

A Walk Along the Historic Goshen Millrace

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Cephas Hawks, Jr.
(1812-1894)

The man who dreamed of the millrace, designed it and built it. Since 1868 it has been a vital part of Goshen's history — first as a source of power to stimulate the growth of industry and recently as a valuable recreational asset for the citizens of Goshen.



Chronology of the Millrace Construction

1865

- July A survey is completed for the dam and canal proposed by Cephas Hawks, Jr. from Waterford to Goshen to provide water power for industry.
- August The Mechanical and Manufacturing Association of Goshen is designated for completion of the project.
- November The north terminus of the canal is set for Clinton Street.

1866

- September The bid of Hawks & Decamp is accepted for construction, and digging, or “mucking,” is begun on a marsh near the south terminus.

1867

- January Waterford citizens petition to have the dam built closer to Goshen.
- March The dam will fill a reservoir of 40 to 80 acres to a depth of 5 to 10 feet. Several hundred yards of the canal are complete and the dam location is changed. The canal is complete to the curve at Shoup’s barn and is 100 feet wide and 10 feet deep.
- April The construction of the dam is to start soon and the reservoir above the dam is being cleared of timber.
- Mr. Mowry, a local photographer, takes pictures of laborers with their shovels, wheelbarrows and animals excavating the canal.
- August Completion is forecast for next spring and provisions are being made for the construction of mills and factories on the banks.

1868

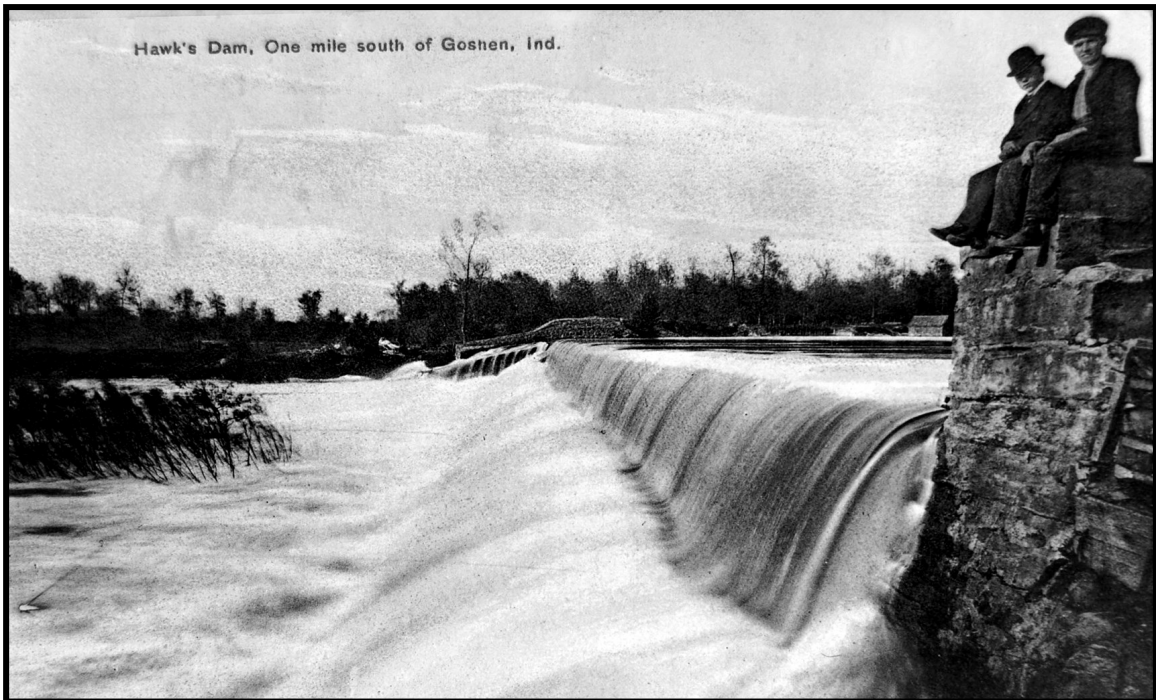
- April The main channel is completed.
- May Tail races and bridges are being constructed.
- July Factory foundations are being constructed.
- October The dam is finished and water is being let into the channel of the canal.

Maps included in this brochure are from the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and some of the photos are of poor quality because of their original source.



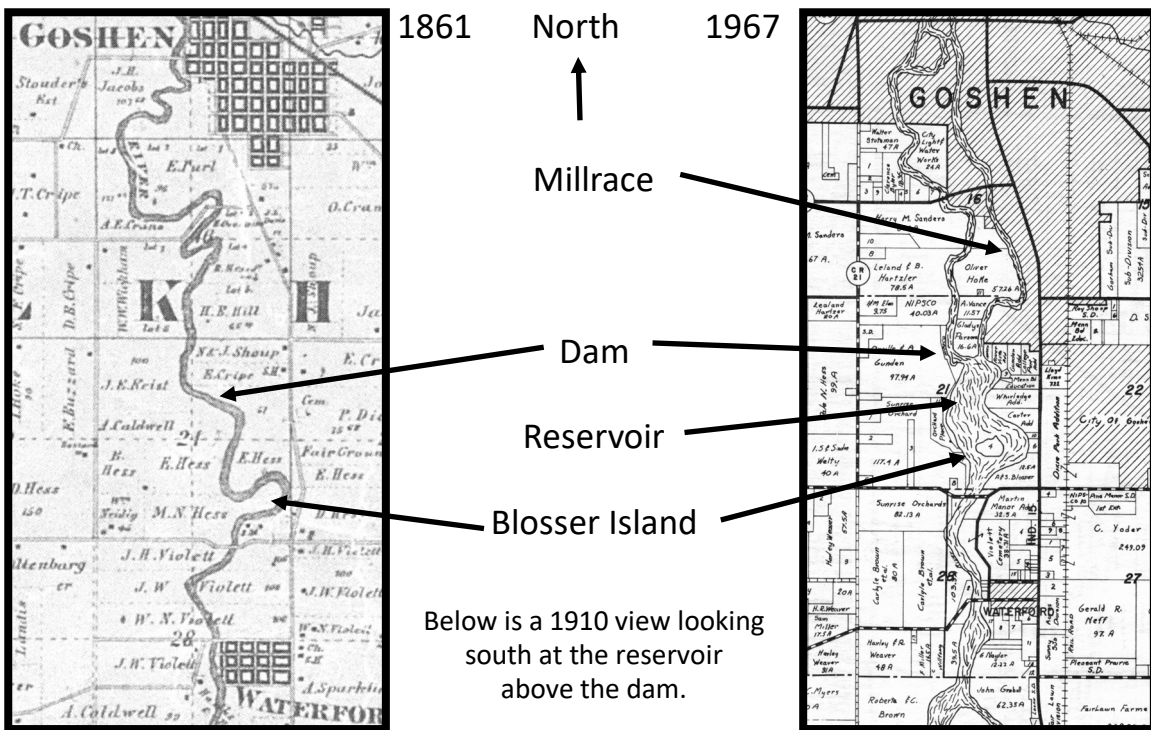
40 men using horse-drawn slip scoops dug the millrace channel at a cost of \$100,000.

