

4.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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The City of Lockport is one of New York State's largest and most prominent Erie Canal cities. The City is located in Niagara County, which is in Western New York State. Niagara County is situated with the Niagara River at its west and Lake Ontario to its north, and perhaps its most recognizable feature is Niagara Falls which is located west of the City of Lockport. The City emerged as a settlement in the early decades of the nineteenth century following the construction and opening of the Erie Canal. The canal acted as a significant route transporting raw materials and labor from the East Coast and New York City and also from the western frontiers via Buffalo, and also served to distribute finished goods and products to markets across the region. Because of its strategic location, Lockport would become one of the most prominent industrial and manufacturing cities in the area and in the nation.

4.1 Creation of Western New York and the Foundations of Niagara County

In its early history in the 1600s and 1700s, Western New York was a vast, sparsely European-occupied frontier on the fringes of the colonized settlements along the East Coast. This area was settled by the Haudenosaunee, who are also known as the Iroquois and more specific to this area, the Senecas. In the eighteenth century Western New York became the focal point of conflicts between the French and the English who each claimed the region and its rich resources, including Niagara Falls, for their own. These two European powers battled over the rights to the continent, with Western NY falling largely at the center of this conflict. The French, initially building two wooden forts at the mouth of the Niagara River at Lake Ontario beginning in 1679, solidified their claim to the area with the construction of the stone French Castle and Fort Niagara in 1726. Meanwhile, the British also sought the rights to the area as a means to expand their territories along the eastern coast of the continent.

This rivalry for the future Western New York region eventually led to open hostilities between the British and French in the 1750s, with the Haudenosaunee allying with the French in the area. British troops eventually captured the French Fort Niagara in 1759 after a bitter siege, crippling the French presence in the region, and effectively establishing British control. Hostilities in the area continued throughout the American Revolutionary War era in the late 1700s. Because of the conflicts and following the 1783 Treaty of Paris, the British were expelled from the fledgling United States of America, pushed across the Niagara River to the Niagara peninsula in Upper Canada. Without their British allies, the Haudenosaunee were forced to sign the Second Fort Stanwix Treaty (1784), ending their disputes with the Americans. The Second Fort Stanwix Treaty surrendered the Haudenosaunee claims to the land west of the Genesee River, except for the creation of several small reservations. This treaty was contested by several groups, and the territorial boundaries were eventually resolved with

The Pickering (or Canandaigua) Treaty of 1794. Although the British continued to occupy Fort Niagara following the 1783 treaty, the Jay Treaty of 1796 finally brought resolution to the issue and removed the British influence from Western New York. Following their removal and the easing of political and military tensions throughout the burgeoning nation, settlement began to slowly move from the east into the frontier.

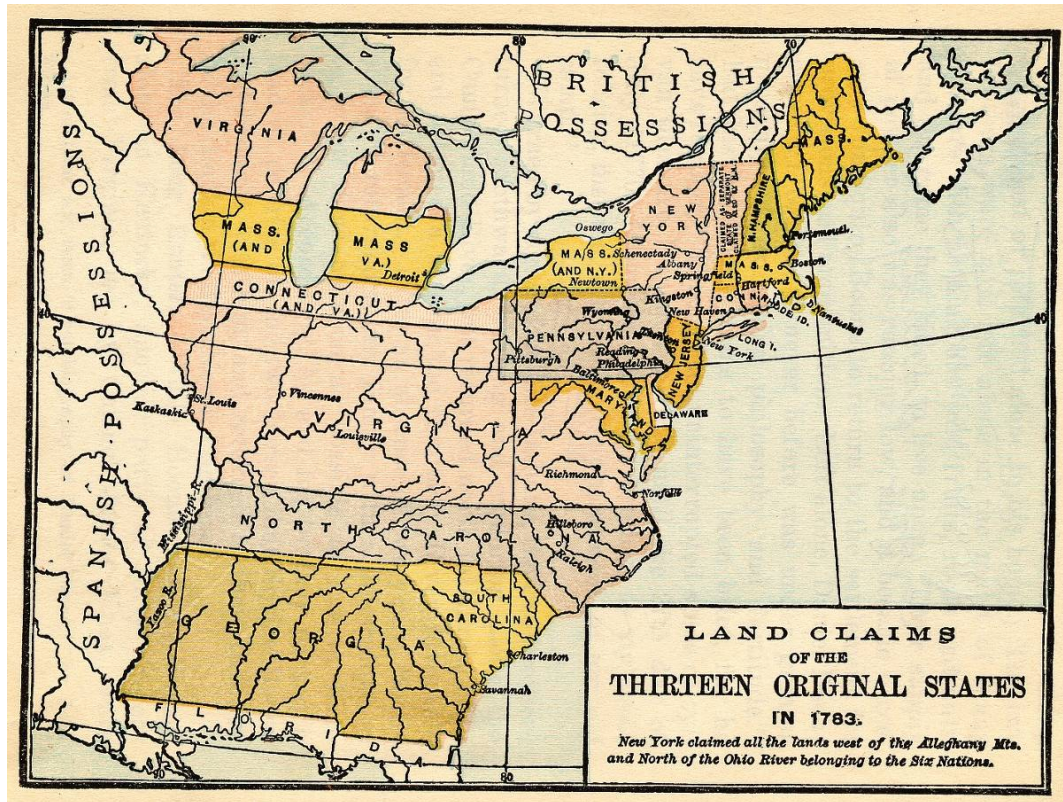


Figure 4.1
Land Claims of the Thirteen Original States in 1783¹
 Note that both Massachusetts and New York claimed Western New York

While international disputes were largely resolved in the last decade of the 1700s, Massachusetts and New York states both disputed the claim to the land west of Fort Stanwix (near Rome, Oneida County). This conflict, with both states claiming ownership, stymied the sale and development of the disputed territory (fig 4.1). New York claimed ownership of this land based on an agreement signed in Hartford, Connecticut in 1786 where the lands once occupied by the Haudenosaunee came under the jurisdiction of New York State. This understanding gave New York the sovereignty of the territory. Meanwhile, Massachusetts still retained ownership of this land, subject to Native American title, meaning the Native Americans could convey title to this land only to Massachusetts and not to New York. The eastern boundary of this

¹ "Land Claims of the Thirteen Original States in 1783." Map. *Kentucky Secretary of State Elaine Walker*. Web. 2 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.sos.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/38554108-8E62-49F7-9CE5-AC6DCB62EB22/0/KYYesterday13Colonies.jpg>>.

Massachusetts claim was known as the Pre-emption Line, as that state had the right of pre-emption, or first purchase, of this region (see fig 4.2).

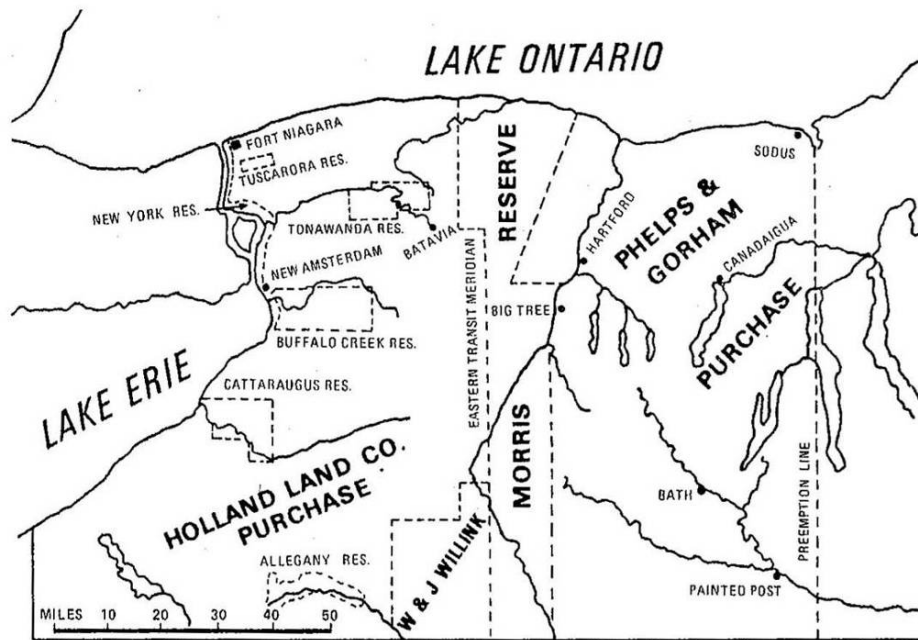


Figure 4.2
Land Purchases and Reserves in Western New York State, ca. 1804²

During the next decade large grants of land in Western New York would be sold to private investors who would attempt to open the area to settlement. In 1788, Massachusetts sold the pre-emption right to Western New York to Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham for \$1 million dollars. A council was held in Buffalo in July of 1788 in order to acquire the Native American title to the land; the result of this council was the sale of 2.6 million acres bounded on the east by the pre-emption line for \$5,000 down and an annual payment of \$500. Eventually Massachusetts sold pre-emption rights to the land of Western New York west of the Phelps and Gorham territory to Philadelphian Robert Morris in March, 1791. Morris divided the land into several tracts, including those which he sold to several Americans who acted as representatives for a group of investors from Holland. This transaction became known as "The Holland Purchase." However, although the state ownership of the property was resolved, Morris was still unable to extinguish the Native American rights to this Western New York territory.

The Treaty of Big Tree, held from August 20, 1797 until September 16, 1797 near the present-day community of Geneseo, was a landmark event in the settlement of Western New York. During this treaty, the Native American title to the lands west of the Genesee River was extinguished, with the exception of

² "Land Purchases and Reserves in Western New York State, Ca. 1804." Map. History of Buffalo: A Chronology. Chuck La Chiusa. Web. 2 Feb. 2011.
<<http://www.buffaloah.com/h/maps/1804landholdings.jpg>>.

small areas which included the Buffalo Creek, Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Tonawanda reservations. Assembled at this meeting was a group of reportedly 3,000 Native Americans including leaders such as Cornplanter, Red Jacket, Mary Jemison and others. Representing American interests was Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, Commissioner, assigned by President George Washington to represent the Federal government interests, Captain Charles Williamson and Thomas Morris representing his father, Robert Morris, and Massachusetts and New York representatives. Theophilus Cazenove and Paolo Busti, represented the interests of the Holland Land Company. Also in attendance was Joseph Ellicott, land surveyor, and Horatio Jones and Jasper Parrish served as the interpreters between the Americans and the Iroquois. For their rights to the lands of Western New York, the Native Americans accepted a payment of \$100,000, to be deposited in the United States Bank, and paid to them in installments.

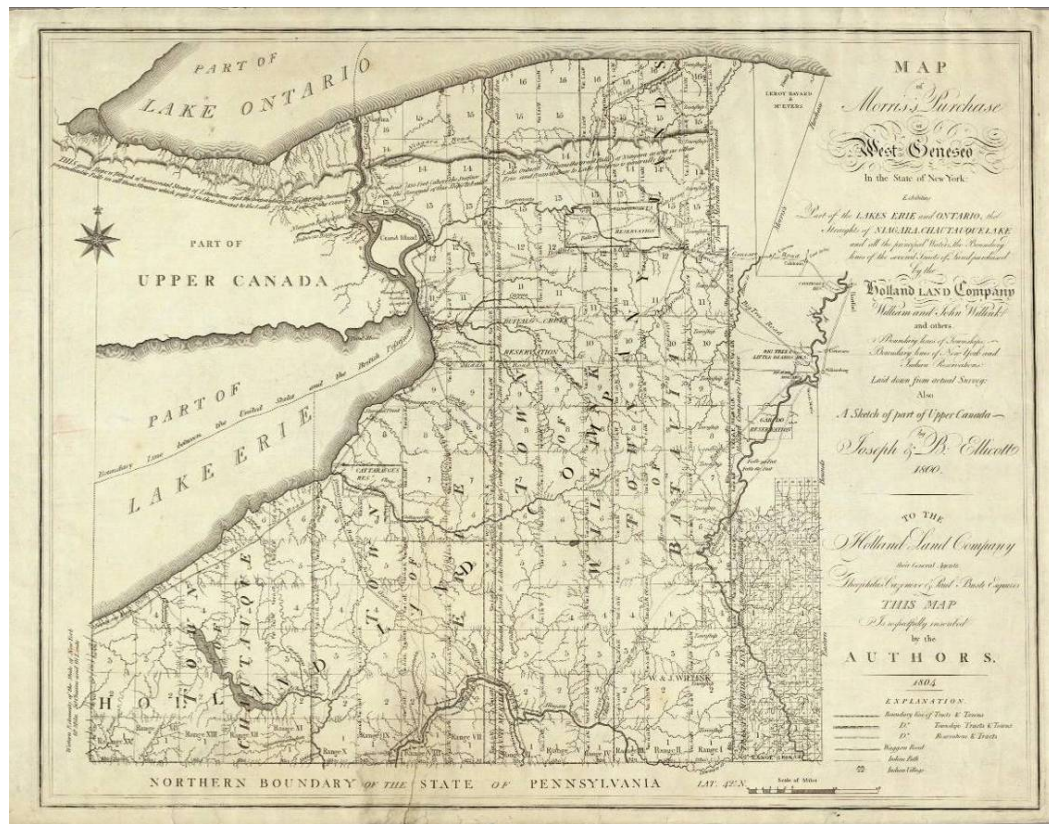


Figure 4.3

Map of Morris's Purchase or West Geneseo in the State of New York by Joseph & B. Ellicott to the Holland Land Company (1804)³

This map shows the division of Western New York into ranges and townships.

