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Frank A. Babcock: Carriages, Buildings and Cars

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Amesbury Carriage Museum
Amesbury, MA

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Frank A. Babcock

Carriages, Buildings, & Cars

Frank Augustus Babcock* came to Amesbury from Hamden, Connecticut, near New Haven, during the early 1870s. He was from the middle of eight children born to a machinist who had become agent for a screw company, the family living comfortably in their own home with a live-in domestic. A paternal uncle, Albert L. Babcock, was a respected New Haven businessman and owner of a carriage hardware manufactory. A period trade publication article** suggests that Amesbury was America's 4th largest carriage producing town, followed by New Haven, the latter catering to wealthy New York City clientele (carriage-making leaders were mid-western cities of Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis).

Frank seems to have been ambitious, hard-working, and successful in building substantial businesses, both in Amesbury, and later in Buffalo, New York. Before leaving Amesbury he had clearly demonstrated a tendency toward a high profile style of business and life.

* His name may be Francis, but Frank appears on his marriage applications and all other documents found.
** *Hub* magazine, October 1897, pgs. 420-430

Carriage Business in Amesbury

Charles Wing (1816-1894) arrived in Amesbury in 1872 from Uxbridge, Massachusetts, where he had started a hardware business in 1848*. In Amesbury he purchased the hardware store of Benjamin E. Fifield in the Union Block at #2 Water Street, turning it toward articles used by carriage builders. Filling the three floors and basement of the building, plus two storehouses, he built this into one of the largest such suppliers in the east. The business incorporated after his death, continuing to prosper through the auto body building era under the leadership of one of its early employees, William Hawkes, and secretary Charles A. Steere.

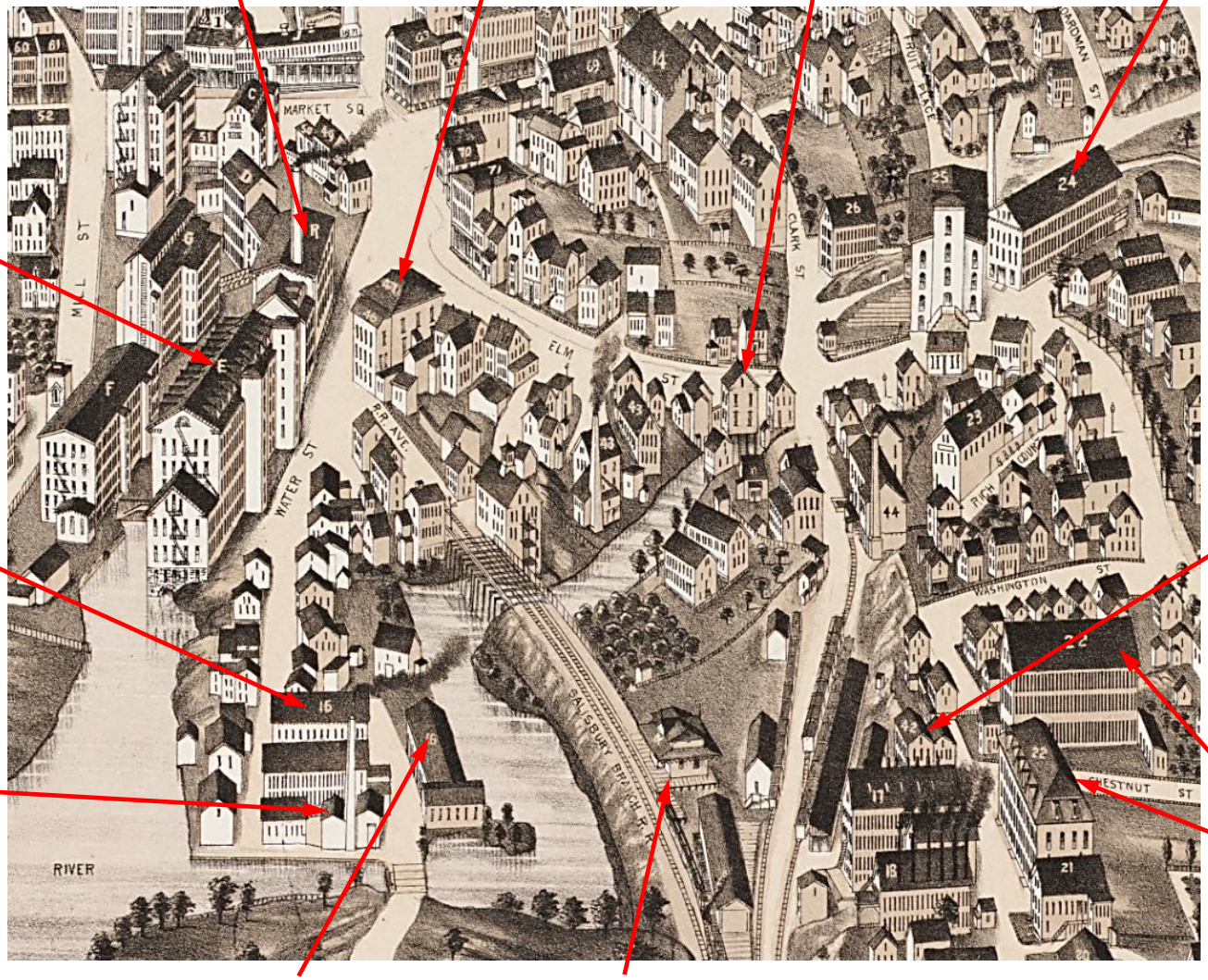
Frank Babcock (1850-1921) arrived in Amesbury in 1873, after his father had died, finding immediate employment with Charles Wing. Amesbury and Wing Hardware could have been specific targets, known to his family and fitting his background and connections in related screw fasteners and carriage items. In equally quick fashion, Frank was married the following year (1874) to Wing's youngest daughter, eighteen year old Sarah C. Wing**. By 1880, Frank's widowed mother was living independently in Amesbury with 22 year old son Stephen and 12 year old Sarah. Also by 1880, Frank concluded to enter the carriage hardware business himself, renting from carriage builder, William Biddle, a brick building further down Water Street, along Back River. He was joined by his brother, Stephen E. Babcock (1858-1940), and in that smaller space they probably concentrated in smaller carriage hardware, rather than large items such as suspension springs and axles.

Circumstances shifted in late 1883 when Charles Wing Babcock was born on December 26. He died the following day, and Frank's wife, Sarah, died the day after. Thus entered 1884, when the Union Block burned, along with Wing Hardware. At that point, Frank Babcock sold his carriage hardware business back to his father-in-law, and Wing Hardware relocated across the street to the first two floors of Mill #17 (currently Sylvaticus Brewery). Given subsequent business dealings, Frank must have done well in the carriage hardware business and its sale. Frank's brother Stephen then re-started independently in the carriage hardware business at #48 Elm Street, and in 1890 brought in a partner, Mr. William Grey (unrelated to Grey & Davis), as Babcock and Grey.

- A History of Carriage Manufacturing in Amesbury, J. J. Allen, pg. 188

** Surviving children were Stephen, born 1876 and named after Frank's father, Frank Jr., born 1880, and Mary C., born 1882 and named after Sarah's mother.

Area of Water and Elm Streets – 1880 Aerial Map



2nd Wing Hardware location (Mill #17)

1st Wing Hardware location

2nd Babcock Hardware location

Seth Clark Jr. Carriage building, now Drew's Tire

Mill #4

Current #29 Water St. bldg.

William Biddle engine house

Edwin Morrill Carriage buildings

James Hume Carriage buildings

1st Babcock Hardware location

Current train station in its original location

Babcock on Carriage Hill

Frank Babcock pinned down a location for a new carriage making business during 1884, shown on the 1884 town map (next page). This is on Chestnut Street (Carriage Hill), between Oakland Street (then called Carriage Avenue) and the railroad tracks. James Hume is shown on the map as still owning the large adjacent wood carriage factory buildings he had bought from Jacob R. Huntington in 1875, Huntington being the originator of Amesbury carriage making. Babcock's site was formerly occupied by two smaller wood carriage buildings belonging to Edwin Morrill, which were shown overlaid on the 1884 map, so that Babcock's new four story brick building may have then been planned, but not yet built. Supporting that likelihood, Babcock was heavily occupied during mid-1884 with other matters.

