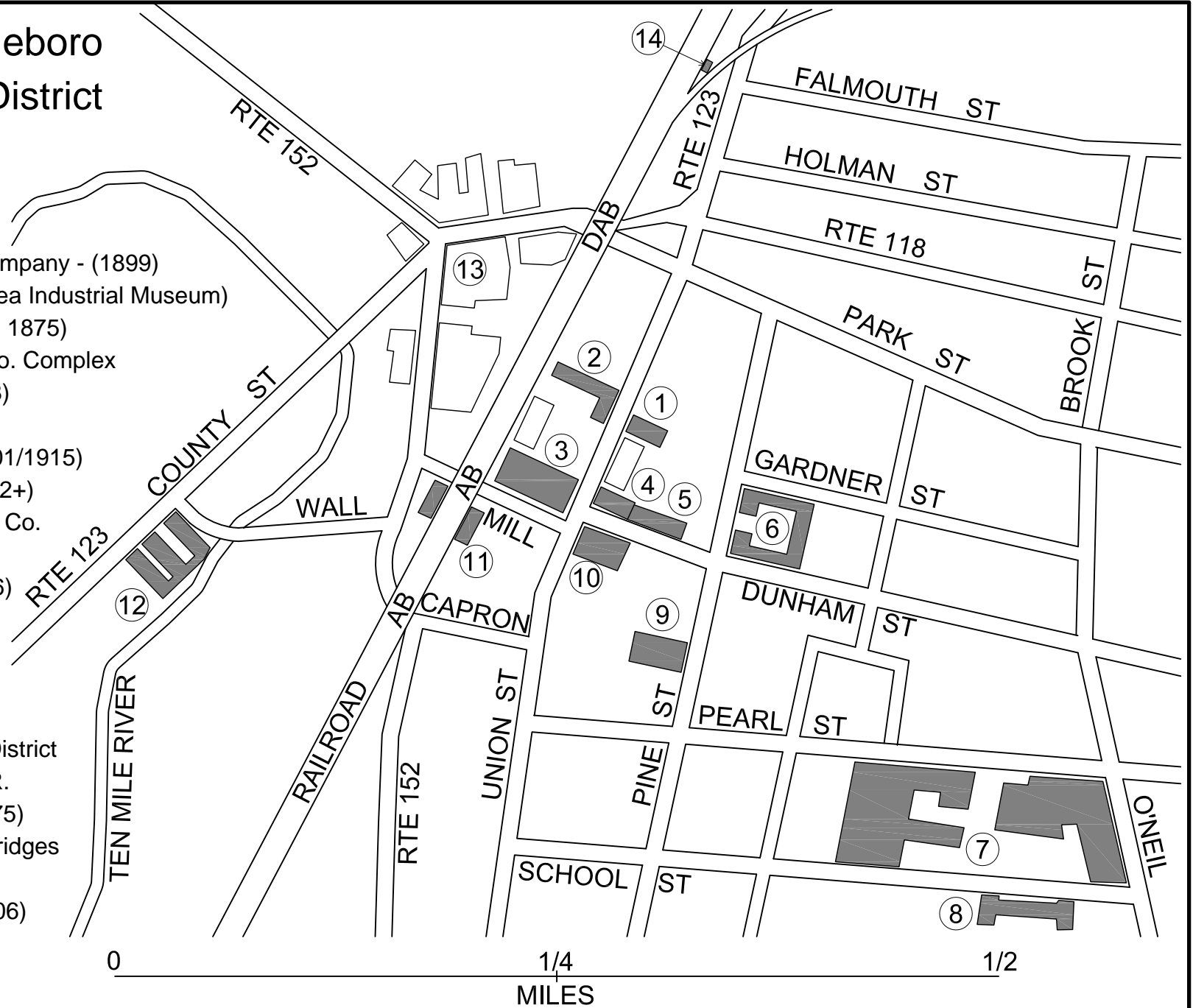


# Downtown Attleboro Jewelry Mfg. District Walking Tour

## KEY:

- 1) Attleboro Refining Company - (1899)  
(now the Attleboro Area Industrial Museum)
  - 2) Robinson Bldg. #1 (c. 1875)
  - 3) Bates / D.F. Briggs Co. Complex
  - 4) Ingraham Bldg. (1908)
  - 5) PlastiCraft, Inc.
  - 6) D.E. Makepeace (1901/1915)
  - 7) Swank Complex (1902+)
  - 8) Robbins / M.S. Chain Co.
  - 9) Armory (1910)
  - 10) Union Theatre (1926)
  - 11) Railroad Stations  
(1906 / 1908)
  - 12) S. O. Bigney Co.  
(c. 1895 + 1906/07)
  - 13) Central Business District
  - 14) Taunton Branch R.R.  
Signal Tower (c. 1875)
- AB) NYNHH RR Arch Bridges  
DAB) Park Street  
Double Arch Bridge (1906)



[1] 42 Union Street – Attleboro Refining Company (1899)

Home to the Attleboro Area Industrial Museum. Adjacent 1925 addition is Chamber of Commerce.

[2] 37-41 Union Street – Robinson Building #1 (c. 1875 + 1945 & 1954 additions)

The 5-story Robinson Building, built in 1875, was one of the few buildings in this area of downtown Attleboro to survive the great fire of 1898. It is really a group of four attached buildings; the structures fronting Union Street and the railroad tracks dating from 1875 and the connector building joining them constructed in 1945. In 1899 the Robinson Bldg. was occupied by prominent manufacturing firms such as Torrey Jewelry Co., W. H. Herring & Co., F. H. Sadler & Co., and Smith & Crosby. It is one of the oldest jewelry factories in downtown Attleboro.

[3] D.F. Briggs – Union Street @ Mill Street

[4] 52 Union Street – Ingraham Building (1908)

The A. S. Ingraham Company produced chemicals, paints, varnishes, and electroplating. Occupants of the Ingraham Building in 1912 were such prominent Attleboro firms as Richards Mfg. Co., producer of "Lilliputian" jewelry for misses and children in gold-filled and gold font, H. A. Allen & Co., manufacturers of rolled plate and gold-filled link buttons, scarf pins, tie clips and fobs, and the E.D. Gilmore & Co., manufacturers of gold rings, brooches, pendants, and drops.

