The Charlestown Navy Yard Ropewalk

1834-7: Alexander Parris designs and builds the Charlestown Navy Yard Ropewalk.

This immense granite building was the United States Navy’s principal manufacturing facility for rope from the 1830s to the 1950s, and was also the location of a complete set of machinery designed by inventor Daniel Treadwell, later Rumford Professor of Physics at Harvard University. Like the Plymouth Cordage ropewalk, Charlestown was one of the first industrial locations to employ female workers. The earliest known view of the Navy Yard Ropewalk is this drawing that appeared in Gleason’s Pictorial Drawing Room Companion in 1852. Note the large chimneys for the boilers located in the basement of the headhouse.