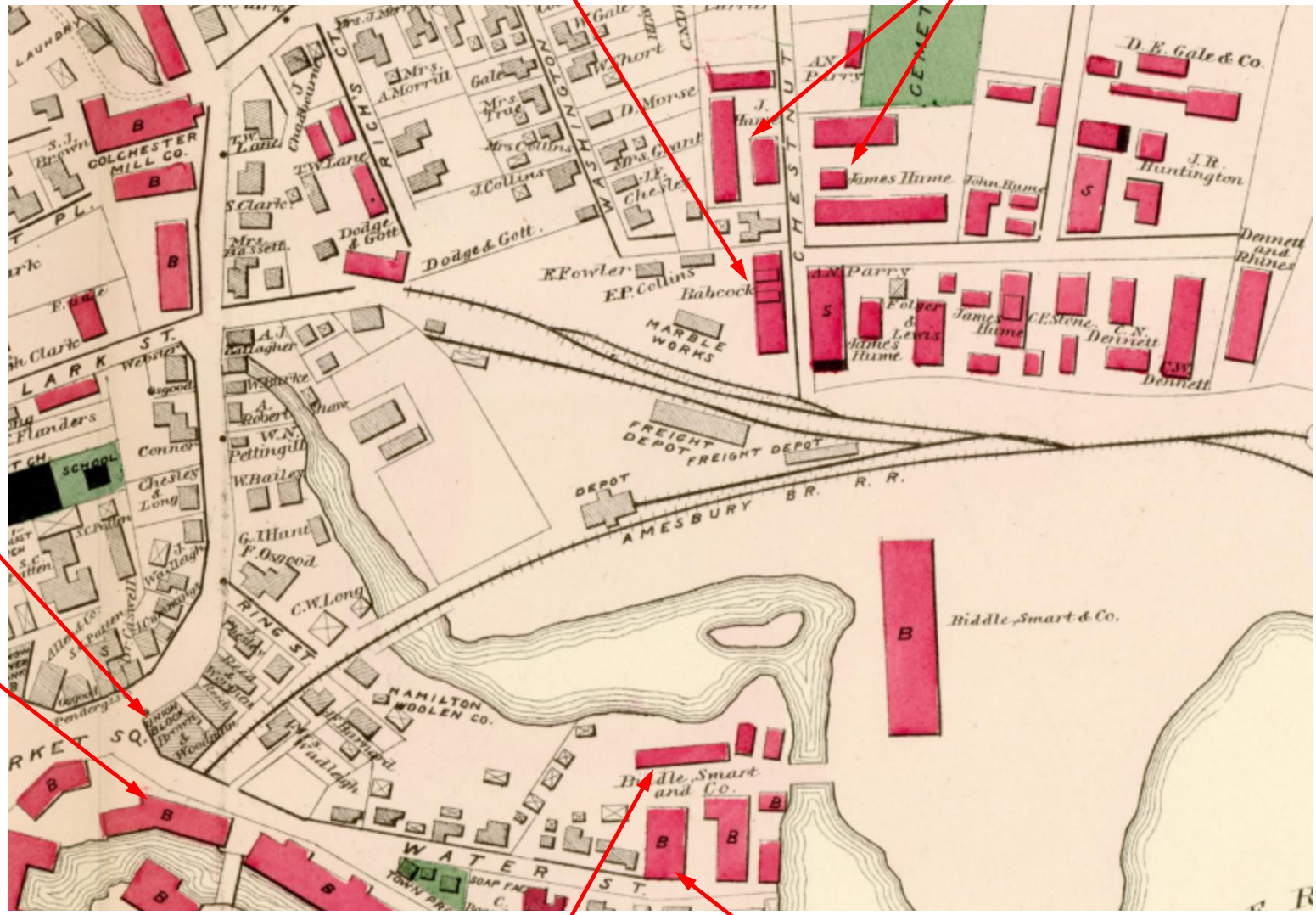
Still a quick worker, Frank married in Boston during August, 1884 to Julia Virginia Pendleton Barker, ten years his younger. She was from near his New Haven home, and was well known to him, being as their mothers were half-sisters. (The mothers of these two half-sisters were full sisters.) The couple were from old New England families, with DAR credentials, where numerous individuals had four names to enumerate their ancestry, and were considerably intermarried. In addition, Julie's family was quite well-to-do. The couple then went to San Francisco, sailing from there on into their honeymoon. At some point during this period, Frank's new brick carriage factory was completed.

Frank Babcock then joined with Robert Drummond Jr. to purchase the adjacent carriage company of James Hume*, consisting of three large wood buildings on both sides of Chestnut Street, and granting them Amesbury's largest carriage factory, by far. From 1885, they expanded their facilities with additional brick buildings that replaced most of the older wood structures on that side of Chestnut. Their growing complex included the only steam engine on Carriage Hill (all other carriage shops being un-powered) creating a complex that certainly exceeded 100,000 ft^2 of work space, along with extensive lumber yards. Drummond had departed by about 1887, and Babcock had been joined by carriage makers, Palmer & Doucette, from Merrimac, who made high-grade enclosed carriages. In addition, Babcock rented space to J. T. Clarkson, who had invented a carriage umbrella made in town, and after a stint as Amesbury postmaster, had gone into carriage making with his son, who had trained in carriage design.

* A History of Carriage Manufacturing in Amesbury, J. J. Allen, pg. 18

1884 Map

from Water Street across Back River & the RR tracks to Carriage Hill



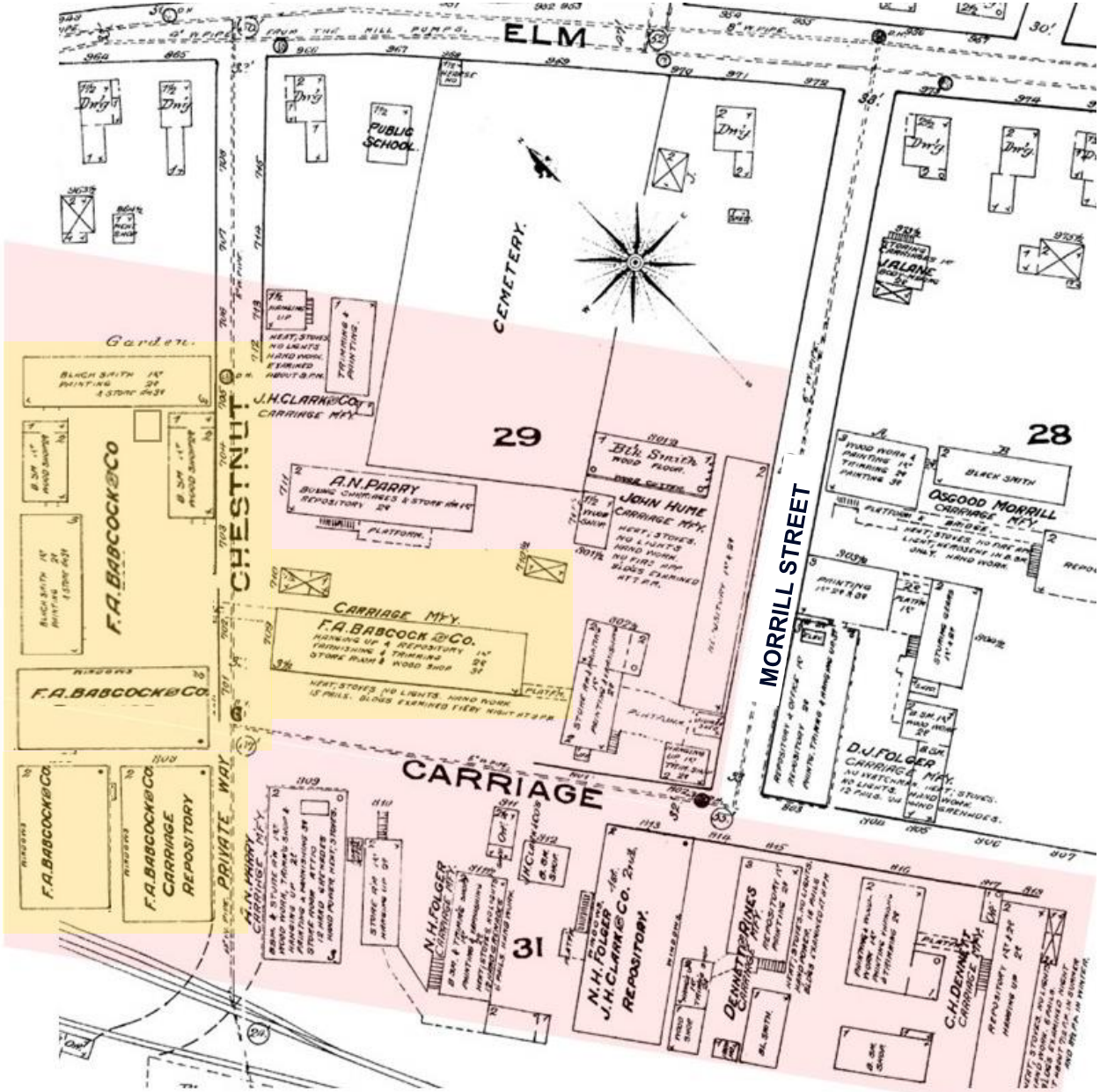
Carriage Hill Factories – Based on 1885 Sanborn Map*

