

FAIR HAVEN: FROM MARITIME VILLAGE TO CITY NEIGHBORHOOD

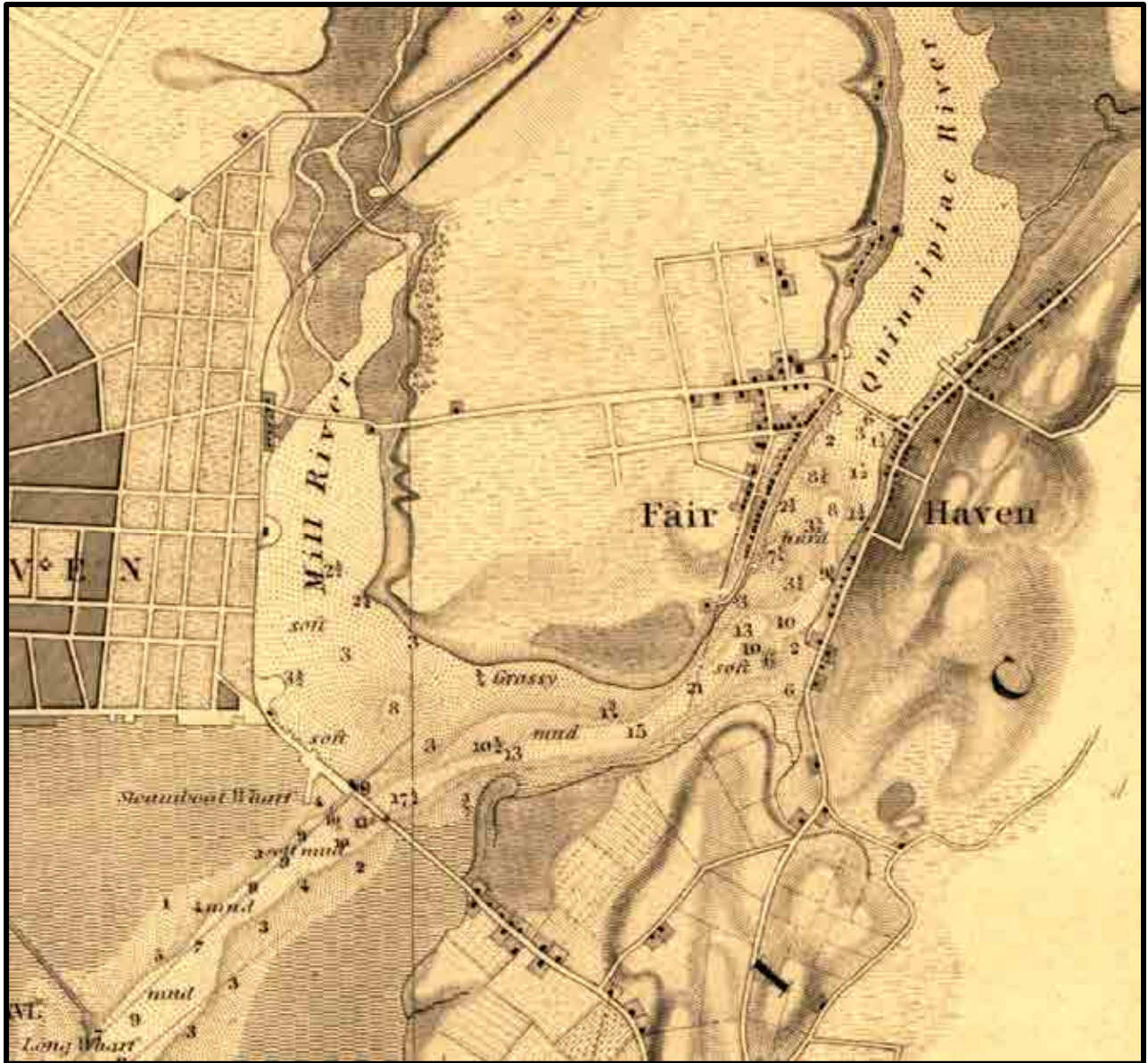
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The Fair Haven neighborhood was once a small village whose residents depended upon the tidal river nearby – the Quinnipiac – for their livelihood as oystermen, coastal traders, sailors, and shipbuilders. Over time, Fair Haven became ever more closely integrated into the city of New Haven, but even today, many of the historic homes and other buildings along the river recall the area’s maritime heritage.

