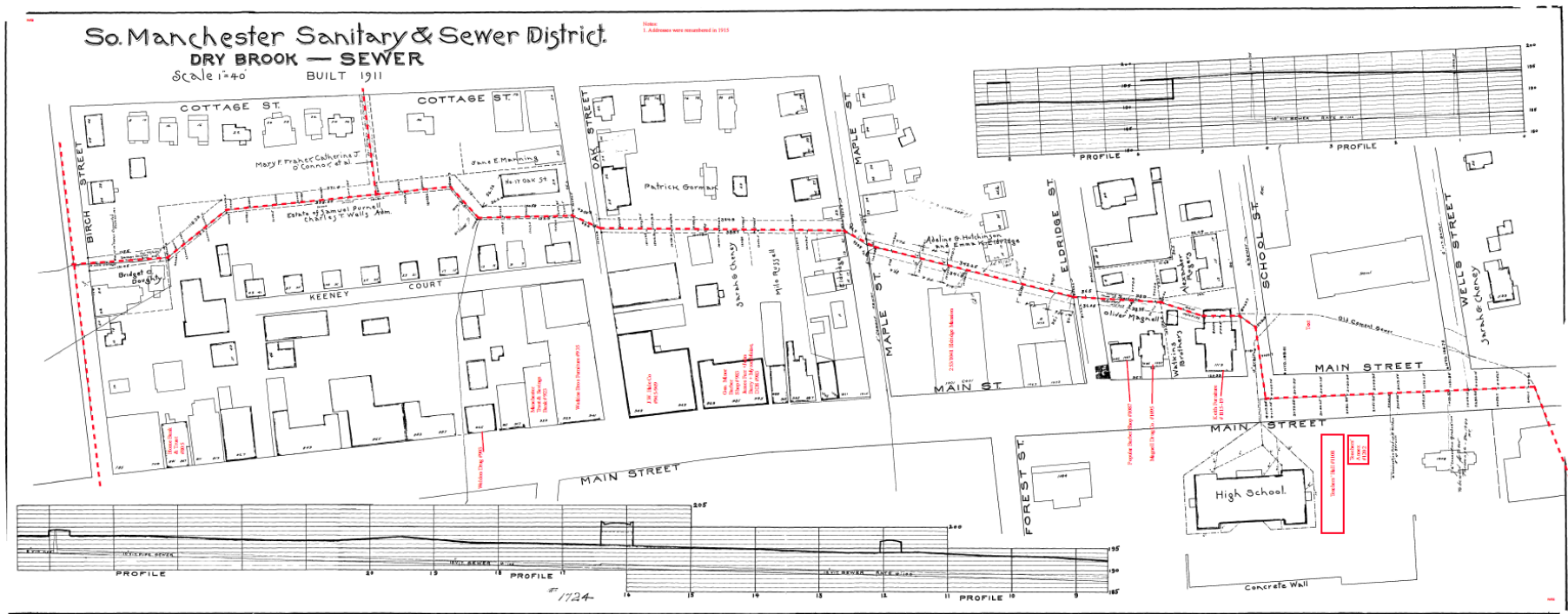


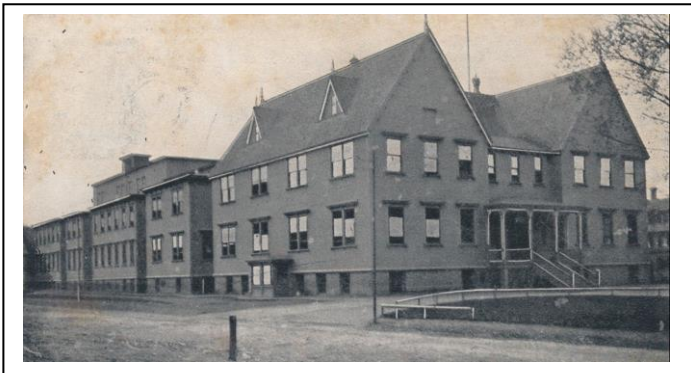
“Dry Brook” notes

By Dick Jenkins, notes as of October 2018.



The red dotted line in the engineer’s drawing above represents the routing of the dry brook when it was redirected underground in 1911. The “dry brook” was sometimes dry, but often wet. It flowed through the Keeney Court area of the Keeney Farm, now known as Purnell Place, under Oak Street just behind the Circle Theater, under Maple and Eldridge Streets behind the Eldridge mansion and Guinipero property. It passed just behind Pinewood Furniture (originally Watkins Bros. then Keith’s Furniture) at School Street, ran across the Ninth District school property passing just in front of the Cheney Library (also known as the South Manchester Free Library, corner of Main & Wells), then ducked under Main St. between north of the Methodist church and along the road’s edge of the Great Lawn until it reached the Cheney Homestead where it passed under Hartford Road and into Hop Brook. (Notes about Keeney Farm: *The Keeney farm began at Oak Street and extended to Birch Street. Later, Samuel Purnell bought the Keeney Farm. He/his estate then built the Purnell block at the corner of Main and Purnell Place. He built the Park building on the opposite corner of Purnell Place and the Orford Hotel, later Marlow’s store, all before his untimely death at age 48 in 1897.*)

The brook was always a problem because it filled with debris, silt, and grasses and had to be dredged regularly, to say nothing of health and safety issues. *The Hartford Courant* reported in March 1911 that “The South Manchester Sanitary & Sewer District are preparing to bring relief to East Side residents generally by removing the obnoxious dry brook nuisance which has long made life on the East Side so undesirable and so unsanitary for many people.”



Left: In this circa 1900 photograph of the Ninth District school complex, note the low fencing in the right foreground, around the edge of the brook that flowed from as far away as the Pearl Street-Spruce Street area. There were subsequent small bridges found on many of the streets running between Main and Spruce allowing the brook to flow to its final destination, Hop Brook.

Right: The postcard of the Ninth District school near the corner of Main and Wells Streets shows the size of the lower portion of the dry brook. (Note: *Over 1,000 children attended the Ninth District school, including elementary and high school students. The school burned to the ground in a terrible fire on October 23, 1913. The large complex of wooden school buildings occupied the site of what is now Bennet Fifth and Sixth Grade Academy, and the East Side Recreation building. All children survived the fire.*)



Left: Early 1900s postcard shows Hartford Road with a stone bridge, evidence of the dry brook. The picture was taken near the junction of Main Street and Hartford Road looking west down Hartford Road. The Great Lawn occupies the right side of the scene.



Left: With Hartford Road passing by, we look out over the Great Lawn from a point close to the Cheney Homestead, 106 Hartford Road. It was here that the brook made its final turn south, under Hartford Road and into Hop Brook. (Note: *Hop Brook* was also routed underground when I-384 was constructed.)

(Additional note: *The Eldridge mansion was situated north of the Guinipero block, which includes the Forest Street Package Store. Very early on in South Manchester's history the Eldridge and Keeney farms occupied all of the land that bordered the east side of Main St between Eldridge and Birch Streets. Russell Eldridge, and then his son, Daniel, also a farmer, were large landowners. The Eldridge farm began at Eldridge Street and extended to Oak St. The last of the Eldridge family, two girls, remained unmarried and lived out their lives in the mansion. Emma, the last survivor remained in the home until her passing in 1935. After the greatest fire in Manchester's history, the Ninth District School fire of October of 1913 Miss Emma would offer to house the South Manchester Library on the lower two floors of the mansion while she lived on the upper level.*)

Dick Jenkins is a Manchester native, graduated from the high school in 1955, and is now living in Niceville, Florida.