[5] 12 Dunham – Plastic Craft Novelty Co. (Est. 1931)

[6] 46 Pine Street - D.E. Makepeace (1901) + Addition (1915)

The D. E. Makepeace Company was one of the leading businesses responsible for Attleboro's dramatic rise as the hub of the jewelry industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The business was founded in Providence in 1885 by David E. Makepeace and relocated to Attleboro. In 1888 with one pair of rolls and a small gas furnace as its only equipment, space was leased from other jewelry manufacturers and in the "Steam Power Building" before the construction of its own factory in 1900. The firm specialized in plating and processing of precious metals (gold, silver and platinum) into findings, tubing, sheets and wire which were then sold to other firms which manufactured the finished jewelry products. The firm retained its own metallurgist and operated its own metallurgy lab and was known for the excellent temper, workability and color of its products. In 1930 the company was capitalized at \$100,000 and had 125 employees. It had gained a reputation as the largest jewelry manufacturer of its type in the world. The firm continued to prosper, adding a new wing to the plant in 1915 and increasing its labor force to 400. In 1952, the company was acquired by the Englehard Mineral Co. A new modern one-story plant was built in Plainville and commenced operations in 1958. The new plant was equipped to treat uranium for atomic energy and also manufactured jet engine parts, radar equipment and special-purpose laminates, related industries into which the original jewelry manufacturer had diversified since the 1940's. The Attleboro plant was gradually relocated to Plainville and closed completely in 1979. The building was added to the NRHP in 1985. It has since been converted into apartments.

