

BROOKS IN HUBBARDTON VERMONT

The three major streams in Hubbardton all start in its northeast corner.

North Breton Brook flows south into the Castleton River.

Both Giddings Brook and Sucker Brook flow southwest into Lake Bomoseen.

North Breton Brook It starts in Hubbardton on Pittsford Ridge east of Mount Zion. It flows over a waterfall on Kit Davidson's property and then follows the East Hubbardton Road south, dropping perhaps 1000 feet from around 1430 to about 430 feet where it joins the Castleton River near the base of the East Hubbardton Road by Route 4A. The northeastern part of Castleton was known as early as 1772 as "North Britain". (Also spelled "Briton", "Breton", "Britin". And Britain".) The East Hubbardton Road was known as the North Britain Road.



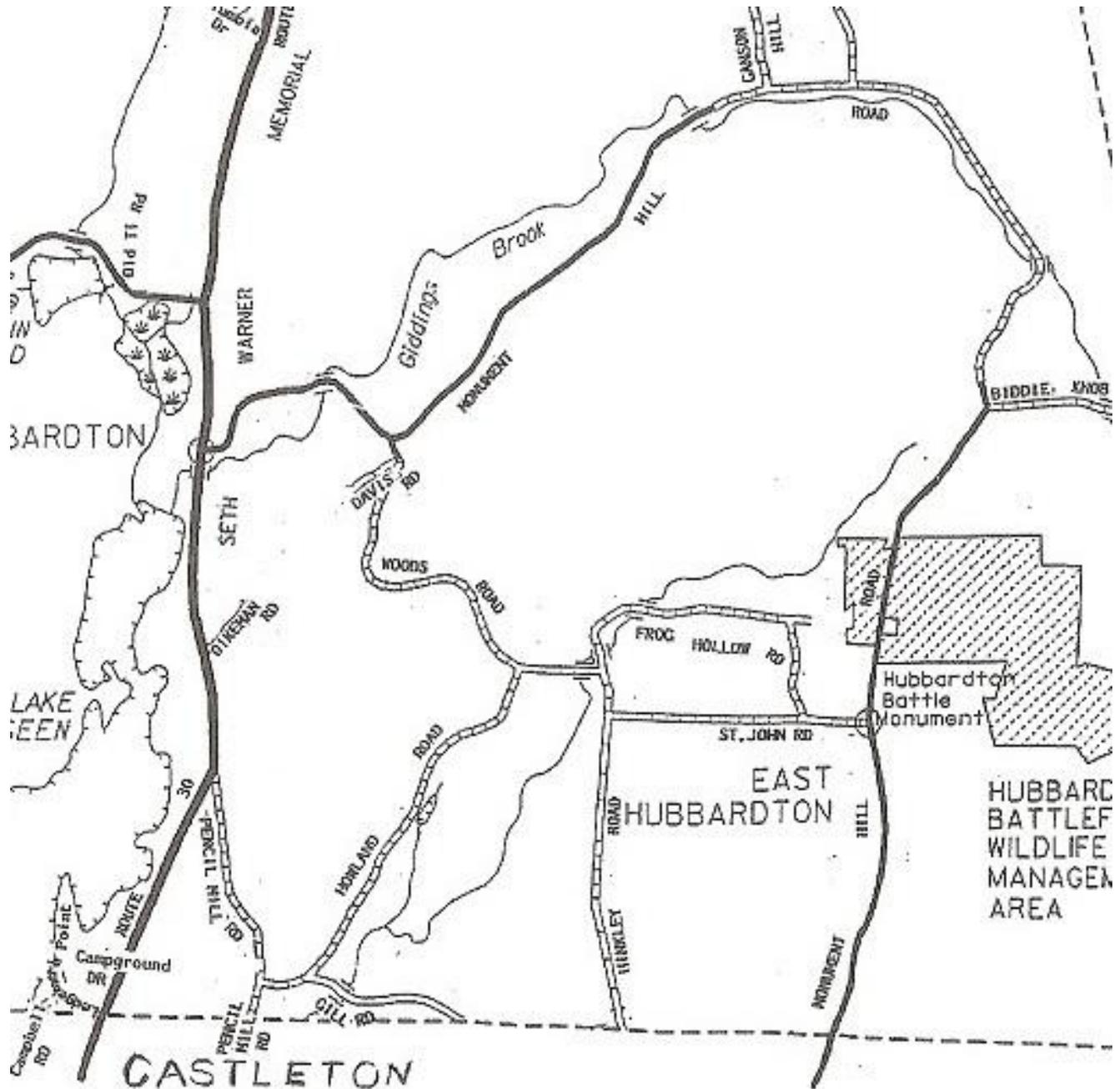
A dam was located in the area pictured above, referred to in 1792 as (George) "Foot's mill lot." When Foot sold his land in 1802, it included a house, grist mill, and sawmill. The dam pictured, (which is on the present East Hubbardton Road 0.6 miles north of Rt. 4A,) is likely not the original one. On a hand-drawn map of the 1820s, a mill is indicated at this place and also one further upstream at Margaret Falls, which is thought to be the location of John Hall's tannery in 1777 and later the site of Bassett's sawmill (1876-1940s).

