical Society, local historical societies, and the New Hampshire Council for the Humanities are frequently used. Programs in the humanities have included: History of Lakes Region Pharmacies, film productions, "World War II Years", History of Lithographs, authors and illustrators, History of Lakes Region Winter Sports, and other related cultural topics.

• EDUCATION •

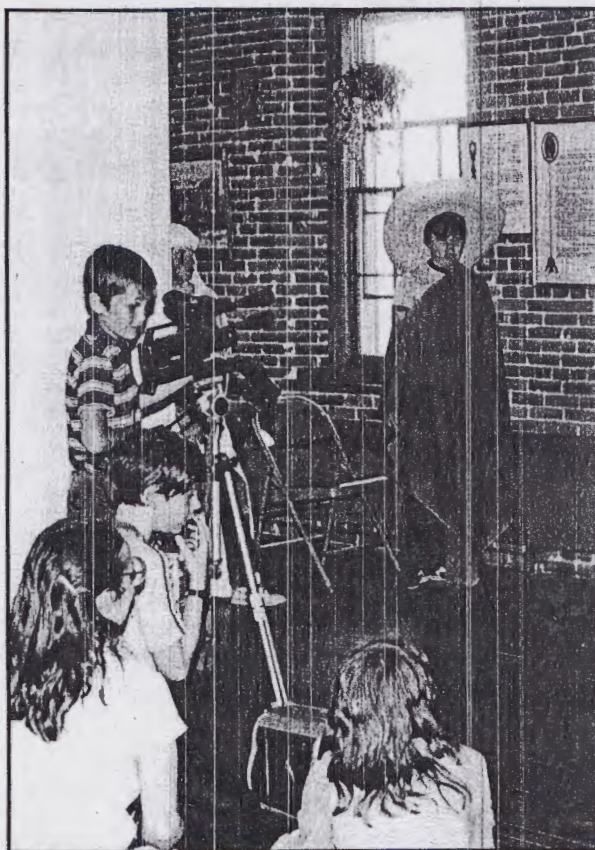
The Belknap Mill is a natural resource for public and private schools throughout the region. Mill activities provide curriculum enrichment for the students of these schools. Artists residencies, for instance, are organized for schools, who are informed of Mill programs and offerings. Classes from these schools frequently come to the Mill to view specific exhibits and displays. Tours of the Mill and visits to schools by Mill Society

staff and volunteers are available and can be arranged.

In the spring of 1986 the Mill received a special grant from the State Department of Education (Gifted and Talented Division), to present a five day Video Instruction Workshop for some of this region's gifted and talented youngsters. Fifty children from eight Lakes Region communities participated.

March, the National "Art and Music in the Schools Month," is actively celebrated at the Mill. Month-long exhibits and musical presentations by students throughout the Lakes Region are highly popular and well attended.

The Mill has also been the setting for numerous school theatre and musical productions, such as a presentation of the Christmas classic, "The Nutcracker".



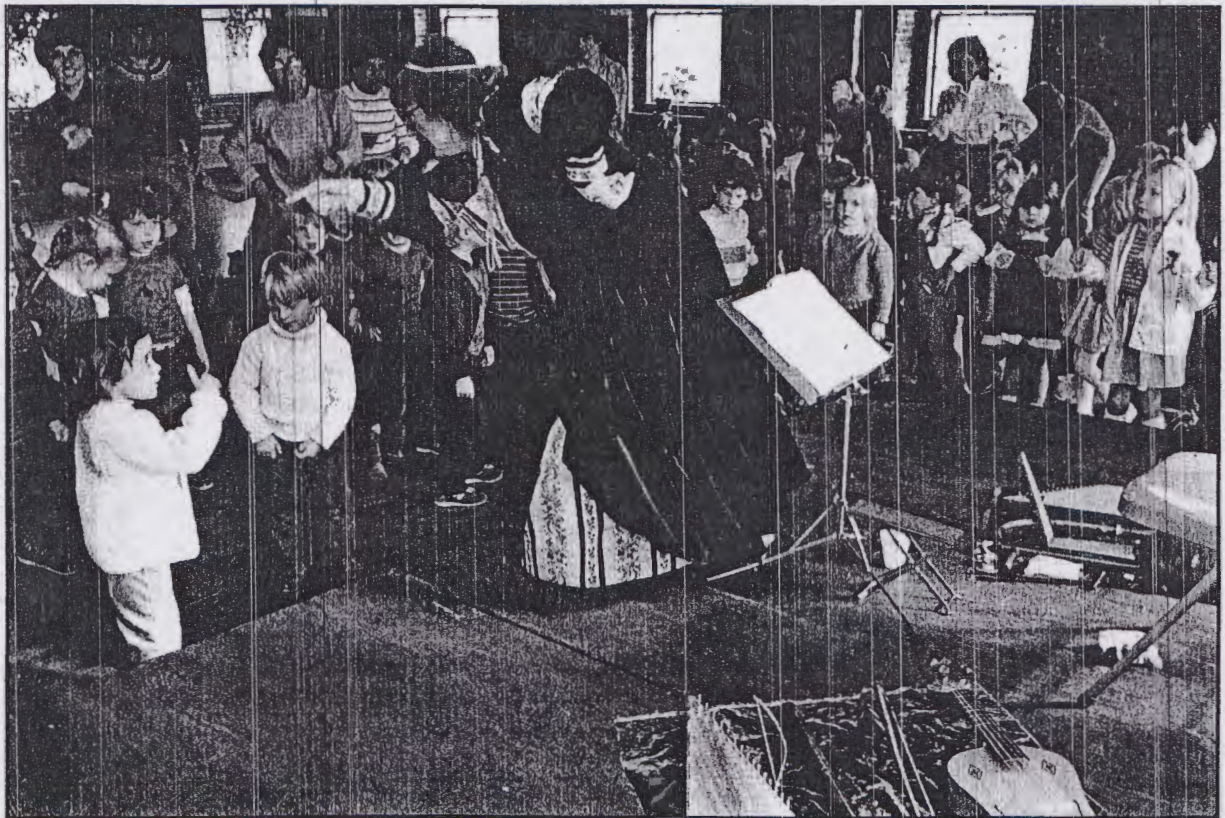
Gifted and talented Video Instruction Workshop.



• SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS •

The Belknap Mill Society supports several groups which use the facility in promoting their unique interests. The Society acknowledges these groups that have added so effectively to the Mill's offerings. These groups include: The Belknap Mill Artists' Loft which meets weekly, the Belknap Mill Quilters' Guild which meets monthly and presents an annual, nationally recognized quilt show. The Lakeport Women's Club Antique Gown Collection, an outstanding comprehensive collection of clothes worn by local women from the early 19th century to present day, is housed in the Mill and displayed there from time to time. Other special interest groups supported in the past have included the Belknap Mill Writers' Guild and the Belknap Mill Children's Chorus.

The Belknap Mill Society is open to all who are interested in local, state and national history, the arts, and the humanities. If you are a person who possesses such interests, the Society solicits your active participation and/or financial support. Membership categories include special rates for students, seniors and families. Membership also includes significant savings on ticket prices for such events as the seasonal concert series and other special functions and activities. In addition, participation in Society suppers, meetings, and other events is also encouraged. To join, or acquire more information on any of the above programs and presentations, call or write The Belknap Mill Society, Mill Plaza, Laconia, New Hampshire, 03246 (603-524-8813). Or, stop in at the Mill located on Mill Plaza, off Beacon Street East, in downtown Laconia. **YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**



Persis Ensor at the Mill during a preschool performance for local students.

F · O · R · T · H · C · O · M · I · N · G

THE many wheels in the Belknap Mill, both large and small, that once spun sustenance and life into this community are now at rest. There are no socks. There are no textiles.

But it is not the wheels' forever frenzied pace that tells the entire story. The rim of each wheel, supported by a series of spokes that flare out from the center, suggests the alert and open posture that caretakers of this unique facility must assume.

The future of the Mill and the Society, into the twenty first century and beyond, rests with those who enjoy, those who participate in, and those who can create the new programs, activities, and ideas.

The energetic directions the Society is taking underscore the need to develop a strong Endowment Fund. The Lakes Region, and indeed New Hampshire, must consider the Belknap Mill as a valuable resource, just as is the state's natural beauty, and therefore plan financially for the continued existence of the Mill and the unique opportunities it has to offer.

There is more renovation planned. Early dreamers hoped for a small, intimate theatre in the basement area. Here is the place for theatrical lighting and raked seating, where foreign films could be shown. To provide for visitor comfort, restroom facilities and a drinking fountain are needed for the third floor. And, someday the wheelhouse with its precious cargo will be the locus of an attractive industrial museum. As the Mill is able to acquire more storage space, the

many interesting artifacts and items donated to the Society will be on display.

Even by virtue of its obvious historical merit, the Belknap Mill cannot become just a monument, or even a showpiece of the past. Plans have been laid to continue and expand outreach efforts. People will not just visit the Mill to feel its impact where the visual and performing arts and humanities programs are taken to other locations, including nursing homes, clubs, workplaces, and area schools. For all this to happen, the Society must add personnel. It is expected that within a few years the staff will include a program director, a development director, a membership director, a volunteer coordinator, an education director, a business administrator, and sufficient custodial and secretarial assistance, in addition to the devoted corps of volunteers.

A wide membership base will create financial support for the Society's day to day activities. It is not unreasonable to predict that in due time the Society will attract many thousands of dues-paying members from the private and business sectors.

The Belknap Mill Society will also continue to develop and assist all efforts made in the Lakes Region to bring cultural and historical programs and activities to the area.

As the spokes of the now dormant wheels stretch away from the center, we are again reminded of our mandate to truly become "the crossroads for the arts and the humanities in the Lakes Region."



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• CREDITS •

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