As the United States fought to establish economic independence from Great Britain in the early part of the nineteenth century, many mills and factories were established for the local production of finished goods. Water powered early industry, and the falls and waterways in the Baltimore region supported the growth of a thriving textile industry. In 1829, Elysville Manufacturing Company was incorporated for the production of cotton and woolen goods. A dam, millrace, and a large and impressive stone factory were constructed for this purpose, and by 1845 several additional mill buildings, a wooden frame home and six stone tenements stood on the site.

After early disputes and changes in ownership, the mill was acquired by James S. Gary, who established Gary Manufacturing Company. In the early period, the factory made cotton duck, a strong material that was used in the manufacture of sails for Baltimore sailing vessels. During the Civil War canvas was sold to the Union Army for use in tents, and by the 1880s the factory was selling duck, twills, osnaburgs, denims and canvas for sale through distributors in Baltimore, New York and Saint Louis.

Innovation was an early element of this town, which was established as a stop on the Main Line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The Nation’s first commercial railroad, the B&O, was constructed to connect the merchants and industries of Baltimore with expanding markets in the west. With the Patapsco River Valley selected as the “best” route to the Ohio River, Elysiville due west of Baltimore was identified as an important entry point into the valley. Following the severe bend in the river at Elysiville, however, proved challenging for railroad engineers who were forced to straighten the tracks in 1838. Rather than follow the curving river at Elysiville, Benjamin H. Latrobe designed two innovative truss bridges to cross the river above and below Elysiville. These structures were short-lived, being replaced by bridges designed by the pioneering bridge engineer Wendell Bollman in 1853-54.