A road surveyed in 1825 ended near Jabez Ward's barn and "Miner's mills" in the area of the dam. The present East Hubbardton road continues north from this point.

Smith Sherman started a marble cutting mill here, perhaps as early as 1835. The stone purchased for Amos Bird's reburial in 1842 from "Sherman, Brother and Son" was possibly cut here. The marble sawmill was located a short distance downstream of the dam.

The mill pond was used by neighboring children as an excellent place for fishing, swimming, and ice skating.

The map below shows Giddings Brook and Sucker Brook in Hubbardton:



These other two brooks start at an elevation of about 1000 feet and end at Lake Bomoseen at 411 feet, dropping about 600 vertical feet. Sargent Hill separates them, with Giddings Brook on the north and Sucker Brook on the south.

Giddings Brook. It generally follows Monument Hill Road (MHR). It flows under Monument Hill Road three times (1. north of Biddie Knob Road, 2. west of the Parsons School, and 3. an area of cascades about one half mile from Route 30.) It then goes over a small waterfall before flowing under Route 30 by MHR and then into the north end of Lake Bomoseen. Dr.Theophilus Flagg, the first physician in town lived on Frog Hollow Road between the two crossings. You can still see the stones for the foundation of the Brookside (Flagg) School on the NW corner of Frog Hollow and St John roads west of the brook. This school house was torn down and reconstructed on property (at one time also owned by the Flagg Family) on the corner of MHR and Woods Road around 1952. It was used as a residence until about 1971 when it was removed and a new building constructed.



Cascades 1/2 mile from Route 30

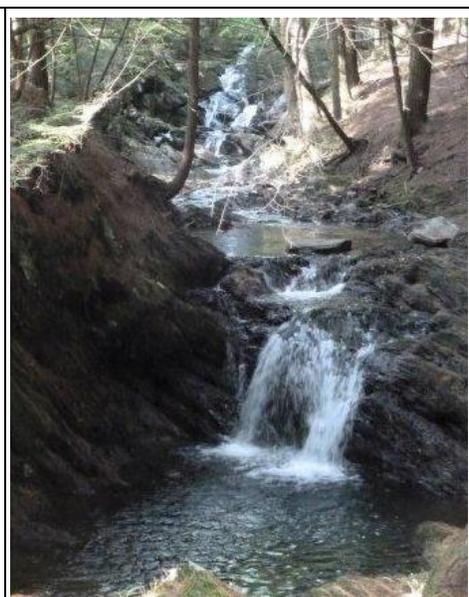


Waterfall near Route 30

Sucker Brook. It flows under MHR opposite Biddie Knob Road. The Battle of Hubbardton started nearby along Sucker Brook. It then flows under a number of roads in Hubbardton: 1. Frog Hollow Road twice, 2. St John Road, 3. Gill Road. It carved out a beautiful gorge south of Gill Road. It then enters Castleton: and flows under: 1. Stables Road, 2. North Road, 3. Route 30 past Crystal Beach. . A pencil mill factory, which used soapstone for pencils, was located on Sucker Brook north of the Pencil Mill School House on Stables Road. "District School No 8" closed in January 1946. This brook empties into Lake Bomoseen in Castleton.



View west towards Brookside (Flagg) School Property



Gorge, just south of Gill Road



Pencil Mill Schoolhouse on Stables Road



Bridge at Crystal Beach on Lake Bomoseen

The once red School House, also a “brookside” school, is now the private home of Allison Reuling.