Extent of fire destruction

Babcock property

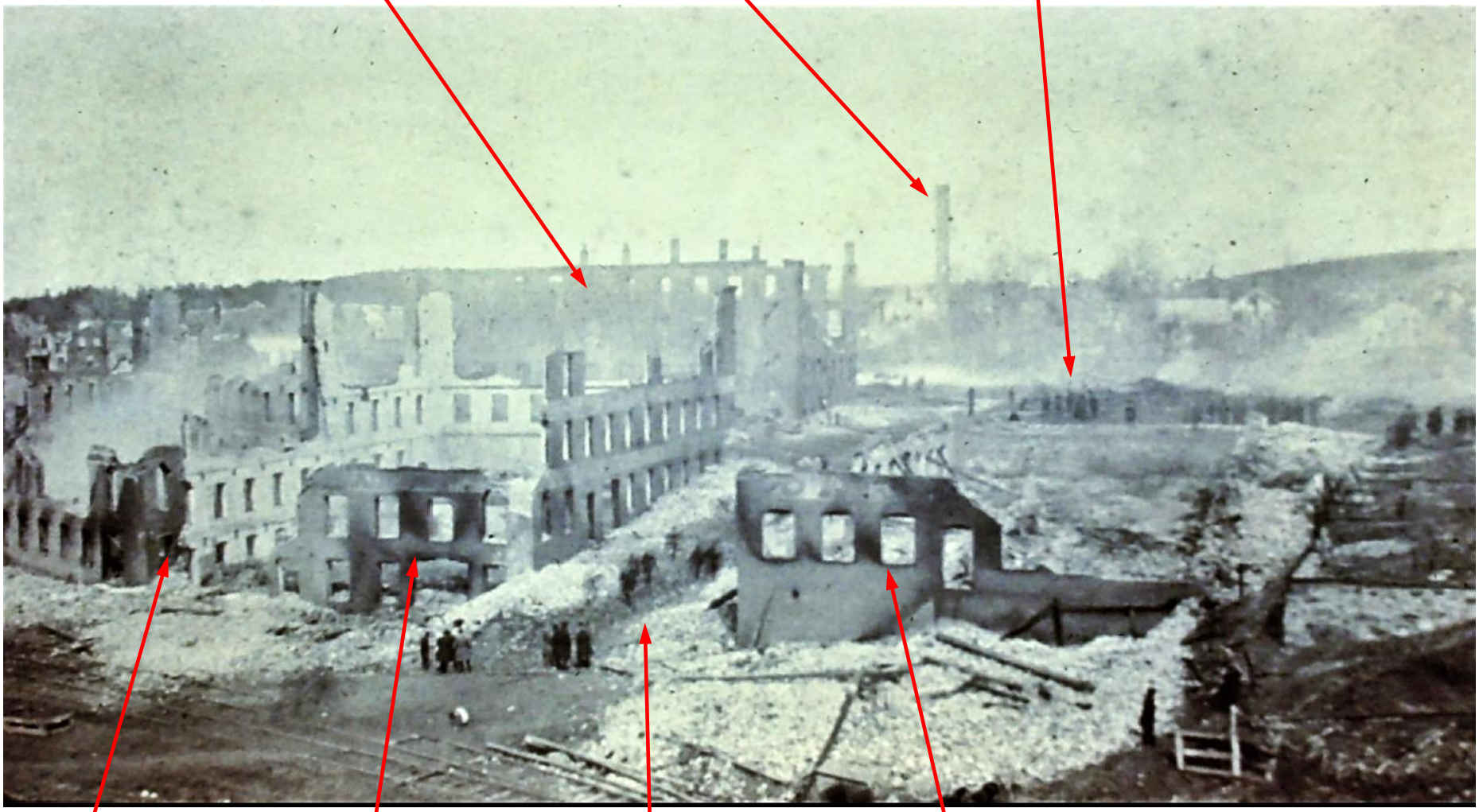
A fire broke out in one of the Babcock buildings around 8 PM on the evening of April 5, 1888. Aided by a southwest wind, it spread to additional properties until 24 total buildings (including 4 major buildings belonging to Babcock) were destroyed. In Babcock style, Frank hosted the largest fire in Amesbury history, largely wiping out Carriage Hill. The only buildings spared were on the east side of Morrill Street, the result of a wind shift.

By late 1889, Carriage Hill was almost completely rebuilt, mostly with brick buildings.



* Modified to approximate changes/additions to Babcock carriage complex made between 1885 and 1888

Looking Up Chestnut Street After the 1888 Fire



Courtesy of Salisbury Point RR Historical Soc.

Babcock After the 1888 Fire

Although the economy was slightly soft, Amesbury carriage making had been booming at the time of the fire, with a total output approaching 20,000 vehicles per year. Amesbury carriage factory owners had been instrumental since the Civil War in creating a series of manufacturers' banks that helped finance commerce. The result was that Carriage Hill rapidly rebuilt, as piles of brick rubble were converted to piles of cleaned bricks to be re-used for the resurrection. Also, part of Amesbury's carriage success was that the builders were a collegial group, such that burned-out makers were quickly granted work space and resources in other shops, and thus suffered minimal interruption of manufacturing capacity, although considerable finished inventory had been lost.

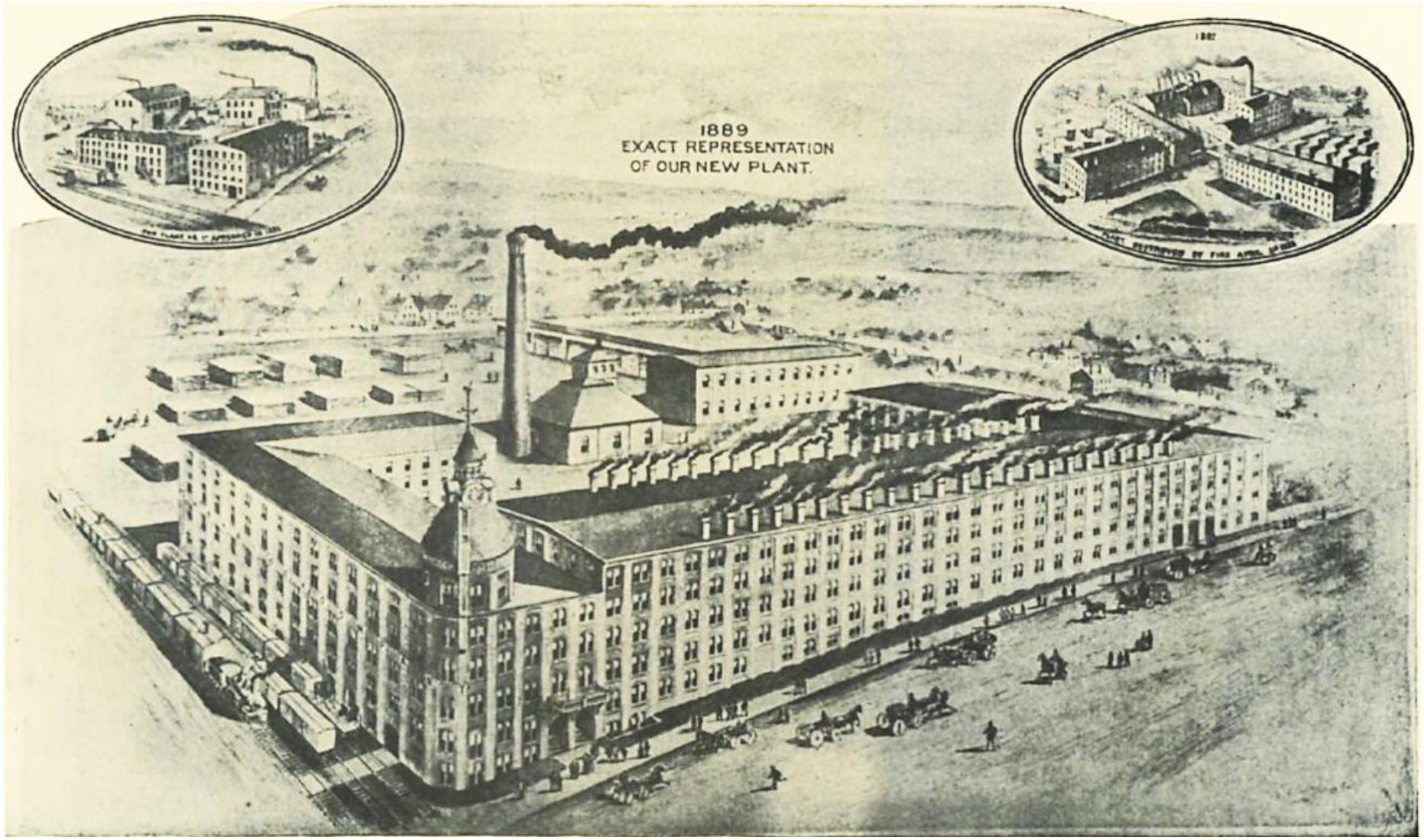
For Frank Babcock's part, he planned a massive building that would occupy his entire property along Chestnut Street, two-thirds of the way from the railroad tracks up to Elm Street. Meanwhile, temporary shops were set up on his lot on the other side of Chestnut, at the corner of Oakland Street, where he could re-commence carriage work. The 1889 Sanborn map shows that the large Babcock Building is not yet completed, but was nearing so. Frank had formed a stock company of $100,000 capitalization to build a factory complex of over 200,000 square feet*, for which the architect's vision is shown on the following page, the final product only slightly different and smaller.

In his carriage history**, John J. Allen describes the F. A. Babcock building as "a four and five story brick building six hundred feet long by sixty five feet wide. A one story Forge shop fifty by thirty-five feet, a one story brick boiler and engine room fifty by fifty, a two story brick storage shed fifty-five by twenty five, and a one story wooden lumber shed eighty-five by twenty-five feet, making a total floor space of 183,125 sq. ft." As part of the effort, 100,000 bricks had been salvaged from remains of a steam mill that had burned in 1883 on lower Main Street, at the current Post Office location. Babcock's building was, by far, the largest historic Amesbury factory building, much larger than massive Mill #8 that dominated Main Street for most of a century. Of note, the 1889 Sanborn map indicates that the building had a 25,000 gallon underground water reservoir with a dedicated pump, for fire suppression. A photo of the final building is shown on page 11.