³ Joseph & B. Ellicott "Map of Morris's Purchase or West Geneseo in the State of New York by Joseph & B. Ellicott to the Holland Land Company." *Purchase or West Geneseo In the State of New York. Exhibiting Part of the Lakes Erie and Ontario, the Straights of Niagara, Chautauqua Lake and All the Principal Waters, the Boundary Lines of the Several Tracts of Land Purchase by the Holland Land Company, William and John Willink and Others ... by Joseph & B. Ellicott 1800. To The Holland Land Company Their General Agents Theophilus Cazenove & Paul Bush Esquires, This Map Is Respectfully Inscribed by the Authors. 1804. No. 1804. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. 1998. Web. <www.davidrumsey.com>.*

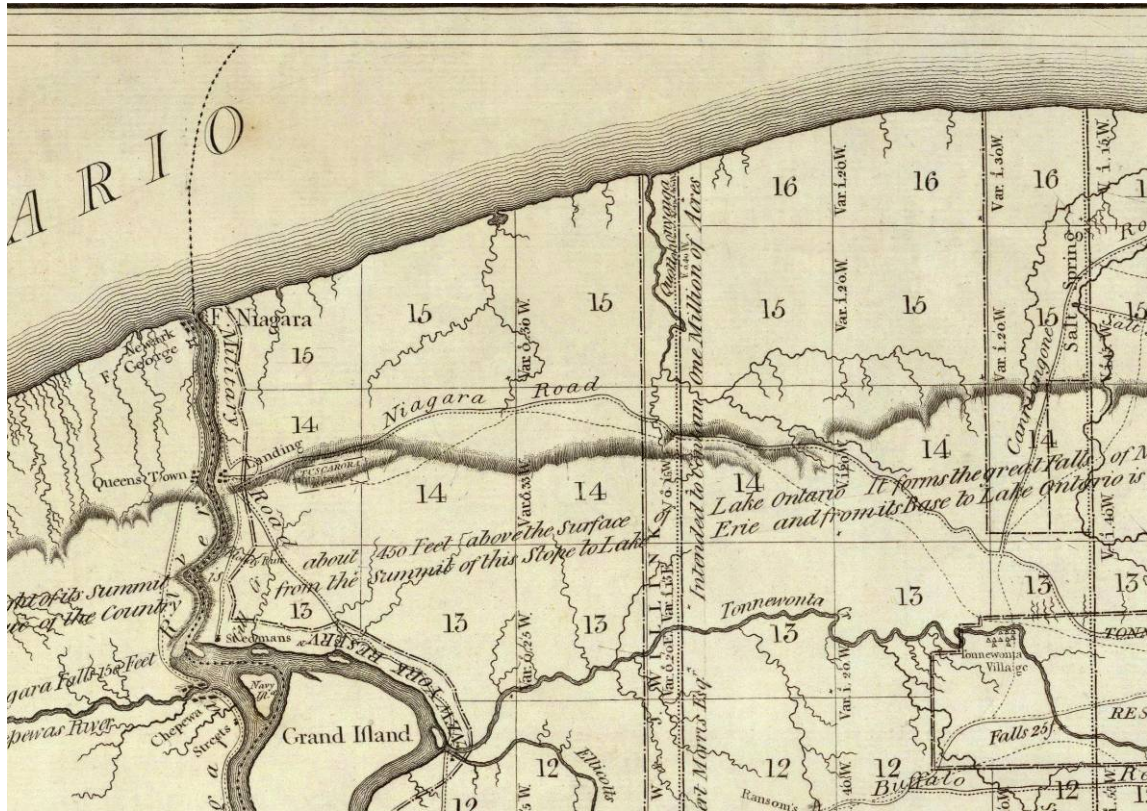


Figure 4.4

Detail - Map of Morris's Purchase or West Geneseo in the State of New York by Joseph & B. Ellicott to the Holland Land Company (1804)

Detail of the map in Fig 4.3 showing Niagara County region and the Niagara Escarpment

Prior to the widespread settlement of the area, in July 1797 Joseph Ellicott, contracted by Theophilus Cazenove, the Philadelphia-based agent of the Holland Land Company, and Augustus Porter, contracted by Robert Morris, along with numerous assistants began their survey of the Holland Purchase. The land was divided in the same manner as the Phelps and Gorham tract; strips six miles wide extending from Lake Ontario south to the Pennsylvania state line were created and called ranges. These ranges were numbered from east to west. These ranges were subsequently divided into townships by lines running east to west, numbered from south to north. These townships were likewise subdivided into sixteen mile-and-a-half squares called sections. Each section was then carved into twelve lots, each 120 acres in size. The Mile Strip, retained by New York State and located along the Niagara River from Lake Ontario into the village of New Amsterdam/Buffalo, was surveyed in 1798 at the expense of the Holland Land Company to a plan which did not follow the same scheme as the rest of the Holland purchase (fig 4.3, 4.4).⁴ Of note, two lines were created in the survey, the East Transit meridian line and the West Transit meridian line. The West Transit line runs through the present City of Lockport as the now-named Transit Street/Transit Road. The East Transit line formed the eastern boundary of the

⁴ William Pool, ed. *Landmarks of Niagara County, New York*, Syracuse: D. Mason &, 1897; 101-103.

Morris purchase.⁵ Once the territory was surveyed and platted, it was then offered for sale to the general public, opening the door for Euro-American settlement of Western New York.

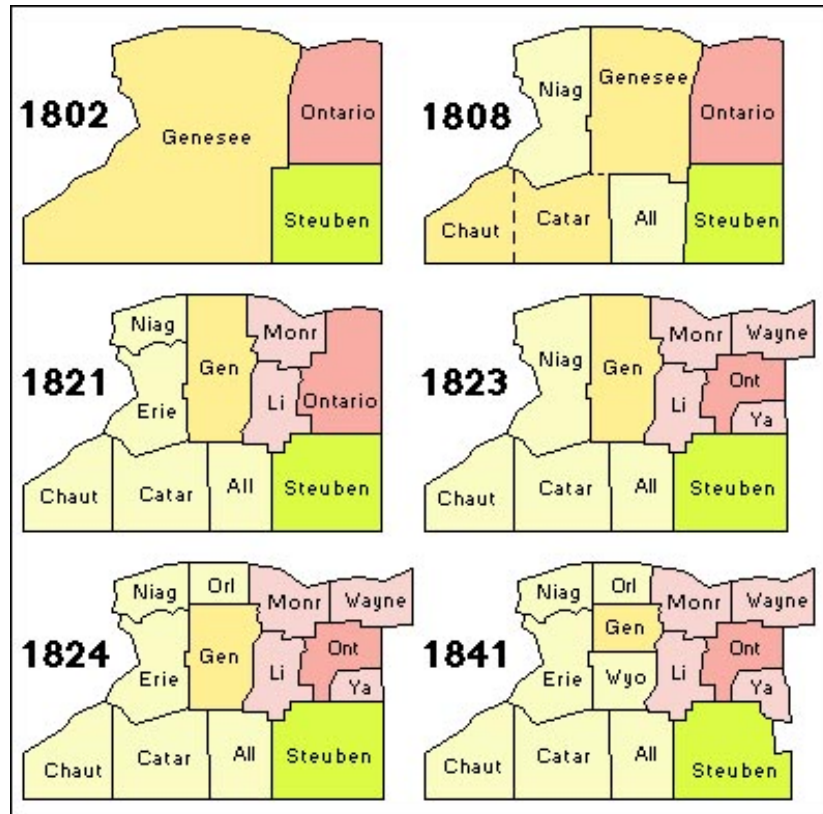


Figure 4.5
Development of Western NY Counties, 1802 – 1841⁶

On March 11, 1808, Niagara County was created from Genesee County. Initially Niagara County included the present Erie County area (see fig 4.5). During this period of the early 1800s, Niagara County was sparsely settled. In the 1820 census the population of the entire county (including the Erie County portion) was recorded at 23,313, with over 15,000 people residing in what would shortly become Erie County. Erie County was established as a separate county, divided from Niagara County along the Tonawanda Creek, on April 2, 1821. Initially,

⁵ "These lines were named because they were run with a transit instrument in connection with astronomical observations, the variation of the magnetic needle disqualifying the surveyor's compass for running the meridian line... The laying down of this [West Transit meridian line] was a slow and laborious operation. It involved nothing less than felling a strip of timber three or four rods wide most of the way across the State, to give unobstructed range to the miniature telescope of the transit. This required, beside three surveyors, a considerable force of axmen. On most of the line all hands camped where night overtook them in the unbroken wilderness. All of the summer and autumn of 1798 was consumed in running the first eighty miles of the transit meridian, there being about thirteen miles remaining undone on the 22nd of November." Quoted from *History of Wyoming County, N.Y.: with Illustrations, Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Some Pioneers and Prominent Residents*. F.W. Beers & Co., 1880; 55.

⁶ "Far Western New York Counties 1802-1841." Map. *The "Burned-over District": Evolution of County Boundaries*. The Oliver Cowdery Memorial Home Page, 2008. Web. <<http://olivercowdery.com/census/BurnEvlv.htm>>.

Niagara County consisted solely of the town of Cambria. On June 1, 1812, Cambria was divided into three new towns. Hartland included all the territory towards the east, Niagara included township 13, ranges 7, 8 and 9, township 14 in the same ranges retained the name of Cambria, and the remainder was created as Porter. On April 5, 1817, a portion of Hartland south of township 15 was established as the town of Royalton. Lewiston was established from the western portion of Cambria on February 27, 1818. On June 1, 1812, the town of Porter was erected from the western and north part of Cambria, and Wilson was carved from Porter on April 10, 1818. The town of Somerset was formed from Hartland on February 8, 1823, and on March 20, 1824 parts of Somerset and Hartland were created into Newfane. The town of Lockport was erected on February 2, 1824 from Cambria and Royalton with its current boundaries (fig 4.5). The town of Niagara originally included the present Pendleton and Wheatfield; Pendleton was created on April 16, 1827 while Wheatfield was established on May 12, 1836.

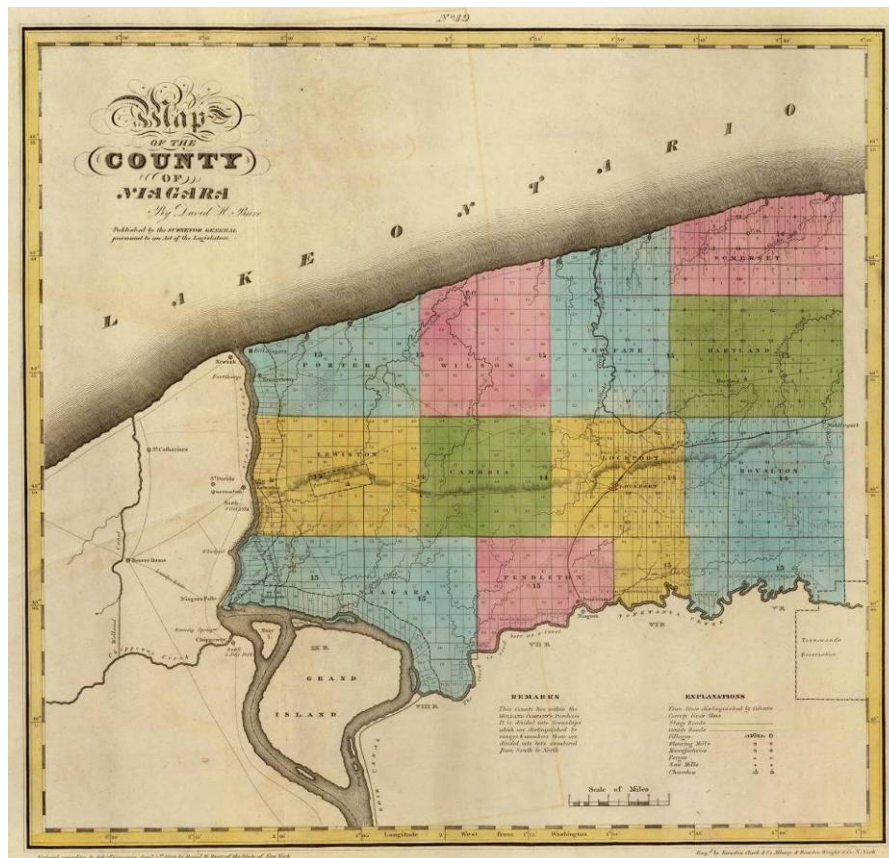


Figure 4.6
Map of the County of Niagara (1829)⁷
 The town of Lockport is shown in yellow.

⁷ David H. Burr, "Map of the County of Niagara," Map. *An Atlas of the State of New York, Containing a Map of the State and of the Several Counties ... under the Superintendance & Direction of Simeon DeWitt, Surveyor General, Pursuant to an Act of the Legislature, and Also the Physical Geography of the State & of the Several Counties & Statistical Tables of the Same*, by David H. Burr. New York: D.H. Burr, 1829. Ser. 52. *David Rumsey Historical Map Collection*. 2005. Web. <<http://www.davidrumsey.com>>.

4.2 Early History of Lockport: 1800 – 1829

Like many towns and cities across New York State, Lockport owes its existence to the creation and success of the Erie Canal. The construction of the canal and its famous “Flight of Five” locks provided new jobs and opportunities, encouraging the settlement and growth of the community. Lockport is perhaps the quintessential “canal town” in New York State; not only does the City owe its existence to the Erie Canal, and its unique location at a point of a massive engineering initiative, but the success and prosperity of the community and industry also were inextricably linked to the thriving canal era.

