

# NORTH NEWPORT: A Local Hub of Industry

The village of North Newport, also known as Northville, was a local manufacturing hub in the 19th and early 20th centuries, due to the proximity to water power, a railroad, and abundant raw materials. Entrepreneurs harnessed the power of the Sugar River with a dam and canals. The town boasted a saw mill, box and tub factory, rake factory, shoe-peg factory, bobbin blank factory, and scythe factory. The Concord & Claremont Railroad stopped in North Newport and carried local goods to Concord and Boston.



Right: From 1907 to 1917 the Draper Bobbin Blank Factory produced approximately 65,000 bobbin blanks per day. Bobbin blanks were narrow rectangular wooden blocks that were finished into bobbins (above) for Draper's textile weaving looms.



Above: This late-19th century view shows the Sibley Scythe Factory (lower) and covered bridges carrying Oak Street and the Concord & Claremont Railroad over the Sugar River.



This mid-20th century view shows the dam and canals that powered North Newport's industries. The canal on the left bank first powered a saw mill and then the bobbin blank factory, while the right bank canal powered the Sibley Scythe Factory. By this time, the bridges over the Sugar River were now metal trusses.

The Sibley Scythe Factory was one of the most successful industries in North Newport. From 1845 to 1932 the Sibley family factory made scythes that shipped internationally, including for use for clearing the Panama Canal. The existing scythe factory buildings, located on the east bank of the Sugar River, were built in 1929 after a fire destroyed the former factory.

## Bridging the Sugar River

North Newport's industries depended on a bridge over the Sugar River for pedestrian and vehicular access to Newport proper and for the Concord & Claremont Railroad. At least 3 bridges have carried Oak Street over the Sugar River. The first was a c.1845 wooden covered bridge, the second was a 1936 metal Warren Truss, and the third is a 2019 steel girder bridge.



The Flood of 1936 damaged the Oak Street covered bridge's eastern abutment. The damage required the bridge's closure to all but pedestrians, who used the improvised walkway shown above.



The covered bridge stood until 1936 when the Sugar River peaked at 10.9 feet and damaged it during one of the worst floods in the history of New England. The heavy March rains, combined with saturated grounds from snow melt, and ice-filled waterways resulted in millions of dollars of damage to bridges, roadways, and buildings in New Hampshire.



New Hampshire officials obtained flood recovery funds from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal agency aimed at combating unemployment during the Great Depression. The State Highway Department designed a metal Warren truss bridge that was longer and higher than the c.1845 covered bridge to prevent future flood damage. The 1936 bridge was designed without piers that could be damaged by ice or debris in the river and sat 13 feet higher above the Sugar River.