* An 1888 edition of *Hub* magazine, reported by Royal Feltner in *History of Amesbury Carriage Makers*
** A History of Carriage Manufacturing in Amesbury, J. J. Allen, pg. 31

The Frank A. Babcock Building Concept Drawing

Below is the original full-quadrangle building concept, running along Chestnut Street down to the railroad tracks. Small cartouche drawings of Babcock's previous plant show the smoke stack for a steam engine, and that stack remains visible in the fire damage photo on page 7. Prevailing winds are in the direction shown by chimney smoke in the large drawing below, which is how the fire spread northeast across Carriage Hill.



Operating the Babcock Building

It is unclear what Frank Babcock's short term plans were in 1889, and his exact path over the next decade likewise remains uncertain. It is neither evident that he occupied his massive new building and participated in it is management, nor what his plan was. From its inception the property was managed by the Amesbury Building Corporation, which may have been Frank's original company, operating as an industrial condominium since no single business could make use of the entire building for some years. The first three floors of the main wing along Chestnut Street were occupied in late 1889 by the Amesbury Carriage Company*, which was directed by knowledgeable Amesbury carriage people backed by Haverhill businessmen, while the Adams & Pettingill Shoe Factory occupied the 4th floor. Simultaneously, S. R. Bailey Carriage Co. moved from their Elm Street location into 30,000 ft^2 of space at the northeast end of the building**. The Atwood Manufacturing Co. occupied three floors at the wide southwest end of the building along the railroad tracks, making carriage lanterns.

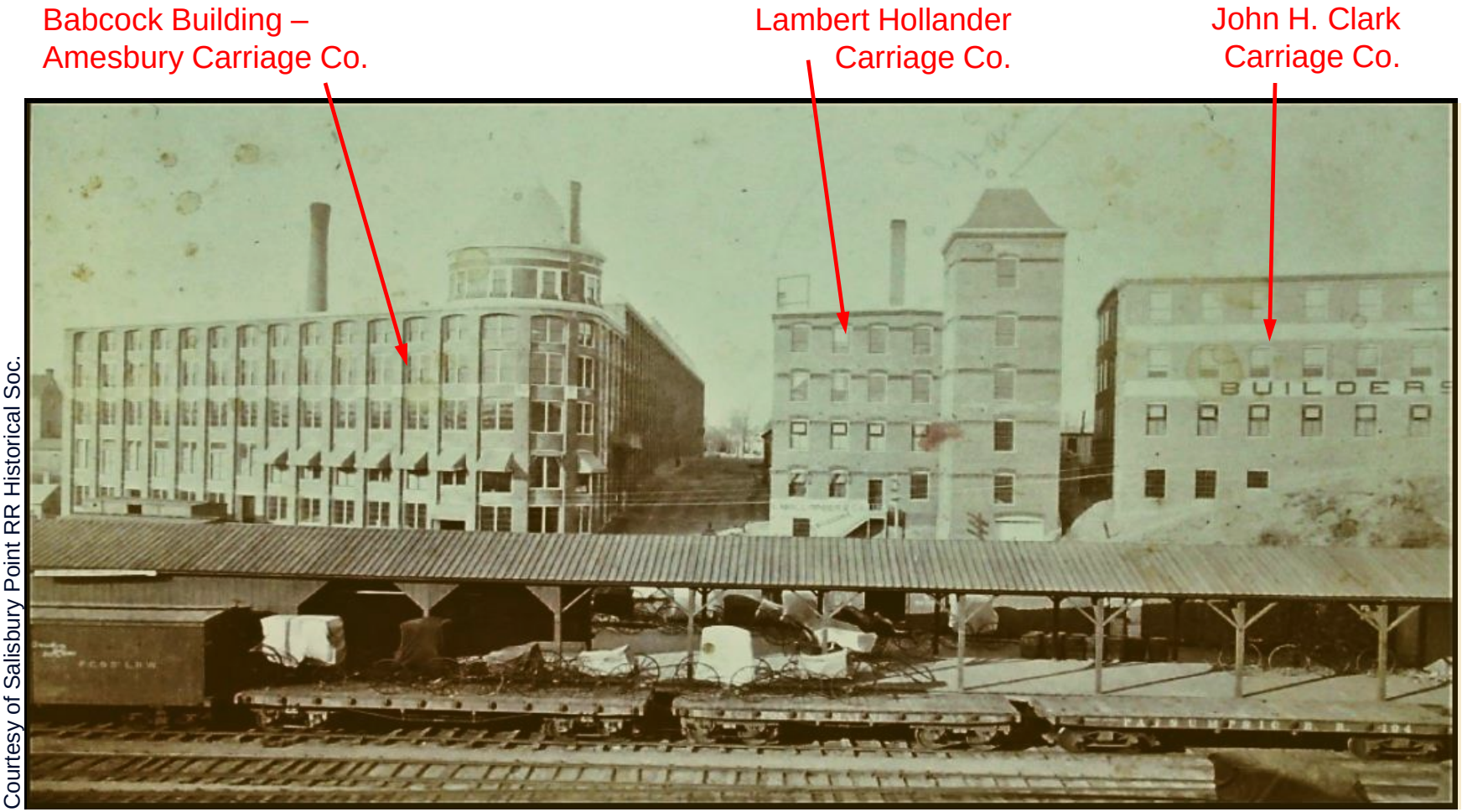
The S. R. Bailey company was sufficiently successful that they purchased the entire building for $150,000 in 1903, although they continued to rent portions to other concerns, including Atwood Manufacturing Company. In 1907, Bailey went fully into manufacture of an electric automobile, averaging about one car per week for eight years. That business failed in 1915, at which point the Biddle & Smart Company purchased the building, using its entirety for making auto bodies. Indications are that they were the last to actively occupy the Babcock building.

Frank and Julia Babcock may have left Amesbury after the Panic of 1893, which ushered in a considerable depression the lasted into 1897, disrupting many peoples' plans. While the local carriage businesses had not been badly bothered by a recession during the late 1870s ("carriage trade" buyers remained financially unbothered), this 1890s crash proved a major setback. Frank's mother still resided in Amesbury in 1900, but her other local son, Stephen, had given up his carriage hardware business and moved to Malden, Massachusetts, where he had found employment.

* 1889 Sanborn Map, sht. 2, and A History of Carriage Manufacturing in Amesbury, J. J. Allen, pg. 1
** ibid., pg. 26

Looking Up Chestnut Street – ca. 1890

Seen from large brick Biddle & Smart 1882 factory, located where Quonset huts are now



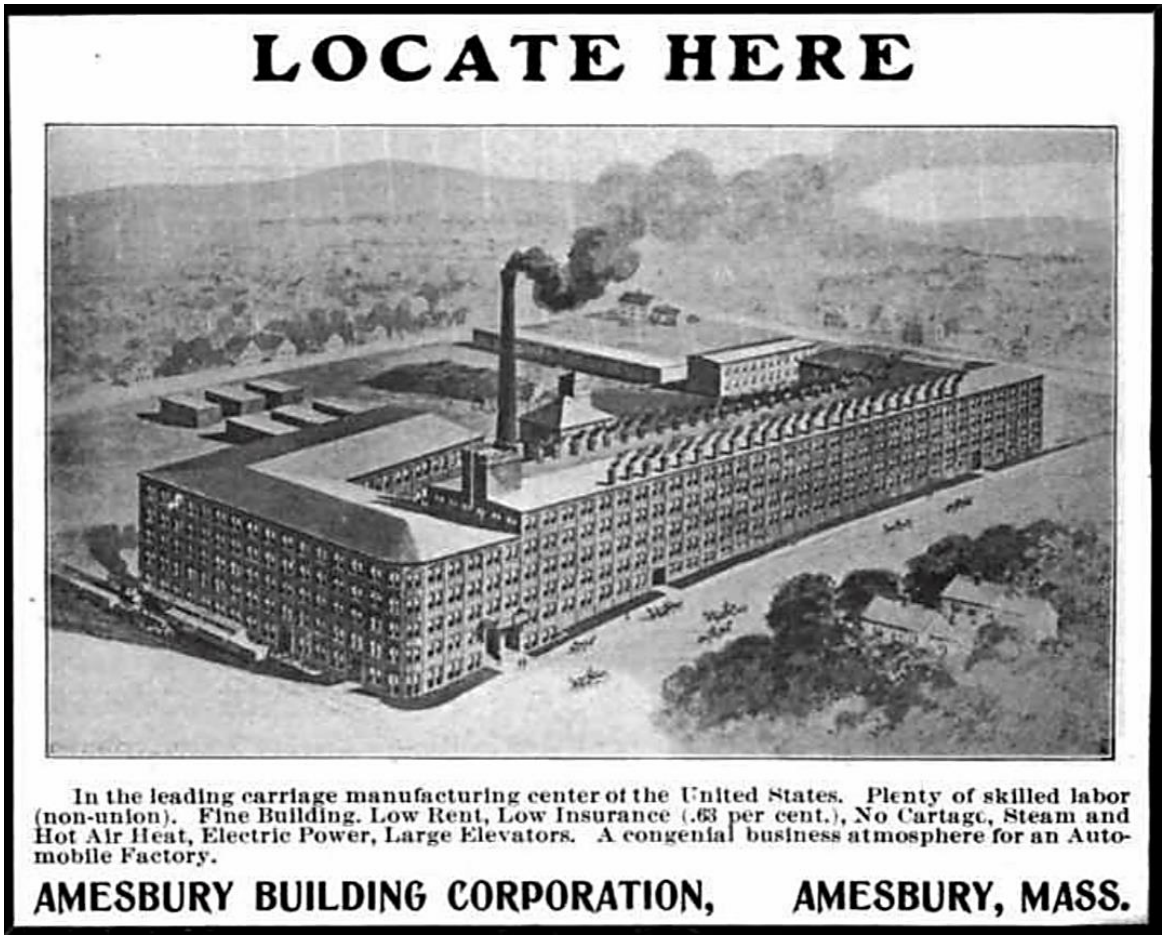
Courtesy of Salisbury Point RR Historical Soc.