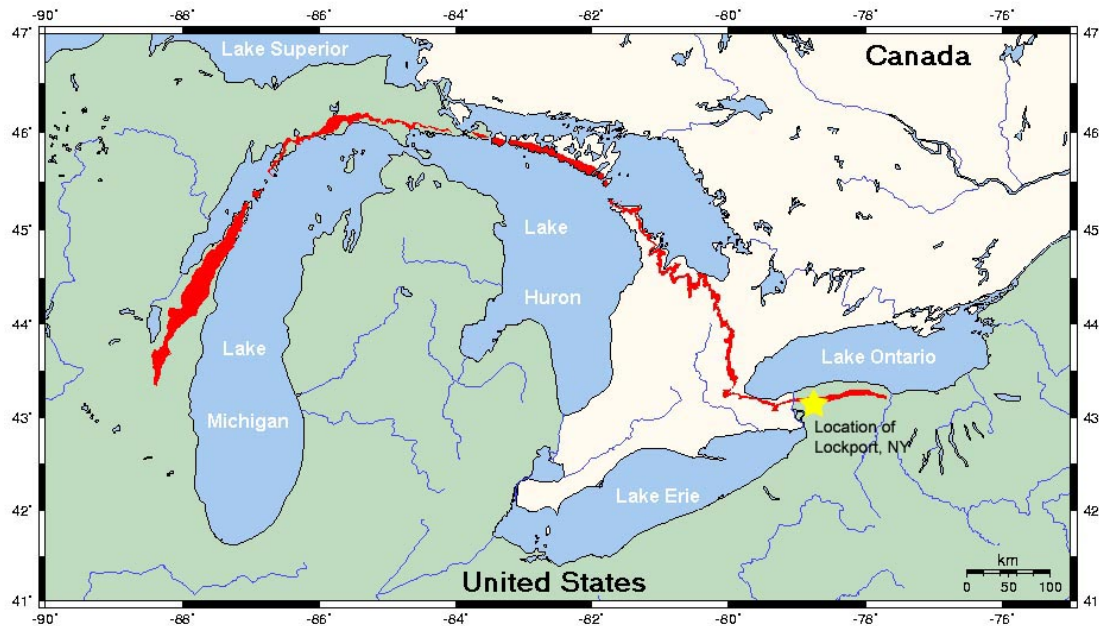


Figure 4.7
The Niagara Escarpment⁸

The approximate location of the City of Lockport is depicted.

Lockport developed in an area once known as the “Mountain Ridge” which we now call the Niagara Escarpment. An escarpment is a steep slope or long cliff which results from erosion or faulting and separates two otherwise relatively level areas of differing elevations. The Niagara Escarpment runs in an east-west direction through New York near Rochester, southern Ontario in Canada, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois in an almost semi-circular shape (fig 4.6). This escarpment divides two relatively level plains, and geological testing indicates it was formed from unequal glacial erosion rather than as a fault line. The escarpment is perhaps most famous as the cliff that the Niagara River tumbles over on its way to Lake Ontario, forming Niagara Falls. Because of this geological feature, this area contains good outcroppings of stone located close to the surface and easily accessible. Niagara limestone was quarried for use in

⁸ "Niagara Escarpment Map." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. 2006. Web. 02 Feb. 2011. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Niagara_Escarpment_map.png>.

building the locks of Lockport, while a layer of hydraulic limestone was turned into waterlime, a type of lime used to make mortar. Medina sandstone was also prevalent in the area, located just northwest of Lockport. These materials, along with the readily available supply of timber in the region, provided ample raw materials for the early pioneer settlers coming into the town of Lockport.

The earliest settlement in the town was made at Cold Spring, located about one mile east of the present City of Lockport. In 1805, settler Charles Wilbur arrived in this area, some nineteen years before the formal town was created, and three years before it was partitioned from the large Genesee County. One of the earliest routes through this area during the early years of the nineteenth century was an old Native American trail which went from Canandaigua (located east near the Finger Lakes Region) to Fort Niagara, passing nearby to Cold Spring. One of the most prominent pioneer settlers in the town was David Maxwell, who had lived at Johnson's Creek in Hartland since 1819 and purchased a farm in the Wright's Corners area in 1824. Maxwell helped to turn an old military road laid with logs which was used during the War of 1812 into a toll road from Wright's Corners to Warren's Corners. Throughout the early decades of the 1800s, settlers began to arrive in the town of Lockport, setting up their homesteads throughout the area.

During these years the area of the present City of Lockport was purchased from the Holland Land Company by Esek Brown, Zeno Comstock, Nathan Comstock, Webster Thorn, Daniel Smith, David Fink, Almon H. Millard, Reuben Haines, Joseph Otis, John Comstock, Ashael Smith, Nathan B. Rogers, Daniel Washburne and James Conkey. Many of these early settlers in the area were Quakers, most hailing from Farmington in Ontario County. In the Spring of 1816, a description of the growing community by new-comer Nathan B. Rogers described the following log houses:

*"Zeno Comstock had a house on Saxton Street; Reuben Haines a house on the 'old John Pound place.' Daniel Smith was putting up a house opposite to Thorn's. Esek Brown built a house, which afterwards became a tavern. Ashael Smith erected a house on 'the Transit,' near the present residence of W.H. Ransom. John Comstock put up a house that same year, on the spot where Archy's stone house stood near 'the cave.' Nathan Comstock lived in a log house on the O.P. Hoag farm, and in the Fall of 1816 put in ten acres of wheat. This was the largest clearing in the neighborhood, the balance of the settlers having barely made a beginning. Thus a few scanty openings in the forest bristling with charred stumps and dotted with the primitive log shanty, roofed with long oak shingles and elm bark were the only evidence of the 'advent of civilization and sunshine' which chequered the scene."*⁹

⁹ Quoted from *The Lockport City Directory, for the Year Ending September 1st, 1868 Containing a General Directory, a Business Directory, City Government, Its Institutions, Societies, &c. : to Which Is Prefixed a Historical Sketch, Post Offices in Niagara County, &c, &c.* [Lockport, N.Y.]: Webb & Fitzgerald, 1867; 23.

Like many settlers who arrived in Western NY in the early nineteenth century, many reports of Native American settlements and artifacts were made by those arriving in the Lockport area. Near the residence of Jesse P. Haines was noted over 100 circular pits approximately 12 to 15 feet in diameter, four feet deep into the ground, located on a roughly ten acre area. These pits appear to be the source of great speculation amongst the early settlers, and briefly lent the area the nickname of "Pittsfield." A stone ax was recovered from nearby these pits, and was later presented to DeWitt Clinton. Interestingly, it was also reported that Mrs. Haines found an English silver penny on the property, coined at the time of Edward II who had reigned from 1307 to 1327.¹⁰

Early life in this still-unnamed community was difficult, and typical of early settlement era life in Western NY. The land at the time was still densely forested, requiring substantial clearing in order for settlement and farming. Rattlesnakes also posed a significant challenge for local citizens in the area. In the 1810s, the area was heavily reliant on services in neighboring communities, with few amenities available locally. During this time, the closest post office was located in Hartland Corners, located to the east in the town of Hartland. Town meetings were often held in "Millard's barn" which was located near Gasport. Grain milling was a difficult and unpredictable process for these early pioneers, as the nearest grist mill was "Maybee's" located seven miles east. Unfortunately this mill ran dry for a part of the year, rendering it frequently unpredictable for grain milling. Other mills in the region were similarly unpredictable. Many people traveled west to Niagara Falls to mill their grain, as the mill there was more reliable, despite being located further away. Zeno Comstock created a rudimentary mill at his property on Saxton Street. His primitive mill - useful in an emergency - was a large oak stump, hollowed out on top, with a wooden pestle used to crush the grain into meal.¹¹

As settlement grew in the area, amenities and industries began to develop in closer proximity. The first mill in the community was established a few years later, about 1824. Otis Hathaway erected this mill near the location of the Niagara Mills on the branch of Eighteen Mile Creek near the canal overflow dam. The opening of this mill, which allowed area residents to mill their grain in a location much more conveniently located, was reportedly celebrated with great festivity, including hauling through the town a large cauldron of the cooked mush made from meal from the first grinding, pulled on an ox sled through the village while revelers ate heartily of mush and molasses.¹² Other advancements in this period included the surveying of the old Mountain Road, which forms part of the present Main Street in the City of Lockport, connecting Lewiston Road at Cold Springs with the Upper Mountain Road in Cambria completely some time prior to 1817. Also during this period the first inn and tavern was established, being of log construction, which was located on the site of the present Farmers & Mechanic

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 24.

¹² *Ibid.* 24-25.

Bank Building.¹³ The first church was also established in this era, erected by the Quakers in 1819 in the middle of the woods on the block bounded by Main, Market and Elm Streets on a parcel which also included a cemetery.¹⁴

Perhaps the single most important event for the history of Lockport was the decision to construct the Erie Canal. Equated to the nineteenth century equivalent of the moon landing by author Paulette Peca, the construction and opening of the Erie Canal would not only influence the growth and prosperity of Lockport, but would create a transportation and trade network linking the East Coast and the growing western frontier.¹⁵ After much debate and effort, the New York State Legislature passed a bill which authorized construction of the cross-state canal in 1817.¹⁶ Designed to run between Albany at the east and Buffalo at the western terminus, the Erie Canal would provide one of the only routes through the Allegheny Mountains. In an era where the few good roads were often clogged with mud or frozen over and treacherous in the winter months, the canal was envisioned to create a more accessible, faster trade route via water from the bustling marketplaces of New York City and the East Coast to the new American western frontiers.¹⁷

The tremendous growth of the community began with the decision to cut through the limestone escarpment in the area of Lockport. In 1815 James Geddes completed the survey of the western section of the Erie Canal, and proposed that the waterway cut through the escarpment at a gorge located about a mile west of the present crossing point. David Thomas was appointed as principal engineer of canal construction west of the Genesee River in 1820, and he later made some alterations to Geddes' route for the canal. A Quaker like many of the residents of the community, Thomas selected the area of what would become Lockport as the site of this large and unprecedented engineering project. Due to the steep grade between the land above and below the escarpment, a series of locks were needed to carry barges and boats up and down the escarpment. Thomas' route was ultimately selected by canal commissioners because it kept the entire distance of the canal below the level of Lake Erie from Black Rock to the escarpment, which allowed the lake to furnish the water as far west as the

¹³ "History: 1816 - 1840." *Official Lockport, NY Government & Tourism Information ~ Erie Canal Locks & Flight of Five*. Web. 21 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.elockport.com/history-lockport-ny.php>>.

¹⁴ *The Lockport City Directory...*; 26.

¹⁵ Refer to Paulette Peca, *Lockport*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003; 7-8.

¹⁶ Peca, 8.

¹⁷ The history of the Erie Canal is lengthy and has been the subject of numerous texts, both historical and contemporary. Since the Canal itself has been excluded from the survey area, a brief overview of some of the key moments in the Canal's history has been inserted, especially where they coincide with the history of Lockport. For additional information on the history of the Erie Canal, refer to sources such as: Noble E. Whitford, *History of the Canal System of the State of New York, Together with Brief Histories of the Canals of the United States and Canada ...* Vol. I. Albany: Brandow Printing, 1906. *Whitford's History of the Erie Canal*. Bill Carr, 11 Dec. 2006. Web. <<http://www.history.rochester.edu/canal/bib/whitford/1906/Front.html>>.

For a more modern interpretation, see: Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. *Preservation and Management Plan*. Publication. Waterford, NY: National Park Service, Oct 2006. Also Bernstein, Peter L. *Wedding of the Waters: the Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2005.

Genesee River. Thomas' selection of what would become Lockport as the site for these locks spurred a period of tremendous growth and development for the burgeoning community.¹⁸

As soon as it was decided that the path of the Erie Canal would run through what would become Lockport, the fledgling community witnessed a boost in its growth and prosperity. 1821 proved to be an incredibly busy time for the developing and still unnamed village, as news of the construction of the locks spread. In January, advertisements seeking men to work on the canal construction in Niagara County began appearing as far away as New York City. These workers were lured with payment of wages and "keep," which meant food and whiskey. In the Fall of 1821 and into the winter, the settlement added many new canal laborers to its population. Many of these new workers were Irish and Scottish immigrants, arriving to work on the construction of the canal. During this year the population of the settlement swelled from its initial settlement of a handful of pioneer settlers to approximately 2,000 people.¹⁹ It is impressive to think how rapidly the community was established, in only a few short years, emerging from its earliest frontier wilderness settlements of a few log cabins to a bustling community of two-thousand residents in only the span of a few years.

With increasing growth and a rapidly developing market for goods and services, the community of Lockport soon became an attractive location for investment and development. Prior to 1821, it was remarked that only a few scattered cabins in the woods were the only signs of habitation in the region; this was quickly to change.²⁰ Deacon Luther Crocker arrived in the community in 1821; a skilled blacksmith, he would later do much of the ironwork on the lock gates and other components of the canal. Another notable arrival in April of 1821 was Dr. Isaac Smith and his wife Ednah (sometimes spelled Edna), who were also Quakers. Dr. Smith was the first doctor to settle in the village, and he constructed a log cabin of peeled logs which were then white washed, located at 69 Main Street at the site of the present Bewley Building.²¹ Other signs of the growing urbanization of the village were noted such as the diminished presence of deer and wildlife in the immediate area, and also the disappearance of stumps and logs along Main Street. It was reported in June of that year that forty or fifty new buildings had been constructed, including three stores.²² Arriving from Batavia, Morris H. Tucker established a store in the growing village; prior to this, the nearest general goods store was several miles away in Hartland Corners. Shortly after, House & Boughton built an additional store in the area, and a third store was opened by Lebbeus Fish. John Johnson, the first baker, also set up shop in the village at this time. Colonel William Bond, a land speculator, also appeared in Lockport, looking to profit from the booming sale of land to the growing

¹⁸ "History: 1816 - 1840." Also, Merton M. Wilner, *Niagara Frontier: A Narrative and Documentary History*. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Pub., 1931; 727

¹⁹ "History: 1816 - 1840."