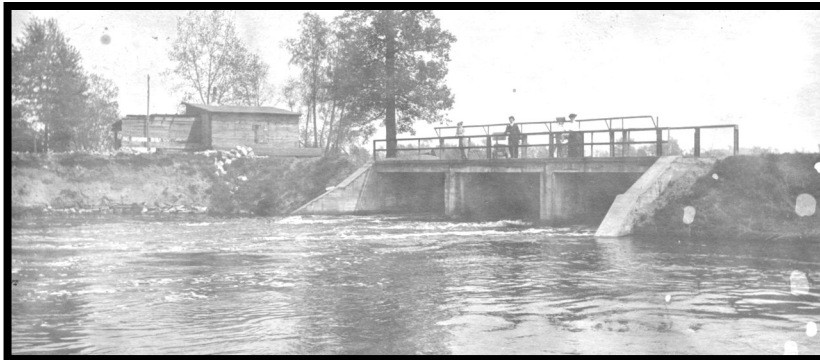
The completed dam from the south shore of the Elkhart River.



The Dam, Head Gates and Upper Millrace

The construction of the dam turned the single snaky stream of the Elkhart River into a wide reservoir that covered up the tree stumps of the former wooded area and also created the once popular Blosser Island. The river was diverted through a set of control gates (the head gates) into the millrace canal. A bridge spanned the head gates for access to the west canal bank, dam and other properties cut off by the canal





Head gates view from the 1910 to 1920 era.



As the millrace flows north it passes the low swampy areas to the west that are now part of the Shoup-Parsons Woods. The fields of the Shoup farm were on the east. The Shoup barn was near where the canal turns east to go around the low muck land that was part of the Hoke Farm.

Originally the top of the west bank was wide enough for truck traffic. By the 1950s it had become a single path for most of its length. The path was widened by the City of Goshen when the current bike path was built in 1997.

Below are views of the millrace path looking north from head gates in 1910 and 1970.



The Hoke Farm and the Waverly Bridge Area

100 YEARS

The HOKE FARM

Levi Hoke 1889-1912
Oliver & Alvin Hoke 1912-1919
Oliver & Nellie Hoke 1919-1964
Ron & Nancy Hoke 1982-2005

TRUCK FARM • GREENHOUSE • LIVESTOCK • CROSS COUNTRY RUNS
• ORCHARD • VEGETABLES • TREE FARM •



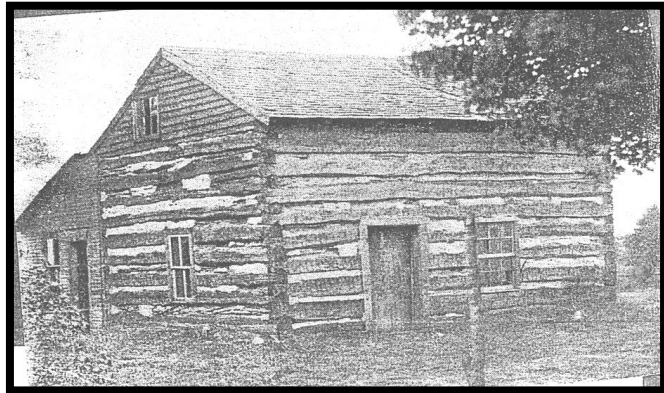
Views from 1970 show the farm buildings (left), some livestock in the pasture with today's Independent Protection Company in the background (below) and the view around the large curve back toward Main Street (below left).





The Waverly Bridge in 1938. The original Hoke barn stood next to the bank here until 1935 when it burned. Swimmers used its hayloft door to swing into the canal.

This log cabin built in the 1890s was enclosed in the Hoke farmhouse. It formed the southeast corner of the first floor of the house when the cabin was converted to a single family residence for the Oliver Hoke family in 1921.

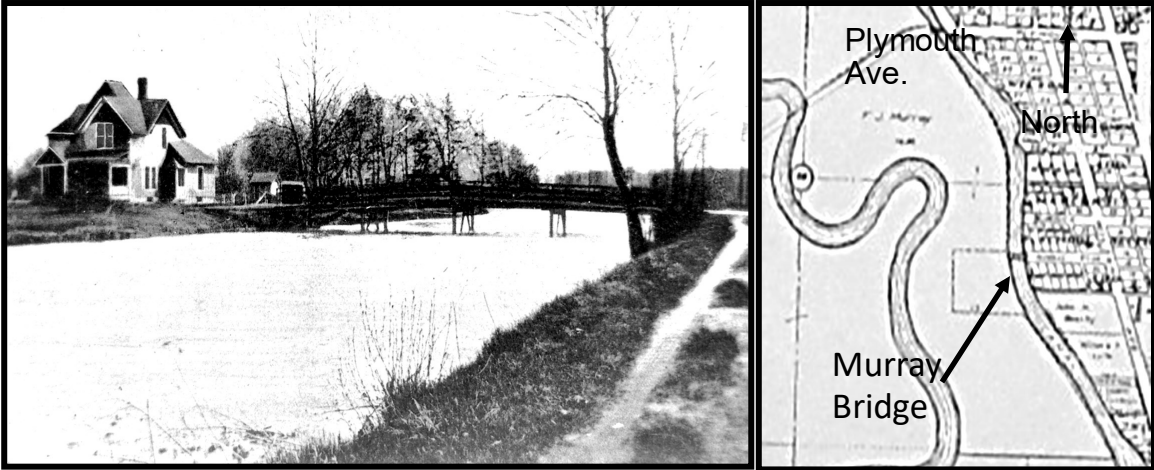


The Hoke farmhouse as it appeared in the 1940s after several additions had been needed to provide space for the family of nine. This structure was razed in 2021.



