



# MANCHESTER CENTER, VERMONT

# A WALKING TOUR

## THE HISTORY OF FACTORY POINT

In the late eighteenth into the early nineteenth century, Timothy Meade and his family settled along the west branch of the Battenkill River and established a number of businesses. Meade's Mill, as it was then called, was one of the three distinct hamlets that would eventually make up today's Manchester (the two others were Manchester Village and Manchester Depot).

When Meade's Mill grew to include sawmills, marble works, tin shops, grist mills, a cheese and butter factory, and liverys along with furniture makers, carriage shops, and blacksmiths, the name was changed to Factory Point. The larger mills, such as the M. Clark & Son Tannery and O.C. Waterhouse & Co. Hosiery Mill, ceased operations in the early 1880s. At this time, Manchester was developing into a destination getaway for visitors from more populous urban areas, and in the late 1880s the name Factory Point was changed to Manchester Centre (from 1887-1895 before being changed to Center) to remove the industrial stigma and make the town more attractive for tourism. The Manchester Development Association, established in 1900, coined the label "Manchester-in-the-Mountains" and full promotion of the area's natural beauty, golf, and luxury accommodations went into full swing.

### 1

#### TOWN GREEN

Around 1840, Myron Clark and his son Augustus built a large tannery operation that dominated Factory Point for decades. The tannery's landmark brick smokestack, which was built in the 1850s, was over 60 feet tall. It remained until 1911 when the brick was sold to Dellwood Cemetery. It was thought to have contained over 100,000 bricks, most of which were smashed during the demolition and not salvageable. Starting in 1928, the property was gradually transformed into a large garage and auto dealership and served that purpose until 1991. The following year, the Manchester Conservation Commission mounted a successful campaign to purchase the property for \$750,000 to turn the parcel into a town green, a community focal point. The bandstand was dedicated in 2016.

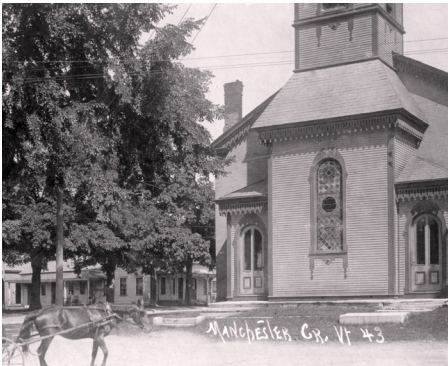




## 2 COLBURN HOUSE

4869 Main Street

The Northshire Bookstore lot was originally the home of Timothy Meade who ran a tavern there and built the first mills along the river. The area was known as Meade's Mill prior to the Factory Point era. In 1872 the old tavern was torn down and the Colburn House built, which operated as a hotel and boarding house with a restaurant until it closed in 1984. The third floor was used as a dance hall and meeting place for a variety of events from community gatherings to vaudeville shows and dances. One of its most famous guests, Louis Armstrong, stayed there in July 1958. He was in town to perform at a fundraising event for the new pavilion at the Southern Vermont Arts Center and had been refused accommodation at the hotels in Manchester Village. The Colburn House was purchased by the Morrow family in 1985, who ran their internationally known bookstore until 2021 when ownership passed to Clark and Lu French.



## 3 THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

4895 Main Street

The First Baptist Church of Manchester was organized in 1781. The original meeting house, erected in 1785, stood on Meeting House Hill (the northwest corner of today's Factory Point Cemetery) on land donated by Timothy Meade. In 1833 a new church was built at Ames Corner, the intersection of today's Main and Bonnet Streets. The Gothic Revival structure, built of bricks hauled from Bennington, cost \$2,300. Improvements and alterations made over time included the belfry tower and vestry, added in 1873. If you look at either side of the belfry, you can see the original configuration of the stained-glass windows evidenced in the brick.