The Slate Interest (from Smith and Rand’s 1886 History of Castleton)

The oldest slate interest in town, although not strictly a slate-mill, as usually considered, is the slate pencil factory of the Vermont Slate and Alum Company. In about 1840 John Cain, of Rutland, bought the land containing the quarry and used to take the slate to Rutland, where it was sawn into slips and they were converted into pencils. In 1854 James Adams entered upon the manufacture of pencils here. It was continued by him until 1859, when a partnership was formed with H. O. Brown, and continued until 1866. D. R. Satterlee then became a partner, under the firm name of Adams Brown & Co. The year following it was incorporated as the "Adams Manufacturing Company," with a capital stock of \$225,000; James Adams, president ; D. R. Satterlee, vice-president, and O. A. Brown, secretary.

The factory is situated at the quarry, has a steam engine of eighty horse power, and suitable machinery for turning out 100,000 pencils per day. The company employs about 100 workmen. The pencils, called "soap-stone pencils," are of superior quality, and are sent to all parts of the world.

This stone is also ground into a fine powder and used in the manufacture of paper. It contains a very large per cent, of alum, and the company have expected to manufacture alum in large quantities. For the above purposes there is no quarry in the United States, if there is in the world, to compare with it.

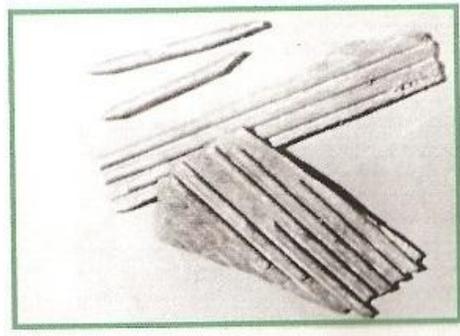
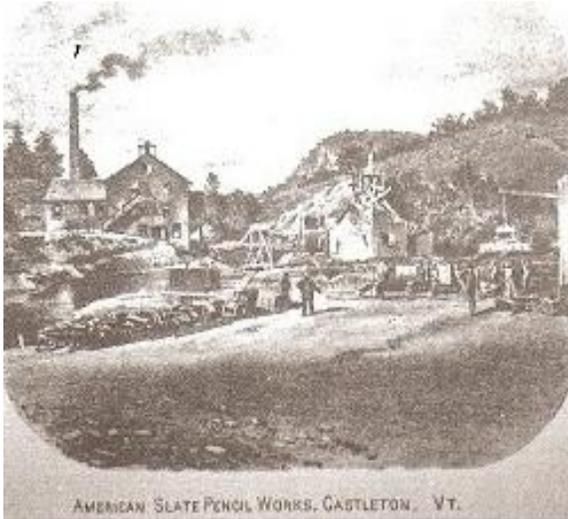
The mill was burned about 1873 and rebuilt. The company soon after failed and the property came into the hands of George P. and John A. Sheldon, who now own it. James Adams is manager.

Slate Pencils (http://www.officemuseum.com/pencil_history.htm)

White slate pencils made by John Cain & Co., Rutland, VT, were exhibited in 1844 at the fourth exhibition of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association in Boston, MA. From that time, if not earlier, through the early 20th century, pencils cut from solid pieces of softer grades of slate or soap-stone were used by schoolchildren to write on tablets cut from harder grades of slate. Apparently, artificial slate pencils were also made; for example, Patent No. 316,374 award to Samuel Kraus on April 21, 1895, describes a method of making slate pencils using ground talc or soapstone mixed with ground potter's clay. Slate pencils were available with the slate core unwrapped, wrapped in paper, and encased in wood like a lead pencil. Holden & Cutter, Boston, MA, advertised slate pencils c. 1840-60; Grigg & Elliot, Philadelphia, PA, advertised slate pencils c. 1850-60; Charles J. Cohen, Philadelphia, PA, advertised slate pencils, including wood-cased ones, in 1878. (Hagley Museum and Library) We have seen advertisements for slate pencils dating as late as 1914. According to Wielandy (p. 91), wood-cased slate pencils were still sold in the early 1930s.

Pencil Mill Factory

The factory was started by John Cain in 1843 on a 9 acre parcel of land at 152 Pencil Mill Road. This property, now owned by Hans Marx, also contains a lovely waterfalls.



Before paper became readily available school children used soapstone pencils to write on hand-held slates.

The stone was first cut into sheets, then grooves were cut into each sheet until it became separated into individual pencils.

Hans and Christine Malz own the 9 acre parcel on which one can view some of the stones from the foundation of the Pencil Mill and a lovely waterfalls.