Postcard view from the east bank,
ca. 1905.

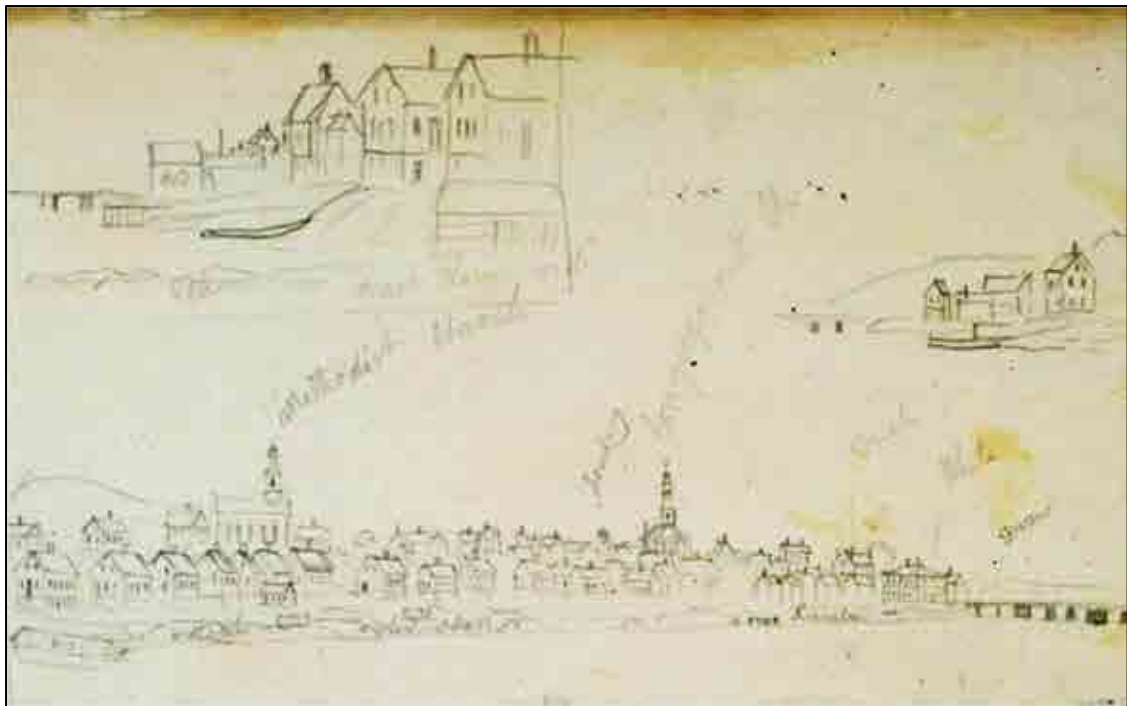


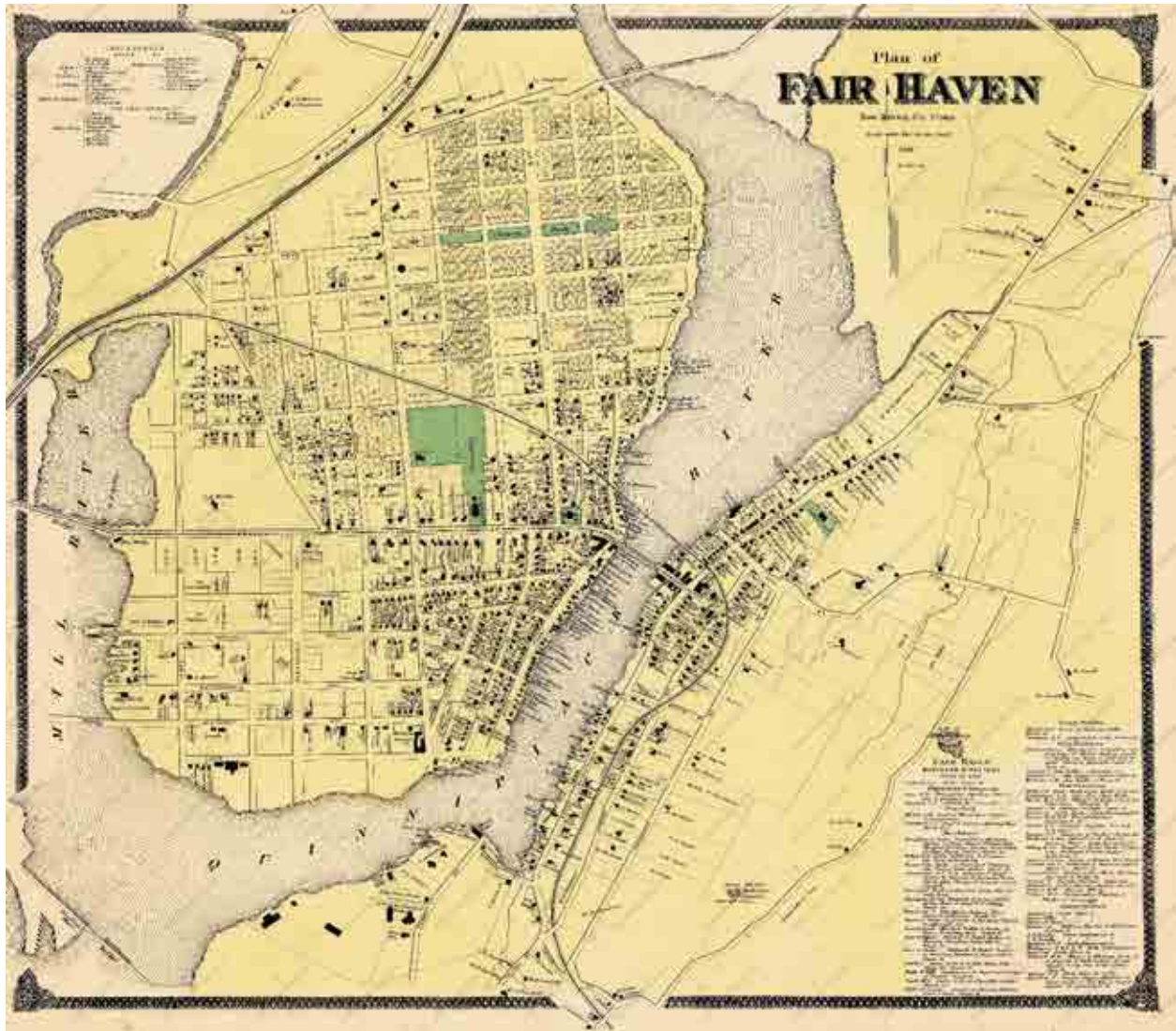


U.S. Coast Survey chart of New Haven Harbor, 1838, the earliest map of Fair Haven that I could find that showed building footprints. Wooster Square in downtown New Haven is on the extreme left. The Grand Street Bridge is just below the “Q” in Quinnipiac River.