## 4 KIMBALL GRIST MILL

4858 Main Street

The stone gristmill was rebuilt in 1822 by William Ames on the remains of the original c. 1790 mill built by Timothy Meade. Purchased by Myron Clark in 1834, the building remained in the family for the next 60 years and then passed through several ownerships until Walker "Kim" Kimball bought it in 1972 for \$30,000. Vacant for years and nearly condemned, a federal Bicentennial grant in 1976 underwrote the restoration of this historic building. Kimball/Martin Real Estate occupied the building for the next 30 years. The grist mill remains in the Kimball family.



## 5 COMBINATION CASH STORE

4886 Main Street

Originally built in 1837, the building was purchased a few years later by Myron Clark and his son Augustus who added the eastern portion over the narrow roadway below. Allen L. Graves operated a general store here along with a carriage shop, which was located in a shed attached to the north side. In 1909 the store became the Combination Cash Store until it closed in 1979. Since then, it has been a leather goods shop and an outdoor outfitter. One can still see the letters C.C.S. Co. etched into the window on the southern side above what was once an entrance.

## 6 WAIT BLOCK

4900 Main Street

Clark Wait built the Wait Block in 1884-85 to accommodate his growing drugstore business. It was home to Wait Pharmacy, Wait & Hard (J.N. Hard eventually went out on his own in the Village), and then from 1896 it was Whipple's Pharmacy until 1971. A millinery shop, telegraph office, and post office were also located here. The structure was barely saved from the catastrophic fire in 1893 that destroyed much of the business district. Dr. Claude Campbell, Robert Todd Lincoln's personal physician, purchased the building in 1935 and it remains in the family. Now the home of law offices, the building is listed in the National Historic Register.



## 7 FACTORY POINT NATIONAL BANK BUILDING

4928 Main Street

Originally the site of an early tavern, Estabrook's Opera House stood here from 1884 until it was destroyed in the devastating 1893 fire that ravaged the entire block. The current blue Italianate-style building opened in 1896 as the Union Opera House. The new building housed a diverse group of businesses and organizations including the Factory Point National Bank, the Masonic Hall, Heinel's Clothiers, and Bennett's Undertaker Service, until the bank took over the entire building at the end of 1972. After the bank sold the building and following extensive renovations in 2014, it is once again a multi-use commercial and residential building.



## 8 LUGENE'S

4935 Main Street

This two-story brick building was a general store in the second half of the 19th century. By the turn of the century the Lugene family operated it as a shoe store. In the book *Shires of Bennington*, editor Tyler Resch points out "the art of the mason in the corbeled brick arches over windows and richly corbeled cornices in the red brick buildings of Factory Point, Manchester."



## 9 DYER FARM

4993 Main Street

This land was originally part of the Dyer farm, which stretched from Main Street west to the Dana Thompson Recreation Park. Beginning in the late 1940s, the farmland was subdivided, and lots were sold to various businesses. Manchester Elementary School was built on a large parcel starting in 1949 and Landmark Gift Shop occupied the original farmhouse. In 1964 the farmhouse was purchased and removed to its current location on Landmark Lane, off Barnumville Road, and the Grand Union Shopping Plaza was built in its place.



## 10 TELEPHONE BUILDING

5053 Main Street

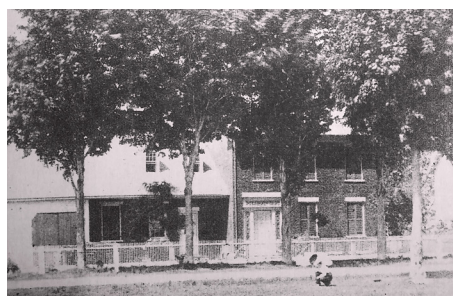
The New England Telephone Company built its local office here in 1918 from which the company provided telephone service east to Barnumville and up to the mountain towns. Switchboard operators worked out of this location until the late 1950s. In 1962, the building was purchased by Douglas Shaw and Dr. Abraham Madkour to house their businesses, W.H. Shaw Insurance Agency and Dr. Madkour's dental practice, which remained there for several decades.



## 11 ROBERTS GARAGE

5081 Main Street

Built at the same time as the brick building next door, it originally housed a grocery store and later a bakery that served the small community that grew up around Adams Park in the late 1800s. From 1926 into the 1960s, Robert's Garage serviced cars and sold gas from pumps out front. Living quarters were located on the second floor. The interior has been renovated several times to accommodate a variety of businesses. For many years it was home to the *Vermont News Guide* offices.