This picture was taken from the Biddle & Smart 1882 building. The Babcock building (left) was the largest factory in town. Its round turret was removed by around 1910. Chestnut Street did not then cross the railroad tracks, coming downhill, but stopping where the buildings ended. The two buildings at right remain today, at the beginning of Oakland Street, then named Carriage Avenue.

The Fates of Central Amesbury Factory Buildings

Biddle & Smart had owned the Babcock building from 1915 until failing in 1930. By 1933 it was deteriorating, amid others in the town-owned real estate portfolio that was recently acquired by tax title action. Some money was spent trying to maintain and sell it, but town meetings held on the matter produced little progress and sometimes failed to even attract a quorum. After a decade of deterioration, the building was sold to a demolition company for $4100 in 1942.

This is the general trend in the extinction of Amesbury industrial architecture.



Found on-line

A few buildings burned, while some older wood buildings were probably decrepit and of little value. The larger brick buildings were of wood post and beam interior construction that aged and degraded, helped by leaking roofs. Finally, economic recovery was long and slow after 1930, so that buildings sat as empty maintenance and tax burdens for their owners, frequently being the town, thus leading to demolition. Virtually nothing remains of Water Street and Railroad Ave. carriage district architecture and railroad tracks.

The Babcocks Move On

In May of 1891 Julia Babcock's widowed maternal grandmother died at age 84 in Amesbury (presumably living with the Babcocks in their house on High Street), and was buried in New Haven with her husband. Such closeness was not unusual in her family. For some years Julia's parents owned a hotel in Kings, Brooklyn, where Julia was born and many of the occupants were from three generations of Julia's parents' extended families. In 1900, Julia's widowed mother lived with the Babcocks in Buffalo, New York, family connections remaining important on both sides of the Babcock family. A prosperous Buffalo physician was a second cousin to both Frank and his wife, but he had died in 1886, so that he does not seem to be a direct factor in their move.

Sometime during the 1890s Frank Babcock relocated to Buffalo, New York, becoming involved at a high level in forming during 1900 the Buffalo Electric Carriage Company, early maker of electric automobiles. He was president and general manager of the firm, gaining full control of the company by about 1903. In 1906 the company became the Babcock Electric Carriage Company, with a substantial plant in Buffalo. By 1905, Stephen Babcock was a superintendent there, while his (and Frank's) mother was living with him and his (Stephen's) family.

1903 is still quite early in automobile development, just as Amesbury was then getting involved with auto body manufacture. The internal combustion engine was in its undeveloped infancy, and the industry was completely unsettled as to what would become an satisfactory engine for automobiles, the other prime options being steam engines and electric motors. Steam engines remained viable into the 1920s, while a determining factor for electrics, as today, was battery technology. A number American companies were working with electric autos, which remained active candidates until about World War I. S. R. Bailey produced its electric auto in Amesbury from 1907 to 1915, using Thomas Edison's battery that he developed as a newer and lighter-weight device specifically for automobiles. Further developed, the internal combustion engine proved more practical for the times, conveniently fueled by lighter petroleum distillates that were a previously unused byproducts of refining kerosene for lighting.

Buffalo Electric Carriage Co. Advert – ca. 1902

This company existed from 1900 to 1906, when it became the Babcock Electric Carriage Company. Frank was president and general manager, while Frank Jr. was treasurer, and someone of the family was involved with their Manhattan salesroom. The automobile shown, with tiller steering, was modeled as a Stanhope style folding top phaeton of the horse drawn carriage era.

http://www.buffaloah.com/a/mich/263/17_bfloelec/be.html

Amesbury Dailey News, 10/30/1903, pg. 3

Frank Babcock is seen here actively promoting his Buffalo Electric Carriage Co. car

ELECTRIC AUTO

Makes a Successful Trip From Boston to New York.

On the cover of the last issue of Automobile Topics is a fine half tone cut of Mr. F A. Babcock with his wife and two other gentlemen in the Buffalo electric auto in which they made a record trip from Boston to New York The following is what Automobile Topics said of the trip:

BOSTON TO NEW YORK IN AN ELECTRIC.

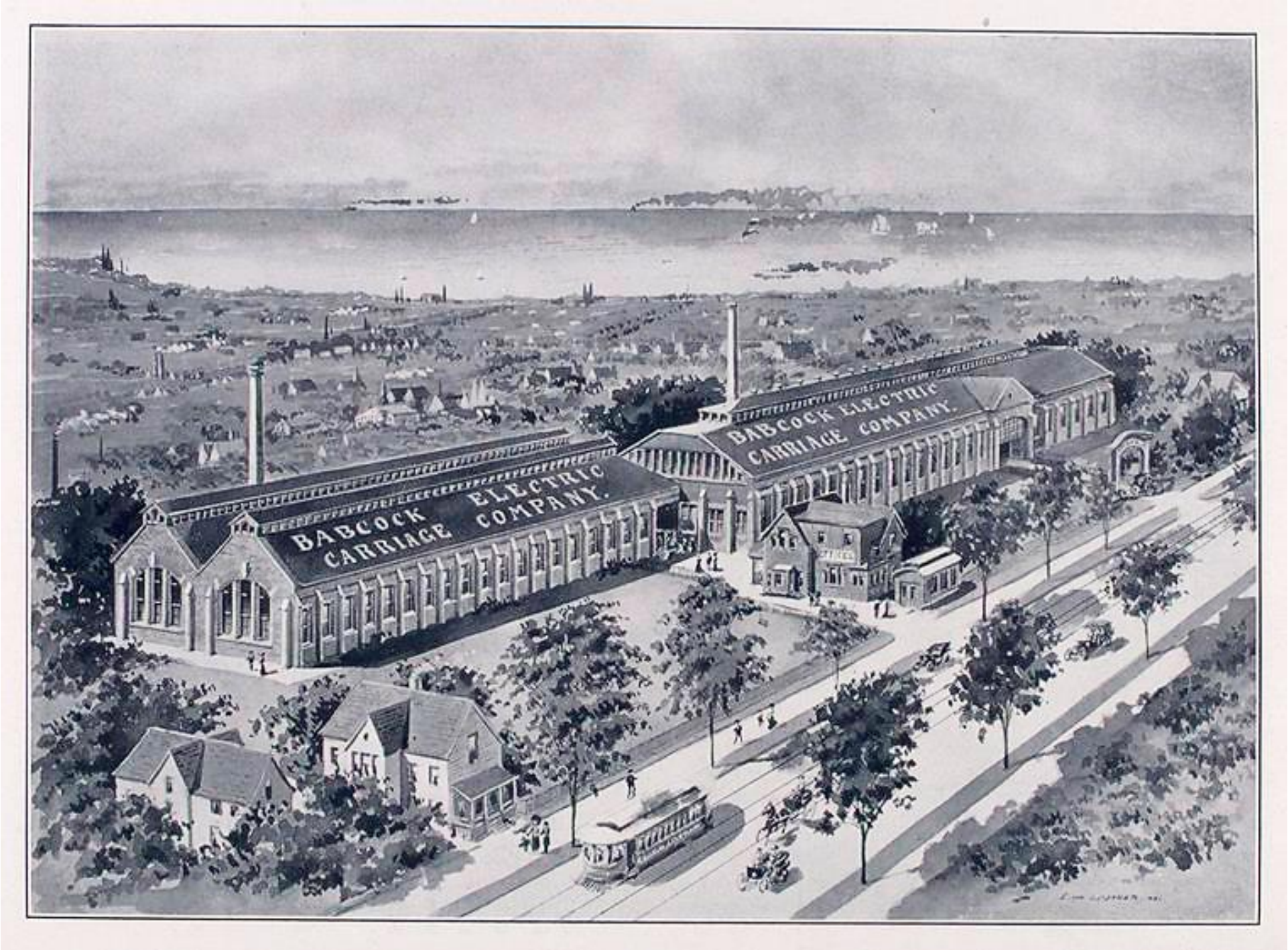
An electric automobile completed a run from Boston New York last Tuesday It was a Buffalo electric touring car of 3680 pounds weight and equipped with Hellos-Upton batteries of forty cells F A Babcock, Sr , F. A. Babcock, Jr , and J J Coakley were the passengers, with the additon of the wife of the first named in the latter part of the trip

The journey is the longest ever made in this country by an electric vehicle, and was undertaken to demonstrate that class of machine is adapted to touring purposes There was no attempt at speed, the trip occupying five days with night stops.