²⁰ Wilner; 727.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *The Lockport City Directory...*, 26.

population. George W. Rogers, a blacksmith, and Elliott Lewis, a harness maker, also arrived in the village at this time. The first shoemakers, Shepard & Towner, also established their business.²³

Land speculation and sales also were a profitable enterprise in the early 1820s. In the Spring of 1821, Esek Brown, owner of property on the west of the Transit line (presently Transit Street, the western boundary of the survey), and Jared Comstock, owner of the territory on the east side of the Transit line (approximately in the present survey area) began laying out lots. Brown's farm rapidly diminished in size by the sale of several village lots, primarily purchased by Jesse Hawley and John G. Bond.²⁴ Meanwhile, development of the east side of the Transit line also was occurring. Originally purchased by Zeno Comstock from the Holland Land Company, the approximately 200 acres of prime land east of the Transit line was sold to Jared, Darius and Joseph Comstock by Zeno Comstock, who purchased land several miles west.²⁵ This land was also sold off.

Public services also began to become more organized during this period as well. In 1821 Almon H. Millard became the first sheriff of Niagara County. The area also saw the establishment of its first newspaper, the Lockport Observer, in 1821 by Bartemus Ferguson, another indication that the population was growing and the village was maturing.²⁶ The first local post office was established on Canal Street in 1822, and after a road was constructed through the wilderness from the growing community which would become Lockport to Wright's Corners to the

²³ William Pool, ed. *Landmarks of Niagara County, New York*. Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1897; 106-107.

²⁴ Jesse Hawley is perhaps best known as the driving force behind the Erie Canal project. Initially a flour merchant from Geneva, NY, Hawley envisioned the Erie Canal in 1805 as a solution to the poor roads of the era which made transporting goods across the state both time consuming and expensive. In 1807, Hawley ended up in debtor's prison, due in no small part to his difficulties in securing such an affordable transportation route. While in prison serving a 20 month sentence, Hawley wrote a series of fourteen essays under the nom de plume of Hercules which were published in the *Genesee Messenger*, where he pushed for the creation of a canal from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. While previous canals had been proposed, this was the first tangible and realistic plan. Hawley had no formal education or training in engineering or surveying, yet he charted a route for the canal which was nearly identical to the route eventually selected by the Erie Canal Commission and legislature following three field surveys and much debate. Hawley's report was instrumental in compiling much of the information needed for the project, and for attracting several notable State figures with political clout and financial connections to the project, including DeWitt Clinton. He would also serve as Lockport's treasurer from 1836 until his death in 1842. "History: Canal Politics." *American Studies @ The University of Virginia*. The University of Virginia. Web. 02 Feb. 2011. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma02/volpe/canal/history_body.html>. Also, Orsamus Turner, *Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York: Embracing Some Account of the Ancient Remains ... and a History of Pioneer Settlement under the Auspices of the Holland Company; including Reminiscences of the War of 1812; the Origin, Progress and Completion of the Erie Canal, Etc., Etc., Etc.* Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas &, 1849; 621-622.

²⁵ In 1819-1820, the site where the canal would pass through the escarpment was debated between the site of the City of Lockport or a gorge one mile to the west. While the question of the exact route that the canal would traverse was still under debate, Zeno Comstock, owner of 200 acres of the most valuable property in Lockport, feared that the canal would not go through his land, and subsequently sold his property to Jared Comstock for \$8 per acre, purchasing instead 200 acres near the western gorge location. Mortified to learn that the Erie Canal indeed was going to pass through his former property, he sold his land and moved West. See *The Lockport City Directory...*; 21-22. Also Pool, 106.

²⁶ *The Lockport City Directory...* 26.

north, the mail service connected to the stagecoach line which traversed through this area.²⁷

At the time David Thomas selected Lockport as the site for the canal locks in 1820, there were reportedly no frame houses or barns of substantial merit, the settlement being solely comprised of the log houses of the early pioneer settlers as previously described. However, by the Spring of 1821, the settlement had grown to a substantial enough size that it became necessary to begin organizing and defining the community. A meeting was held in April at Esek Brown's hotel, a log cabin which was located near the junction of the present West and Park Avenues, called together by Jesse P. Haines, who at the time was working as a surveyor, laying out lots in the area. All the property owners were called together in order to select a name for the community, which could then be added to Haines' map. Present at this meeting was Esek Brown, Zeno Comstock (a miller), Reuben Haines, and Dr. Isaac W. Smith. Dr. Smith suggested the name of Lockport for the community, while others suggested Locksborough. The majority voted in favor of Dr. Smith's suggestion for the future village, and Lockport was born.²⁹

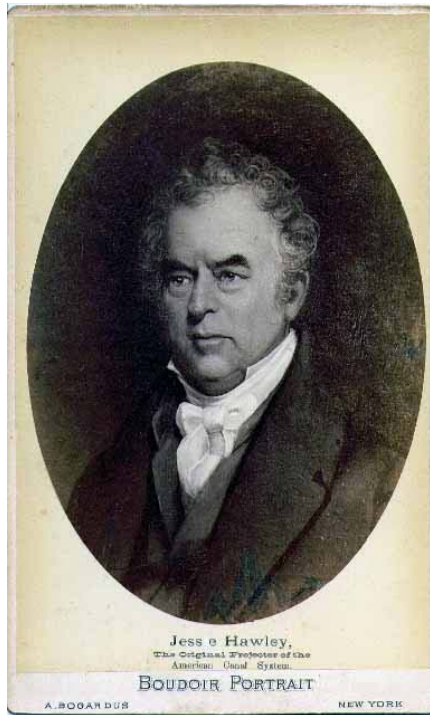


Figure 4.8
Jesse Hawley (1782 – 1842)²⁸
 An undated portrait of one of the visionaries behind the Erie Canal. Caption reads: "The Original Projector of the American Canal System."

1822 also proved to be a similarly active year for the newly-named and rapidly growing village of Lockport. In July, 1822, the village of Lockport was selected as the county seat for Niagara County, giving the community an additional boost.

²⁷ Wilner; 728.

²⁸ "Jesse Hawley (1782 - 1842)." Find A Grave - Millions of Cemetery Records. 2009. Web. 02 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=33904588&Pipi=15557155>>.

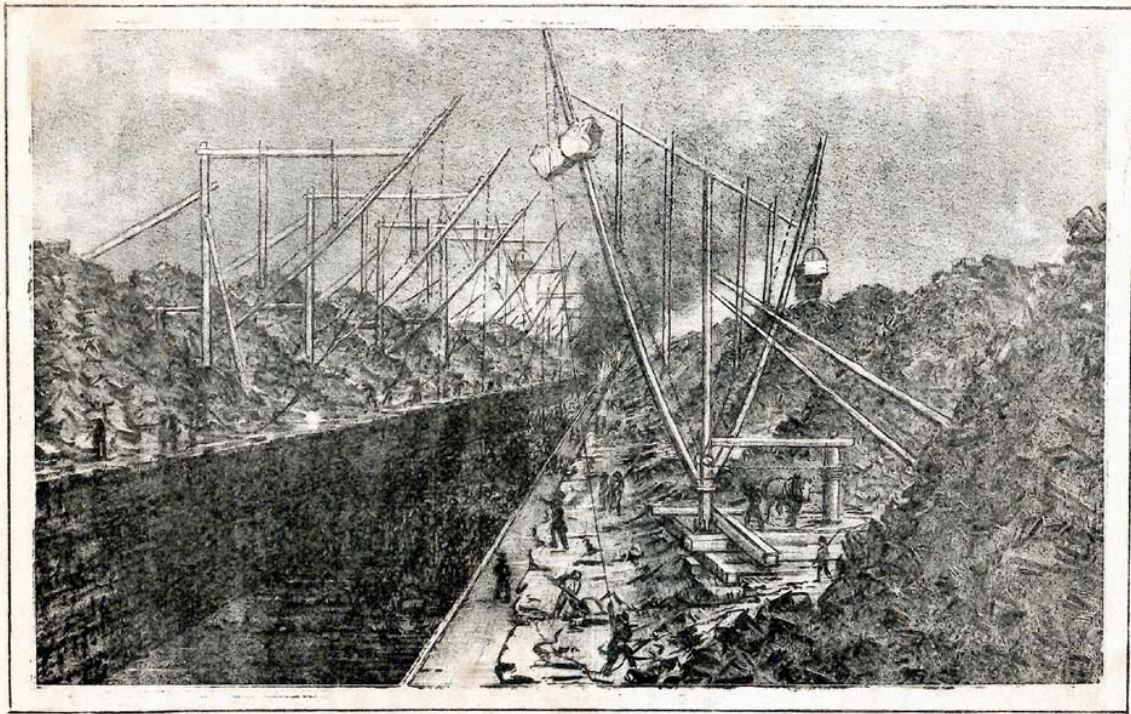
²⁹ *The Lockport City Directory*...., 22. Also Wilner; 728.

This same month Col. William M. Bond deeded two acres of land for the construction of new county buildings.³⁰ It is around these county buildings, on the north side of the canal, that much of the earliest development in Lockport occurred. In the span of less than a decade with the dramatic growth and economic prosperity brought to the village by the construction work on the canal, the young community of Lockport had quickly risen from hard-scrabble pioneer community to become the county capital of Niagara County.

Construction on the Erie Canal and its locks proceeded rather quickly, and became a source of great innovation and experimentation in technology and engineering. These scientific and technical advancements would lay the foundation of innovation which would permeate the Lockport industrial and manufacturing industries throughout the nineteenth century. Construction of the locks and the canal was especially challenging in this portion of the canal, as the project in general was noted to be lacking in skilled and experienced engineers. Costs ran high as excavation of the rock of the escarpment was tackled with great ingenuity and adaptability to the challenging conditions. At the time, technology in this frontier region was limited to hand tools and wheelbarrows; a time consuming and labor intensive method. Canal contractor Orange Dibble revolutionized canal construction techniques with his invention of a simple crane. This modest invention dramatically impacted the construction of the Erie Canal, making it much cheaper to construct and also streamlining and expediting the process. Nathan S. Roberts, resident engineer for the locks, was another self-educated man who would make great contributions to the construction and design of the canal. Tasked with the challenge of overcoming the 60 foot height between the base and the top of the escarpment, Roberts designed a series of five “double-combined locks of twelve feet lift each, working side by side.” Roberts’ design for this chain of locks would thus become known as the “Flight of Five” and was one of the most incredible engineering feats of the entire Erie Canal project. At the same time, it was discovered that the stone excavated from the lockpits could be used to make an excellent quality hydraulic cement. Good hydraulic cement, a waterproof adhesive, was common in Europe but very expensive in the US. This Lockport-made hydraulic cement was used in the canal and locks’ construction, and later became a valuable commodity shipped across the region. Other innovations developed in Lockport included a hardened drill, able to penetrate the hard limestone, and also a new type of blasting powder. The first stone for the locks was laid on July 9, 1823.³¹

³⁰ Pool, 107.

³¹ Wilner; 728, 733-734.



PROCESS OF EXCAVATION, LOCKPORT.

Figure 4.9

“Process of Excavation, Lockport” (ca 1825)³²

Originally produced for Cadwallader D. Colden’s 1825 *Memoir* about the Erie Canal, this image showcases the unique technological developments pioneered during canal construction, here the horse-drawn crane system developed by Orange Dibble.

In existence for fewer than three years, Main Street in what became Lockport was described in 1823 by Marcus Moses, Esq. who was an early settler in the area. Moses provided the following sketch of his recollection of the early era of Lockport some fifty years later in 1878:

“When I came to Lockport in the fall of 1823, the greater part of the business doing in the village was on the west side of the canal. On the northeast corner of Main and Transit Streets was a small building occupied as a store, and there also William Fox kept a barber shop. Going east from this point, along the north side of Main Street, there was one and perhaps two buildings, occupied as stores, before reaching the Lockport Hotel, kept by Samuel Jennings. This hotel was somewhat celebrated and quite spacious for those days, though but a one-story building. Adjoining this, on the east, was the blacksmith shop of Allen Skinner. These two buildings were about where the Judson House now stands [Main Street at the corner of Canal Street]. The next building east was the store of House & Boughton, in which the post-office was kept by George H. Boughton, who was the first postmaster. A little further along A.T. Prentice had a small building in which he repaired watches and kept a small stock of jewelry. From

³² Frank E. Sadowski Jr., "Erie Canal Images - Lockport." *The Erie Canal*. 2005. Web. 07 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.eriecanal.org/>>.

there down what is now Canal Street huge piles of stone lay all along the way. Where the Congregational church now stands was a small building used for a tavern.

About opposite Prentice's jewelry store the canal was crossed by a bridge. This primitive structure consisted of two log stringers reaching from shore to shore, across which were thrown split logs for with the bark side up, and was only wide enough for one team. East from this bridge and on the ground here the Bristol fountain now stands, Alexander Pound kept a meat market. Near this market was a small building in which Judge Birdsell had an office. There was no other building between this and a yellow store kept by William Parsons & Co. which stood upon or near the ground now occupied by the Moyer block. The next was a stone building, a part of which was used for a store and was occupied by Sidney and Thomas Smith. This building is still standing and but little changed. The ground between this and the shore of Lyman A. Spalding, which stood where the Farmers' and Mechanics' Savings Bank does now, was vacant and used as a passage way to the locks and to the front of a building which stood on the bank at the head of the locks. In this a grocery was kept, and it was afterward used as an office by Asa W. Douglas, the first toll collector.

