

# Upper Falls Industry

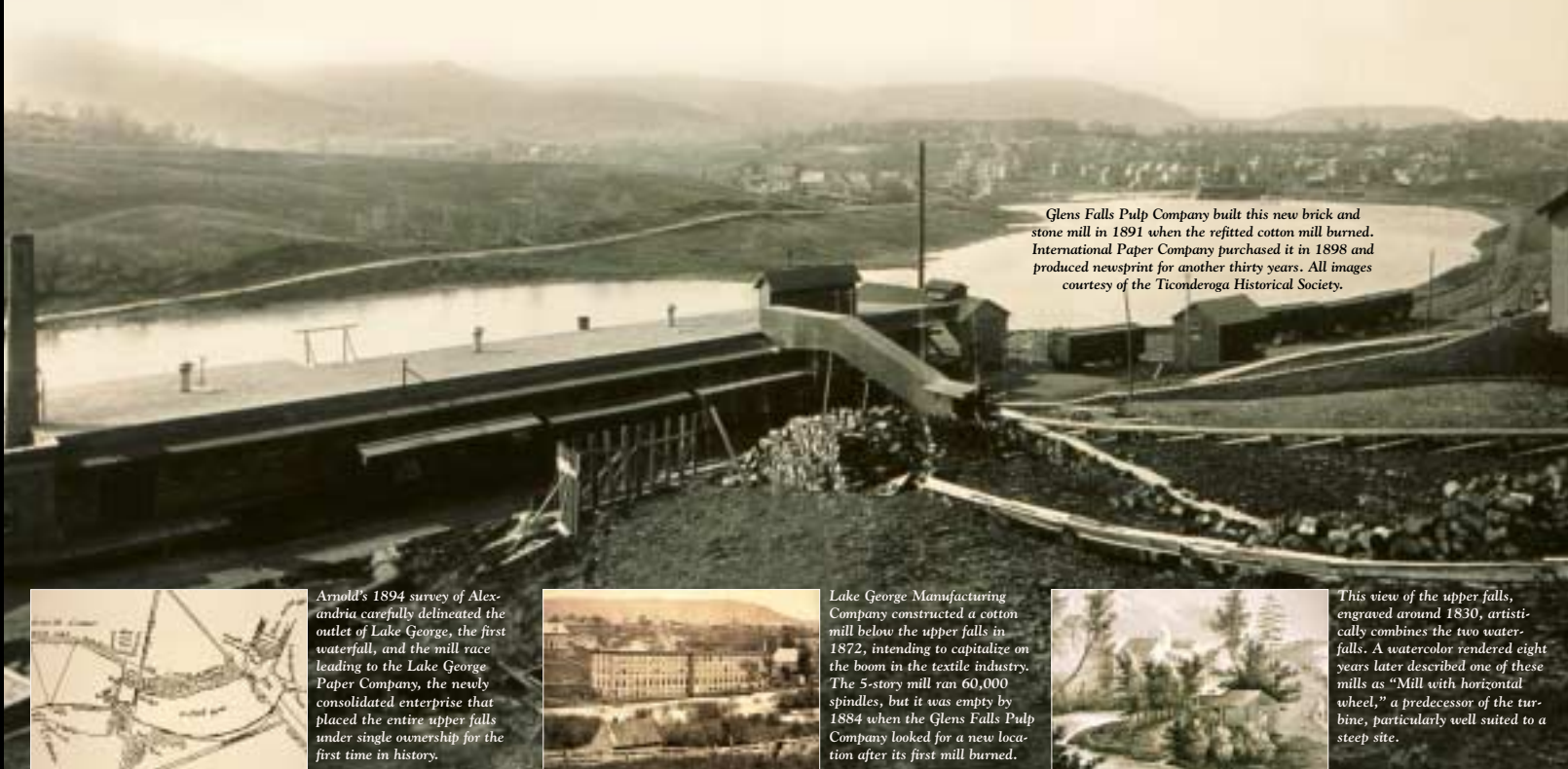


In its first half mile, the LaChute River falls 99 feet from the outlet of Lake George. This wealth of waterpower combined with the traffic between the two lakes to make Alexandria the earliest settlement in Ticonderoga. By 1810, the hamlet had two forges, a tannery and several sawmills.

Ticonderoga's famous graphite industry had its beginnings at the upper falls. Guy Baldwin built the first "lead mill" on the west side of the River where he ground graphite mined in the hills to the west of town. He ran the ore through grindstones, mixing it with iron ore to help pulverize it. After he filed his pencil patent in 1835, he and his family produced pencils here for a generation.

Lumber drove the local economy until the financial panic of 1837, when the bottom dropped out of the market. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, fiber industries took over the upper River. A cotton factory went into business in 1872 while different pulp mills occupied the two main falls. In 1893, the pulp companies merged into the Lake George Paper Company, one of twenty mills in the northeast to form International Paper Company in 1898.

Reforestation has blocked the falls from view. For an unobstructed view, drive up Lord Howe Street on the other side of the River.



Arnold's 1894 survey of Alexandria carefully delineated the outlet of Lake George, the first waterfall, and the mill race leading to the Lake George Paper Company, the newly consolidated enterprise that placed the entire upper falls under single ownership for the first time in history.



Lake George Manufacturing Company constructed a cotton mill below the upper falls in 1872, intending to capitalize on the boom in the textile industry. The 5-story mill ran 60,000 spindles, but it was empty by 1884 when the Glens Falls Pulp Company looked for a new location after its first mill burned.



This view of the upper falls, engraved around 1830, artistically combines the two waterfalls. A watercolor rendered eight years later described one of these mills as "Mill with horizontal wheel," a predecessor of the turbine, particularly well suited to a steep site.