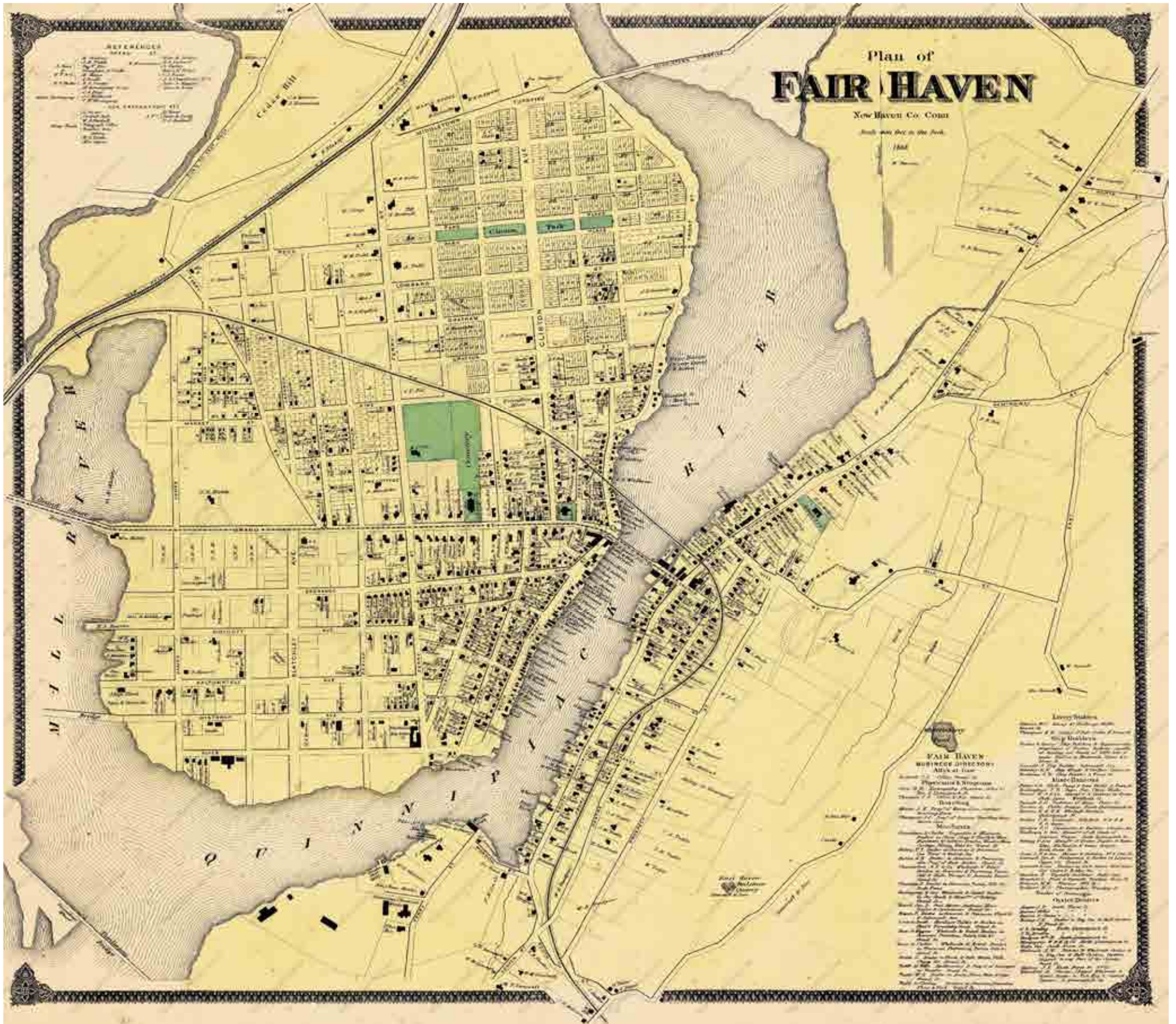
View of Fair Haven, John W. Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections*, 1836. The mounds along the river bank are deposits of oyster shells. Barber's notebook sketch is shown below (original in the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford).