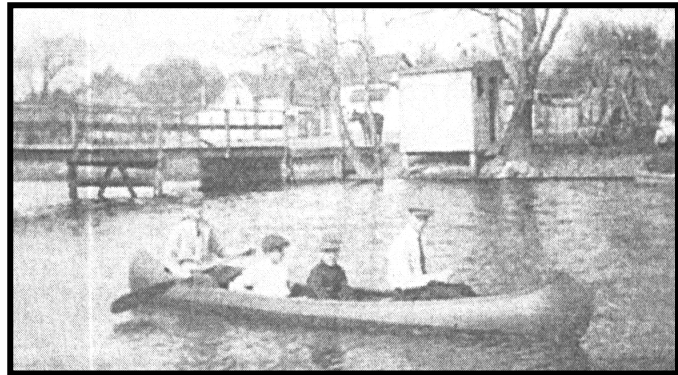
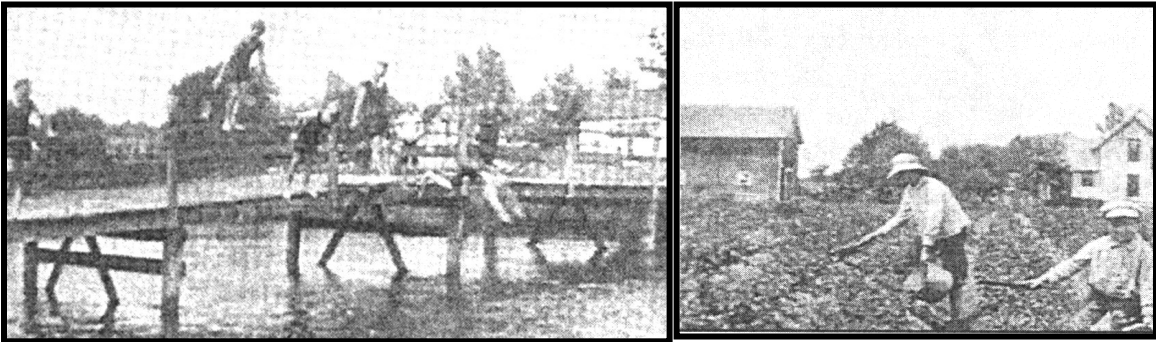
This is the site of the former Hoovens Dairy and swimming beach. The beach was sandy and had a slide and changing facilities. To the left is the former Turtle Top production building.

The Murray Farm and Bridge



The Murray Farm extended from the north line of the Hoke Farm to Plymouth Avenue . The house pictured above stands on the east bank of the canal. The wooden bridge provided access to the fields and buildings on the west bank. This home stands next to the pony truss bridge (below) that was moved in the 1920s, from a location on a state road that spanned the East Fork of the Little Elkhart River east of Middlebury. Two homes and a barn were located on the farmland west of the bridge near the Elkhart River.





Swimming, canoeing and gardening all were normal activities on the Murray farm. The foundation of the barn that stood on the west bank can still be seen on a trail that leads from the present day Rieth Interpretive Center (below), which sits in the old north field of the Murray Farm.



Plymouth Avenue to Madison Street

The land north of Plymouth Ave. and west of the millrace was once part of the Elkhart River and/or low-lying marshland. It was obtained by the City of Goshen in 1950 and, until 1963, gradually filled by using it as a city dump.

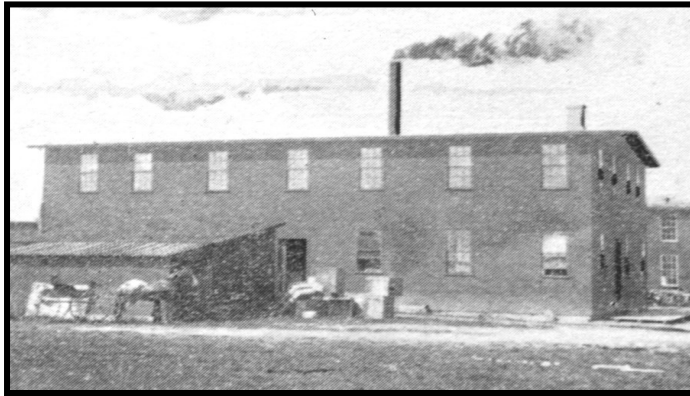
In the late 1950s a ball diamond and playground were placed in the park. It was named Shanklin Park as a memorial to a popular high school teacher.



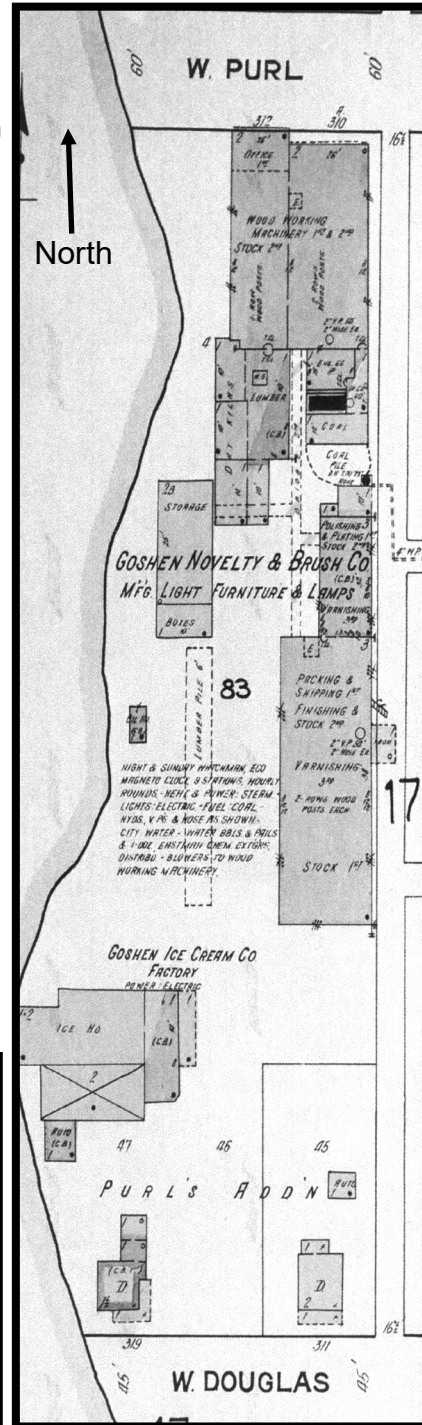
Above, Mayor Ralph Schenk (far right) and Paul Underwood (far left) pose with other officials and children by the new swings seen in the background. Later the Schrock Pavilion (below, 1969), a pool, more ball diamonds, a warming house at the pond, Tommy's Kids Castle and other amenities were added to make this park a very popular city attraction.