The next building east of Spalding's store was a small law office occupied by James F. Mason, who was county clerk and kept the records of the county in his office; and adjoining that was a store kept by H. Kimberly & Co. On the corner of Main and Pine Streets where the Exchange Bank stands was a two-story frame building, a part of which was occupied by the canal commissioners and engineers and the residue by Orsamus Turner as a printing office. Up 'the hill' from here, as it was then called and on the bank of what is now the mill race, near where the Murray block is, stood a log cabin owned and occupied by Dr. Isaac W. Smith. This dwelling was neat in every respect, and in perfect keeping with Dr. Isaac and Aunt Edna. It was built of small logs, nearly equal in size, with the bark peeled off, and whitewashed both inside and out. Who of our old citizens do not remember Aunt Edna (sic), with her checked apron, always sociable and cheerfully smiling as she said, 'How does thee do?' At the top of the hill where the Hodge Opera House stands, was the residence of M.H. Tucker. The triangular block now encompassed by Main, Market and Elm Streets was occupied by the Quakers as a burying ground. Their meeting-house was built of logs and stood in the rear of the brick block facing Main Street. I recollect attending a wedding there. Two couples were united on that occasion, the parties performing the marriage ceremony themselves.

"Where the American House is [corner of Main and Locust Streets] was a log cabin used as a tavern. Timber was standing close about this building, and great stumps were yet in the street. Lyman A. Spalding lived on the corner where the Hosmer block stands. From there down to Pine Street, on the south side of Main, not much improvement was made, as it was quite away from the business portion of the village. I remember Isaac Price having urged me to buy a lot of him about where the Breyfogle building stands [58, 68-70 Main Street, reportedly one of the largest dry goods dealers in Western NY]; but the location was too far out of town. It was then thought that the business would be done west of the canal. It was about in front of Breyfogle's that I paid my first highway tax. There was a gigantic stump standing in the street at this place, and myself and several others

were two days busily employed in removing it. Before the street was graded, the surface where the American House stands was about up to the floor of the stoop on that building, as it is now, and continued nearly level westward to where Breyfogle's store stands, where it was higher than the second floor of that building; from that westward it fell away quite abruptly. Morris H. Tucker had a store about where Simmons & Walter's jewelry store is now. Next east was the "Green store" occupied by Nathan B. and George W. Rogers as a grocery. Adjoining this, Elias Ransom had his law office; and there was Dr. Isaac Smith's office. From there west was a vacant lot enclosed by a stone wall. Then came the "Red store," kept by William Kennedy, who died soon after on a canal boat near Rome, while on his way home from New York. West from the "Red store" was a passage way for teams to the yard of the Cottage Hotel. The Cottage was a log house of much renown in those days, kept by Joseph Langdon. He always kept a good fire when needed. In cold weather, in the old-fashioned Dutch fireplace would be seen a large back log, and on the andirons a large fore stick, and heaped upon thee about a quarter of a cord of wood. The cottage stood upon the ground where the spacious Ringueberg block now stands. On the corner of Main and Cottage streets Harvey W. Campbell kept a store in a small building, and adjoining that Price & Rounds kept a grocery. The next building was John Jackson's bakery, which did a pretty large business. West of this was Gillett Bacon's grocery' and there were some other small buildings and a blacksmith shop along what is now Buffalo Street, but in front were piles of stone so high that the buildings on the opposite side of Main Street were hidden from sight.

"On the point of ground between the canal and Main streets, about opposite where the Judson House stands, was a stone building. In one part Hiram Gardner had a law office, and in another part a shoe store was kept. In the upper story the masonic hall was first established. The next west was the tin shop of Pardon D. Richardson. A little further along was the Mansion House, kept by Captain McKain. It is now the Exchange, and has been made one story higher, with some other slight alterations. The first court held in Lockport was in the second story of this building. The members of the bar residing in Lockport at that time were John Birdsell, Hiram Gardner, J.F. Mason, Elias Ransom, Harvey Leonard, and Theodore Chapin. On the corner of Main and Transit streets, where the Mansion House now stands, was a small bakery, kept by a man named Woodard, and Moses Goble kept a meat market west of Transit street.

"Of those who were residing in Lockport when I came there are yet living here only Lyman A. Spalding, Alexander Pound, Daniel Price, Moses Goble, N. B. Rogers, J.G. Gustin and P.G. Richardson."³³

In a frontier-town such as Lockport, it is perhaps not surprising that taverns and inns played a large role in the early life and culture of the community. These buildings provided lodgings to new arrivals to the booming settlement and also acted as centers for entertainment and socializing. Locals and new arrivals could

³³ As no printed map of Lockport existed until 1830, this excerpt provides a written narrative "picture" describing the earliest appearance and character of the village in 1823. As quoted in *History of Niagara County, NY, with Illustrations Descriptive of Its Scenery, Private Residences, Public Buildings, Fine Blocks, and Important Manufactories, and Portraits of Old Pioneers and Prominent Residents*. New York: Sanford &, 1878; 167-168.

learn the news of the day, sharing stories and information, creating an early social network. The area around the new county buildings had become the business and commercial center of the community, in the vicinity of Hawley Street (formerly Bond Street) and Niagara Street around the Public Square. On the northwest corner of Main and Transit Streets was the Washington House, built in 1823, which was perhaps the most popular of Lockport's early taverns.³⁴ The Exchange Coffee House was located at the northwest corner of New Main and Hawley Streets. The original Niagara House was built by John Gooding, who arrived in Lockport in 1823, and was located on the north side of Niagara Street, between Transit and Hawley Streets. On Niagara Street at the corner of Prospect Street was sited the Eagle Hotel. Another popular establishment was the Cottage, at the corner of Main and Cottage Streets, which was mentioned by Marcus Moses in his description of the community in 1823. The Cottage was a unique building, which was created partially of an existing log house with several log room additions, covering significant ground in its plan.³⁵

During the 1820s, the only church in the community was the First Presbyterian Church, located opposite the Court House, which was founded in 1823. A few scattered buildings were located along Main Street, and many lots were still heavily wooded and undeveloped. A long narrow bridge was constructed, spanning the Canal below, aligned obliquely on the present site of the Big Bridge at Saxton and West Main Street. Catering to the influx of canal traffic, along the tow path a series of shanties were constructed by grocers, "huckster shops" and apple stands, selling their wares to traveling customers.³⁶

Despite the growing population, life in Lockport in the 1820s still bore traces of its wild, raucous frontier character. Strikes and riots were not uncommon in the community at this time, often erupting into violence. The fire was often fueled by a plentiful supply of alcohol provided liberally to the workers as a means of payment and entertainment, and many of these canalworkers brought an unrest and uncivilized feel to the developing community. The surge of Irish immigrants to Lockport in the 1820s brought with them the simmering tensions of their homeland, often leading to clashes between Catholic and Protestant groups. A riot erupted in 1822, known as the Christmas Day Riot, which was painted by stereotypical portrayals of the Irish in the local newspapers. Contemporary accounts blamed the violence on an abundance of alcohol, with unruly laborers "getting fairly in their cups." A group of roughly forty or fifty men gathered at J.P. Lawes Tavern on Canal Street, quickly dissolving into a mob by an unknown trigger. As a result of the violence, two men were mortally wounded and a group of twelve Irish immigrants were arrested and held in neighboring prisons as the local Lockport municipal buildings were still under construction. The murder of John Jennings in the event led to Lockport's first trial, being held at the Mansion

³⁴ The Washington House was demolished in 1865 following a fire. *History of Niagara County*, 168.

³⁵ *History of Niagara County*, 168-169. Also, *The Lockport City Directory...*, 26.

³⁶ *The Lockport City Directory...*, 27.

House, and resulting in the manslaughter conviction of James Kelley and several others.³⁷

A second riot erupted in 1824, once again shattering the tranquility of the young community. This second major riot occurred in July of 1824, and is noteworthy as being the first time in US history that the State militia was called out to subdue a labor disturbance. This violence was spurred by religious pressures between Catholics and Protestants within the Irish community. Fortunately, this conflict was quelled with no loss of life, as rioters were awed by the presence of the militia. Other minor disturbances also occurred in Lockport, and it was not uncommon for women of the era to fear being alone without their husbands or fathers, and often they stayed with friends and family for protection.³⁸ The internal and external unrest brought to the community, many thought, by the Irish immigrants led to a general sense of unrest, threat and raucousness which would permeate society for several decades.

In fewer than five short years, the village of Lockport had become a busy, thriving community of several thousand residents and a destination in Niagara County. On June 1st of 1825, General Lafayette arrived in Lockport during his nationwide tour of all twenty-four existing states as the “nation’s guest.” Invited by the Lockport Committee, the renowned hero of the American Revolutionary War was introduced to the enthusiastic residents of Lockport in a reception held at the Washington House. Every effort was made to impress the General, despite the somewhat primitive conditions which still prevailed in the growing community³⁹. While General Lafayette only stayed in Lockport for about four hours, the visit surely made an impression on him. Eventually the party boarded a boat on the canal and headed further east to Rochester. The event is described by Auguste Levasseur, Lafayette’s private secretary during his trip in 1829, who also described the appearance of the community as it appeared at the dawn of the Erie Canal era:

“On a height near Lockport we met a troop of from seventy to eighty citizens on horseback, and under this escort entered the village, where the general was saluted by an extraordinary kind of artillery. Hundreds of small blasts, charged with powder by the workmen engaged in quarrying the bed of the rock to form the canal, exploded almost at the same moment, and hurled fragments of rock into the air, which fell amidst the acclamations of the crowd. The appearance of Lockport filled us with astonishment and admiration. No where have I ever seen the activity and industry of man conquering nature so completely as in this growing village. In every part may be heard the sound of the hatchet and

³⁷ Kathleen L. Riley, *Lockport: Historic Jewel of the Erie Canal*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2005. Google Books. Google. Web. 8 Feb. 2011; 38-39.
<<http://books.google.com/books?id=t7ePWzumsawC&lpg=PA141&dq=Lowertown%20Lockport&pg=PA36#v=onepage&q=Lowertown%20&f=false>>.

³⁸ These violent episodes which so rattled women in the community were often blamed, whether correctly or not, on alcohol consumption. As a result, the women in Lockport would become a very active and vocal group during the temperance reform movements in the later nineteenth century. Riley, 39-40.

³⁹ *History of Niagara County*, 169. Also, *The Lockport City Directory*..., 26.

*hammer. Here trees are felled, fashioned under the hands of the carpenter, and raised on the same spot in the form of a house; there, on a large public square, which exists as yet only in project, an immense hotel already opens its doors to new settlers, who have not any other habitation. Scarcely is there to be found in the whole town a sufficiency of the necessaries of life, and yet, by the side of a school, in which the children are instructed whilst their fathers are building the houses that are to shelter them, is to be seen a printing press, which every morning issues a journal, teaching the labourers, in their hours of repose, how the magistrates of the people fulfill the confidence reposed in them. In streets traced through the forest, and yet encumbered with trucks of trees and scattered braches, luxury already appears in the light wagons drawn by splendid horses; finally, in the midst of these encroachments of civilization on savage nature, there is going on, with a rapidity that appears miraculous, that gigantic work, that grand canal, which in tightening the bonds of the American Union, spreads comfort and abundance in the wilds through which it passes.*⁴⁰

It was shortly after General Lafayette's landmark visit to Lockport that the community had another reason to celebrate. On September 29th, 1825 William C. Bouck, president of the board of Canal Commissioners, announced that the canal would be in fit condition to allow the passage of ships by the end of October. All construction efforts intensified to ensure that the canal would be completed. On the evening of October 24, the guard gates were opened, flooding the canal from Lake Erie in anticipation of its official opening. These original locks measures 90-feet in length and were 15-feet deep, accommodating board which could carry 75-ton loads of freight.⁴¹ On October 26, 1825 after years of planning and construction, the Erie Canal from Buffalo to Albany was open amongst great fanfare. At dawn, a great volley of cannon fire roared in the valleys surrounding Lockport. General Parkhurst Whitney of Niagara Falls presided over the ceremony acting as marshal of the day, and one of the canons which had belonged to Admiral Perry's historic fleet was brought to Lockport and fired in commemoration of the day's events. General Whitney led a procession which formed at 9 o'clock in the morning. This procession marched down to the foot of the locks and embarked on several boats prepared for the occasion. One of the most esteemed boats, the "William C. Bouck," was boarded by some of Lockport's most prominent citizens, and took the lead maneuvering through the locks. Overall, the day was marked with great ceremony and festivities by the residents of Lockport, who had labored intensely for several years in the Erie Canal's construction.⁴²

⁴⁰ Quoted from Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825; Or, Journal of a Voyage to the United States*: Trans. John D. Godman. Vol. II. Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1829. Google Books. Google. Web. 9 Feb. 2011; 191-192.

<<http://books.google.com/books?id=pPRIZqUYmoEC&lpg=PR4&ots=hfZOwcWv02&dq=Lafayette's%20visit%20to%20Lockport&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

⁴¹ "History: 1816 - 1840."

⁴² *History of Niagara County*, 169.

