

HISTORIC MILL RIVER WALKS

PARADISE POND TO SOUTH STREET

You will be walking through more than 350 years of history on this riverwalk, which focuses on the centers of Northampton's early industries as well as the history of the river itself.



NORTHAMPTON MILL RIVER TOUR

Distance: 1.25 miles | Duration: 40 minutes

Begin your tour at the Smith College Boathouse. Continue down College Lane towards the Conference Center to visit the site of one of Northampton's earliest factories.



1 THE MAYNARD HOE FACTORY

You're standing at the site of the **Clement & Hawks Manufacturing Company** factory, originally built just after the Civil War in 1866 to manufacture cutlery. It began making agricultural tools in the 1870s and was thereafter known as the **Maynard Hoe Factory** until it was demolished in 1921. Built in 1858, the tower of the **Northampton State Hospital for the Insane** would also have been visible from this site. The State Hospital was demolished in 2006. *Now continue down College Lane and stop when you have a good view of the dam.*



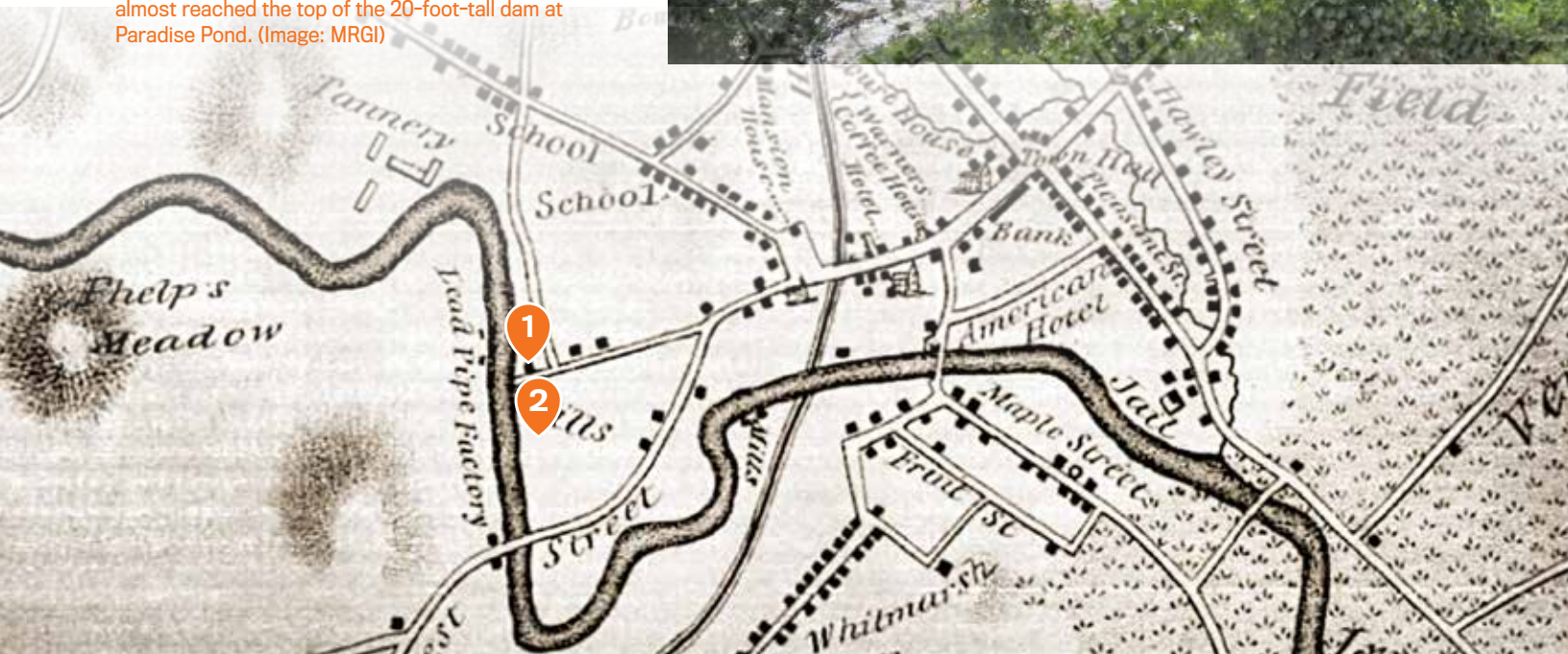
1885 Workers repair the dam at the Maynard Hoe Factory in Northampton (Image: Sophia Smith Collection)