Pencils that Allison Reuling found in Sucker Brook



THE SLATE PENCIL INDUSTRY

1843–1872

An early slate industry along Lake Bomoseen in Castleton had its origin in a lucky discovery. In 1842, eighteen-year-old John Cain was fishing in Sucker Brook, which flows into Lake Bomoseen, and needed to weight his fishing line with a piece of stone. He broke up a larger rock and noticed it left marks on other rocks. He brought several samples of this softer rock back to West Rutland in his saddlebags, recognizing that his find might have some potential use. He whittled the rock into oblong, pencil-shaped pieces and marketed them to area schools for use as slate pencils. Local schoolteachers and their students found Cain's slate pencils superior to the imported German ones currently in use. The enterprising young man in 1843 purchased land from Hiram Johnson in a large ravine along Sucker Brook for the sum of \$1,500 and established his pencil mill, a very modest one-man operation. Where Cain received the capital to start his business is not known, but it remained in operation for ten years, although it was never very profitable.

In 1853, Benjamin Adams and his son James, both of Castleton, bought out John Cain and started the Adams Manufacturing Co., with the goal of eventually mass-producing slate pencils. They began on a small scale, much like their predecessor, but in the 1860s, they expanded—acquiring more partners and additional land—and built a factory. The new company was called Vermont Slate and Alum, possibly in hopes that if the slate pencil business petered out, they could still remain viable through mining alum. Incidentally, the material used for slate pencil manufacture was a type of softer slate that contained magnesia, not soapstone, as many people suppose. Soapstone was not hard enough to be cut into slender slate pencils.

The slate company dammed Sucker Brook to provide water power and built a paddle wheel. Later a forty-horsepower steam engine powered the mill, according to the Industrial Census Report of 1867. The mill site, along the western side of Sucker Brook (also referred to as “Pencil Brook”) had five buildings, including living quarters for the workers, in its heyday. The mill itself consisted of a long five-room structure with a large, exterior, thirty-foot brick chimney, which was said to have contained a staircase. The slate first went to the sawing table, where it was cut into quarter-inch-thick slabs by

one of four machines called a “shavy.” The smaller slabs were then cut into pencils by the grooving machine. Next in the process was sharpening the slate pencils to a point, first done by hand and later by a machine. Finally, the pencils were sorted and packed into wooden boxes. They were taken by wagon to Castleton to be shipped by rail to more distant markets.

In spite of the use of machines to do much of the work, it took many workers to produce the slate pencils. At peak production, one hundred Irish immigrants working twelve-hour days, six days a week, could produce up to 100,000 slate pencils a day. Child labor laws were not yet in force, so whole families, including young children, worked at the mill. Housing for the unmarried men and smaller families was provided in a barrackslike building called a “Long Sue.” This two-story building had double and single rooms, and measured 100 feet long by 20 feet wide. The foundation of another long building has been found, and it was even larger—125 by 50 feet—and had a massive slate foundation. Its exact use is unknown, but it has been speculated that it may have been a warehouse or barn.

By the end of the Civil War, the Castleton slate pencil industry was starting to wane. First, the local company was beginning to find increasing competition from less-expensive foreign companies. Also, by then, better-quality and less-costly paper was becoming available. Modern wood and graphite pencils quickly replaced the slate ones, and people preferred the portability of paper and wooden pencils over slate. The Adams Manufacturing Co. tried to hold on for a few years, even changing its name to American Slate Company, an appeal to patriotism over foreign products. Like so many flourishing businesses in the nineteenth century, it became a victim to progress as the new century and its advances approached. Slate pencils soon joined the buggy whip as obsolete curiosities. The Vermont Slate and Alum Company went into foreclosure in 1878, and court documents mention a burned pencil mill. Today, few remnants of the former pencil mill can be found amid dense overgrowth along Sucker Brook on what is today called Pencil Mill Road.

Note: some of the above information and pictures are from “CASTLETON Looking Back” published by Castleton Historical Society in 1988 or from “Castleton” by Donald Thompson.

Waters in Vermont

Statistics on Vermont Lakes and Ponds: http://www.voga.org/fish_pond_web.htm

Depth Charts of Lakes and Ponds: http://www.vtwaterquality.org/lakes/htm/lp_depthcharts.htm

Data on Vermont Rivers: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rivers_of_Vermont

A portion of http://www.vtwaterquality.org/rivers/docs/SA_SWS/StreamAlterations_Hubbardton.pdf shows both Giddings Brook and Sucker Brook. It is below:

Giddings Brook and Sucker Brook

