

# Mill Brook & Waterpower

# WINDSOR VERMONT

In the 1700s Mill Brook was a reliable source of waterpower for small industry in the rural community of Windsor. Its three falls, dropping 60 feet in three-fourths of a mile, powered grist and saw mills that provided settlers with food and lumber for building. Shops producing ironwork, shoes, leather goods, and textiles soon joined these early industries.



A variety of enterprises clustered around Mill Brook in 1855, including the Robbins & Lawrence armory, a railroad car shop, a pail factory, a foundry, and boarding houses for workers. (*Map of Windsor County*, Hosea Doton, 1855)

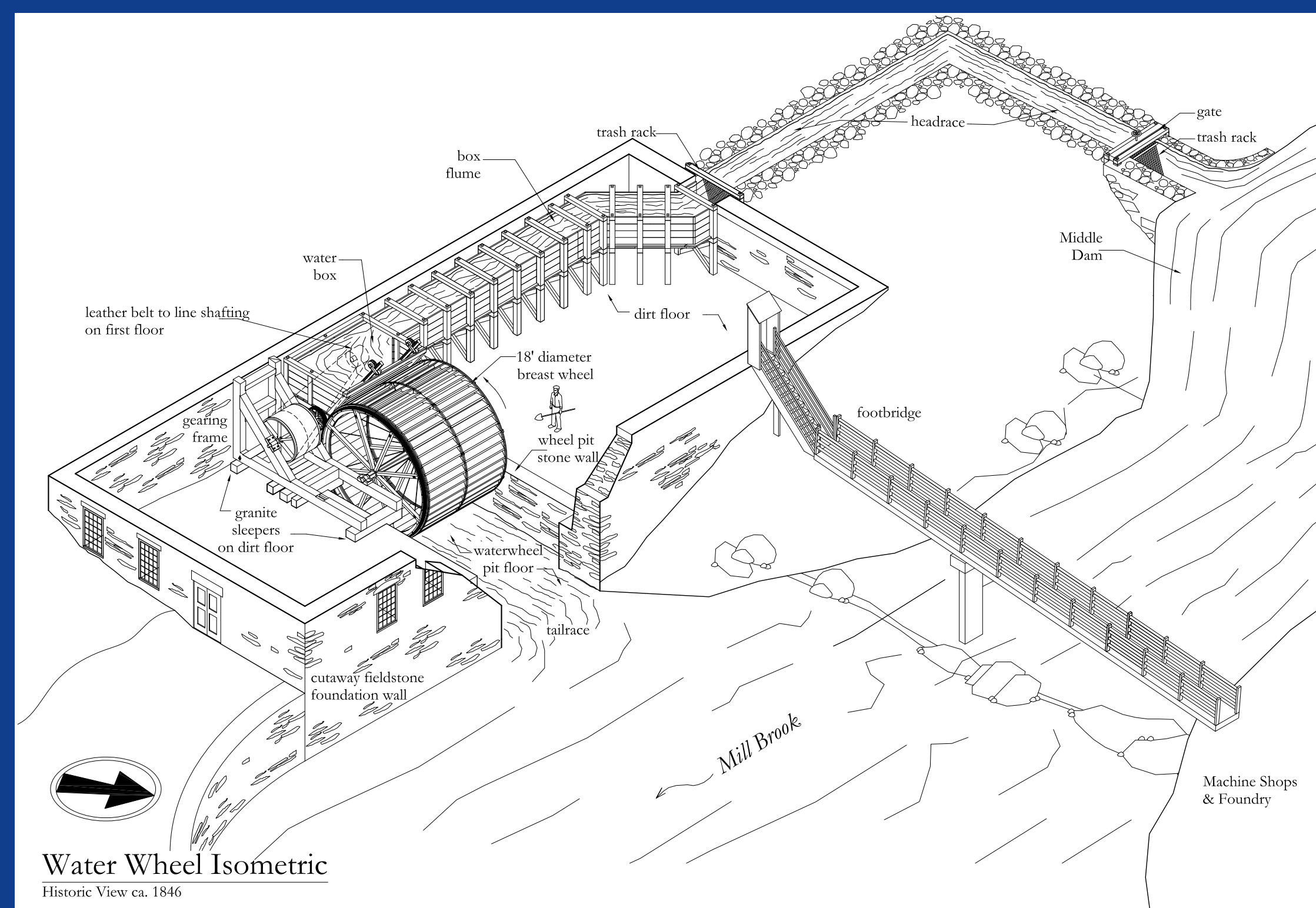
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By 1846 the Robbins & Lawrence Company had fully developed the waterpower here at the middle falls with an armory on the south bank. The company manufactured rifles and machine tools that produced interchangeable parts for a wide range of products. Machine shops and assembly buildings occupied the north bank into the early 1900s. In 1924 the National Acme Company, an automatic lathe and machine parts manufacturer, built the apartment block on the north bank to house a large labor force.



The wooden penstock (*above left*), installed in the early 1870s, fed a water turbine that worked with a steam engine to power the site. (*Factory Complex Sales Prospectus*, c. 1915)  
Courtesy Windsor Historical Society

Windsor resident Frank Kennedy purchased the dams and properties along Mill Brook, including the armory, in 1898 and generated electricity using waterpower and coal-fired steam from 1902 to 1926. His heirs sold the facility to Windsor Electric Company, and in 1929 it became part of Central Vermont Public Service. Electricity generation ceased in the 1930s, but the property continued to be used as a transmission substation. The American Precision Museum purchased the armory in 1965.



Water above the dam traveled through the headrace and followed the box flume in the basement to power the 18-foot-diameter breast wheel in the wheel pit before exiting through the tailrace.

Courtesy Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service (delineated by German Osorio, Christopher H. Marston, Pavel Gorokhov, 2009)