

# The Rollinsford Town Emblem

A brief history of the landmarks and the story behind the redesign



1967



2017

## WHY WAS THE EMBLEM UPDATED?

The town only owned a relatively low resolution digital image of the original emblem, and the file could not be used for any kind of professional printing (signage, screenprint, engraving, etc). A local artist offered to recreate the emblem in a digital vector format so the town would have the ability to reproduce the emblem in any medium they like.

## ABOUT THE UPDATE (from the artist)

When I first looked at the emblem up close, I thought the images were small sketches. As I asked around, no one seemed to know where the drawings came from or what buildings were represented. Even longtime residents were unsure! The most popular guesses were St. Mary's church, the grade school, and the Colonel Paul Wentworth House. Many people thought the seal would need to be completely redesigned (and I will admit I was starting to think that myself). Then it got really interesting!

First, Joe Caouette was able to tell me that the original design was created on a flag and presented to the town as a gift from the American Legion. When I realized that the images weren't hurried sketches, but had been hand stitched as a gift to the town, I was really excited! Our little emblem had a story to tell! From there, I decided to find out as much as I could about the emblem and share it with the town, and I decided to do everything I could to preserve and enhance the original design.

As you can see on the new version. I brought the images forward so they're easier to see. I changed the typeface to an old style type that has a hand-forged feel (as a nod to both the foundry and our town's industrial roots) and, in the color version, I created a pattern to give the look of a hand stitched textile (in honor of the original emblem which was hand stitched and as a nod to our textile history – truly, textiles built this town!) So – my hope is that you don't feel like I changed the emblem, but that I reinforced what we already had. And if you didn't like what we had, I hope learning the story behind it gives you a whole new appreciateion!

ARTICLE 3. To see if the Town will adopt the emblem as shown on the Flag being presented to the Town by Martel-Roberge Post No. 47, American Legion, as the official emblem of the Town of Rollinsford.

Mr. Raymond Tancrede moved that the Article be accepted as read, seconded by Mr. Edward Theberge.

Mr. Raoul Labrecque displayed the flag while Mr. Raoul Therrien, American Legion Post Commander, explained the theory and purpose of the flag. He stated that the Town had been incorporated in 1849 and that the Old Mill, Foundry, Town Hall and Ordway Homestead had been selected as important landmarks to portray. Mr. Therrien announced that if the Town accepted the flag, the American Legion planned to have two more flags made up and they would be made available to various organizations of the Town.

Motion was put to a vote, was carried and the flag was duly presented.

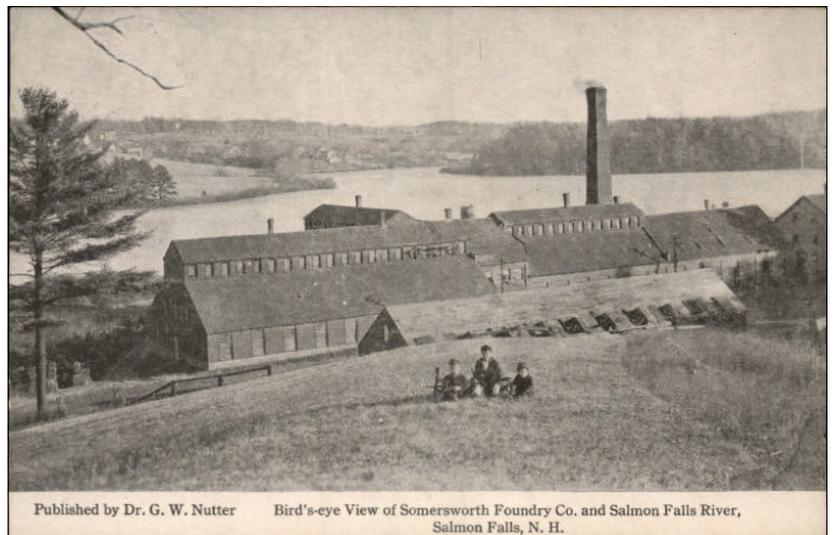
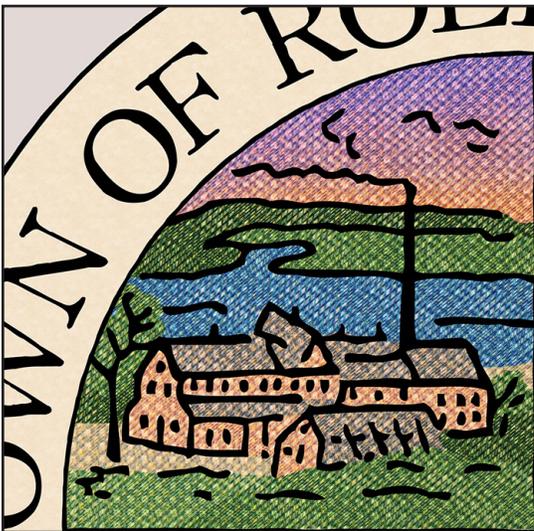
*Excerpt from the 1967 Rollinsford Annual Report, when the emblem was presented to the Town*