## 12 ZULLO HOUSE

5103 Main Street

Lyman Harrington operated a tavern on this site until the building was sold to Judge Myron Clark in the 1840s for use as his residence. A prime mover in the building of the Western Vermont Railroad and eventually first president of the Bennington and Rutland Railroad, Clark held many important state and local offices. He acquired much of the original Meade property in Manchester Center and is credited with the industrial boom of Factory Point. His son Augustus carried on the family business, and his two sons-in-law, Mason S. Colburn (namesake of the Colburn House) and John Whipple, inherited many of





his holdings and began their own businesses. The farmhouse became the home of the Zullo family, by whose name it has been known for several generations.

## **13** **ZION EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

*5167 Main Street*

The Zion Parish was established in 1782 in Manchester. However, it was not until 1820 that land was purchased (for \$40) and the church erected (at a cost of \$4,500). In 1862 the church was enlarged and remodeled and a stained-glass chancel window and a Trinity window were added. During the summer of 1886, the parish built a rectory. A parish house was bought and dedicated in 1939. Extensive renovations were completed in 2001.



## **14** **THAYER'S TAVERN**

*5138 Main Street*

Built as the Stagecoach Inn around 1790, when Vermont was still an independent republic, the Federal style building was significantly enlarged in 1845 by Dorset master builder Aaron Sheldon, who added the distinctive Greek Revival porch with its tall square columns. There was a ballroom on the third floor with a spring-loaded floor and a small stage that was used as a community entertainment space. When Steven Thayer purchased the property in 1860, he renamed it Thayer's Hotel. It was rebranded the Fairview Hotel in 1902. In 1934, Walter Clemons-McGuire reopened it as a hotel and antique shop until it was purchased by Peter and Susan Palmer in the 1970s, who undertook an extensive restoration and renamed it Ye Olde Tavern, just in time for the 1976 U.S. Bicentennial celebrations. In 2001, the tavern was purchased by Minna and Michael Brandt, who added it to the Vermont Register of Historic Places.



## **15** **METHODIST CHURCH**

*34 Park Place*

Though Methodist services were held in Manchester beginning in 1811, the Methodist Society in Manchester did not build a chapel until 1883 after purchasing the Main Street lot for \$500. The original tin barrel-roofed wooden building seated 200. In 1889, the parsonage was completed just north of the church. In May 1940, the church disbanded the local society and sold the buildings. In 1945, Robert Brewster moved his funeral home from Main Street to this building which has remained a funeral home through successive owners.



## **16** **ADAMS HOUSE**

*18 Park Place*

Warren Adams built this structure in the Greek Revival style, with Italianate details, just after the Civil War, where he lived with his family and ran his jewelry business and spectacle shop. The business was carried on by his son Harry, who was born in the house in 1874, and died there 90 years later in 1964. Harry was a revered member of the community, participated in numerous civic and fraternal organizations, and was a founding member of the Manchester Band. In the late 1920s, the band raised over \$900 to build a stone bandstand in the park across the street, where it remained a local gathering place until the 1950s. Adams Park is dedicated to the memory of Harry Adams and his many contributions to Manchester during his long life.



## **17** **ENGINE HOUSE**

*345 Center Hill Road*

The small wood building on the south side of Adams Park was originally Manchester Center's first firehouse. It stood south of the Colburn House (Northshire Bookstore today) for over fifty years until it was moved in 1921 to its current location, where it continued to be the engine house. A 1924 fire devastated the building and forced the department to move their pumper temporarily to the brick building across the park. A new firehouse was built in 1966 on Depot Street and the building sold. The small observation tower used by the firemen remains on the roof.



# MAP OF MANCHESTER CENTER INDICATING AREAS OF INTEREST



For more information about the history of Manchester, please visit our website: [manchesterhistoricalsocietyvt.org](http://manchesterhistoricalsocietyvt.org)



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