Thirty years after the Coast Survey, the 1868 F. W. Beers "Plan of Fair Haven" shows the village has expanded westward toward New Haven, with nearly all the remaining vacant land divided up into building lots. The Fair Haven & Westville Street Railway's tracks are visible along Grand Street, as is the company's barn and car house. The Shore Line Railway runs right through the village, an alignment that persisted until 1893, when the Fair Haven tunnel allowed the tracks to take a more northerly route.

F. W. Beers, "Plan of Fair Haven," 1868.





Ca. 1860 photograph of the east end of the Grand Street bridge (New Haven Museum). The four-story building is the Quinnipiac House hotel, with the belfry of the Episcopal Church behind it. The tracks of the horse railway are not visible, so it may date before 1861. The conveyance in the middle is an omnibus, New Haven's first form of public transportation. The Quinipiac River railroad bridge is visible behind the house at the extreme left.

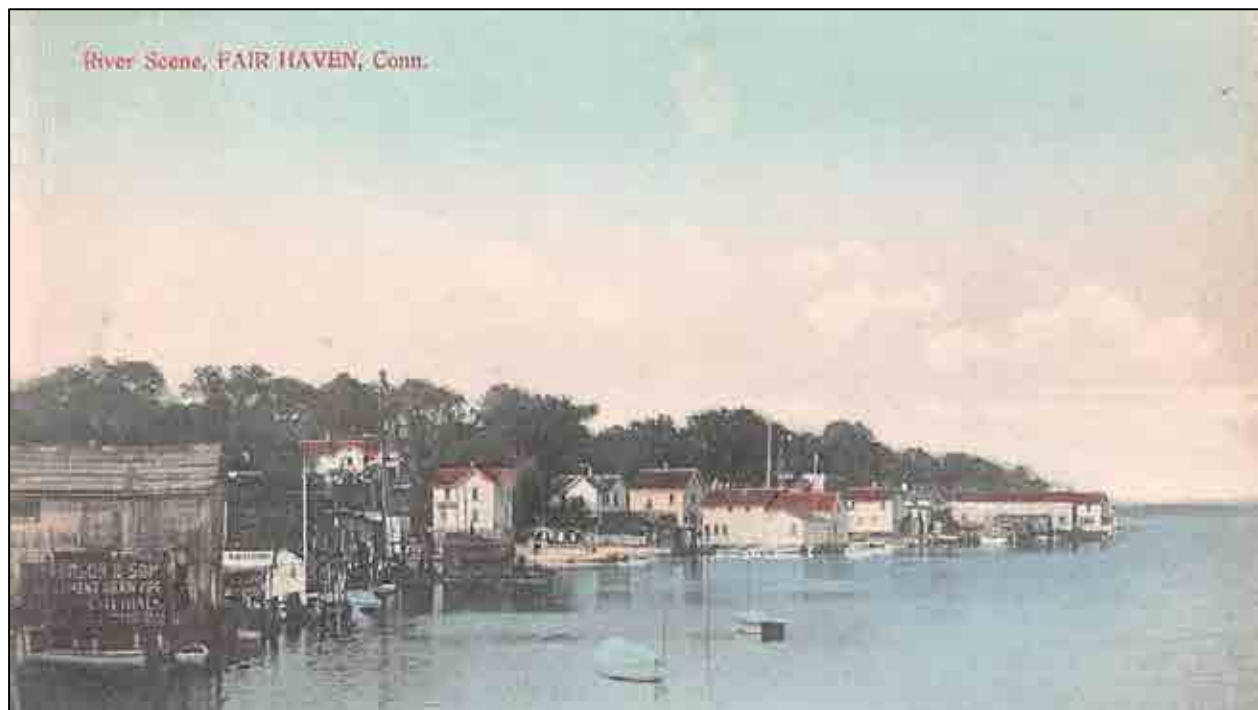
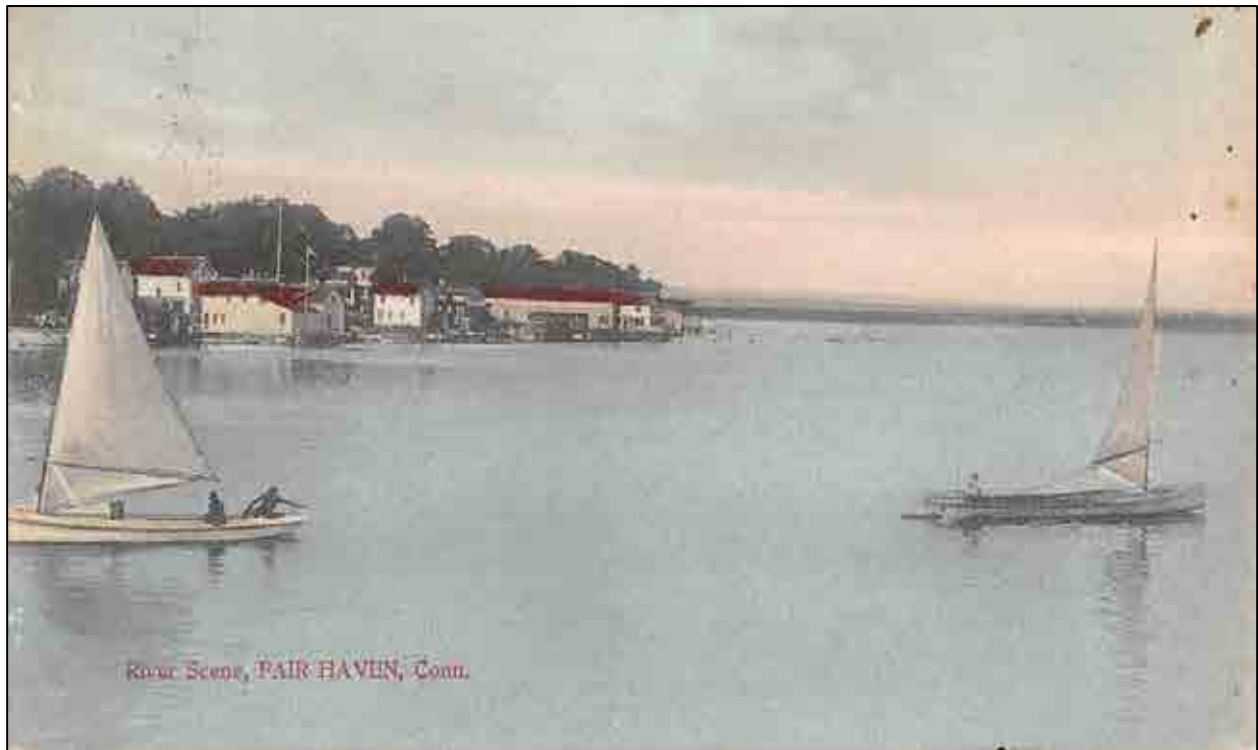


Postcard view of the Quinnipiac River, ca. 1910, looking north to the Grand Avenue Bridge. The F. Mansfield & Sons property on the right is probably typical of Fair Haven's many oyster enterprises. Visible are a two-story oyster barn, huge piles of oyster shells, a scow loaded with oysters or shells, and a horse-drawn dump cart.



Beginning in the early years of the 20th century, recreational boating assumed a place as one of the chief uses of the Quinnipiac River.

Two more ca.1910 postcards included just for their scenic qualities:



For further information:

Brown, Elizabeth Mills. *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976. The guide includes a tour of Fair Haven.

Ingersoll, Ernest. *The History and Present Condition of the Fishery Industries: The Oyster-Industry*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1881. Prepared as part of the Tenth Census, this volume covers the Fair Haven oyster business on pp. 61-78.
<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/94693>

Ohno, Kate. "Quinnipiac River Historic District, " National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1983.
https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/84001139_text
https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/84001139_photos

Townshend, Doris B. *Fair Haven: A Journey Through Time*. New Haven: New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1976.