

Patterson Chair Company A pioneering small factory in Norwich

A bustling manufacturing community once stood along the Ompompanoosuc River near the intersection of Campbell Flats Road and Route 132. Prior to its founding and beginning in the early 1770s mills, harnessing the waters of the Ompompanoosuc, turned out lumber, grain, linseed oil, and shingles. In 1872 Leslie Spencer Patterson (1850-1910) of Strafford purchased the saw mill and shingle factory on the northern bank of the river. He quickly invested in upgrading the facilities eventually expanding into full scale chair manufacturing.

Patterson developed a small but thriving company town around the factory, providing housing for employees in eight tenements and a general store where the second floor finishing room became a dance hall on occasion. The community became known as Pattersonville.

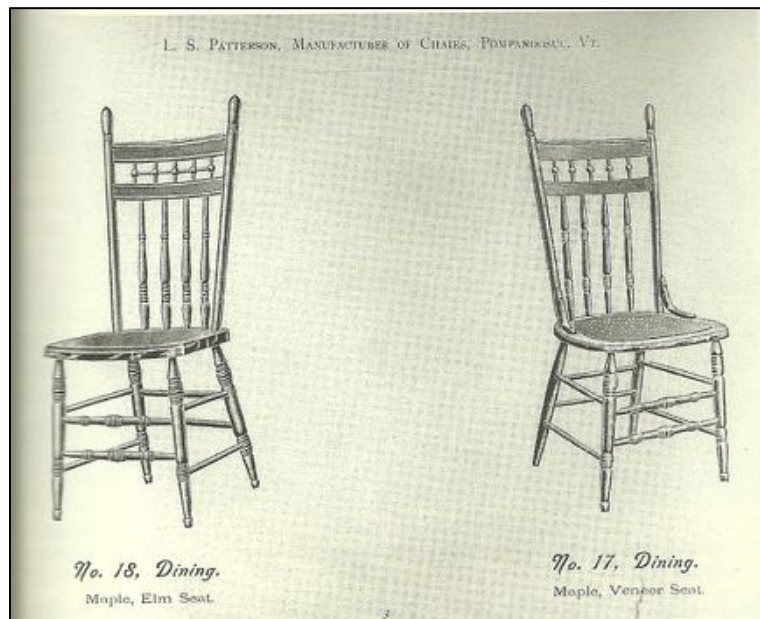
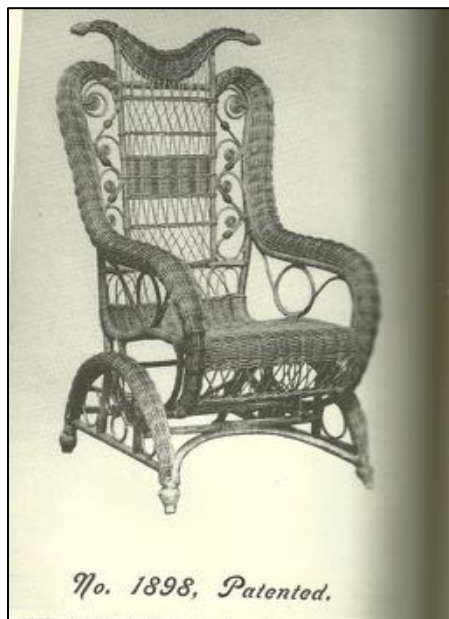


Patterson's house and barn are in the lower left, the general store just beyond, and the factory is along the river in this 1890s photograph. At the right is a cluster of tenement houses.



Patterson's General Store

The general store with its motto "WE SELL EVERYTHING." was the heart of the community. Leslie Spencer Patterson, known as Spencer, is standing beside the carriage in this photo. To his left is his son, Leslie, hands on hips. On the landing is finisher, Justin Pennock. The Patterson homestead rises above the pile of logs.



Catalogues helped market the chairs, the standardization of parts leading to many stylistic variations. The cost of the average chair was \$1.25.

By the late 19th century, the Patterson Chair Company had become a leading supplier of chairs to businesses, institutions, and individuals. Boxcar loads of chairs were shipped via the Boston & Maine Railroad from the Pompanoosuc Station less than a mile away or sold locally.



FREIGHT RATES, ETC.

Under the official Freight classification all the chairs we manufacture are shipped set up at 1½ times first class rate.

The first class rate of freight from Pompanoosuc to the following points is as follows per 100 lbs.

New York City	49c.	Boston, Mass.	39c.	Portsmouth, N. H.	39c.
Albany, N. Y.	45c.	Springfield, Mass.	34c.	Lancaster, N. H.	27c.
Buffalo, N. Y.	50c.	Fall River, Mass.	55c.	Burlington, Vt.	44c.
Rochester, N. Y.	50c.	Worcester, Mass.	39c.	Montpelier, Vt.	29c.
Jersey City, N. J.	49c.	Portland, Me.	40c.	Newport, Vt.	35c.
Baltimore, Md.	53c.	New Haven, Ct.	49c.	St. Johnsbury, Vt.	28c.
Philadelphia, Pa.	51c.	Hartford, Ct.	49c.	St. Albans, Vt.	48c.
Providence, R. I.	40c.	New London, Ct.	49c.	Pittsburg, Pa.	60c.
Newport, R. I.	58c.	Manchester, N. H.	37c.	Washington, D. C.	60c.

Our Chairs weigh 70, 80, 100 and 120 lbs. to the doz.

Spencer Patterson's son, Leslie, helped to expand the market through innovative marketing, opening a wholesale distribution office in Springfield, Massachusetts and hiring salesmen to travel far and wide selling Patterson chairs. Leslie's success is reflected in the company's gross sales of \$61,500 in 1909, the approximate equivalent of \$1,717,958 today.



Employees of the Patterson Chair Co. including three generations of Pattersons (Spencer's father, David, Spencer himself, and Leslie) stand before the factory in this c. 1890 photo.

Spencer Patterson died unexpectedly in 1910 at the age of 59. Leslie Patterson returned from Springfield intending to carry on the business, but learning of plans to build a dam at Wilder that would reduce his ability to generate hydro power, he decided to sell his father's estate.

The property was purchased by the New England Power Association and sold off piecemeal. The mill itself was purchased by the Goodell family in 1920 and operated as a saw mill until the building of Wilder Dam in 1950.

Reminders of Pattersonville's vibrant past remain. The large Patterson house, two tenement houses, a mill building along the river, part of the dam, and a stone retaining wall associated with the store remain visible on the landscape attesting to the lively company town that was once Pattersonville and to the vision, ingenuity, and industry of the chair company's founder, Leslie Spencer Patterson, his family, and employees.