2 THE UPPER MILLS

You now stand at the very center of Northampton's mill industries, founded between 1660 and 1840. Mill buildings have occupied this site since 1666 when the first mill dam was built (the current dam was built by Clement & Hawks in 1866). **Green Street**, one of Northampton's earliest streets, was built in 1667 to connect the mills to the town. Now imagine high water at this dam (the most recent instance was during **Tropical Storm Irene** in 2011). In the past, such floods damaged many of the little mills and dams that lined the banks of the river. Because of this, early grist mills were risky investments, and the town had to provide incentives such as free land and labor to lure investors. *Continue down the road and take the path down to the bridge; cross the bridge and walk onto the athletic fields.*



2011 The floodwaters from Tropical Storm Irene almost reached the top of the 20-foot-tall dam at Paradise Pond. (Image: MRGI)

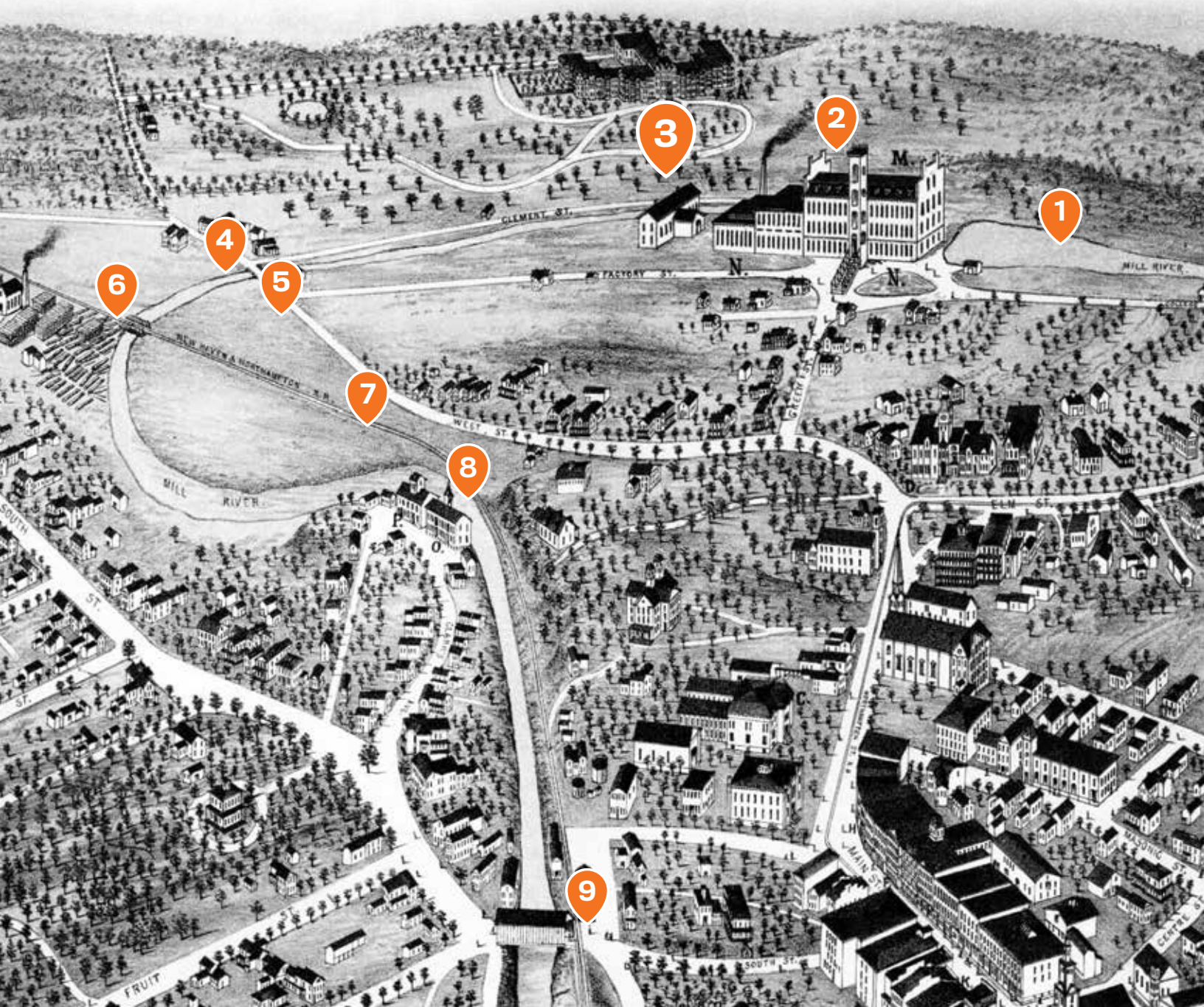


3 ATHLETIC FIELDS

Native Americans cultivated this land for some 600 years prior to the arrival of the English colonials, growing crops such as corn, squash, and beans. This area was used as farmland by the English settlers as well, and was part of the Northampton State Hospital's farm until becoming **Smith College's** athletic fields. The recent construction of synthetic turf fields here was mediated by eradication of invasive species and planting of native vegetation bordering the Mill River.