# The Somersworth Foundry Company

The foundry (which was located where the Legion is today) was originally the site of a nail factory run by William Henry Griffin. Historian Annie Wentworth Baer notes in “Some Industries of Early Somersworth” that the factory also produced both nails and latches. In 1848 the site was purchased by the newly incorporated Somersworth Machine Company<sup>1</sup>—which improved the site and ran operations here, in Great Falls (Somersworth,) and in Dover, NH. The Rollinsford location manufactured ranges, heating stoves, furnaces, and hollowware<sup>2</sup> (e.g., metal soup tureens, platters, water jugs, etc.). By the late 1890s the company had consolidated its Somersworth operations into the Dover facility. A special edition of Foster’s Daily Democrat from 1898 described the quality of the “world famed Somersworth ranges” as “so well known that it is useless to elaborate upon them,” and that, “The products of the company have reached a degree of perfection as regards quality and finish which it is impossible to imagine can be surpassed.”<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the foundry was owned by the same people that owned the Sawyer Woolen Mill Company. In 1898 (the same year as the article above), the Sawyer Mill Company fell into bankruptcy and the stove foundry was “closed indefinitely owing to the failure of the Sawyer Woolen Co of Dover.”<sup>4</sup>

In 1901, William M. Bowman and E.F. Shaw purchased the plant and renamed it the Somersworth Foundry Company.<sup>5</sup> William Bowman was a self made man. He started off as an apprentice, learning the tinsmith trade in Attleboro, Massachusetts, then working for years as a tradesman until finally becoming a foundry foreman.<sup>6</sup> Bowman opened his own stove shop in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1900, a year before he decided to move to



Published by Dr. G. W. Nutter      Bird's-eye View of Somersworth Foundry Co. and Salmon Falls River,  
Salmon Falls, N. H.

1 A.E.G. Nye, comp., *Dover, New Hampshire: Its History and Industries* (Dover, NH: Geo. J. Foster & Co, 1898), 56.

2 Nye, *Dover, New Hampshire*, 57

3 Nye, *Dover, New Hampshire*, 58

4 “Among the Foundries,” *The Foundry* 13, no. 76 (December 1898): 137.

5 John Scales, *Strafford County, New Hampshire and Representative Citizens*. (Chicago, IL: Richmond-Arnold, 1914), 915.

6 Scales, John, *Strafford County*, 916.

# Somersworth Foundry Company (*continued*)

Salmon Falls and take over the famous stove foundry here. The foundry would go on to have great success, and Somersworth stoves are still prized by collectors today.

The Somersworth Foundry Company continued operations until 1942. The plant was taken over by two unsuccessful corporations between 1942 and 1948, closing when a fire damaged the facility in 1948. The plant reopened after this fire but closed after a second devastating fire in 1953. The company office building, purchased in the 1950s and converted into a meeting hall by the American Legion, was the last remaining foundry building. The legion purchased the company land across the street and created the ball field and park they still own today. The American Legion hall was destroyed by fire on the morning of March 19, 1978.

Lifelong resident Joe Caouette remembers when the Foundry was still open, “As kids we used to watch operations from that field across the Foundry, where one of the Legion parking lots are at today, specially fond memories of molten steel being poured in molds.”

You can learn more about the stove foundry and see a beautiful example of one of their stoves on display right in our Town Hall!



**SOMERSWORTH MACHINE COMPANY'S SALMON FALLS PLANT.**

# Rollinsford Town Hall

(The majority of the following information is from the Town Hall's *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, which was compiled in 1998 by Rollinsford resident, Nelson Lawry, and State Architectural Historian, James Garvey. The building was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places in March of 1999.)