The east bank north of Purl Street was occupied by a variety of junk yards. Kosnoff & Sons was located here from the 1940s to the 1980s, followed by Goshen Iron & Metal.



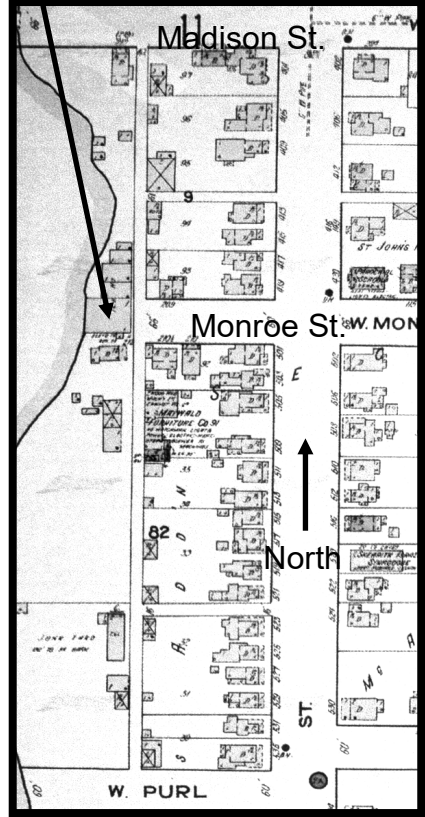
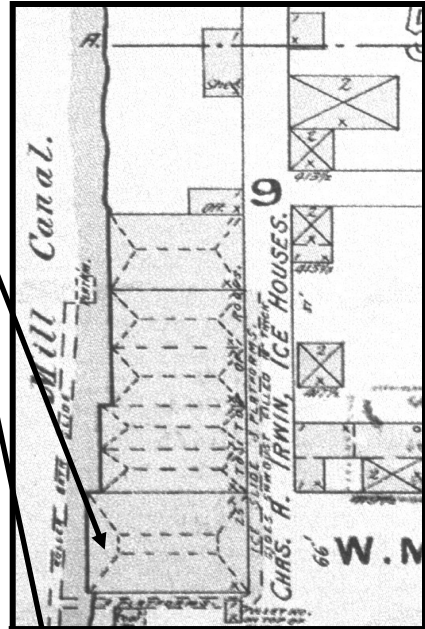
Between Douglas and Purl Streets on the east bank of the canal, various factories and businesses were established, including the Goshen Novelty and Brush Co. (above) and the Goshen Ice Cream Co. They were eventually replaced by the Mogul Rubber Co. (below). This location is now the site of a new co-housing development.





The view above is looking south from the Madison Street Bridge. Seen on the east bank behind the ladies are the ice storage sheds of the Goshen Ice Co. that are shown in the insurance map on the right. This company and other entities harvested ice from the millrace during the winter months for sale to the citizens of Goshen during the warmer months.

The west bank across the bridge was the site of lumber yards, the Tonawanda Park baseball field and later the headquarters of the Rieth-Riley Construction Co., which required the building of a heavy duty bridge. Goshen's street department followed Rieth-Riley in the location before the area was designated for redevelopment as a skating rink and all-purpose pavilion. The bridge will be replaced as part of this redevelopment project.

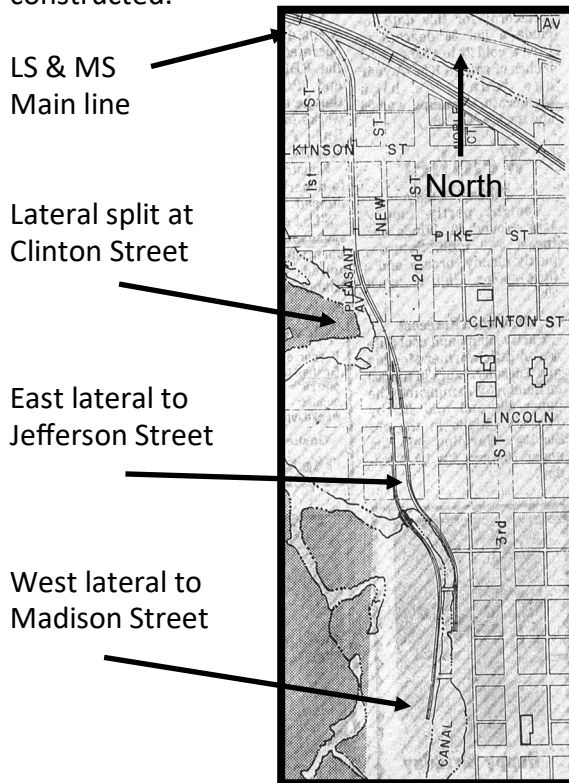


Millrace Railroad Laterals

As the factories along the millrace began to turn out more products, it became obvious that teams of horses pulling wagons were not the ideal way to transport incoming raw materials and outgoing products. By 1892 negotiations and surveys were completed to construct a rail lateral (or siding) along each bank of the millrace.

The Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad was to run a lateral south from their main line, and the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad (The Big Four) was to run a lateral north from their main line near Jackson Street. Together, when connected, there would be a belt line serving the millrace industries and connecting the two main railroads.

By the end of December 1892 the Lake Shore had completed their two-prong siding, with the east bank lateral reaching the Hawks Furniture Co. at Jefferson Street and the west lateral extending south of Madison Street. The Big Four lateral was never constructed.