Cross Lamont Bridge, then turn left to take the riverside trail. Continue straight ahead, past the storage building on your right, and through the open gate at the fence. Turn left onto West Street and walk until you reach the West Street Bridge.

1875 An artist's rendering of Northampton, which displays some artistic license and is not drawn to scale.
(Image: Forbes Library)



4 FLOOD BARRIER

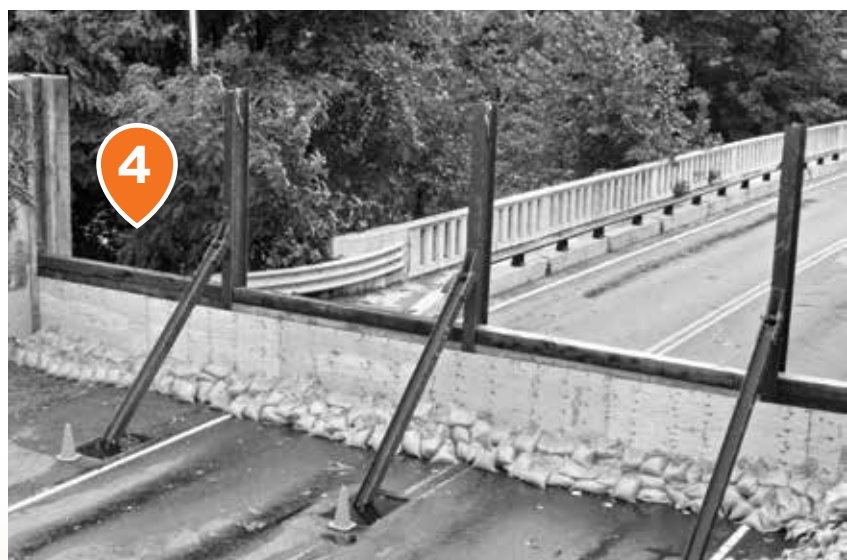
Stand in front of the bridge and note the supports on either side of the street. These were constructed for the flood barrier that was built in 1940 to protect local residents from potential flooding of the Mill River. The barrier has been used only twice since its construction, first in the mid-1950s, and again very recently in 2011 during Tropical Storm Irene. *Cross to the far side of West Street and continue ahead until you reach a large brick building on your right.*



1936 The remains of a local bar carried into the Meadows after the 1936 flood. (Image: Forbes Library)

2011 This is the West Street flood barrier in place during Tropical Storm Irene for only the second time since its construction by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1940. (Image: MRGI)

1936 Paddling down Valley Street during the 1936 flood. (Image: Forbes Library)



5 THE FELT BUILDING

This building's current name is the result of its ownership by the **National Felt Company** in the late 20th century. However, the first building on this site was constructed in 1898 by **McCallum-Propper** silk hosiery, a major player in Northampton's famous silk industry for many years.

