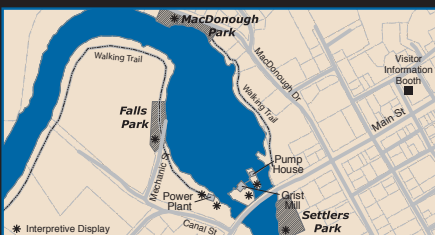
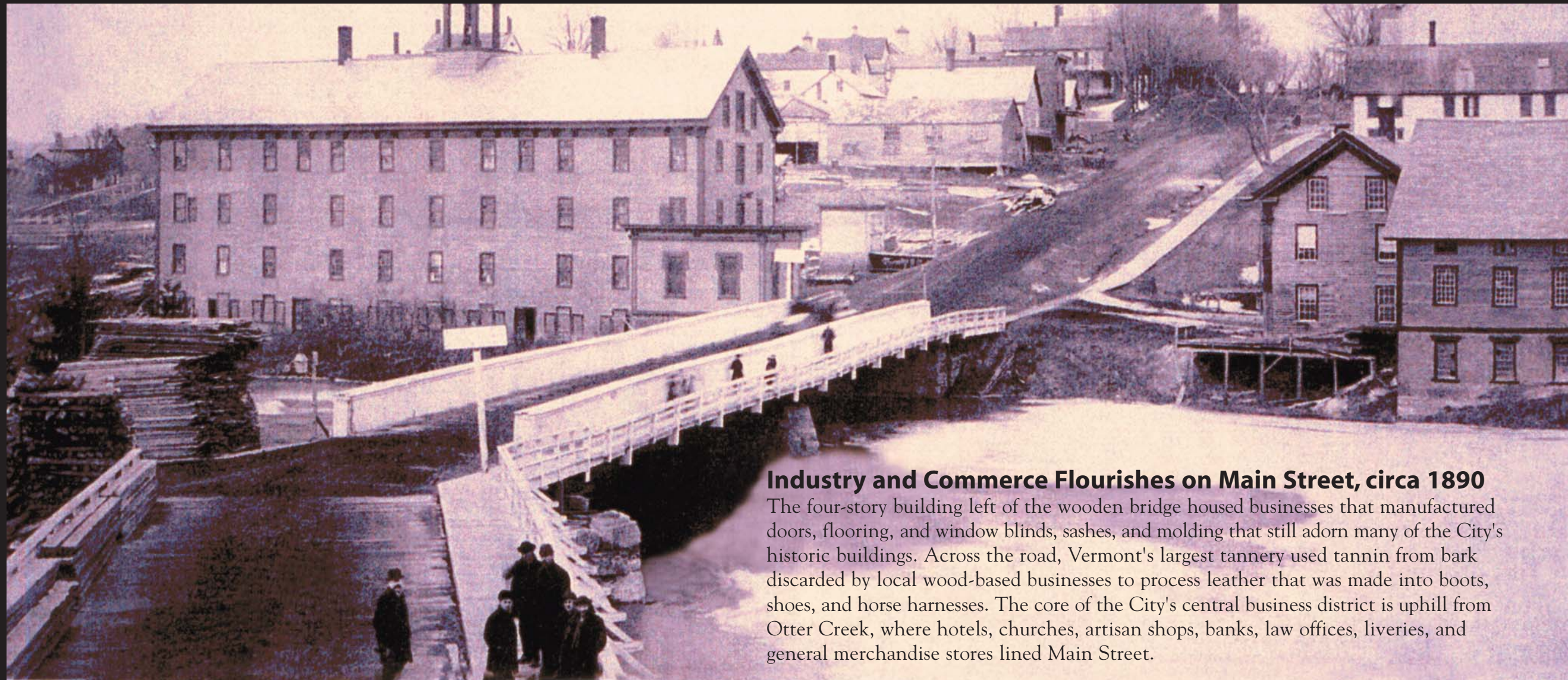


Commerce at the Crossroads



City of Vergennes
For information: 802.877.2841
www.vergennes.org



Wooden bridge over Otter Creek in the 1890s. The large building is the Hayes Falardo furniture factory. Collection of the Bixby Library.

Industry and Commerce Flourishes on Main Street, circa 1890

The four-story building left of the wooden bridge housed businesses that manufactured doors, flooring, and window blinds, sashes, and molding that still adorn many of the City's historic buildings. Across the road, Vermont's largest tannery used tannin from bark discarded by local wood-based businesses to process leather that was made into boots, shoes, and horse harnesses. The core of the City's central business district is uphill from Otter Creek, where hotels, churches, artisan shops, banks, law offices, liveries, and general merchandise stores lined Main Street.

Intersection of River and Roads

Imagine traveling hundreds of miles in an ox-drawn wagon along muddy, rock-strewn, deeply rutted roads through the wilderness. In search of new homesteads, early settlers followed the same routes you took to get to Vergennes. Old stage roads, now US Route 7 and Vermont Route 22A, merged on Main Street. In addition, Otter Creek was a main travel route in the 1800s, as the basin below the falls grew into one of nearby Lake Champlain's busiest ports. Later, in 1848, the Burlington and Rutland Railroad arrived at Vergennes, providing a faster mode of travel.

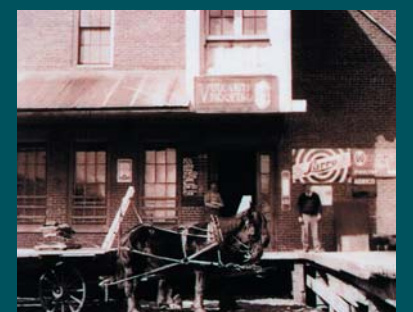
An Early Vermont Hub

Founded in 1788, Vermont's first city capitalized on the falls, access to Lake Champlain, and its location at a crossroads to attract people and businesses. Vergennes, which covers about two square miles (1,200 acres), grew during the 1800s as a manufacturing, trade, and cultural center for the surrounding agricultural towns.

Farm Trade in the City

Farmers from nearby towns brought grain, milk, wool, and other raw materials to sell or trade in

Vergennes. The red brick Norton Grist Mill, built in 1878 to replace an earlier grist mill on the island, served the farmers. It used water power to drive large grindstones and produce flour, grain, feed, and plaster for over 90 years. Teams of horses driven to the mill were watered, fed, and rested in the nearby barn.



Norton Grist Mill loading dock, circa 1900. Courtesy of Robert Norton.