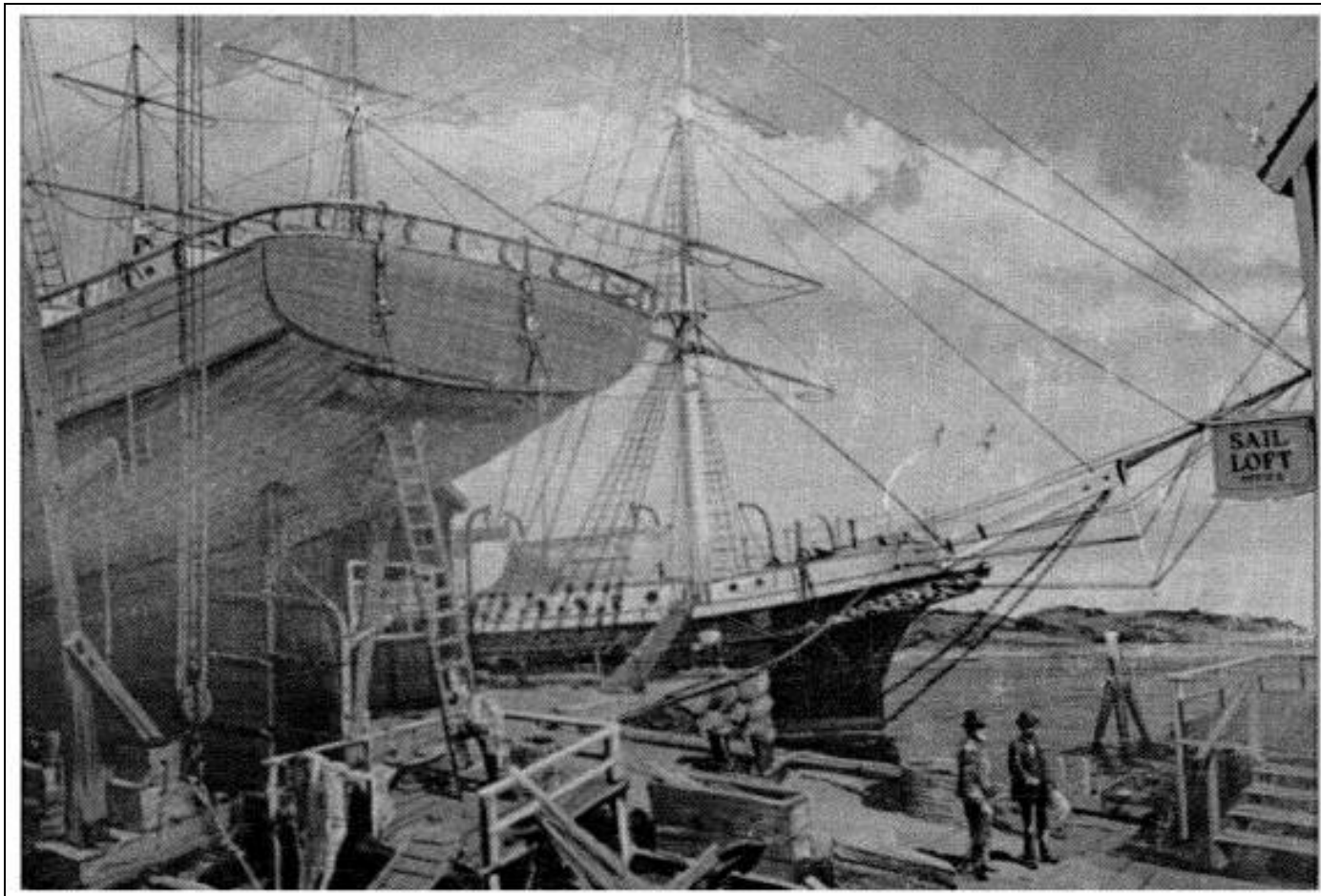


## New England Industrialists and Merchants



<http://thomascranelibrary.org/shipbuildingheritage/images/histor1a.jpg>

## New England Industrialists and Merchants

The New England area had several attributes that encouraged the growth of industry and manufacturing such as: abundant natural resources including rapidly flowing rivers for water power, a large and willing labor force, a well-developed transportation system with access to markets world-wide, and a supply of investment capital (money) to fund new businesses. Northern businessmen did not always criticize the system of slavery. Southern products produced with slave labor were less expensive than products made by paying free laborers; and some northern shipping firms were engaged in the “triangular trade,” part of which was the transportation of slaves from Africa to the Americas.

As the slavery issue grew more heated in the 1830s and 1840s, and abolitionists called for the eradication of slave labor, southern plantation owners accused northern businessmen of engaging in “wage slavery” or “white slavery.” That is, southerners accused northerners of treating the growing numbers of factory workers worse than slave owners treated their human chattel (property). Working conditions in the factories

were dangerous and factory workers earned appallingly low wages.

Ironically, northern businessmen, like southern planters, saw passionate abolitionists as radical “hot-heads.” If abolitionists continued to pester the south to end slavery, they feared the south would rebel. If the south rebelled, war would ensue. That would interrupt the established social, political, and economic order and ruin lucrative northern businesses.

To northern industrialists, Abraham Lincoln of the Republican Party seemed a logical candidate in the presidential election of 1860. The Republican platform (or beliefs) was: to prevent the expansion of slavery, to encourage farmers to move west by offering them free land, to establish daily overland mail service, to build a transcontinental railroad, and to support a protective tariff. Most of these ideas would support and encourage economic growth in the North and increase profits for northern industrialists and merchants.