The party left Boston at 11 o'clock last Thursday morning and ran to Worcester The battery was charged overnight and the run from Worcester to Springfield made on Friday On Saturday Hartford was reached through the rain at noon, and left at 5 30 in the evening The night stop was made at Meriden. Sunday the run was from Meriden to Bridgeport From Bridgeport to Mount Vernon by 11 o'clock in the morning Mr Babcock says that his car averaged forty-seven miles on a charge. It cost him 81⅝ for recharging during the trip, but he considers that he has demonstrated the practicability of touring with an electric vehicle

The wheels were fitted with solid tires, which required no attention The vehicle, which is of the surrey type is built unusually high, and is striking in appearance When the tourists arrived at Central Bridge, New York, they were met by a delegation of local tradesmen

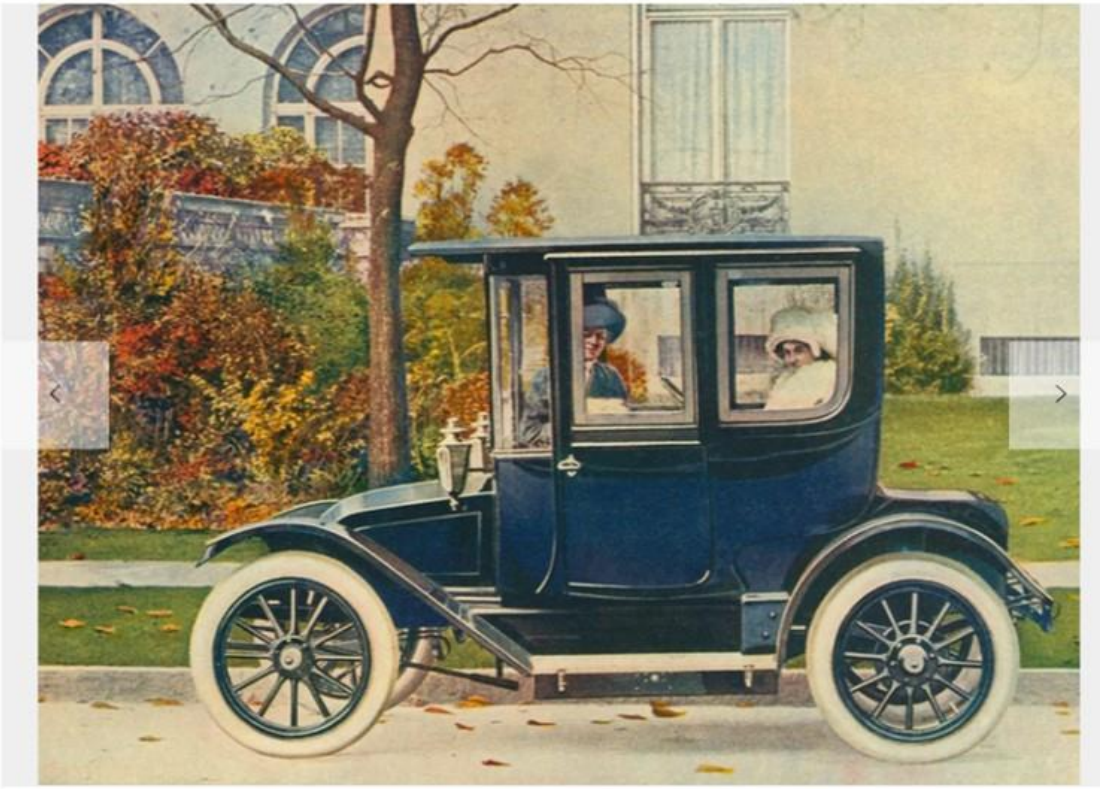
The above mentioned photo of the Babcock family in their Buffalo Electric car remains unfound


BABCOCK ELECTRIC
CARRIAGE COMPANY.
BABCOCK ELECTRIC
CARRIAGE COMPANY.

Babcock and The Electric Car Era

Early autos with internal combustion engines were noisy and smelly compared to a stately carriage ride. They also persisted for a number of years in the problem of manual crank starting, that was strenuous and outright dangerous in the event of a violent kickback with a false start. Steam and electric cars were quieter and smoother. Electric cars also lacked the complications of any style mechanical engine, including steam.

Electrics cars were thus attractive to women and families, as passengers, drivers, and owners. A major issue they had was how and where to recharge them, being as electricity was only gradually becoming available, which limited them to urban areas.



1 / 7 Buffalo Electric's 1914 Model 30 would be a classy way to enjoy Central Park, and it would keep tourists warm in winter. This illustration is from a 1913 magazine ad, clearly aimed at women.

Babcock expanded to more elaborate enclosed cars, appealing in advertising to women's tastes. In 1912, he merged with the Clark Motor Company, creating the Buffalo Electric Vehicle Company, of which he was still president, but ceased production by 1915 or 1916, and converted to making auto bodies for other companies.

Sometime thereafter, Frank Babcock and his wife moved into retirement in Canton, Connecticut, about ten miles west of Hartford, where he died in 1921. This was near Julia's sister, in Collinsville, where their mother (Frank's aunt) had died in 1904. Julia may have left the area after Frank died, her sister and mother both being gone, and she died in Boston in 1939.

Amesbury Daily News, 5/14/1907, pg. 2

BABCOCK ELECTRIC CO. RECEIVE LARGE ORDER

F. A. Babcock, Formerly of This Town, Has Achieved Marked Success

The Imperial Motor Co., of Buffalo has just closed a deal with the Babcock Electric Co, of this city whereby the former purchases more than 100 Babcock electric carriages, the combined value of which is about $250,000. By a contract dated May 6, the Imperial Company has acquired the right to the sole distribution of Babcocks in Buffalo and vicinity until Sept. 1, 1908. This is one of the most important changes in the local field of automobile manufacture in some time.

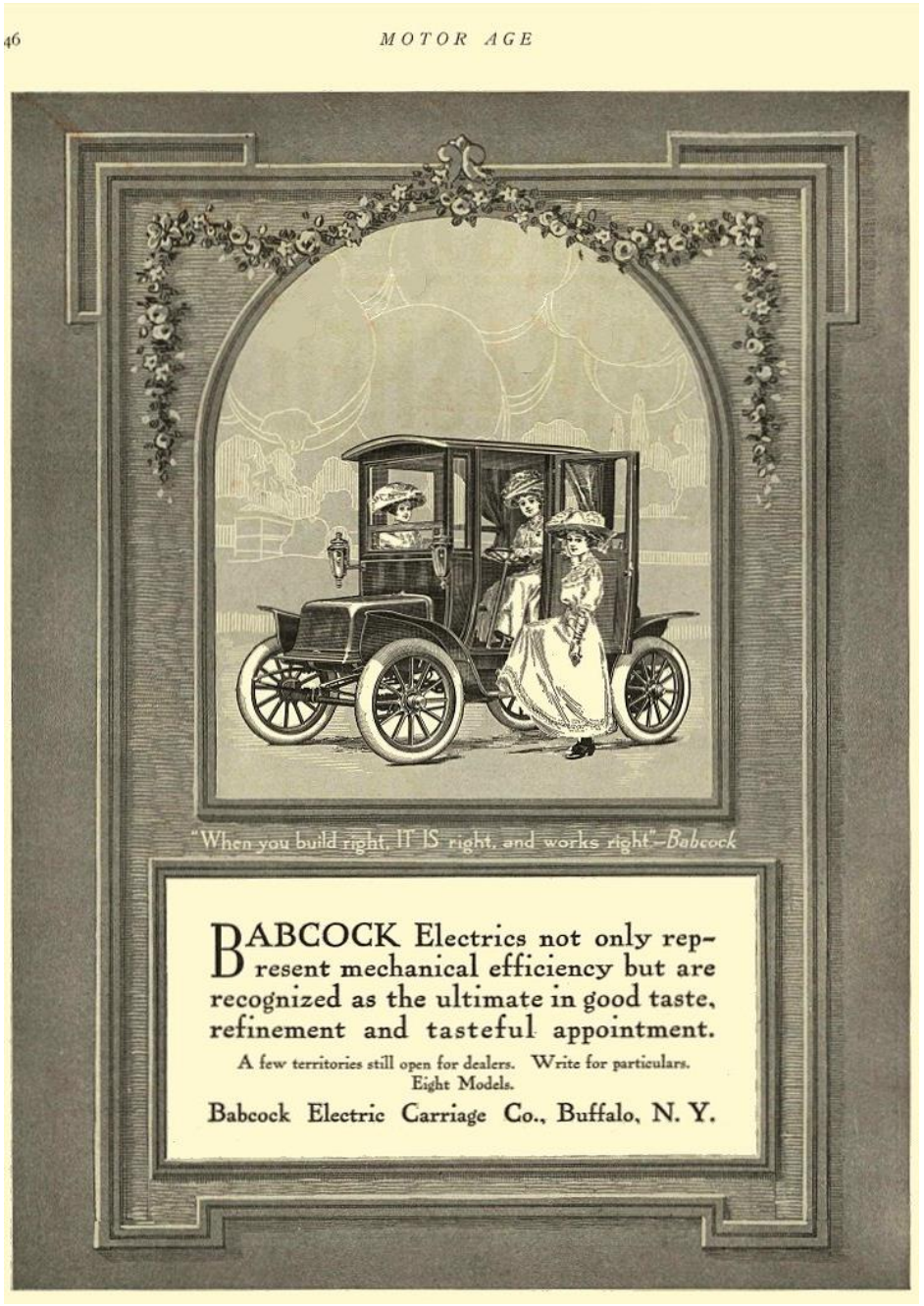
The Babcock Electric has come to be recognized as one of the leading manufacturing concerns in the country and it is said that its output for 1907 will equal any factory in the United States. This rapid growth has imposed such demands upon Mr Babcock's time and attention that he has decided to relinquish the retail department in this vicinity in favor of the Imperial Motor Company.