Walk towards the parking lot at the end of the Felt Building and take a right turn at the building's end, then turn right again to walk down the bike path behind the building until you reach the bridge.

6 MILL RIVER DIVERSION OF 1940

This is the site of the Mill River's most recent diversion, which the **Corps of Engineers** constructed following the **Great Storm of March 1936** and the **Hurricane of October 1938**, both of which flooded downtown Northampton. Walk back down the trail the way you came, towards the Felt Building lot. As you walk along the path, look to your right and notice the wetland where the river ran before the diversion. In recent years, community members have discussed memorializing or restoring this former riverbed.

Continue along the trail until the area to your left spreads out into a grassy park.

7 VETERANS' FIELD

The Mill River once flowed in a semicircle around the back of the skateboard park. **Veterans' Field** was a floodplain when the river took this route. From here, you can see the old riverbed, which ran alongside the railroad. In fact, the path that you are walking on is the **Manhan Rail Trail**, built upon the former railroad. **The Hampshire & Hampden Railroad** was built in the 1850s to replace the short-lived canal that had previously operated here.

Continue down the rail trail.

1831 The first modern map of Northampton "surveyed under the direction of the Selectmen."
(Image: Forbes Library)

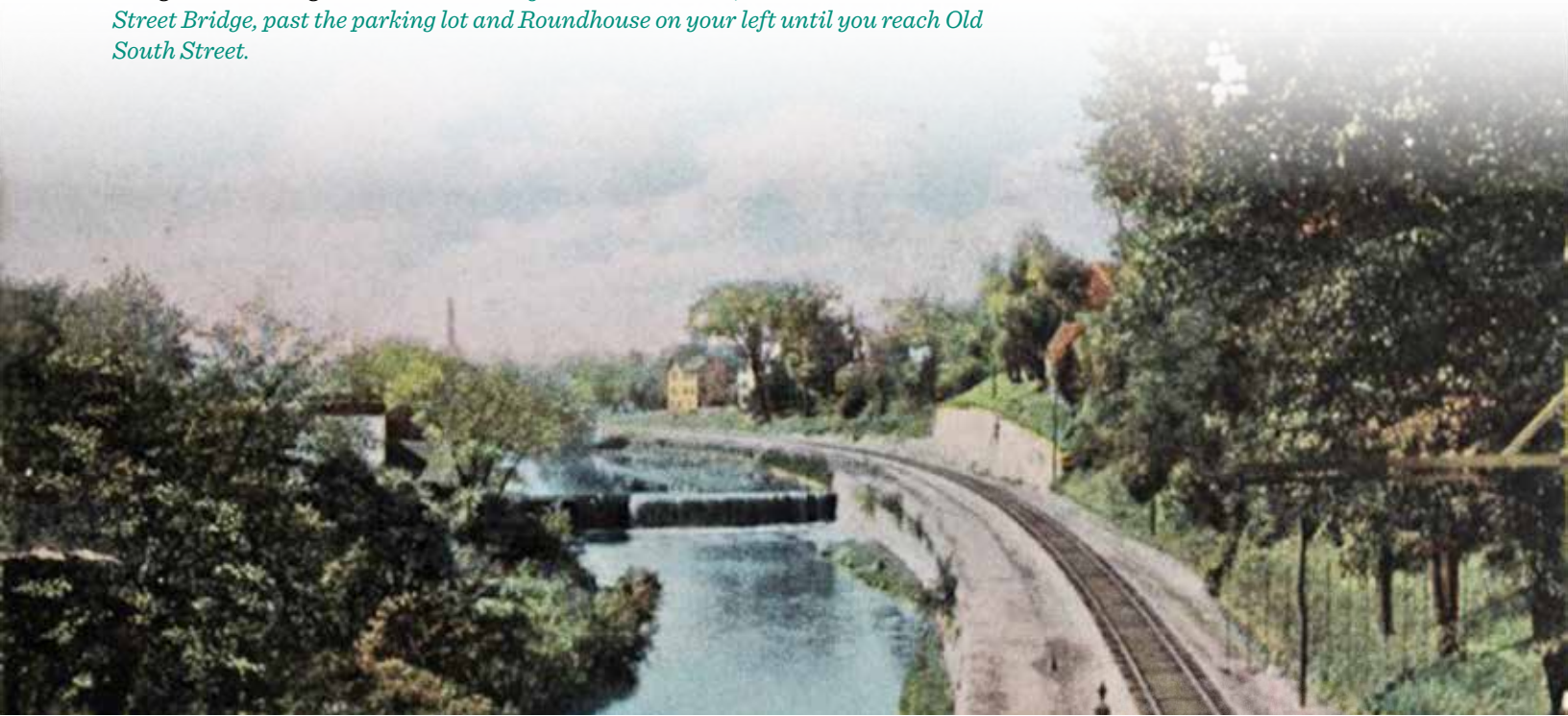


8 THE LOWER MILLS

Through the vegetation, you can see a jumble of rocks that marks the site where, in 1657, the town asked several of its citizens to build a grist mill. The first mill existed for only a decade or so, because the drop in the river was too shallow for the power production that was needed. A higher dam was constructed in the mid-1700s, raising the river level so high it interfered with the workings of the Upper Mills at Paradise Pond. After a 25-year legal battle, the lower mill dam was reduced in height to mitigate the damage. *Continue walking down the rail trail, underneath the New South Street Bridge, past the parking lot and Roundhouse on your left until you reach Old South Street.*

