

Welcome to Heyworth/Mason Park

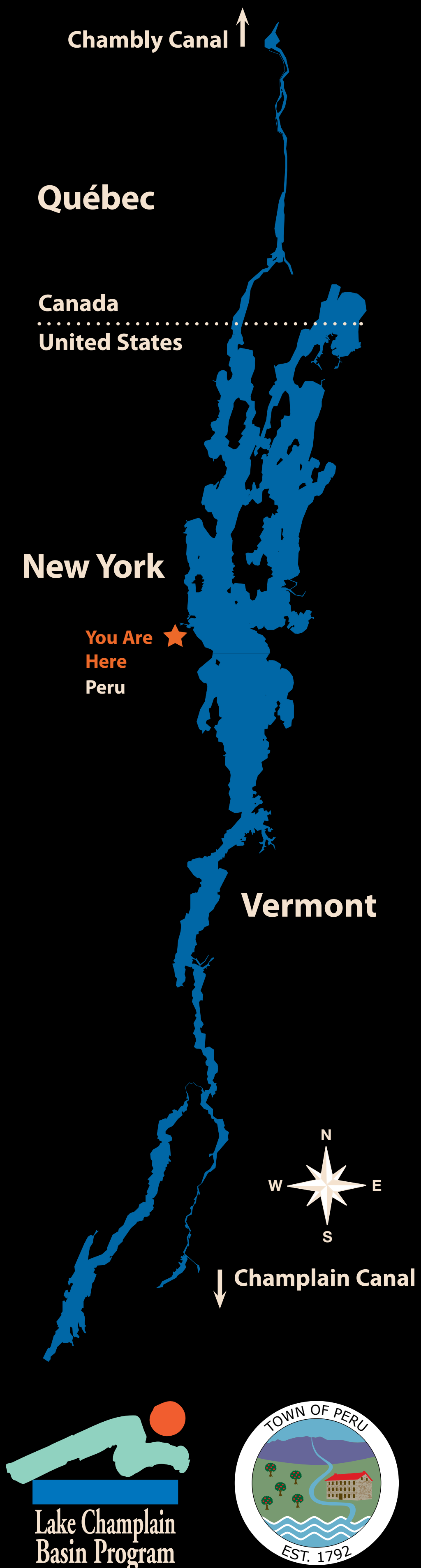
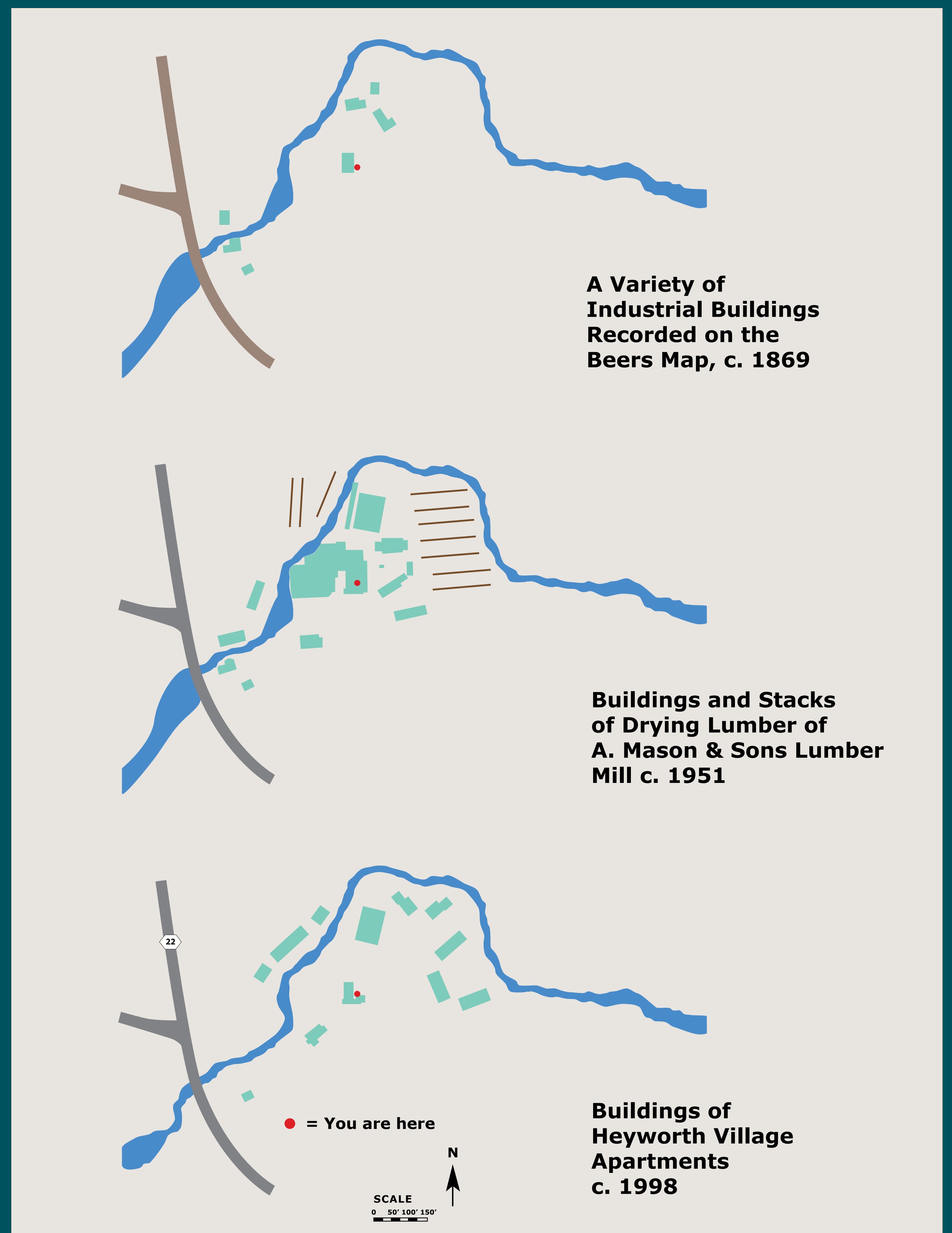
Heyworth/Mason Park Over Time