[7] Pearl Street @ O'Neil Boulevard – Swank Complex

The company dates back to 1897 when the organization was first incorporated as the Attleboro Manufacturing company by partners Samuel S. Stone and Maurice J. Baer. It was established for the manufacture of a general line of jewelry and set up shop at the corner of Union and Mill Streets. This building burned in the major fire of 1898 and the present building on Hazel was finished on August 2, 1902. The scope of the men's jewelry department so increased that in 1908 it was set up as a separate business, under the name of Baer and Wilde. In 1918 the manufacture of "Kum-A-Part cuff buttons began and the popularity of this single item grew by such dimensions that from 1918 to 1926 the company devoted itself exclusively to producing this button. Gradually other items in the men's jewelry line were developed and marketed under the registered trade name of Swank,

which became such an important identification that the firm name of Baer and Wilde was changed to Swank Products, Inc., in 1936 and to Swank, Inc. in 1941. The factory closed in 2000. The east half of the complex has been slated for demolition since 2013.

[8] 61 School Street – Robbins / M.S. Chain Co.

Built in the late 1880s and one of the earliest occupants made "mother of pearl" buttons from sea shells. There are shells that were dumped on the premises that have round holes in them where the button blanks were cut. Imitation pearls were made by dipping glass beads in a solution made from fish scales. The Robbins Co., which was founded in 1892 by Charles M. Robbins and specialized in the production of college seals, class pins, flags, fraternal emblems and badges, moved to this building in 1903. The company remained here forty-six years before moving to their new plant on O'Neil Boulevard in 1949. The M. S. Company which was started in December 1913 with S. M. Einstein president, Max Schweinschaut, treasurer, and Eugene Claupin, clerk, bought the building at 61 School Street in 1920 for the manufacture of jewelry chains and findings in gold, silver, plate and brass for the manufacturing jewelers and - kindred trades.

[9] M.V.M. Armory (1910)

Designed by well-known Rhode Island architects Wm. R. Walker & Sons. Now used as a community center.

[10] Union Theatre (1926)

[11] Northbound & Southbound Railroad Stations (1906 & 1908)

The northbound station was built 1906 by the NY, NH&H RR as part of the grade crossing elimination project. The southbound station opened in 1908.

[12] 98 County Street – S.O. Bigney (c. 1895 + 1906/07)

The S.O. Bigney Co., noted rolled gold plated chain and sterling silver novelty manufacturer, began in North Attleboro as Marsh & Bigney in 1879 and moved to the Robinson Building in Attleboro in 1881. In 1894 Bigney bought out C. A. Marsh's interest and the firm became the S.O. Bigney Co. Colonel Bigney himself did not retire until the age of 89 and even after that the business continued to be carried on in his name billed as "The Largest Jewelry Plant in the United States."

[13] Central Business District

[14] Route 123 near Falmouth - Taunton Branch Railroad Signal Tower (c. 1875)

The Attleboro Signal Tower is the only remaining wood tower within the MBTA system and is a significant example of wooden railroad architecture. It also represents a period of signal tower construction from the mid-19th century when all towers were wood. This is the only tower in the system that has not been taken out of service and/or replaced by a brick tower. From 1904-1906 the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad raised the grade level tracks in Attleboro, constructed the northbound station and several signal towers. The tower was moved at the time of this construction and is the only remaining wood tower in the MBTA system. The tower originally signaled the Taunton Branch, but after automatic switching was installed in 1930, its function was reduced to serving four local Attleboro locations.

[AB] Mill Street & South Main Street Arch Railroad Bridges (1906)

[DAB] Park Street Railroad Bridge (1906)

These three bridges are among the four filled-spandrel stone arch bridges constructed in 1906 when the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad eliminated eleven grade crossings in Attleboro. (The fourth is located at Peck Street, just north of the map). The bridges still carry Amtrak and MBTA trains.