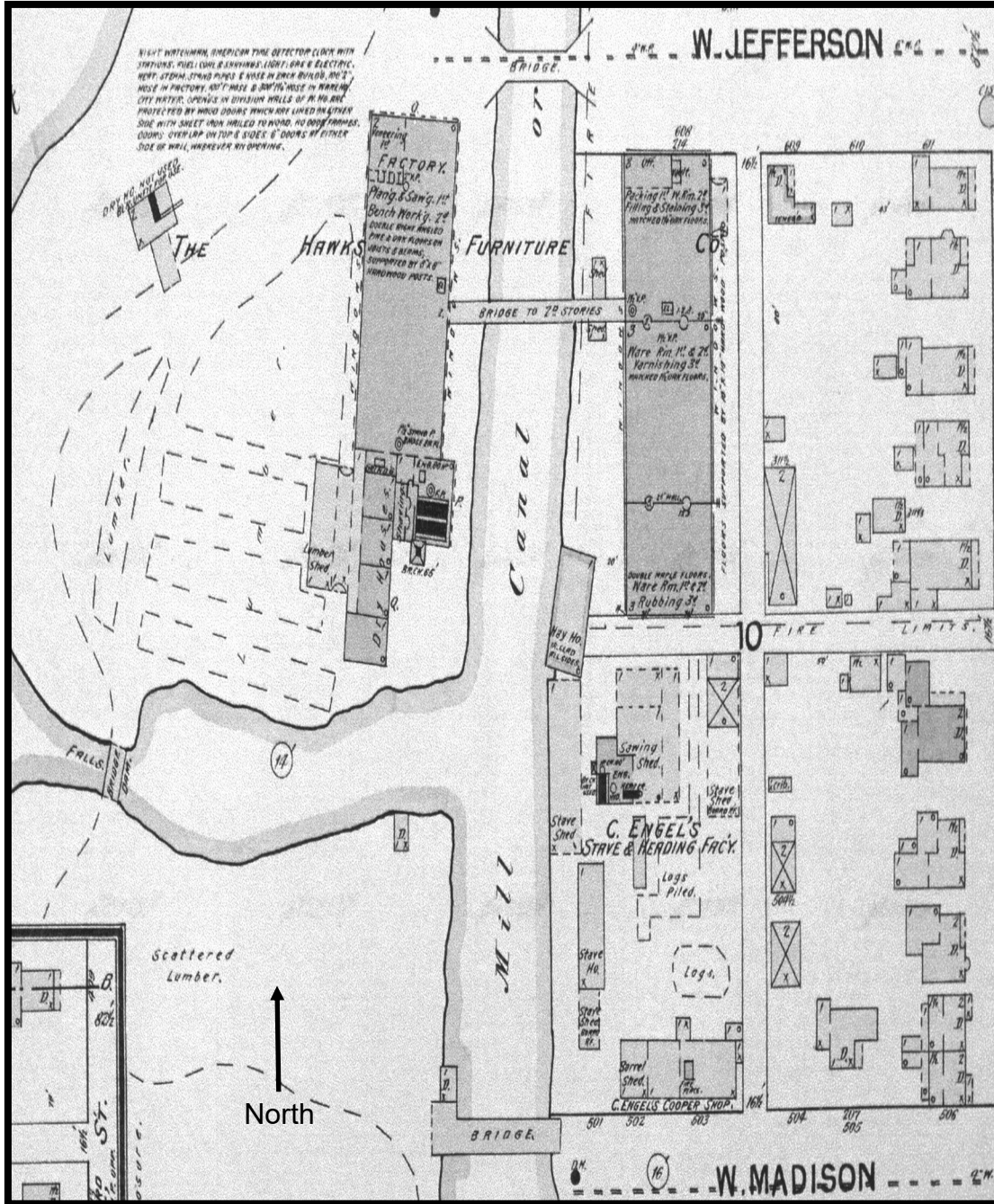


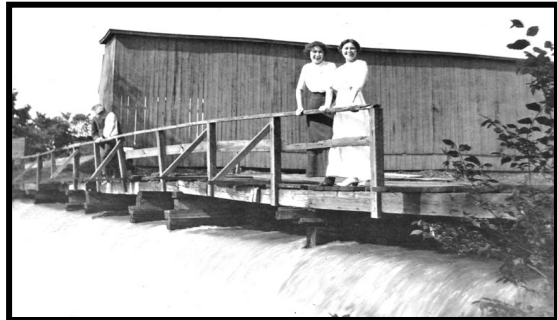
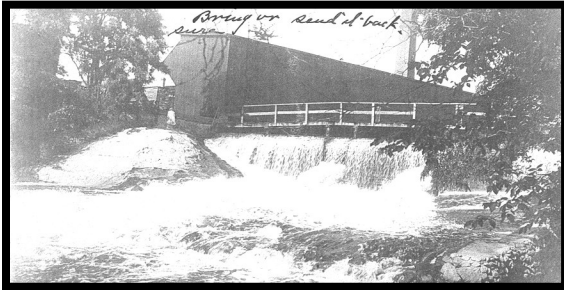
On December 20, 1892, the first two cars of coal were delivered to the Hawks Furniture Co.

By February 1893 the rail business had increased to such an extent that the Lake Shore had placed a permanent engine in the Goshen yards to handle the switching on the millrace laterals.

By 1897 an average of 200 cars per month were being shipped from the two laterals — the greater number of these from the Goshen Milling Co., the Hawks Furniture Co., the Goshen Furniture Co. and the Case Buggy Co.

Madison Street to Jefferson Street

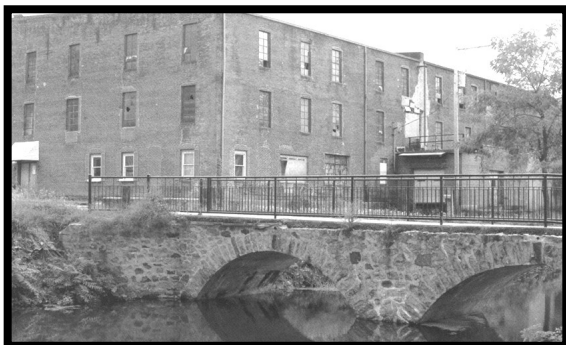




These pictures show the dam, bridge and waterfall that served as a relief channel for water from the head race to flow directly into the Elkhart River. The building behind the ladies on the bridge was a lumber shed for the Hawks Furniture Co. Established in 1872, the Hawks Furniture buildings dominated both banks of the millrace as it approached Jefferson Street. These buildings later housed Barler Metal and Anderson-Bolling. The west bank has been cleared for redevelopment and the surviving east bank factory building is being developed as housing.