The Imperial Motor Company has just moved into its new building at 1095—1100 Main street, which is one of the best equipped sales automobile houses in the United States. This company has developed into one of the largest retail selling organizations in the country. Its output for 1907 will aggregate about 200 cars

Pres Penney of the Imperial Motor Co. said in an interview:

"My company is giving a great deal of serious thought to the electric carriage We have investigat d every line of electric wagons built in this country at all times determined to identify ourselves with what we consider to be the very best. That is why we entered into a two years' contract with the Babcock Electric Carriage Co. I do not believe Buffalo appreciates its high standing in the automobile industry. Our magnificent automobile factories are doing as much of advertise this great city as any other single commercial factory

"The Babcock Electric Co., is one of the oldest electric vehicle manufacturing companies in the country and its line of cars is attracting more general and favorable comments in other cities than the average Buffalonian realizes. It is recognized the world over to be the fastest electric carriage built and its extensive mileage is a marvel to other manufacturers. We must all take off our hats to Mr. Frank A. Babcock as being the man who has produced the first electric wagon to travel 100 miles on a single charge of its batteries."
—Buffalo Evening News.



From 1911 Motor Age Magazine, pg. 46

Babcock Electric Carriage Company

BUY
AN ELECTRIC

Runs 20 miles an hour—50 miles on one charge. Room for 2 or 3. Solid rubber tires—large, elastic, ensuring easy riding. This is the most popular American Electric. Price, $1800.

SEND FOR
CATALOGUE H

BUY
A BABCOCK

Light and luxurious. High speed and great mileage capacity. A mechanical duplicate of the car which made the run from N. Y. to Phila. on one battery charge. Clean, noiseless, the ideal car. Price, $1600.

Most of your driving is in the city. The Babcock Electric is the ideal car for city use. Is handled easily by ladies, physicians, business men. Our Electrics have a snap and style of their own.

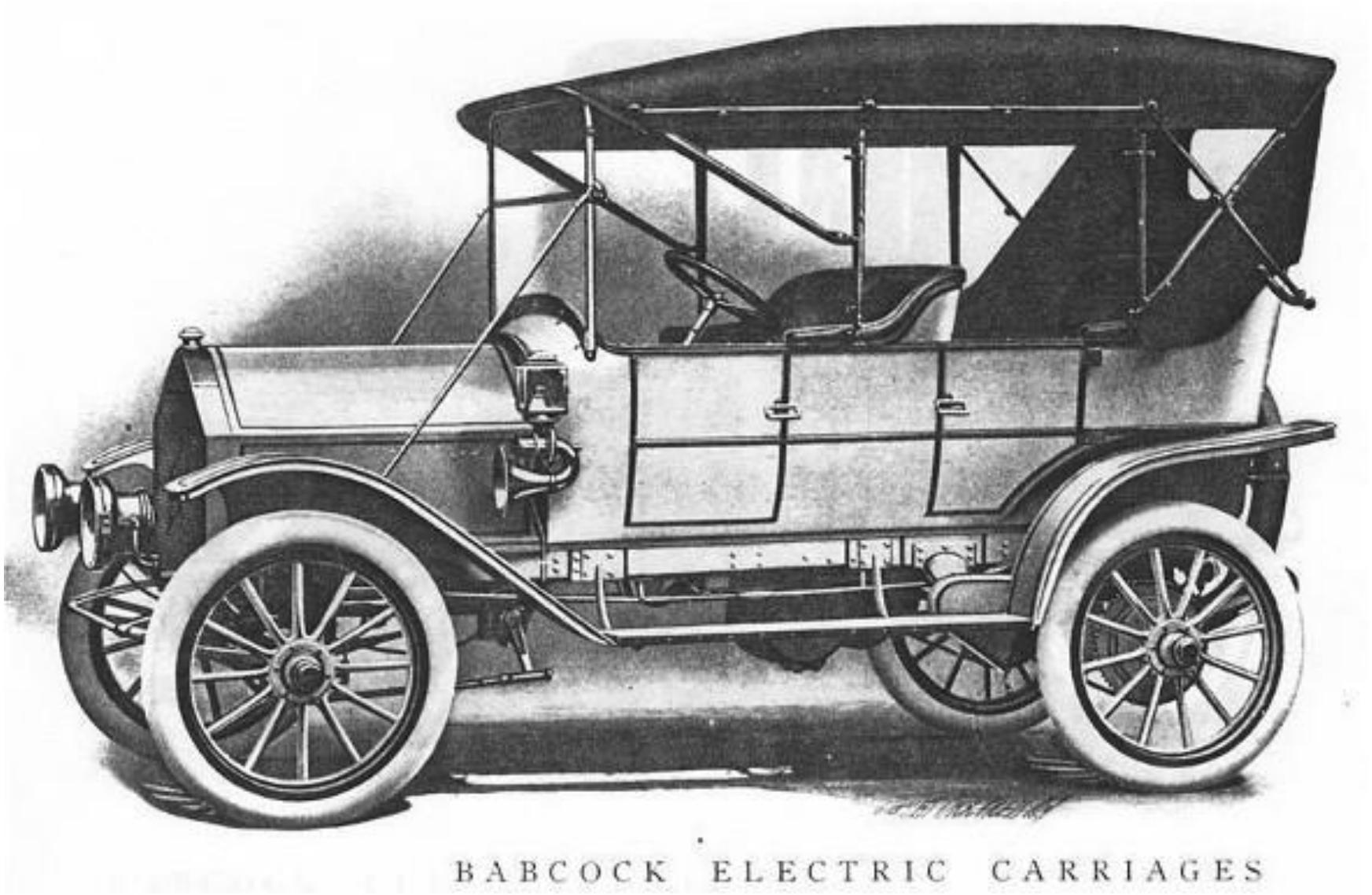
BABCOCK ELECTRIC CARRIAGE CO., Buffalo, N. Y.

1907 Newspaper Ad Depicting a Babcock Electric Carriage Co.

Advertising for the Babcock Electric automobiles claim that they were the *"Standard of Excellence."* They further claim that *"These cars combine all the elements of safety and comfort with sufficient speed, besides greater mileage than is required in city or suburban riding."*

https://www.american-automobiles.com/Electric-Cars/Babcock-Electric.html

1907 Newspaper Ad Babcock Electric Carriage Co.

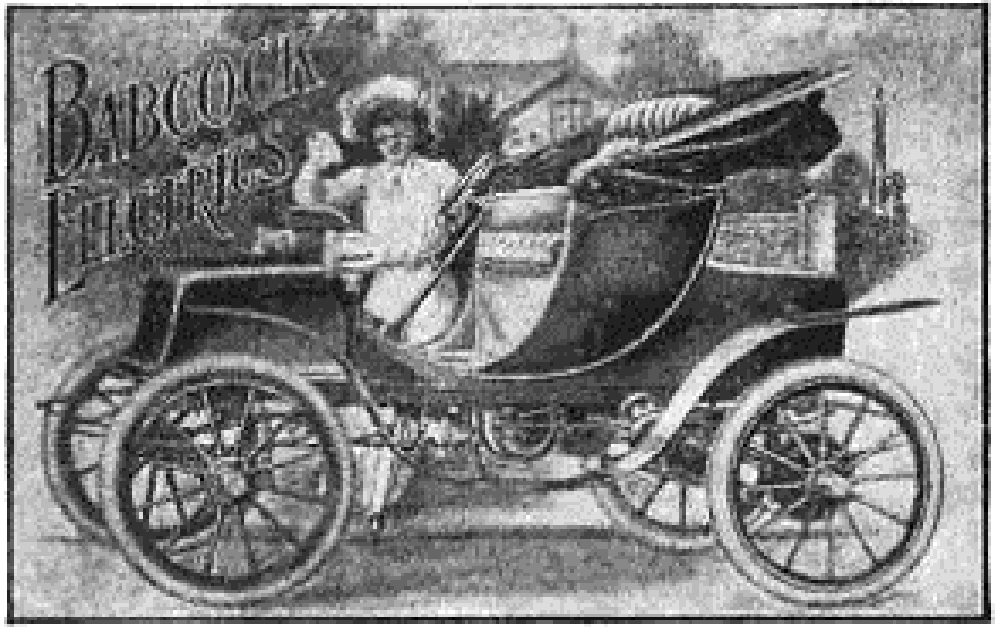


https://www.american-automobiles.com/Electric-Cars/Babcock-Electric.html

1909 Babcock Electric Model 6 Victoria

THE

"WORRYLESS" AUTOMOBILE



MODEL 6, VICTORIA

When you own a Babcock Electric, you don't have to worry about cost of maintenance.

