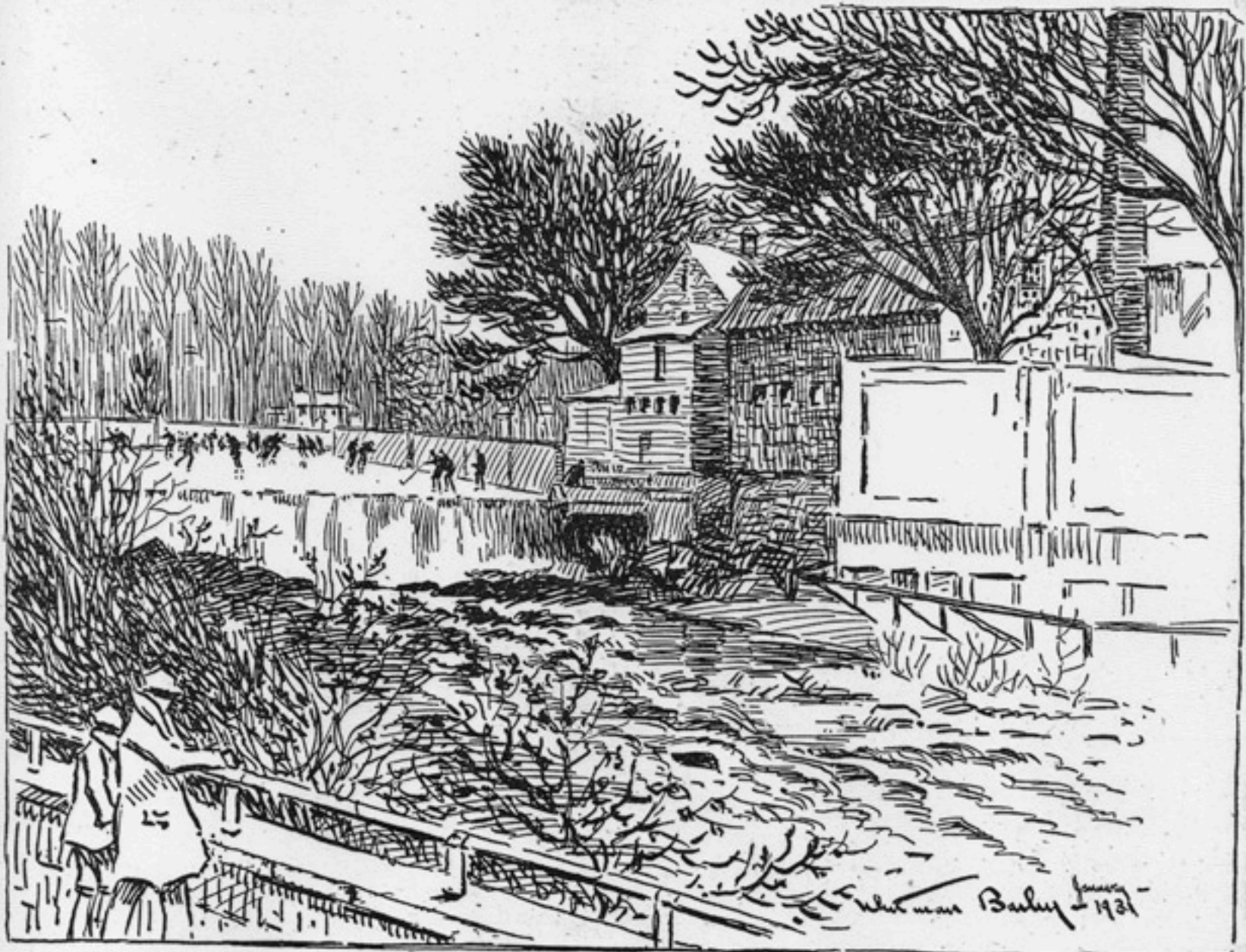


THE OLD MILL POND FROM WEST MAIN STREET BRIDGE 288



According to tradition, among those who first noticed the beauty of the Rippowam River, was George Washington, while on a trip to Stamford from Rye. It is said that the general on horseback suddenly turned a corner near the present West Main Street bridge and saw the sunlight sparkling on a dashing waterfall. Reining in his horse abruptly, he wrote in his diary a few notes that described the scene. The falls mentioned by Washington must have been those going over the early dam constructed at this point and built for the water-wheel of the first grist-mill of Stamford that,

according to Huntington's history, stood nearby.

This section, however, known to most of us today as the Mill Pond, undoubtedly kept its early title from the woolen mill which replaced the Rippowam Iron Foundry at the east end of the dam. This woolen mill was run by William C. Harding and John A. Smith, and was known as Harding, Smith & Co. This firm, still remembered by an older generation in Stamford, was started in 1867 and continued in business up to 1886 or thereabouts, when a great fire destroyed most of the building. Only the original chimney now remains. It

can be seen at the extreme right of the sketch above. William C. Harding was a staunch Republican and headed many a torch-light parade on election nights and during political rallies. Indeed, there are a few people who remember how a small cannon drawn by several men about town, was hastily dragged to Rose Park to greet Bill Harding as he was about to address the public. This enthusiastic group often called themselves "the Harding Battery," and could be depended upon to wake the sleepy neighborhood with a deafening roar upon a suitable occasion.

Other people remember the Mill Pond when it had a much greater reach than it has today. They recall how "Ginger" Smith could be seen on cold days getting in his harvest of ice; and how the water often came to River Street after a heavy rainfall, or touched the shore across the western boundary of the present Rippowam Park.

Today one finds in place of the old woolen mill an extensive ice plant, which has become a landmark in our later years, while the pond in Winter still resounds with the voices of happy skaters.

Whitman Bailey