

THE VILLAGE OF PASCOAG

Pascoag is one of the larger villages in the Town of Burrillville. As early as the 1740s there was a saw mill at the site of the Granite Mill where CVS now sits. The name Pascoag comes from the Indian name of the stream which later became the Pascoag Reservoir. According to the Pascoag Herald Memorial Edition, the name means to pass a snake and refers to the ledges which lined one side of the stream.

At one time, there were five working mills in the immediate vicinity of downtown Pascoag. Main Street became the business center for that village. Citizens didn't have to leave town to get food, supplies, clothes and kitchenware. And in the early years, a blacksmith and tinsmith were in business to make or fix just about every piece of equipment needed to run the farms which furnished their produce and milk to the families. Everything was available within walking distance for most.

The Music Hall provided entertainment, and with the arrival of the railroad and later on, trolleys, visitors came from other parts of the state just to visit this bustling village. Local families would hop on the trains and go to the southern shores of Rhode Island for clambakes and swimming. When the trolleys arrived, their convenience made it easier to get from one village to another, and that opened up a whole new world for the people of Pascoag.

The Granite Mill privilege was the first water power utilized on either the Pascoag or the Clear Rivers. A saw and gristmill was here before 1740 and in 1814; Daniel Sayles built a mill for dressing cloth-using waterpower from the Pascoag River. The Reservoir was enlarged in 1860 by Albert Sayles financed by most of the other mill owners downstream. In 1865, Mr. Sayles built the stone mill, enlarging it in 1880. During WWI and WWII worsted uniform cloth was made in the Granite Mill for the USA. Unfortunately, in May of 1981, the mill was destroyed by fire. Plans had been made to transform the mill into housing units and to preserve the original facade of the mill. A devastating loss for the Town of Burrillville. The Stone Worsted Mill was located where the Bridgeway is now. It was torn down by Austin T. Levy in the 1930s in order to construct the Bridgeway.

The Lincoln and Anchor Mills complexes were on North Main Street on the Pascoag River. There was a sawmill here as early as 1790, a cotton spinning mill in 1807, and then a mill for making snuff. Woolen and worsted goods were manufactured until closed in the 1960s. The Clear River joins the Pascoag below these mills and continues on its way to Harrisville. The Magner mill existed near that site until it was destroyed by fire in 1895. The Magner Brothers rebuilt in Chepachet.

In the early years, Pascoag was growing so fast because of its many mills, that it was the most populated village in the Town of Burrillville. Sorry to say, that has changed over the years principally because of the demise of the mills. The future of Pascoag lies in its ability to attract summer visitors to its beautiful Pascoag Reservoir. With plans for rehabbing downtown, it has potential to again become a showcase village for the Town of Burrillville.

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