Expense ends with the purchase.

Nothing but enjoyment afterwards.

No complicated parts to get out of order.

Simplicity itself in operation.

"When you build right, IT IS right and works right."—*Babcock.*

BABCOCK ELECTRIC CARRIAGE COMPANY, BUILDERS

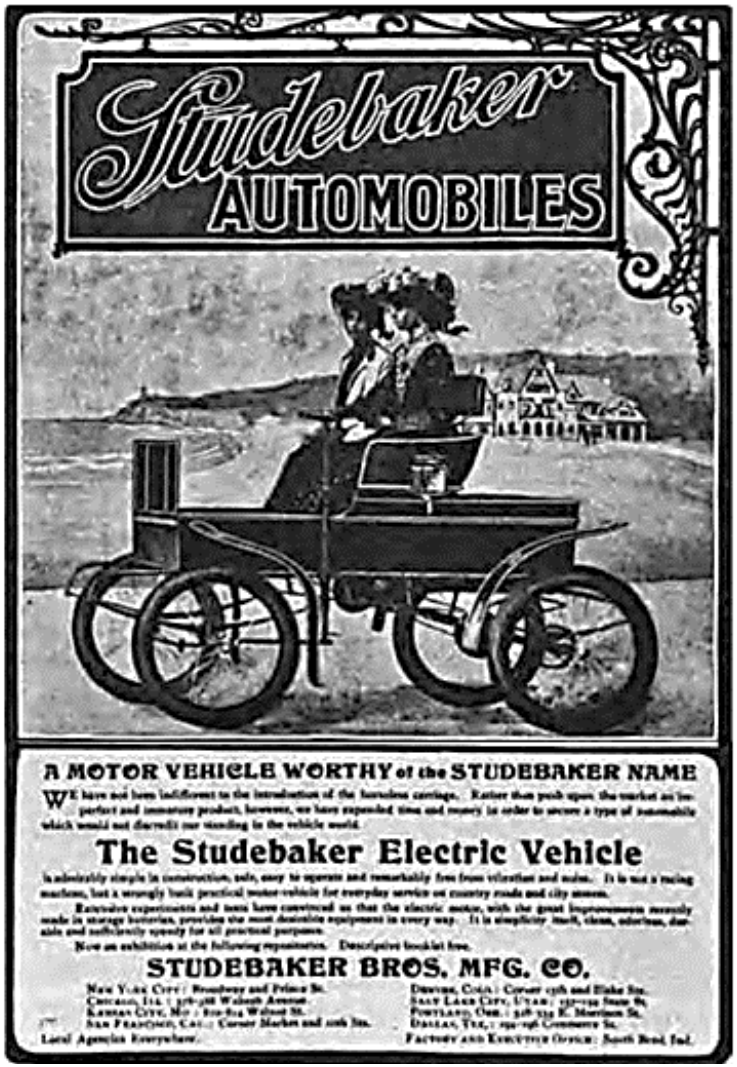
236 West Utica Street, Buffalo, N. Y.

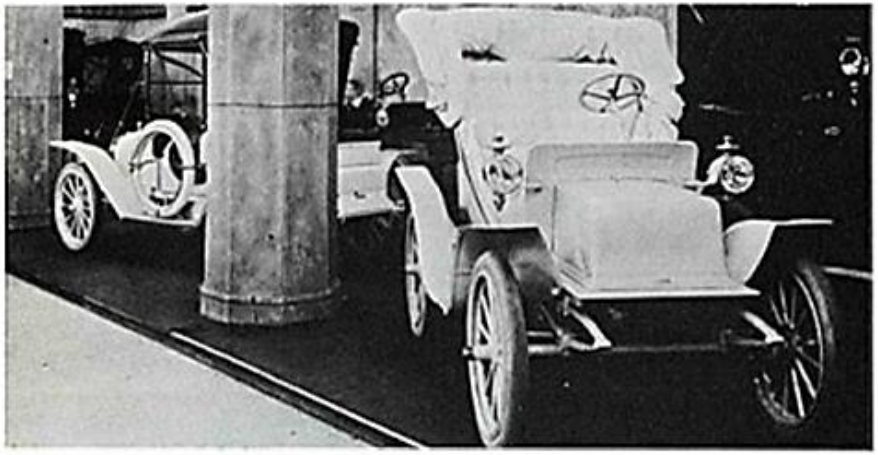
https://www.american-automobiles.com/Electric-Cars/Babcock-Electric.html

Right, 1903 Studebaker auto shows one of many electrics then available. Studebaker's prominent place in carriage making is mentioned, and the car is essentially a piano box carriage body with tiller steering and an engine.

Below describes Babcock's company getting into body making, after dropping out of auto manufacture.

The first horseless carriage for Studebaker was a light runabout built along buggy lines. It had leather fenders, bar-lever steering, chain drive and a leather dashboard. The advertisement claimed "Reliable Brake Control ... with All Machines equipped with Two Brakes." The Studebaker brothers of Fort Wayne, Indiana, were the largest wagon makers in the United States by 1895 and became interested in supplying the federal government with wagons for the Spanish-American War (1898–1902). They also wanted to supply the army with electric vehicles, but were slow in developing the complete product. Their first electric appeared in 1902. By 1904, electric production ceased and the company moved to producing





1909 BABCOCK(i) two-seater electric car. *Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library*

BABCOCK (i) (US) *1906–1912*
Babcock Electric Carriage Co, Buffalo, N.Y.
The company was formed by F.A. Babcock who built his first electric car in 1903. The Babcock did not differ greatly from the Buffalo (ii) which it succeeded. In turn it was superseded in 1912 by the Buffalo Electric Vehicle Co, which was formed from Clark Motor Co, Buffalo Automobile Station Co, and Babcock. After its departure as an active automobile manufacturer, Babcock built bodies for several makes including the Model A Duesenberg, Dodge Brothers and Franklin. GMN

Ca. 1909 Babcock Electric Carriage Co. Car Meet

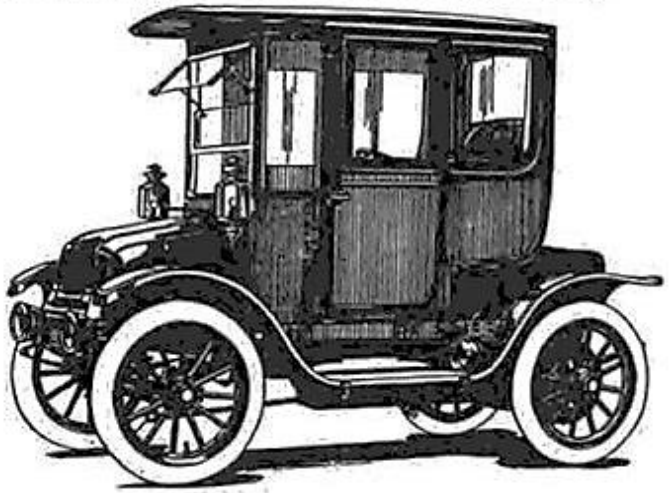
Touring group of Babcock tiller steering electric carriages gathered at Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, from Babcock company catalogue, showing a notable concentration of women drivers and passengers*. Many electrics were used for local delivery vehicles and town runabouts, given limited range and need for urban concentrations of recharging stations.

* Western New York Heritage magazine online, https://www.wnyheritage.org/content/electronic_automobilers--_1905/index.html

Babcock Electric Carriage Company

The Babcock Electric Carriage Company (1903 to 1912) of Buffalo, New York, promoted safety and comfort in its vehicles. They were advertised as having "sufficient speed, besides greater mileage than is required in city or suburban riding." Founder Frank A. Babcock claimed a world record for range when he drove a runabout 100 miles from New York to Philadelphia in 1906 on a single charge. The actual distance to Philadelphia was 105 miles. The car consumed the last kilowatt of electricity a half-mile from the Camden, New Jersey, city limits and was towed the remaining five miles to the Philadelphia ferry, but the record had been set. It had a top speed of 30 mph and was claimed to be able to climb any hill at better than 20 mph. In 1911 Babcock maintained an electric garage at 66th Street and Euclid Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio, for the convenience of electric car owners "who wish to leave their cars downtown while attending business or the theater."[45] A special inspection service, provided as part of the manufacturer's guarantee, was furnished free for the first year and included batteries being charged, inspection and adjustment of chains and minor repairs being made "at the great convenience to electric owners."[46] The service could be extended after the first year by a payment of $2 monthly. Frank Babcock merged his company with the Clark Motor Company, changed the name to the Buffalo Electric Vehicle Company and continued production until 1915. Attempts were made to increase sales by designing the body to look similar to a gasoline-powered car, but the company went out of business in 1915. Their Model 6 Victoria sold for $1,700.

In 1908 Henry Ford introduced the first Model T at a price of $850. The gasoline-powered "Tin Lizzie" was his idea of a universal car. Ford kept reducing the price of the car until it reached $265 in 1923. In 1914, Clara Ford, Henry's wife, bought a Detroit Electric car for herself, claiming Henry's cars were too noisy.



Babcock Electric Coupe, 1912[48]