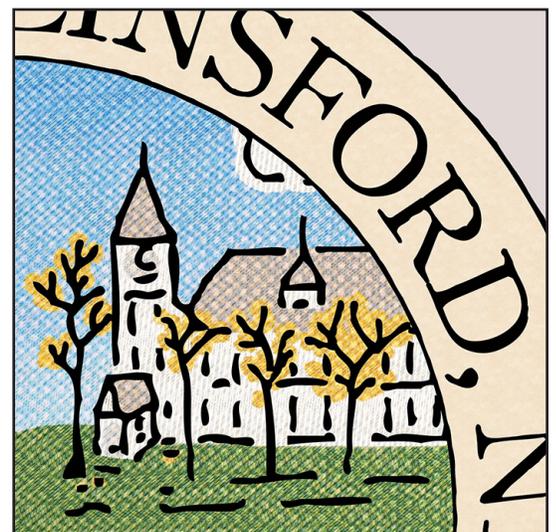
The Rollinsford Town Hall was designed by one of the most successful New Hampshire architects of all time, Alvah T. Ramsdell (1852-1928). The Rollinsford Town Hall was not only one of Ramsdell's earliest designs, it was the first of a series of town halls that he would create. Other beautiful buildings designed by Alvah Ramsdell include the Ricker Memorial Chapel (or, as our son used to call it, *the Castle*) located at Pine Hill Cemetery in Dover, and the Strafford Banks Building of Dover (where the Thirsty Moose is located today).

Built in 1893 and dedicated in 1894, the Rollinsford Town Hall was designed to house a variety of municipal services, including offices, the police department, and the fire department. It was even designed to house a fire truck in the basement!

Today, much of the original detailing on the exterior of the building is hidden by vinyl siding. The tower was originally subdivided into rectangular panels by horizontal and vertical bands that defined the window openings and allowed for patterned shingle work. A patterned frieze extended down the side of the building, and a continuous horizontal band near the tops of the first-story windows created an emphasis across the length of the building. If you would like to see the original details of the Town Hall, the architect's original rendering and early photographs are published in the Rollinsford town report for the year ending on February 15, 1894.

The interior millwork of the first floor has also been covered with modern materials, but the original character of the building is still fully revealed in the unaltered (albeit deteriorated) second floor. The upper floor of the Town Hall houses an auditorium complete with a balcony and stage. It was originally furnished with 413 chairs and 38 settees, and was a cultural and civic center for the town, often hosting local and traveling musicians and theater groups.

While the second floor of the town hall is in rough shape from decades of disuse, the space and the woodwork is absolutely beautiful and will hopefully be restored for town use again some day.



## Salmon Falls Mill No. 2

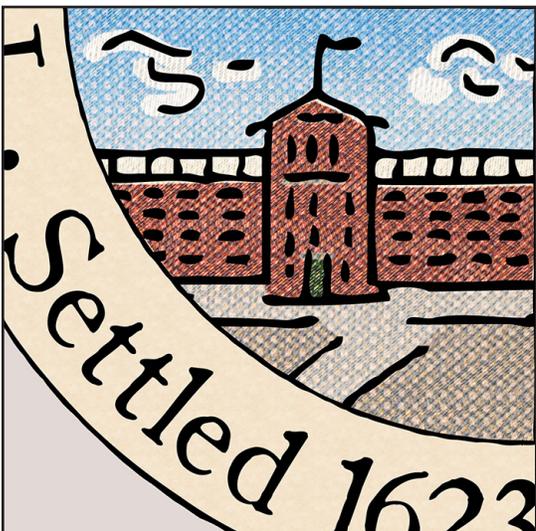
Other than farming, textile manufacturing was the largest industry in Salmon Falls Village. The Salmon Falls Manufacturing Company was incorporated on June 17, 1822<sup>1</sup> and the first mill was built to manufacture woolen cloth. Within ten years, that one mill was producing nearly 7 percent of all broadcloth in the United States<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, the mill burned to the ground in 1834. It took years to rebuild and the company was starting to flounder.

