



### **Glory Days: An Era of Industry**

In the 1700s the Battenkill, Mettawee and Indian River were vital to the settlement of towns and villages along the banks of the river. Water became the moving force which powered a variety of mills in the early days and still generates electricity until the present day. Job Whipple established the first saw mill providing lumber to build homes in Whipple City, now Greenwich, New York. By 1800 there were as many as 100 mills of varying types along the Battenkill, all the way from Dorset, Vermont to Clarks Mills, New York where the river flows into the mighty Hudson.

**Glory Days** portrays the history of industry from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until present day through early photographs, drawings, artwork and objects from the material culture. For instance, the American Tea Tray Company established in 1849 produced decorated tin trays, the first in the country. Many of the mills sawed lumber but then went on to make textiles such as flax and cotton or paper goods. The Rexleigh Marble Mill near Salem, New York cut marble which was transported there by rail car from Dorset and Rutland, Vermont. Eventually the same mill produced machetes and sickles many which were exported to Russia up until WWI. In the early 1970s the buildings were used to produce ceramics before fire destroyed almost everything, leaving hollowed out marble walls and rusted machinery.

Today what's left of earlier mills are mostly in ruin along the Battenkill and mill ruins in Middle Granville, New York. Two examples are the original flax and cotton mill in Eagleville, New York, once an outstanding example of post and beam construction with a look-out tower and the textile mill in Battenville, New York which Susan B. Anthony's father managed until the crash of 1837. Hollingsworth & Vose still operate the mill in Center Falls, New York which manufactures filter paper. The original construction burned and was rebuilt several times, but the present buildings hug state route 29 on one side and the Battenkill on the other. In Middle Falls, and Clarks Mills, New York there are powerful turbines which still generate electricity.

The story of how mills along rivers led to the establishment of industry and jobs helps explain the original demographics of the area. Irish, Welch, Italian and Polish immigrants once settled in Union Village (aka Greenwich) Salem, New York and Middle Granville to work in the textile mills and quarries there. In southern Vermont the slate quarries were the mainstay of resident workers. Communities which sprang up along river banks are no longer thriving. Main Streets are dotted with empty storefronts as commerce struggles to hang on with ever increasing taxes while shoppers are few. A dwindling and aging population is faced with the difficult financial burden of maintaining roads and schools which compromises the quality of life once enjoyed so long ago. **Glory Days** portrays what was once upon a time the Great American Dream: a place to work, prosper and raise a family.

The exhibition **Glory Days: An Era of Industry** is curated by Salem historian, Judy Flagg, Sally Brillon, research assistant, Washington County Historical Society and Elizabeth Cockey, artist and author of *Untold Stories of the Battenkill*. **For more information contact Judy Flagg at 518-742-0878 or email [j.flagg@outlook.com](mailto:j.flagg@outlook.com)**



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Curated by Judy Flagg, Sally Brillon and Elizabeth Cockey, the research was completed over a period of two years. Special thanks go to the Greenwich Free Library, Gill research room, the Pember Museum, the Washington County Historical Society, the Salem archives and the Slate Valley Museum; all providing historical data, rich insights and numerous historical photographs. The exhibition started out as Mills on the Kill and was exhibited in 2018 at the Salem Courthouse Community Center in Salem, New York and at the Georgi Museum in Shushan, New York. At each venue there was a large turnout, not just from the local New York area, but many came from Vermont and as far away as Albany, Glens Falls and Saratoga. Many individuals who attended the opening receptions took an active role through story-telling, sharing family oral histories and reminisces.

Not long after the last showing of the historical photographs and objects pertinent to the mills: an Eddy Plow, American Tea Trays, and Rexleigh pottery to name a few, the curators were approached with an idea to expand the exhibition, including other areas in Washington County, New York. The new focus led to more information made available through the auspices of local merchants in Granville, the Slate Valley Museum and the Washington County Historical Society.

The intention behind telling the story of industry along the famous Battenkill, and the Mettawee and Indian rivers is to show what life was like over 150 years ago. At a time when water power fueled industry immigrants were encouraged to relocate to the upstate New York area. Ingenuity and problem solving was prevalent during that time. For instance, after the Battenkill was washed out during a storm the builders of the Pulp Mill Dam in Clarks Mills were unable to get from one side of the river to the other, so a tunnel was constructed inside the dam so workers would have access. Seamstresses who labored in the Glove and Lingerie factory in Granville made use of showers and water in the building, a luxury they did not have where they lived. In Greenwich, the Dunbarton created a child care center for factory workers children in 1919, most who lived near the Dunbarton. This made it possible for both men and women to work at the mill.

The importance of remembering our heritage through images and story-telling is a way to teach our children and grandchildren to remember where we all came from, and not only what life was like, but how everyone had an opportunity to thrive. That goal is especially important today when our society is rapidly losing its connection to the past, and its history.

**Currently the exhibition Glory Days features over 30 framed photographs, numerous objects from the material culture of the mid 1800s and a 28 page exhibition catalog which describes the exhibit in detail.**

**For more information about the exhibition contact Judy Flagg, Salem Historian 518-742-0878 or email [j.flagg@outlook.com](mailto:j.flagg@outlook.com) or contact Elizabeth Cockey [bcockey1@twc.com](mailto:bcockey1@twc.com)**