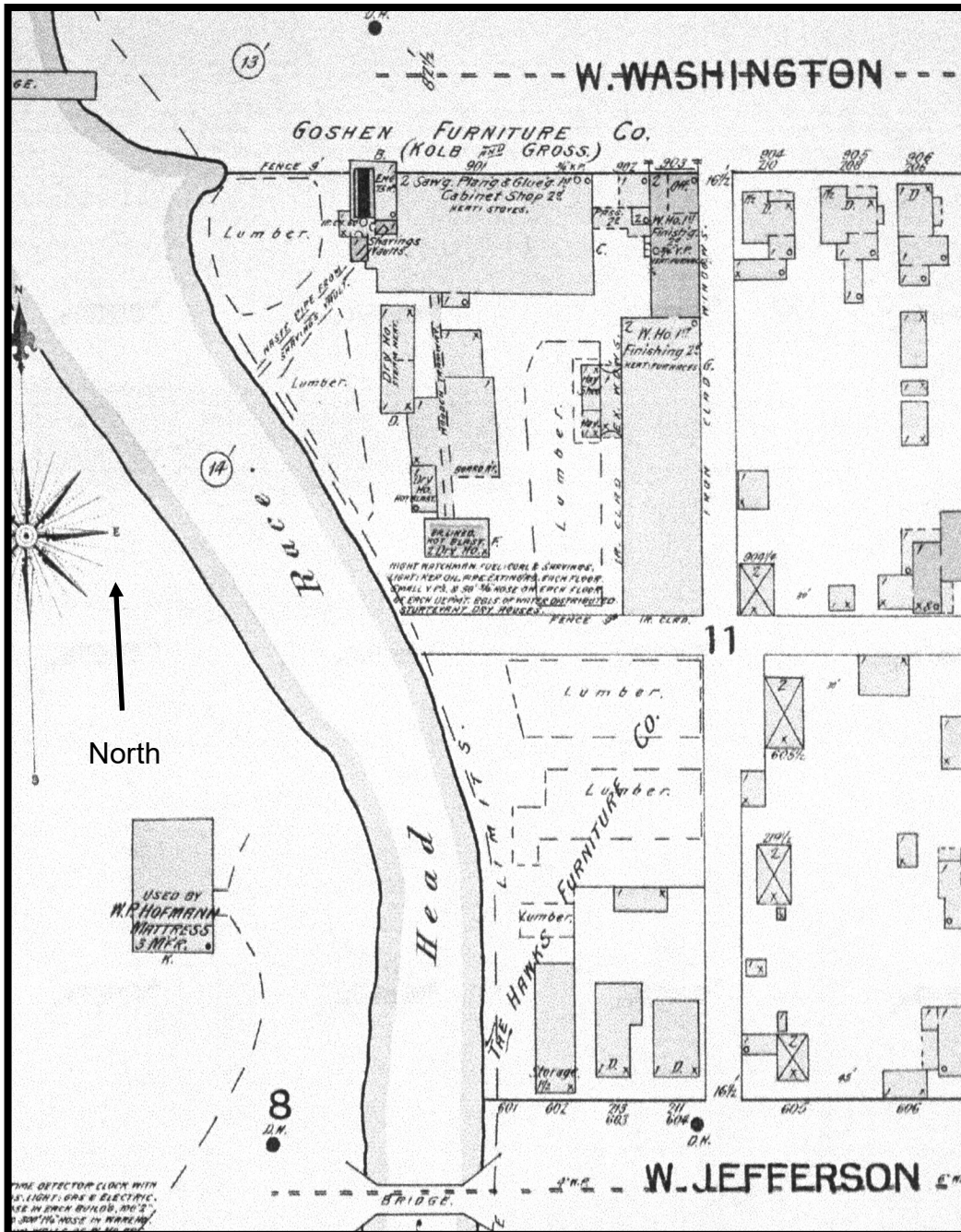
Above, the Hawks west bank factory.



Above and lower left, the original brick Hawks building on the east bank. Below, the Barler building as seen from the west bank.



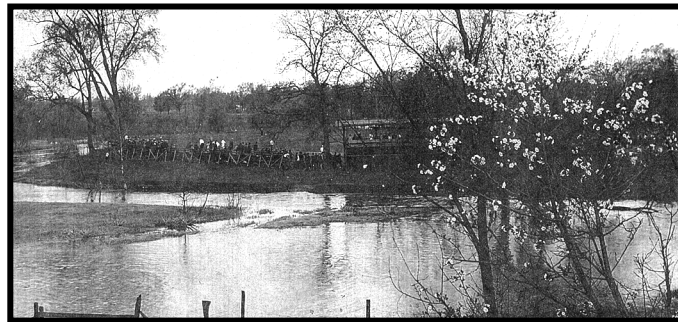
Jefferson Street to Washington Street



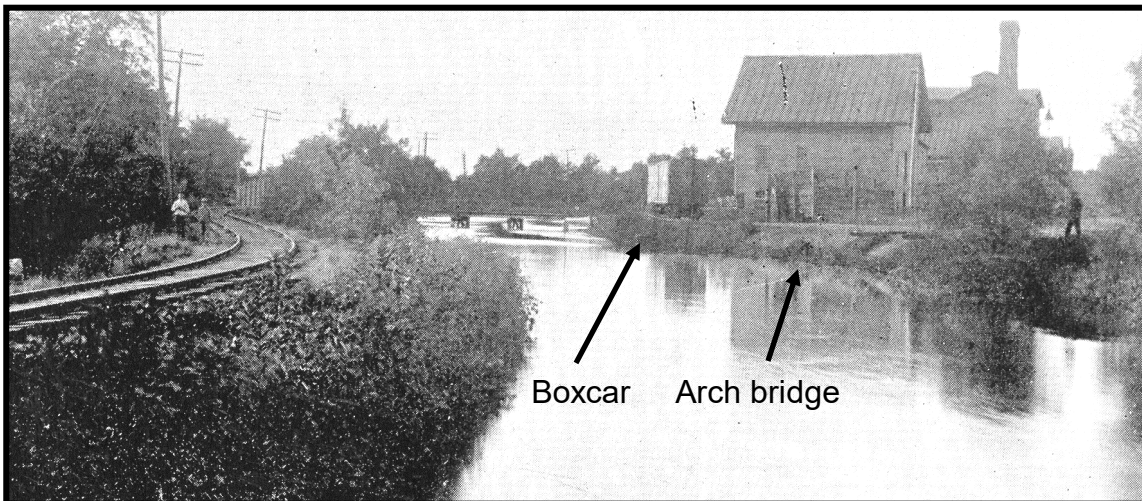


This close-up is of the Jefferson Street stone arch bridge over the millrace. It was built in 1904 for the Hawks Furniture Co. The bridge was also a great help to citizens walking to Tonawanda park and later to Island Park to see baseball games.