In 1844, Mason & Lawrence (cotton distributors out of Boston) gained controlling shares of the company. They brought in the very best machinery and quickly had the mill manufacturing cotton drill and sheeting fabrics<sup>3</sup>. They also began building a village around the mill. They laid out the streets, built housing for the workers (the brick row houses on Second Street), houses for the foremen (the brick duplexes higher up on South Street) – they even built the business district for the village<sup>4</sup>. In many ways, the town of Rollinsford was created by the Salmon Falls Manufacturing Company.

At that same time, Mill Number 2 was built to increase production. Opened in 1848, Mill No. 2 added 16,000 new spindles to the operation. It had a massive three-story picker house (where raw cotton would be cleaned by hand and organized into sheets for the carding machines) and was built with a turbine instead of a waterwheel, which was state-of-the-art at the time<sup>5</sup>. By expanding production, creating jobs for hundreds of families, and creating a village, the Salmon Falls Manufacturing Company would change the town forever.

The entire Salmon Falls Mill Historic District was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

*"It remains one of the most perfectly preserved mill towns in New England. Neatly laid out, no bigger than a city block, the industrial center of Rollinsford, NH has seen boom times and collapse. Now undergoing a renaissance as an artist colony, the village survives much as it appeared in the 19th century."* – Peter Michaud, *The Mills of Salmon Falls*



1 John Scales, *Strafford County, New Hampshire and Representative Citizens*. (Chicago, IL: Richmond-Arnold, 1914), 269.

2 Peter Michaud. "The Mills of Salmon Falls" Seacoast NH. 2006. Accessed March 4, 2017. <http://www.seacoastnh.com/Places-and-Events/NH-History/the-mills-of-salmon-falls/>

3 Michaud, Peter. "The Mills of Salmon Falls." Seacoast NH Online.

4 Scales, John, *Strafford County*, 270.

5 Richard M. Candee, "Salmon Falls Mill Historic District NRHP Nomination," US Dep of the Interior, accessed February 22, 2017, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/80000315.pdf>.

# The Ordway Homestead

At one time, the Ordway Homestead of Sligo Road was considered to be the oldest home in Rollinsford, which is why it was chosen to be displayed on the town emblem. Today, the current owner, Jonathan Ordway, says it may not be the oldest after all. Regardless of whether it's the oldest or not, the history of this house is more than significant enough to merit its place on our official emblem. In fact, the Ordway Homestead has been in the same family, by blood or by marriage, virtually uninterrupted since the day it was built.

The house was originally built by Captain James Philpot Jr. in the early 1700s, and it remained in the Philpot name right into the early 1900s. The Rollins family, who married into the Philpot family as early as 1760 when Captain Philpot's granddaughter Ruth married Ichabod Rollins<sup>1</sup> (and again when his great-granddaughter, Sally Philpot, married Andrew Rollins, Esq.<sup>2</sup> in the early 1800s), would go on to own the home for a few decades in the early 1900s.

The Rollins family then sold the home to Cora Ordway, a distant cousin of the Rollins family (and the current owner's great grandmother). Cora's son, Donald, modernized the home in the 1920s, adding plumbing and electricity. The house was later sold out of the family for about 10 years, then bought back by Mary Ordway in the late 50s or early 60s. Mary Ordway's grandson, Jonathan, his wife Ling, and their two children live in the home today.



*The Ordway Homestead Today (a bit more secluded!)*

1 "Ichabod Rollins," Ancestry, accessed March 8, 2017, [http://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/ichabod-rollins\\_38637460](http://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/ichabod-rollins_38637460).

2 Gowen, Ralph, ed. "Sarah Philpot Rollins." Find a Grave. Last modified April 29, 2012. Accessed March 15, 2017. <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=89278245>.



**Special Thanks to Joe Caouette and Peter Michaud  
for helping me get off on the right foot,  
and to the Ordway family  
for sharing the story of their home.**



“Town legends are similar to family legends. You believe the stories you were told growing up without question, but when you dig a little deeper, you sometimes learn they are not as accurate as you were led to believe.”

– Jonathan Ordway

## **Help us tell more of the story**

There are still unanswered questions about the town emblem!

**Who sewed the flags?**

**Is there still a flag in existence?**

We could not locate a flag at the town hall, but we believe three were made. We would love to locate one to be able to preserve and share with the town.

**If you have any information about the 1967 town emblem,** let us know!

Email the Historical Committee at  
**[historicalcommittee@rollinsford.nh.us](mailto:historicalcommittee@rollinsford.nh.us)**

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