Peru is very fortunate to have this historically important and beautiful site in the center of its hamlet. While today peaceful and virtually empty, years ago it bustled with activity.

Before the settlers came, Native Americans camped along the river here, catching fish and following game, no doubt utilizing that great water highway that became known as Lake Champlain.

As the town took root in the 1790's, buildings along the riverbank provided flour, meal, lumber, apple cider, potato starch, leather, and cloth. These early industries were typical of those that sprung up throughout the area during the early period of European settlement. Thanks to improved technology many of the basic necessities, like building materials and food, could be made much more economically at a central location using water power than on individual farms. Then, with improvements in roads and railroads, specialized regional centers developed, and the small, local industries failed. In Peru, the grist mill, tannery, starch factory, woolen mill, and cider mill all experienced short lives, but A. Mason and Sons Lumber Mill, specializing in architectural lumber, thrived from 1883-1972.

Please enjoy the signage to learn more about the Park's rich history. The Little AuSable River Trail begins at the back of this site, a paved, multi-use path that will lead you to the entrance of Sullivan Park in 1.5 miles. Along the way, look for interpretive signs about the D&H Railroad and, at the river crossing, river ecology.



175 Years and Counting

To your right is the Heyworth/Mason building, it's a true survivor and an impressive legacy to the site's industrial past. This is its early history, according to an article in The Plattsburgh Republican from 1906:

A mile below Goshen we come to this place which was first known as Cochrane's Mills, then as Hackstaff's Mills and now as Peru Village. There are two dams a few rods apart, the upper of which has for more than a hundred years furnished the power to run a saw and gristmill. At the lower dam there was a woolen factory where the shops of A. Masons & Sons now stand, and across the road from it Richard Heyworth afterward built the large stone factory which has had many different uses but is now a storehouse for A. Masons & Sons' supplies.*

Away back in the "thirties" or thereabout, there was a freshet that caused the Little Ausable to break out of the lower pond and cut a new channel through the field east of the old woolen factory. Seeing that channel caused Richard Heyworth to conceive the plan as using it as a flume to convey power to a new factory, so he erected the large stone building where it stands today, covering over the flume so that the road between the two buildings could pass over it. For some years it was used as a woolen mill, but afterward was changed to a starch factory, then to a tannery and back to a starch factory, which was the last use made of it before it was bought by A. Masons & Sons in 1903.

* other accounts attribute the commission of the construction of the building to George Heyworth rather than to his son Richard.

After the lumber mill closed the Heyworth/Mason building was divided into apartments to become part of the Heyworth Village Apartment complex. It was the only building on the site to survive the devastating flood of 1998.

Built to last in 1836 by stonemason Robert York Sr., a recent immigrant from Yorkshire England, the building is an excellent example of early nineteenth century stone building tradition in the region. Constructed from local potsdam sandstone, ground level walls of this three-story building are over three feet thick. The building measures 35' by 60' and has a standing seam metal covered gable roof. When the base was excavated for repointing a number of years ago a small archway was found below ground level in the front of the building, which must be where water from the river entered to power the mill.

The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Peru Community Church, also built by Robert York Sr. and the Valcour Island Lighthouse are the only other buildings in Peru on the Register.