This is a view of the Island Park baseball field and stands that were located on an Island between the millrace and the main Elkhart River stream.



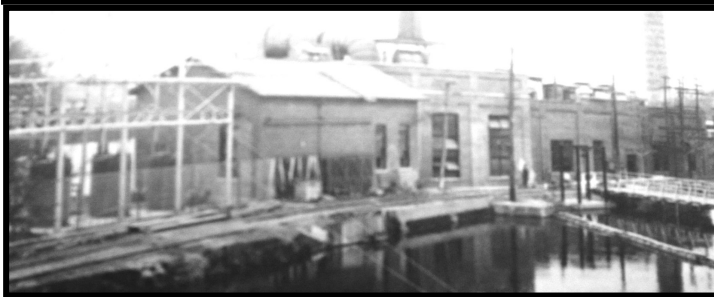
The photo below, taken from near the Jefferson Street bridge, shows the millrace as it nears the Washington Street bridge. Note the rail lateral on the west bank to the left and the box car and stone arch rail bridge on the east bank by the Defrees Grist Mill building.



As water power gave way to steam and then electric power in the factories, the Hawks family recognized that the millrace could be used to generate electricity for all the industries on and near the millrace. In 1898 the Hawks Electric Co. was established and a power-generating facility was built at the west stub of Washington Street.



The picture at left shows the power house and the intake gates where the water entered and dropped 14 feet through the turbines to river level.

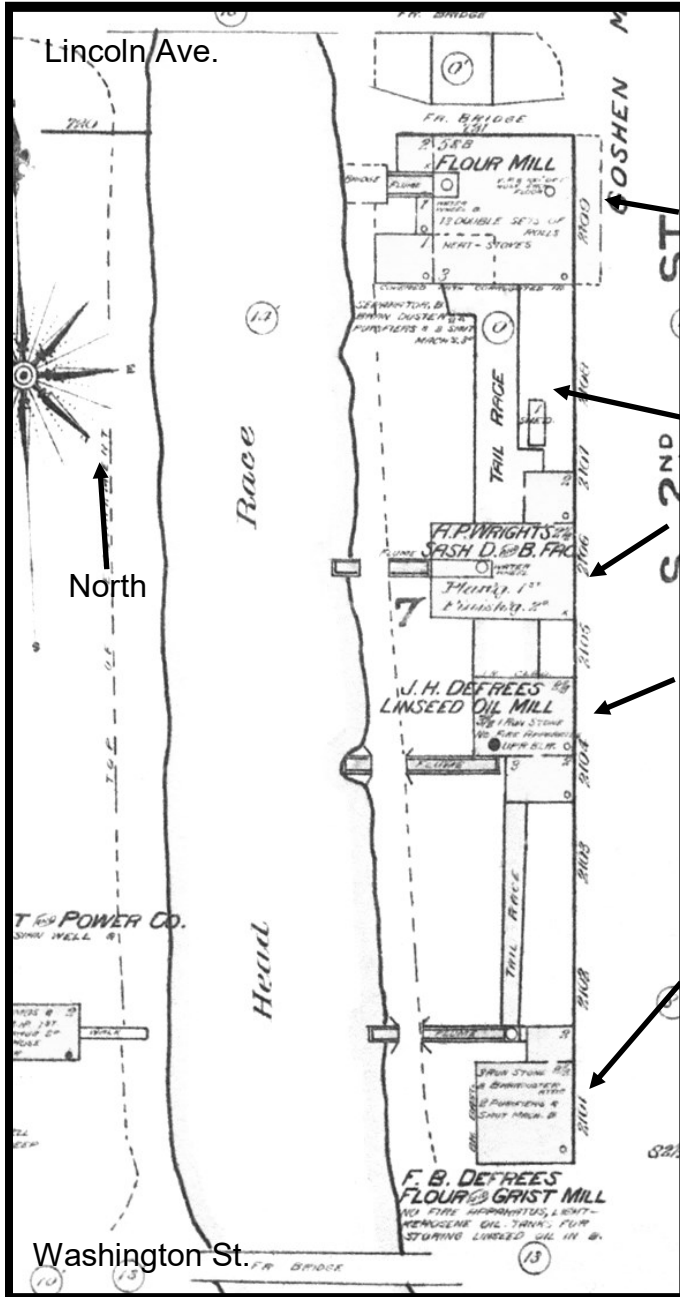


The same power house in the 1950s under NIPSCO with the extra racks of transformers on the south end of the building.

The area south of Washington Street on the east bank was the home of several furniture factories and lumber yards. The pictures below show the Neidig Lumber Co. (left) and later the Home Lumber & Supply Co., in the same building. This site is now home to the Farmer's Market and several craft guilds.



Washington Street to Lincoln Avenue



This block, along the now-filled canal channel, was developed soon after the completion of the canal.

Hawks Flour –1868
Farm Bureau Co-Op
Interra Credit Union

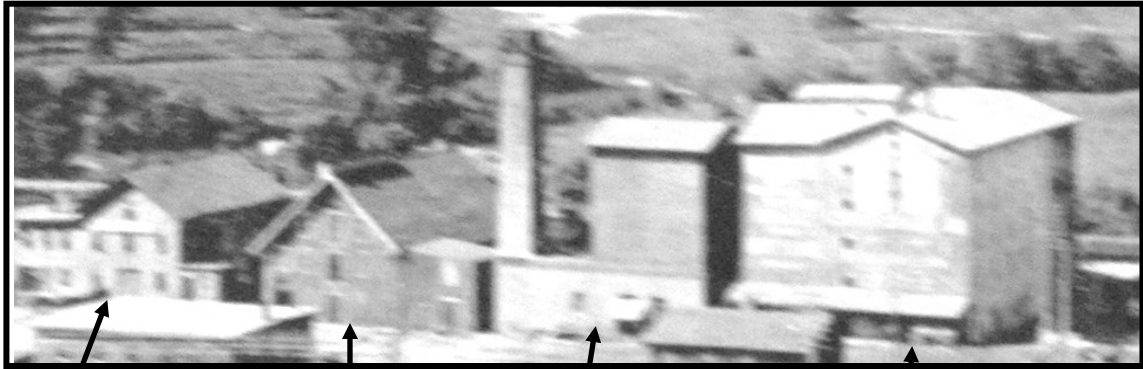
Citizens Electric Light
Hawks Electric

Rowell Iron Foundry –1868
Wright Sash & Door
Goshen Manufacturing

Crary Furniture –1868
Defrees Linseed Mill
Case Buggy

Defrees Oil Mill –1868
Defrees Flour & Grist Mill
Farmer's Coal & Feed
Doriot's Coal & Fuel

Note that each factory in this 1886 map is served by a flume from the Head race. The Goshen Milling Co. Flour Mill was the last to use water power in 1917.