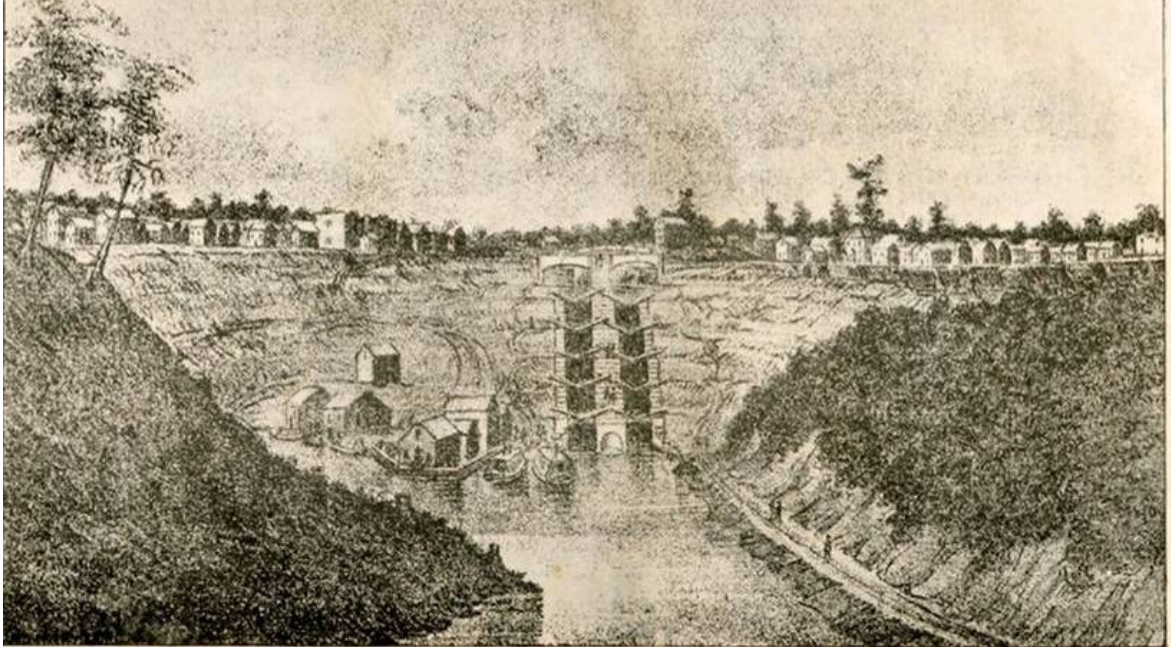


Figure 4.10
“Original Locks at Lockport” (ca. 1825)⁴³

Based on a print originally produced for Cadwallader D. Colden’s 1825 *Memoir* about the Erie Canal, this image depicts the earliest incarnation of the famous “Flight of Five” locks at Lockport. Note the relatively sparse development of small buildings along both sides of the Canal.

The rights to utilize the excess water from the canal to power mills and manufacturing buildings became a source of great contention following the opening of the canal. The New York State Legislature had passed an act on April 20, 1825 whereby the canal commissioners were authorized to sell surplus water from the canal whenever it was possible. Initially, the power estimated to be generated by the canal was not thought to be of a significant level, due to the obstruction of the locks. The land around the locks and the canal basin was owned by Darius Comstock at the time the water was first advertised for sale; Comstock bid fifty dollars for the rights. A few days before the canal was opened in October, 1825, Comstock sold to Lyman A. Spalding all of his land on the southeastern side of the canal for \$3,500, not including a small portion he reserved for himself. When the canal was finally opened, and the water rushed into the channel for the first time, the immense power and potential for the canal was realized, and a great drive to obtain the use of the copious excess water began. On January 25, 1826, the surplus water in this area was sold to William Kenney, of Lockport, and Junius H. Hatch, of New York, who bid \$200 to be paid annually. In the winter of 1825-26, Spalding built a flouring mill, and Jabez Pomeroy and William Bass constructed a building nearby Spalding’s mill used for carding and cloth pressing. These two businesses became the first in Lockport to be powered by the canal waters.⁴⁴

⁴³ Frank E. Sadowski Jr., "Erie Canal Images - Lockport." *The Erie Canal*. 2005. Web. 07 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.eriecanal.org/>>.

⁴⁴ Pool, 111.

While some of the transient canal workers moved on following the end of construction on the Erie Canal, seeking other opportunities further west, many others remained in Lockport. In 1827, measures were adopted to begin laying out settlement in what was called East Lockport or Lowertown. In Lockport's first development project, a group of Albany investors purchased 300 acres of land from Nathan Comstock. Joel McCollum, Otis and S.R. Hathaway and Seymour Scoville purchased the land to capitalize on its location, "lying below the locks and the grand natural basin," and saw potential in the area developing as a milling and industrial center, as already a grist mill was located in this area.⁴⁵ This group had the vacant land surveyed, cleared and platted into its own village, seeing it as an ideal location for houses and shops. Lowertown was marketed as the future center business, trade, and industry, soon to surpass the Upper Town. Several of the lots were sold, and significant improvements were made in Lowertown, however the investors sold their rights to Lot Clark and other investors, who were dubbed the "Albany Company," who continued the development efforts in the area.⁴⁶ The Albany Company then purchased the water rights to the canal in 1829, with excess water from the canal being used to power the mills there, a great source of conflict between the emerging Lowertown and the previously settled Uppertown.

The settlement of Lockport had developed at such a lightning pace during the 1820s, growing from a few pioneer cabins noted ca. 1820 into a community of roughly 2,000 people only a few years later, that it soon became apparent that an organized municipal system was imperative to the success of the community. A petition to organize the municipal government was favorably received by the New York State Legislature, and on March 26th, 1829 the Legislature passed the act for incorporating the Village of Lockport. Initially the village borders formed a large parallelogram, optimistically describing a much larger area than the size of the settlement at the time. This large area centered on the canal, and due to the angle of the canalway, it created a larger portion on the northwest side. This parallelogram measured one and three-quarters in length, and was divided into two wards.⁴⁷ Jesse P. Haines was tasked to survey the new Village in 1829-30 in preparation for creating the Village's first map, noting its streets and describing its overall appearance.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Quoted in *History of Niagara County*, 170.

⁴⁶ Eventually as development in both Lockport and Lowertown continued, the delineation between the communities grew less distinct, and the rivalry cooled. For more information on Lowertown, refer to, Cornelia E. Brooke, *Lowertown Historic District: National Register of Historic Places Nomination*. Publication no. 73001225. Albany, NY: New York State Parks & Recreation, 1973. Print.

⁴⁷ *History of Niagara County*, 171.

⁴⁸ "History: 1816 - 1840."



Figure 4.11

“Map of the Village of Lockport by Jesse P. Haines, surveyor” (1830)⁴⁹

The first known map of the Village of Lockport, this map depicts the earliest appearance of the area’s street patterns. Note that, true to verbal descriptions and account, the area in the northwestern section of the Village is the most densely developed, whereas the southeastern portion (including the survey area) is less developed at this time. The area known as Lowertown is located in the northeastern area of this map, along Market Street and the Erie Canal.

The new Village charter also established the early governmental structure of the Village of Lockport. It provided for five trustees, a treasurer and collector, two constables, five assessors and five wardens. Three of the trustees were to be selected by whichever of the two wards held the greatest population. The first board of trustees consisted of Joel McCollum, Levi Taylor, Levi E. Rounds, Josepha G. Driscoll, and James F. Mason. Their first meeting was held at Mason’s office on May 13, 1829, where Joel McCollum was selected as

⁴⁹ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

President of the Board. The Board met again on May 18th when they filled other municipal service positions, including establishing a fire department.⁵⁰ In the span of a decade, the community had grown from a sparse pioneer settlement carved from the wilderness into the organized Village of Lockport with a bright commercial and manufacturing future ahead.

4.3 The Early Growth of the Village of Lockport (1830 – 1865)

Once the municipal structure was established, giving this rugged pioneer community a greater sense of organization and legitimacy, the Village of Lockport continued to thrive in the 1830s. Based largely on the success of the Erie Canal as both a shipping and transportation route and also as its role as a source of power, business and industry boomed in the middle part of the nineteenth century in Lockport. This led to the continued growth and prosperity of the community.

The population of the Village of Lockport had swelled to 3,823 residents as recorded in 1830; only roughly about a decade after settlement in the area had truly begun.⁵¹ In 1835, statistics were prepared to highlight the character of Lockport as a business center. These early records paint a picture of the very diverse early canal-era businesses and industries which was developing in the Village, and were likely compiled as a marketing piece to encourage new business and growth in the area. Lockport's first ward was noted as containing Spalding's flouring mill, which ran at a capacity of manufacturing 120,000 barrels of flour annually. This calculated to a profit of over \$600,000 annually, based on the price of wheat at the time; this is approximately \$1.9 million dollars today. A wool carding and cloth dressing business was also recorded in the first ward, most likely the shop established by Jabez Pomeroy and William Bass in the mid-1820s. The firm was noted as employing six workers. Lockport's first ward also housed an iron foundry, which turned out \$10,000 worth of product annually, two saw mills, one turning and machine shop, a sash factory, fifty or sixty mercantile shops which were estimated to have a combined revenue of about \$600,000 each year, five boot and shoe manufacturers, a tannery, six clothing shops, a hat manufacturer, two harness and saddle shops, four cabinet and chair shops, two jewelry shops and various establishments which made carriages, wagons, and blacksmith work. In 1835, the first ward also contained a brewery, several cooper (barrel making) shops, a book bindery and two newspapers which were both published weekly.⁵²

Lockport's second ward contained nearly as many businesses as its first ward in 1835. The second ward was noted as containing three flouring mills, which combined to produce about \$1 million dollars worth of flour yearly (roughly \$3.2 million today). The area also included seven saw mills, a cotton factory (noted as

⁵⁰ *History of Niagara County*, 171.

⁵¹ *The Lockport City Directory...*, 28.

⁵² *History of Niagara County*, 171.

being functional but not yet completed), a woolen mill and cloth dressing business, two distilleries, one furnace and plough factory, a soap and candle factory, an ashery⁵³, a tannery, five mercantile shops, two tailoring shops, a boot and shoe factory, a harness and saddle factory and a printing office.⁵⁴ The wide variety of different trades and industries represented in Lockport, both in the first and the second wards, and the tremendous production capacity and profitability of these businesses which totaled into the millions of dollars, is a good indicator of Lockport's important role as a business and industry leader in the still rugged Western New York region. The success of these industries in Lockport was partially due to the Erie Canal trade, which was still in its infancy in 1835, but was mostly due to the use of the canal water to power the mills and factories which lined its banks.

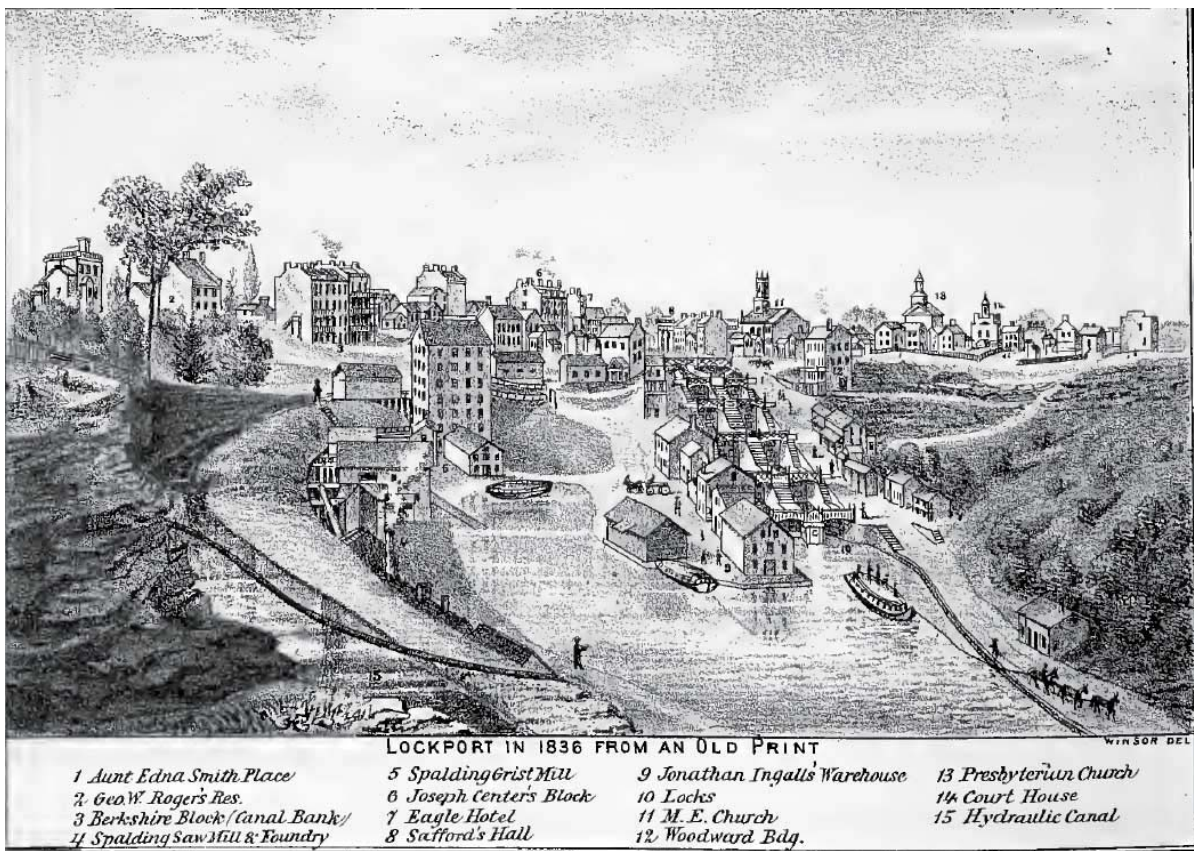


Figure 4.12

"Lockport in 1836 from an old print" (1878)⁵⁵

Based on a lithograph by J. H. Bufford, from drawing made by W. Wilson in 1836, this view shows the Upper town of Lockport. Note the development of industrial and commercial buildings along the canal in the 1830s, including Spalding's thriving mill. Note the prevalence of side-gabled Federal style buildings which was popular for commercial and residential architecture at this time.

⁵³ An ashery is a type of factory which was very common in newly-settled areas of North America in the late 1700s and throughout the 1800s. Asheries converted hardwood ashes, the abundant byproduct of the clearing of land by settlers, into lye, potash or pearlash.

⁵⁴ *History of Niagara County*, 171- 172.

⁵⁵ *History of Niagara County*, 171- 172.

