

The History of Our City



*Upper Falls
Genesee River in 1831*

ROCHESTER

History of Our City

IN THE SAME YEAR in which George Washington became first President of the United States, 1789, Ebenezer "Indian" Allan erected a saw mill and a grist mill. These were the first buildings located on the site which is now the center of Rochester.

However, community life did not begin until 1811 when Colonel Nathaniel Rochester began to survey the tract and sell lots. On July 4, 1812 Hamlet Scrantom moved into the first log dwelling, on the site of the present Power's Building. First casually called Falls Town, and later Rochesterville, the name was shortened in 1822 to Rochester.

The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 provided transportation for the flour ground in the many mills along the Genesee, and Rochester became the "Young Lion of the West," first boom town in America. It was for this reason that, when young Rochester was incorporated

as a city in 1834, it was known as the "Flour City." By 1888 Rochester, with its 125,000 people and 31 mills, was capable of grinding 1,000,000 barrels of flour a year to take care of the abundant wheat crop of the fertile Genesee valley. Rochester was proudly one of the great milling centers of America.

Today, Rochester has become a city of over 330,000 inhabitants, the third largest in New York State and twenty-third largest in the United States. Rochester is presently known as the "Flower City" because of its many nurseries, numerous parks and beautiful flowers. The industry and enterprise of early settlers has been perpetuated by progeny until Rochester not only leads the country, but the entire world, in the production of many types of manufactured goods.

And what of the city's industries — the mills, the shops, the factories whence comes the preponderant wealth of our citizens? Two outstanding characteristics of these in-

dustries are very evident: their diversity and the high quality of their products. The fates of fortune have indeed been kind, for Rochester has been blessed with an abundance of inventive genius.

In the 1870s, a young man named George Eastman, who worked as a bank clerk by day, was spending his evenings experimenting in his kitchen sink with emulsions for photographic plates. Due to his interest in photography and his experiments, Eastman invented a machine for coating dry plates, which previously had been done only by hand. As a result of his clever invention, he entered business on State Street with a small staff of six employees. Originally known as the Eastman Dry Plate Company, it was to grow into the Eastman Kodak Company we know today, employing 30,000 workers in Rochester and becoming one of the nation's top industrial organizations.

The Bausch & Lomb Optical Company, today the largest company of

its type, can trace its beginning back to 1853. It was then that John Jacob Bausch, a mere lad of 18 years and with only \$7.50 in his pocket was joined by Henry Lomb, who contributed \$28.00 to their partnership. They applied their minds to the perfection of new ways of grinding lenses, and as a result of their inventions the business flourished.

Throughout the length and breadth of America, Rochester-made clothing is famous for its quality. From very humble beginnings came this prosperous industry, for it was along about 1840 that a woman named Baker first made boys' trousers on Front Street and sold them for 25c a pair. After her marriage to Meyer Greentree, her husband took over the business and soon afterwards his imagination prompted him to make men's clothing. Thus, from a pants shop on Front Street have come the famous clothes of which Rochester is so proud — Bond, Hickey - Freeman, Fashion Park, Levy Brothers and Adler,

Michaels Stern, Stein Bloch and Timely Clothes.

Taylor Instrument Company had its early beginning in 1851 when George Taylor and David Kendall began making thermometers on Exchange Street; while machine tools of the Gleason Works, which are sold all over the world, were first designed by William Gleason in a shop on Brown's Race near the Upper Genesee Falls.

The large Ritter Park plant on West Avenue is a result of an interesting incident that occurred to Frank Ritter. In 1887, Ritter was going about his business of making furniture when he was approached one day by a dental equipment inventor who asked Ritter to design him a scientific dental chair. Ritter applied his genius to the problem, and as a result Ritter Dental is the outstanding manufacturer of Dental appliances.

When, in 1908, Edward A. Halblieb founded the Rochester Coil Company in a basement at 187

North Water Street, his idea was to make electricity take the place of the hand starter. Fortunately he was able to interest others in his ideas and the group succeeded in perfecting the present automotive starter, lighting and ignition systems. Known for years as the North East Electric Company, the company in recent years became known as the Delco Division of General Motors.

Another one of Rochester's major industries is the Todd Company, founded in 1899 by the Todd brothers, Lebanus M. and George W. Todd. In a small cold woodshed on Gregory Street they devised the first check protector which to this day has been the nemesis of forgers.

This brief history, typifying the inventive genius and the productive industrial arts which have sparked Rochester to its position as one of America's leading cities, is representative of other great industries of which our city is justly proud such as Hickok, Stromberg Carlson, General Railway Signal, Tobin

Packing, Yawman & Erbe, Folmer-Graflex and American Laundry Machinery Company.

As one travels throughout Rochester, he is impressed by the neat little white-front Fanny Farmer Candy Shops that dot the city. It was just 27 years ago, in 1919, near the corner of Main and Clinton Streets, that the first Fanny Farmer Candy Shop was opened. The growth of these little white shops in two and one-half decades has been phenomenal. Every important community in the East, the West as far as Des Moines, Iowa, and as far South as Virginia, is familiar with the deliciously fresh Fanny Farmer Candies and the friendly service shown by the Fanny Farmer Salesladies.

But it is not only industry that is the heartbeat of a city. Less tangible, but ever present in the minds of Rochesterians, are its beautiful homes, churches and schools. In the cultural field Rochester can point with pride to the University of

Rochester, Eastman School of Music, Nazareth College, Rochester Institute of Technology, Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and St. Bernard's Seminary.

And today, as we survey the past and marvel at its tremendous progress, Rochester looks to the future. With a growth and development that has marked the years, the future built on the pattern of the past and inheriting a legacy of genius and inspiration will be but an unfolding of the greatness of its pioneers. Rochester goes forward and with such a stable foundation, culturally and economically its future is guaranteed.

The "Little White House" on Washington Square will be glad to furnish current information regarding Rochester.

Scanned by:
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