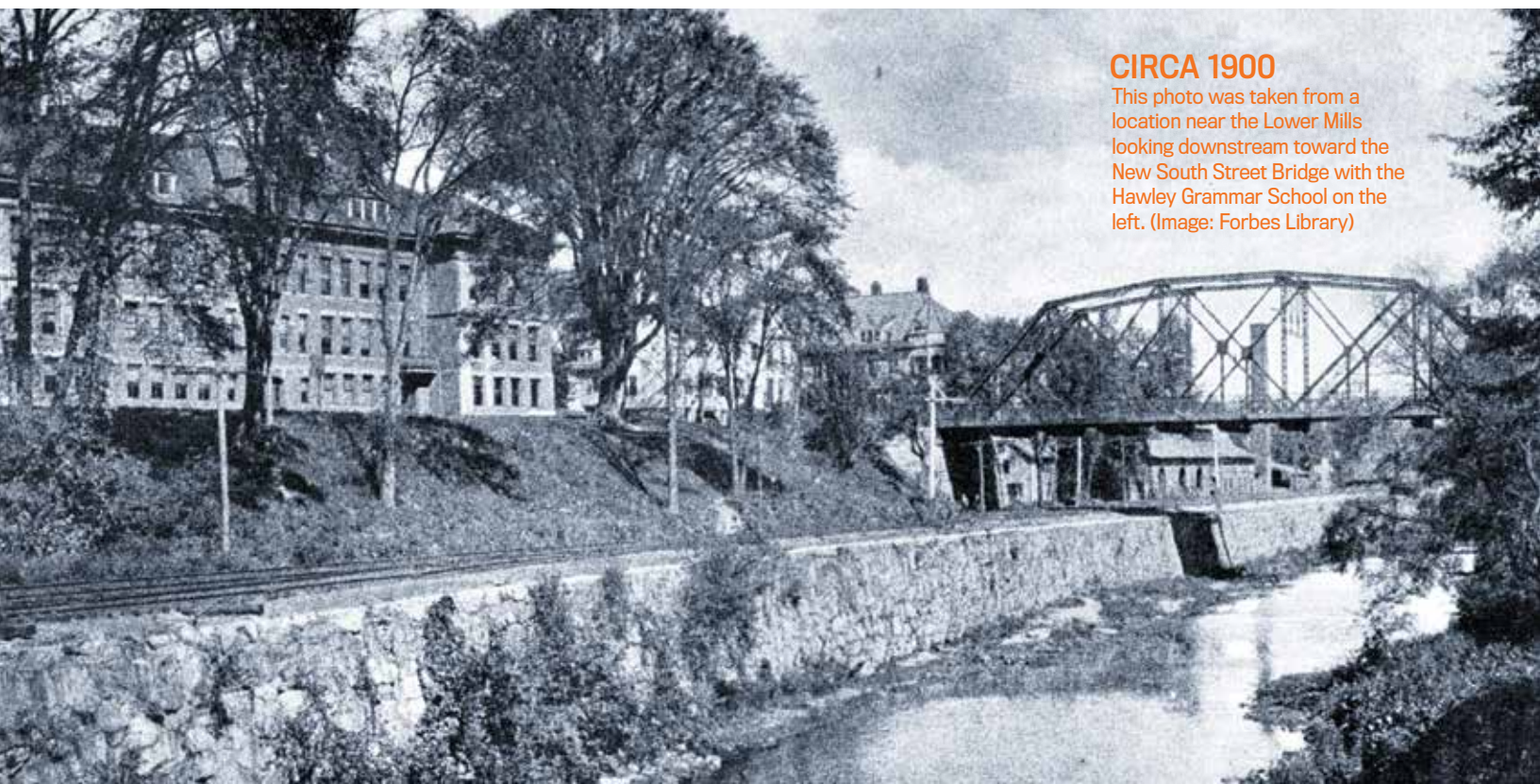
CIRCA 1900

This is a postcard photo from the New South Street Bridge of the last dam at the Lower Mills. (Image: Steve Sauter)



CIRCA 1900

This photo was taken from a location near the Lower Mills looking downstream toward the New South Street Bridge with the Hawley Grammar School on the left. (Image: Forbes Library)



9 MAPLE STREET

You are standing at the site of the Old South Street Bridge, 20 feet above the former riverbed. Look down **Conz Street** (formerly Maple Street). Before this area was developed, the **Manhan Meadows** began about 500 yards from where you're standing. These meadows, which provided fodder for precious livestock, were the most valuable property in 17th- and 18th-century Northampton, and original landowners had a share of this land. In the 18th century, a free black woman, **Bathsheba Hull**, lived here on a small island on a section of the river called **Licking Water**. The more wealthy Northamptonites occupied the higher ground; those less fortunate occupied **Fruit and Maple Streets**, which were prone to frequent flooding until the Mill River diversion of 1940. A bridge was built at this spot in 1660 and taken down in 1947 when the city drained and filled the old river bed and replaced it with the current parking lot.

CIRCA 1890

For 200 years, a bridge connected the city's center to South Street, which was the only road south from Northampton for much of the town's history. (Image: Forbes Library)



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

THE RIVER RUNS THROUGH US...

The **Mill River Greenway Initiative** and **Smith College** are creating a series of self-guided riverwalks along the Mill River in Northampton and Williamsburg, Massachusetts. Our goal is to celebrate the river, attract residents and visitors to its natural and historic heritage, and spur action to preserve and enhance the river's treasures.

In this brochure, co-sponsored by the **Leeds Civic Association** and **Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways**, we focus on the extraordinary mill history of Leeds and the impact the Mill River had on the village's woolen, button, and silk mills situated along it. We welcome you to join the Mill River Greenway Initiative and add your voice and support in our efforts to open up the river for exploration and recreation.

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