As a measure of the success and innovations in canal technologies, after only ten short years after its opening the Erie Canal and its locks required expansion and enlargement. Traffic on the canal was already exceeding expectations, and there were new demands for larger boats and barges which could accommodate more cargo and thus increase profitability. In 1835 an expansion was authorized which called for locks 110-feet long and 18-feet wide. The work was not completed for many years, however due to delays and setbacks. In an 1862 report made by S.H. Sweet, State Engineer and Surveyor, noted that the locks rose over 55-feet high above the water over a distance of 630-feet, and that the enlargement cost \$686,000.⁵⁶ While construction was underway, coffer dams held off the water from the canal, effectively shutting down industry in Lockport as it relied exclusively on the waterpower of the canal to drive its machinery.⁵⁷ The locks throughout the early decades of the 1800s continued to be a source not only of commercial interest, but also served to attract curious tourists and visitors to Lockport, to marvel at the sheer size and scale of the engineering work.



Figure 4.13

The Expanded "Flight of Five" Locks, Lockport (ca. 1835-1862)⁵⁸

A photograph of Lockport taken sometime between 1835 and 1862, showing the first expansion of the locks. Note the substantial development and several church spires. The tow path, running alongside to the right of the canal, is also a prominent feature.

⁵⁶ Wilner, 737.

⁵⁷ "History: 1840 - Present." *Official Lockport, NY Government & Tourism Information ~ Erie Canal Locks & Flight of Five*. Web. 21 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.elockport.com/history-lockport-ny2.php>>.

⁵⁸ Frank E. Sadowski Jr. "Erie Canal Images - Lockport." *The Erie Canal*. 2005. Web. 07 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.eriecanal.org/>>.

The 1830s also saw the opening of several quarries, resulting for discoveries and advancements made during construction of the locks and canal. As excavation of the stone for the lockbeds commenced, it was discovered that the escarpment provided an excellent source of a variety of minerals and materials suitable for a many purposes. The hydraulic cement that could be made from stone harvested in Lockport was one early discovery. Extensive quarries in the Lockport area quickly opened, creating a thriving quarrying industry. Niagara limestone was one of the chief stones extracted, as well as the hydraulic limestone, and also Medina sandstone used for building construction. Limestone quarries were noted as being located in the south part of the Village of Lockport, and also about a mile to the east and some further west. Much of the limestone harvested was used for construction and building projects, as it was noted as fine quality, and was shipped throughout the region and beyond. Medina sandstone was quarried near Rattlesnake Hill (present day Gooding Street), northwest of the Village, and was used for paving and flagging of streets, sidewalks and roadways.⁵⁹



Figure 4.14
Corner of Main and Locust Streets (ca. 1904)⁶⁰

This stone building, identified as the American House in 1875, appears to be the same stone building built by Spalding as his hotel.

Lockport also had several other notable developments in the 1830s. The first Episcopal church, Christ Church, was erected, located on the corner of Vine and Market Street. In 1833 business leader Lyman Spalding built a stone hotel, originally called the Central House and later The American, on the parcel where the Farmers & Merchant Bank Building now stands, at the corner of Main and Locust Streets. At the intersection of Spring, Garden and Exchange Streets, the

⁵⁹ Wilner, 739.

⁶⁰ Frank E. Sadowski Jr., "Erie Canal Images - Lockport." *The Erie Canal*. 2005. Web. 07 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.eriecanal.org/>>.

Lockport Manufacturing Company (Joel McCollum, proprietor) constructed a four-story cotton mill. During this period, Dr. George W. Merchant founded the Merchant Gargling Oil Company (for more information, see the section “Notable Businesses in Lockport”), which would become a very successful business in Lockport. A Baptist congregation constructed a stone church at the corner of Pine and Center Alley in 1833, and a three-story school building was constructed during this year as well. The municipal services in Lockport also continued to progress and the first hook and ladder company was organized, originally located on Main Street and known as Protection Hook and Ladder #1, it later was moved to Locust Street. The first fire engine was purchased for the fire department, at a capacity of roughly a barrel and a half. St. John’s Catholic Church, located on Chestnut Street near East Street, was also constructed.⁶¹

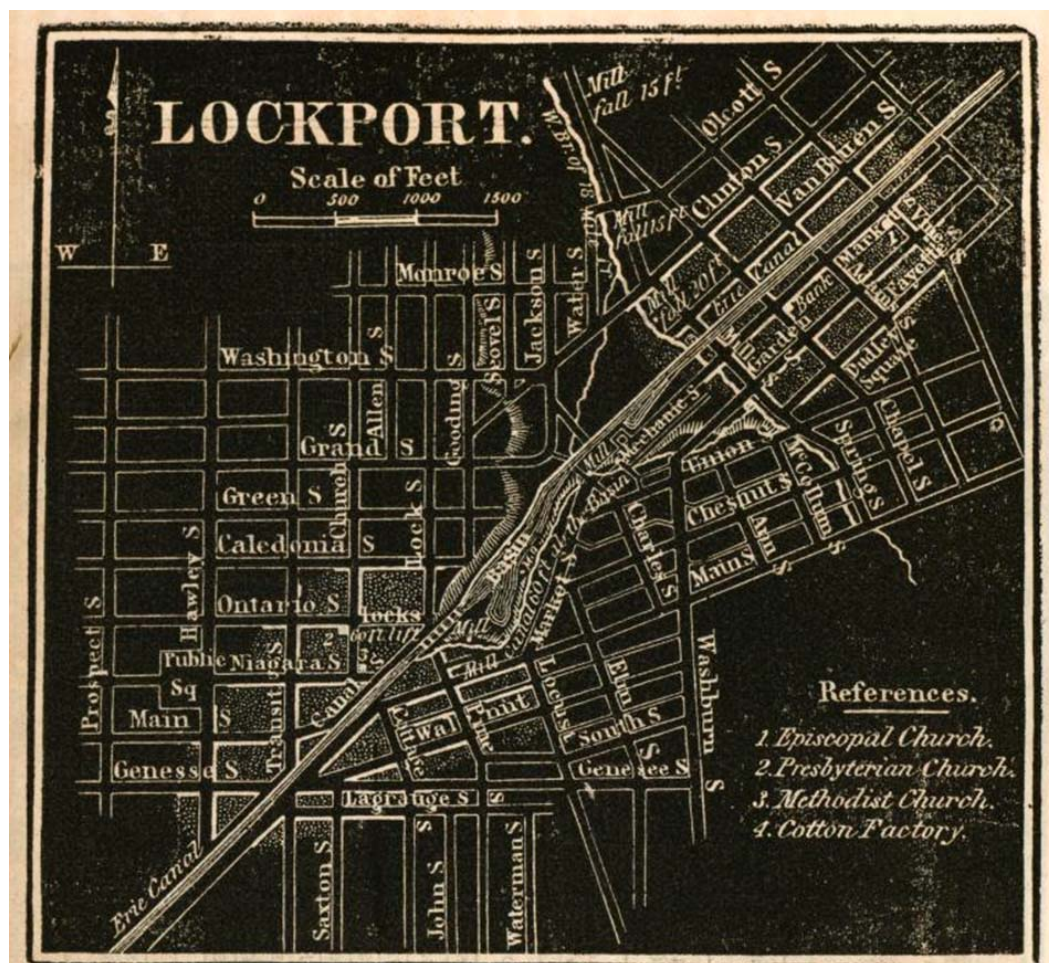


Figure 4.15

Map of Lockport, David H. Burr, cartographer (1838)⁶²

This unusual map printed in reverse shows the development of Lockport as it appeared in the late 1830s. Note that three churches are identified, as well as a cotton factory.

⁶¹ “History: 1816 - 1840.”

⁶² David H. Burr, “Lockport.” Map. *Atlases of the United States / New York / Atlas of New York*. 1838. 60. NYPL Digital Library. New York Public Library, 2004. Web. <<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?433855>>.

Another notable achievement for the Village of Lockport was the construction of the Lockport and Niagara Falls Strap Railroad Depot. This early railroad was a curious invention in the 1830s, representing the height of technological development and a precursor of the larger steam powered locomotives which were yet to come, consisting of a "locomotive" about the size of a modern hot water tank mounted on four spoked wheels which belched smoke, hissed and sent sparks flying as it traveled along its tracks alongside the escarpment towards Lowertown. Dubbed a "tea kettle on wheels" by the locals, this noisy, dirty engine drew two cars which resembled the stagecoaches of the day, and rocked and swayed so violently as it chugged along that many passengers clung to the sides of the cars. Built in 1836, the depot was located on the canal bank near the end of Chapel Street in Lowertown. Tickets could be purchased at a ticket office located in the Lockport House, and this also served as the starting point of its route. This was a convenient location where packet boats also stopped at docks located across from the hotel, providing a steady stream of travelers and passengers. The 24-mile route, connecting Lockport and Niagara Falls, traversed a climb of about 110-feet, made over a distance of less than a mile; a feat that not even today's modern locomotives would attempt.⁶³ Perhaps the most famous passenger of the Strap railroad was President Martin Van Buren and his campaign party who arrived in Lockport from Niagara Falls on September 1, 1839. During the journey, the railroad coach that Van Buren was riding in derailed; fortunately no one was injured and the car was simply lifted up and put back on the tracks.⁶⁴

Lockport continued to grow and prosper in subsequent decades; however the region was still far from tranquil and peaceful in the 1840s. In 1840 the population of the Village was recorded at 6,088.⁶⁵ This is nearly double the population recorded in 1830. One of the most dramatic episodes of the decade was the arrest and trial of Alexander MacLeod, in the late autumn of 1840 and the winter of 1841. MacLeod was a Scottish-Canadian who served as sheriff in Niagara, Ontario, Canada during the failed Upper Canada Rebellion (also called the "Patriot War"). MacLeod boasted that he was involved in the sinking of the *Caroline* during this war, an American steamer ship thought to have been used to smuggle weapons to a group of rebels on Navy Island in the Niagara River. A group of Canadians set out and destroyed the ship in 1837. During this incident, an African-American sailor named Amos Durfee was killed, and an indictment for his murder against MacLeod was subsequently issued by Niagara County. In September of 1840, MacLeod was found on the American side of the border and was arrested. This initial case was dismissed on a technicality, but he was

⁶³ Douglas Farley, "Niagara County Historical Society's Bicentennial Moments - The Strap Railroad." *Welcome the Niagara County Bicentennial Celebration!* Niagara County Bicentennial Committee, 2007. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.niagara2008.com/history6.html>>. Also refer to "History: 1816 - 1840."

⁶⁴ Douglas Farley, and Ann Marie Linnabery. "Niagara County Historical Society's Bicentennial Moments - Many Early Presidents Visited Niagara County." *Welcome the Niagara County Bicentennial Celebration!* Niagara County Bicentennial Committee, 2008. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.niagara2008.com/history169.html>>.

⁶⁵ "History: 1840 - Present." *Official Lockport, NY Government & Tourism Information ~ Erie Canal Locks & Flight of Five*. Web. 21 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.elockport.com/history-lockport-ny2.php>>.

subsequently rearrested two months later in Lewiston under a warrant issued there. MacLeod was permitted to post bail, and was subsequently released; a situation which highly angered the general public. In the following February in 1841, the grand jury charged MacLeod with arson for burning the *Caroline* and also with Durfee's murder, upon which action the British government demanded his release. Diplomatic sparring between the British and American governments continued while MacLeod remaining in prison in Lockport. Eventually following a sensational and widely followed trial, at which key witnesses for the prosecution never materialized, the jury deliberated for twenty minutes before returning a verdict of not guilty for MacLeod. Meanwhile during this time, Benjamin Lett, who was also implicated in the rebellion in Canada, fled across the border into the US, residing in Lockport. In April, 1840, Lett destroyed the monument to Sir Isaac Brock located in Queenston, Ontario using gunpowder. Involved in several illicit and illegal acts, Lett continued his reign of terrorism by torching the steamer *Great Britain* in Oswego, NY, murdering Captain Fisher in Chippewa, Ontario, Canada, blowing up a lock on the Welland Canal in the Ontario peninsula, as well as attempting to blow up a lock in Belleville, Canada. A genuine miscreant, Lett was eventually imprisoned and served several years imprisonment in Auburn, NY before he was pardoned by the governor in 1847 following abuse and mistreatment while incarcerated. In 1858, the body of Benjamin Lett was found on a beach in Mackinaw, Lake Michigan, the result of strychnine poisoning, most probably murdered.⁶⁶

The 1840s also saw some improvements which further supported the thriving business and industry, as well as life in general, in Lockport. In 1847 the State Legislature passed a resolution authorizing companies to construct plank roads and collect tolls, which resulted in roughly a dozen companies being formed seemingly overnight. These companies created many new plank tolls roads, radiating in all directions from the Village. Local tycoon Lyman A. Spalding also built and operated a fleet of canal boats, adding to his business empire. Improvements continued on the Erie Canal itself, and the second set of locks was completed, allowing for twice the barge and boat traffic. While Lockport made commercial and technological strides during the 1840s, it also made progress with education as well. On March 31, 1846 the Lockport Public School System, the nation's first Union School district, was founded by a special act of the State Legislature (for more information on the school system in Lockport, refer to section 4.4d.)⁶⁷

The 1850s was a decade of great successes for the Village of Lockport, but also great loss and devastation. In 1851, the population of the Village was recorded at 8,861 people, indicative of the tremendous growth and success of the area which

⁶⁶ *History of Niagara County*, 172.

