

Timeline of Forge Village (Abbot) Mill

Mid-17th century: There was a fish weir owned by Native Americans (specifically by either the Wamesit, Pawtucket, or Nashoba tribe) near the site of the current Abbot Mill. The weir was bought by the Town of Groton shortly after.

Around 1710: A blacksmith and Groton landholder named Jonas Prescott built an iron forge by the weir, which gave Forge Village its name and catalyzed a period of industrial growth in this area.

1730: Groton ceded Forge Village to Westford.

1853: A group of men found the Westford Forge Company, which sought to expand the old iron forge. Among these men were Forge Village local Jonas Prescott, descendant of the 17th century Prescott, and John W. P. Abbot, who served as the principal financier.

1855: The new forge was in operation. Among its facilities was a small machine shop that was part of the old iron forge and contained drills and lathes for finishing machine parts. The forge manufactured windlass necks, axles for railroad cars and wagons, sledgehammers, nuts, bolts, shafts, farm tools, andirons, candlesticks, mortars, pestles, sheet iron, and boiler plate.

1865: Unable to survive the economic depression of 1859, the Westford Forge Company went out of business. The forge was transferred to the Forge Village Horse Nail Company, founded in that same year (1865), which manufactured horse, mule, and ox shoe nails. The company was able to make use of much of the former forge company machinery but introduced some nail-specific manufacturing equipment.

1879: The Abbot Worsted Company bought the Forge Village Horse Nail Company and acquired the ownership of the forge, which it converted into a mill for the manufacture of carpet worsted yarns.

1887: The Company expanded the mill complex with the construction of a three-story brick mill.

1909-10: The Company expanded the mill again with first the demolition of a wood-framed building that served as the main facility of the Forge Village Horse Nail Company and then the construction in its place of another three-story brick mill.

The 1920s: The mill became the largest producer of mohair yarn in the country.

By 1950: The mill became the largest producer of knitting yarn in the world.

1956: Unable to compete with the textile mills in the Southern US with their cheaper, non-unionized labor, The Abbot Worsted Company sold the mills and closed its other facilities in Forge Village. These mills were then occupied by the Murray Printing Company, who further expanded the mill complex with modern construction.

1964: The Murray Printing Company became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Courier Corporation, another printing company, who acquired ownership of the mills.

2002: The mill was registered on the National Register of Historic Places.

2005: The Yule Development Company, Inc., headed by Chris Yule, bought the mill from Courier Corp. with the intention of converting it into a luxurious apartment complex.

2007: Yule's plan for the conversion of the mill was greenlit by the town boards of Westford.

2012: The conversion of the mills was completed, and the first tenants began to move in. Abbot Mill remain an apartment complex to this day.

Sources:

- <https://westfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1621/Forge-Village-Historic-District-PDF>
- Abbot Company Employee Handbook.
- Speech addressed to “Mr. Dyson, Mr. Murray and other invited guests” dated 4/4/1957.
- Westford Eagle 7/12/2012.
- Westford Eagle 4/5/1990.
- An article by Joyce Pellino Crane titled “Abbot Mill clears financial hurdle.” The snippet shows neither the newspaper’s name nor its publication date.