

Bridgeton School
White Mill

The 1894 edition of the Pascoag Herald states the name Bridgeton was given to this area because of the post office in the store next to Hopkins Spindle Works. Two bridges spanned the river here, one below and the other above the Hopkins Factory, so naturally Bridgeton was a proper name for this place. The village was formerly known as Huntsville in honor of Arnold Hunt who built the first mill on this site about 1834. At one time, there were five separate mills operating here as follows: The White Mill, Wilson's Shoddy Mill, Hopkins Machine Works, the Laurel Hill Yarn Company and the Premier Mill. Like most other typical villages, mill houses were built for the workers with several stores in the immediate vicinity for their shopping convenience.

Previous to 1803 there was a sawmill at Wilson's Reservoir operated by William Ross. In 1847 it became a grist and shingle mill. Starting in 1866, the Wilson family operated a shoddy and yarn mill, which continued until the 1930s. The last gristmill in Burrillville operated at that site until 1882. Over 100 years later, in 1988, two grinding stones were recovered from Wilson's, donated to the Burrillville Historical & Preservation Society, and displayed on the grounds of their headquarters at the Bridgeton School.

The White Mill, also known as the Prendergast Mill, was destroyed by a fire set by an arsonist in the 1970s. The new White Mill Park, built with open space monies, was dedicated by the Town of Burrillville in 1994. The rest of the mill complexes were also destroyed by fires at one time or another and sadly, no longer exist.

Bridgeton had several sub villages - Eagle Peak, Ross Village, Laurel Hill, and Laurel Ridge. Each of these had their own special identities even though they were a part of the whole picture. Besides working in the mills, farming and woodcutting were other ways of making a living.

In the olden days the welfare system was much different than it is today. At the Town Poor Farm the residents grew their own vegetables, cut wood, plowed the fields, hired out to other farmers in the neighborhood, and were not afraid to give a good days work in exchange for having a roof over their heads and a full stomach. It was a wonderful way to take care of our needy.

With the advent of the railroad and then the trolley, the conveniences of travel were afforded and that is when the world expanded for the citizens of Bridgeton and for the rest of Burrillville. Trips were made to other parts of the state, especially to the waters of the ocean, for all kinds of entertainment.

When the children were transported to other villages to attend schools, the village lines seemed to run into each other, which eventually lead to the assimilation of the village concept. But fortunately, even today, the citizens of Burrillville are proud of their villages and still refer to where they live by the village names. Even though officially there is no Bridgeton, the name continues in the minds and hearts of those who live there.

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