Case Buggy

Goshen Manufacturing

Citizens Electric
Light Dynamo

Goshen Milling Flour Mill

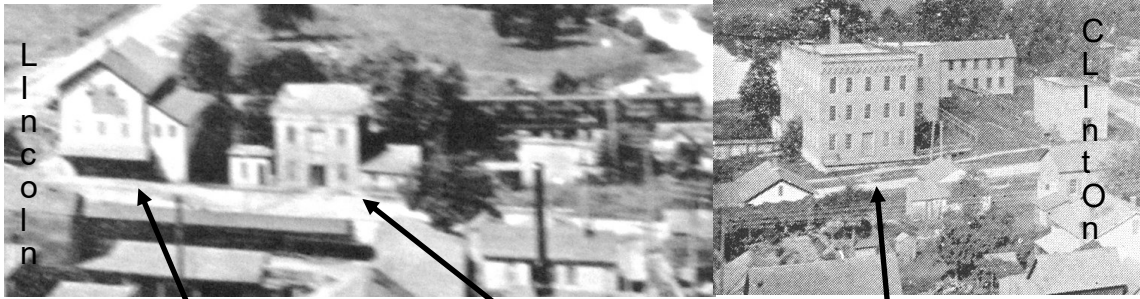


The Farm Bureau Co-Op Elevator above replaced the Goshen Milling Co. Flour Mill.

The entire block shown in the photo at the top of the page has been replaced by the Interra Credit Union complex shown below.



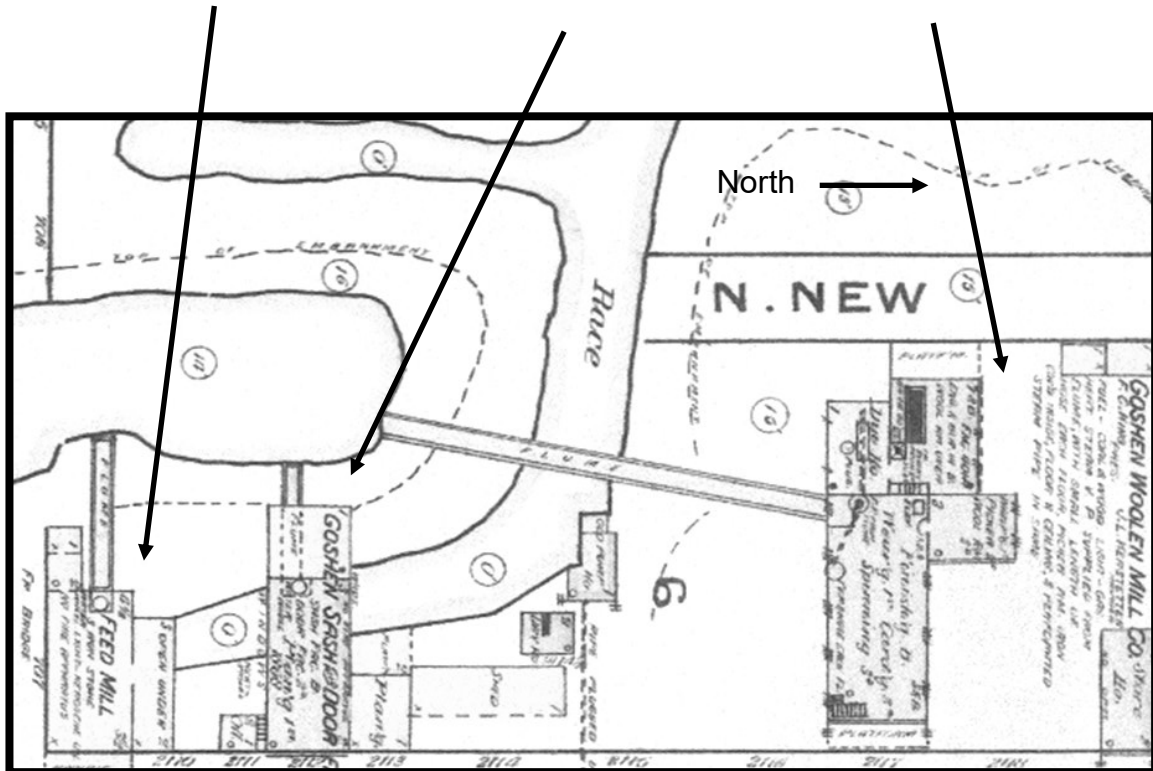
Lincoln Avenue to Clinton Street



Stauffer Flour Mill
Goshen Milling
Farm Bureau Co-Op

Yeakel Carriage
Goshen Sash & Door
Standard Plating

Goshen Woolen Mill
Goshen Buggy Top
Goshen Cushion
Elkhart County Administration Building





After the feed mill on the northwest corner of Lincoln and Second was razed, the Farm Bureau Co-op constructed this building as a hatchery and offices. Later the Co-Op Credit Union occupied the building. The building now hosts several small businesses, including Maple Leaf Printing.

The building below, among the first constructed along the millrace, housed the Yeakel Carriage and Goshen Sash & Door in 1868. Goshen Sash & Door was succeeded by Wehmeyer Lumber and Goshen Planing before Standard Plating occupied the structure in 1914. Elkhart County purchased the building and razed it for parking when the County Administration Building was constructed on the site of the woolen mill at 117-121 North Second Street.



The impressive Goshen Woolen Mill was constructed in 1869 and later housed Goshen Buggy Top and Goshen Cushion and Body. Swartzendruber Hardwood Creations was the last business located here before it was razed to make way for the construction of the Elkhart County Administration Building in 1984. That structure is shown below.



Compare the recent photo below of the 100 block of North Second Street with what it looked like with the original structures shown at the top of page 21.





Prepared by Ron Hoke for the Goshen Historical Society
August 2021. The society museum, at 124 S. Main St.,
is open 10am—4 pm on Tuesdays to Saturdays.

Contact the society by phone at 574-975-0033
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Website: www.GoshenHistorical.org

