

THE IRON WORKS
(New Haven Water Co)
1655

The low frame building on the east bank of Farm River just north of the Boston Post Road in East Haven marks the site of the ancient Iron Works, the third established in America and the first in Connecticut. Work was commenced in November 1655. The furnace was located at the south end of Lake Saltenstall, then known as Furnace Pond.

The bog ore from North Haven was either carted by ox-cart overland or by boat from Bog Mine Wharf, Quinnipiac River down to the mouth of New Haven harbor and up Farm River to the point below the furnace now called "Bog Mine". The pig iron produced by the furnace was then taken to the forge that stood where the present mill now stands. Here the blacksmith beat the pig iron into iron implements. No attempt was made to manufacture anything but what was done by hand on the anvil under the strokes of the smith. This business was given up after twenty-five years due to giving out of the ore deposits and due to a severe epidemic which took the lives of the principal workmen.

Later the site of the furnace was used for a grist mill which continued until it burned in 1878. The site of the forge on April 26, 1687 was converted into a fulling and carding mill by Samuel Hemingway. After the spinning and weaving had been done in the homes of natives the flannel was taken to fulling mill where by some process of heating and sweating, the cloth was thickened and made more compact and firm for men's clothing. The business of fulling was given up about 1840 when the place was turned into a gristmill. This last mentioned process was carried on until twenty years ago. In later years the building has been used as an antique shop, laundry and tea room.

At present the building and all the ground from the middle of the river are owned by the New Haven Water Company. While there has been no milling done here for years there is a clause in the deed for the property held by the present owners where by it is mandatory for them to grind any corn or grain brought here by an East Haven property owner for ever and ever. Of course this is a privilege never exercised by the natives who are not following the old fashioned customs of the early settlers.