⁶⁷ A union school district is a district generally formed from one or more common school districts to operate a high school or secondary education program, which common school districts cannot do. "History: 1840 - Present." *Official Lockport, NY Government & Tourism Information ~ Erie Canal Locks & Flight of Five*. Web. 21 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.elockport.com/history-lockport-ny2.php>>.

had continued steadily since the 1830s.⁶⁸ One of the most energizing events for the Village was the opening of the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad on June 25, 1852. The line was extremely successful, tallying over \$1,000 daily in its first year of operation. The original lines ran along East Market Street before crossing the canal. The opening of the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad created another means of transporting raw materials and finished products both into and out of Lockport, boosting business and industry. Railroad development also spurred population growth and Lockport's nascent tourism industry. Perhaps one of the most famous travelers of the line was General Winfield Scott, who visited Lockport in the fall of 1852.⁶⁹

Whereas the railroad was one of the great triumphs in Lockport in the 1850s, one of the great trials that the Village faced was the scourge of nineteenth century communities – fire. On October 31, 1850 a fire raced through the Merchant Block (site of the present Masonic Hall, Main Street at Cottage Street), destroying many of the village's records.⁷⁰ On the night of November 2, 1854 a massive fire swept through the business district in the Village of Lockport, devastating many of the community's buildings and businesses. The blaze began in a building just west of the Judson House, located where the Lockport Municipal Building now stands. Within a few hours the fire had spread rapidly, and many of the Village's buildings were destroyed. It was recorded that this devastating fire swept through and devastated eighteen stores, three Hotels, two churches (the Congregational and Methodist churches which were later rebuilt), and many other buildings. The loss was estimated at over \$100,000.⁷¹

Although this massive fire leveled a large swath of the Village, it did not hinder the continued growth of the community. These areas of Lockport were quickly rebuilt and life hastily returned to normal. Other events of note in the 1850s included the election of Lockport resident, Washington Hunt, to the position of Governor of New York State in 1850; a good indication of the prominence and clout of Lockport in state-wide politics at this time. The Erie Canal continued in its success as a major commercial artery through New York State, recording thirty thousand barges had passed through the locks, collecting over \$50,000 in toll revenues. The Hydraulics Race was also enlarged in 1857, allowing for a dramatic increase in the available water power used to power the numerous mills and factories located nearby. The Village of Lockport continued its progressive spirit of advancements in technologies and modern science, and the Lockport Gas Works was constructed in 1851 on South Transit Street at Lagrange Street (site of a modern gas facility). This gas facility helped illuminate the homes and streets of the Village, and when the first gas street lights were turned on on

⁶⁸ This figure is noted on Bernard Callan. "Map of the Village of Lockport, Niagara Co. NY." Map. New York: M. Dripps, 1851. Print.

⁶⁹ Pool, 113.

⁷⁰ "History: 1840 - Present."

⁷¹ *History of Niagara County*, 173. Also *The Lockport City Directory...*, 28.

December 31, 1851 the streets of Lockport blazed thanks to this new modern system.⁷²



Figure 4.16

Map of the Village of Lockport, Bernard Callan, C.E (1851)⁷³

This map records the early buildings constructed in the Village by the 1850s. Note also it identifies the route of the Lockport and Niagara Falls Strap Railroad as well as the route of the Rochester, Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad.

⁷² "History: 1840 - Present."

⁷³ Callan, Bernard. "Map of the Village of Lockport, Niagara Co. NY." Map. New York: M. Dripps, 1851. Print.



Figure 4.17
Detail of Main Street and Erie Canal area, Map of the Village of Lockport (1851)⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Callan, Bernard. "Map of the Village of Lockport, Niagara Co. NY." Map. New York: M. Dripps, 1851. Print.



Figure 4.18

Detail of area around High and Locust Streets, Map of the Village of Lockport (1851)⁷⁵

Note the sprawling estate and orchard of tycoon Lyman A. Spalding located at the corner of High and Locust Streets (lower right). Also of interest is the indication of trees in this area, giving the sense that this part of the Village was still moderately forested even in the 1850s.

Other events of note in the 1850s include the 1857 election of Niagara County's first County Judge, the Honorable Alfred Holmes, who was a resident of Lockport. The cornerstone of St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was also laid in 1857, located at Church and Caledonia. At Market Street and Exchange Street, the Lockport Manufacture's Building was also constructed. This era was also important in the industrial history of Lockport, as Birdsill Holly located in the Village in 1859, arriving from Seneca Falls to manufacture sewing machines (for more on Holly, see the section on *Significant Businesses in Lockport*, section 4.4b) The company of Race, Matthews & Co. also arrived in Lockport, following Holly who was their chief engineer and inventor, from Seneca Falls to manufacture fire engines. Benjamin Moore erected a stone flour and grist mill, located on Pine Street near the canal; this building served as a mill for many years before it was utilized as City Hall. A more whimsical event occurred on July

⁷⁵ Callan, Bernard. "Map of the Village of Lockport, Niagara Co. NY." Map. New York: M. Dripps, 1851. Print.

30, 1859 as the residents of Lockport marveled at a hot air balloon which ascended from the old fair grounds.⁷⁶

The 1860s was also a decade of improvements and developments for the Village of Lockport. The Lockport Union School system comprised a series of 7 small district schools, which were generally one-room stone edifices, and several private schools also operated in the community. On March 18, 1860 Lockport had the honor of hosting noted suffragist and activist, Susan B. Anthony, who spoke against slavery at the Universalist Church. In February 1861, the train carrying president-elect Abraham Lincoln passed through Niagara Falls and Lockport on its way to his inauguration in Washington. In September of this year, First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln returned to the area for shopping, spending time in Niagara Falls and Lockport. Lincoln's funeral train also passed through Lockport, as it returned to Illinois in April 1865.⁷⁷ Sports amused the residents of Lockport, and in the 1860s there were known to be at least three organized baseball teams, the Niagara, the Union and the Lockport teams, who played at the Courthouse Square.⁷⁸

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Village of Lockport made tremendous improvements, quickly shifting from rural frontier outpost comprised of a few scattered rudimentary log cabins into a thriving modern center in Western New York. On April 11, 1865, just two days after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the close of the American Civil War, Lockport was incorporated as a city. Four wards were established, and the governmental structure and positions were delineated. Benjamin Carpenter was elected as the first Mayor of Lockport, elected in 1865 and re-elected in 1866. The positions of clerk, police justice, treasurer, tax collector, superintendant of streets, one chief and two assistant engineers of the fire department, two aldermen for each ward, an assessor, and others were established. At this point in its history, Lockport had emerged as a modern center of population, business, industry, government and other functions, and with a population recorded at 13,523 in 1865, had successfully transitioned to become the City of Lockport.⁷⁹

4.4 The City of Lockport (1865 – Present)

Following its incorporation, the newly created City of Lockport continued to thrive as it had done steadily since the 1830s. Industries and businesses continued to be founded, and Lockport became a center for industrial and manufacturing development during this era. People continued to be attracted to the City due to

⁷⁶ "History: 1840 - Present."

⁷⁷ Farley, Douglas, and Ann Marie Linnabery. "Niagara County Historical Society's Bicentennial Moments - Many Early Presidents Visited Niagara County." *Welcome the Niagara County Bicentennial Celebration!* Niagara County Bicentennial Committee, 2008. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.niagara2008.com/history169.html>>.

⁷⁸ "History: 1840 - Present."

⁷⁹ *History of Niagara County*, 173. Also Pool, 114.

its tremendous water power potential, drawn from its ideal location on the escarpment and the Erie Canal. This water power served as the primary source of energy to drive the machines and belts used in industry, making Lockport's readily available water source of national, not just regional or local, interest. Due to its location and promise, Lockport became a destination for those seeking to develop their business and industry in manufacturing, bolstered by the sense of invention and creativity which was not uncommon in the Industrial Revolution age of the last half of the nineteenth century.

As its industrial and manufacturing sector grew and strengthened during this period in the late 1800s, this had a tremendous influence on the neighboring community of Lockport. Many of the City's big business leaders also became highly influential members of the local community, become active in politics and government, local churches and religious organizations, social groups and clubs and other organizations. Also, the influx of wealth that these successful businesses generated and often put back into the community radiated throughout the community, spurring development in public services, transportation systems, entertainment and in other arenas.

4.4a Lockport's Big Bridge



Figure 4.19
Lockport's "Big Bridge" (1875)⁸⁰

This image depicts the type of public market which was often held on Lockport's Big Bridge since it was initially constructed. This example is from the winter, but the summer markets would have been even larger. Note that the bridge appears to be constructed of wood in the 1870s.

⁸⁰ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

If the City of Lockport identifies itself with the engineering marvel of the Erie Canal, its second most recognizable structure is the “Big Bridge.” Located at the odd intersection formed by the union of Buffalo Street, Cottage Street, Canal Street and Main Street, this unique junction also spanned the Erie Canal. This resulted in the construction of a large bridge which was wider than it was long. Originally, this location was spanned with a log bridge as early as the 1830s, but this was soon replaced in 1858 by a wood bridge which spanned along Main Street. In 1868, this bridge was recreated in iron. This subsequent bridge was in turn replaced by the first bridge known as the Big Bridge in 1886. It was opened in this year among great fanfare and excitement, in a ceremony which included fire works, two brass bands, and speeches from politicians and other significant local figures. Not only did the bridge serve as a traffic route overlying the canal, but it also housed a public market and served as a center for activities along Main Street in the City. In 1914 the bridge was widened even further as part of the Barge Canal expansion, absorbing the adjacent Cottage Street Bridge. At this time it would become one of the widest bridges in the world, spanning in a single span with no support beams 399-feet with only a length of 129-feet. This bridge in turn was also refurbished in the 1960s. Today, a historical marker bears information on Lockport’s Big Bridge, noting it as one of the widest bridges in the world.⁸¹

4.4b Significant Businesses in Lockport

Early on in its history, Lockport had a strong manufacturing and industrial core, based on the trade and power provided by the Erie Canal. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these businesses thrived and played a critical role in shaping life in the City. Many of these businesses were well known locally, but also were known throughout the region and even throughout the country. Products, ideas and inventions created in Lockport by these businesses had a wide-ranging influence and impact.

As discussed in previous sections, much of Lockport’s early industries were powered by the canal, and as a result, the City became a significant manufacturing center. Located in the center of a large wheat producing region, and with wheat and grain being increasingly shipped from the Midwest through the Erie Canal, Lockport once served as a prominent grain milling city. Flouring, as it was sometimes called, became Lockport’s primary industry for many years, and created wealth in the local economy.

Lockport’s first mill was established in about 1824 by Otis Hathaway, located on a branch of Eighteen Mile Creek where it passes beneath the Erie Canal. Several years later in the Spring of 1826, Lyman A. Spalding built his large flour mill which was seven stories high. In 1832 the mill was purchased by the Albany Company, although Spalding continued to operate it under lease. A fire destroyed the original mill in 1840, at which time Spalding bought back the

⁸¹ Pool, 116. Also Riley, 127.

property and constructed another mill, even larger than the original, which produced over 400 barrels of flour a day. This mill was purchased in 1857 by N.H. Wolf, but yet again was lost to fire the following year.⁸² On the same site, Spalding erected a new mill facility in 1858. This mill was eventually sold to Thornton & Chester and later by George T. Chester; eventually this mill was also lost to fire.⁸³

Beside's Spalding's mills, which were among the largest and most profitable, Lockport also contained many other flour mills. Some of these include the Thompson mill, which in the 1890s was Lockport's largest milling enterprise, the Niagara mill which was built around 1832 by Henry Walbridge on the canal's north bank, the Lockport City mill (later the Grigg Brothers mill) of 1862 operated by David Cope and located near the Spalding Mill.

The Franklin mill was established as a cotton factory in 1833 by the Lockport Manufacturing Company. In 1841 this mill was purchased by Washington Hunt, the future Governor, who shortly thereafter sold it to the Niagara Manufacturing Company who continued to operate it as a cotton mill until 1854. After this point, it was converted to a flour mill, after cotton manufacturing became less profitable. The mill was operated by the Franklin Milling Company in the 1890s, when it primarily manufactured wheat flour.

The Farmer's mill was built in 1833 as a flour mill, and was by the 1890s used as an iron works. The Pine Street mill, an elegant stone building erected in 1864 by Benjamin C. Moore, was originally established as a flour mill before later serving as Lockport's waterworks and later as its City Hall. On Market Street was constructed what was originally a plaster mill ca. 1832, and in 1865 was converted to a flour mill known as Model Mills.⁸⁴ Numerous other flour mills popped up along the canal, many being small enterprises which were short lived.

Lockport also had a thriving lumbering industry. Zeno Comstock founded Lockport's first saw mill in 1819, located along a branch of the Eighteen Mile Creek. As settlement grew in the Lockport area and throughout Niagara County, numerous saw mills emerged as the densely forested land was cleared for development. David Frink constructed an early saw mill, which was later replaced by the Lockport Paper Company plant. Lyman A. Spalding added a saw mill to his business interested, building a plant in 1825-26. This facility was later taken down and replaced by a mill of even greater capacity in 1836. Edward Bissell constructed a saw mill in 1828, and in 1836 there were eight saw mills recorded

⁸² It should be noted that fires in grain and flour mills were note uncommon. The heat of the machinery would build up in these poorly ventilated structures, often leading to spontaneous combustion of the dry grain. Flour dust, suspended in the air, was noted as being highly explosive. Also, as was common in other types of factories and mills, these early industrial buildings were lit with candles, gas light or by other means, which provided a ready source of combustion.

⁸³ Pool, 162-163.

⁸⁴ Pool, 163-164.

in operation within the present city limits. Other saw mills and paper pulp factories were constructed in the 1850s.⁸⁵

Perhaps some of the most prominent businesses in Lockport's history were the Holly companies, under the leadership of inventor and businessman Birdsill Holly. Born November 8, 1820 in Auburn, NY, Birdsill Holly grew up in Seneca Falls, NY. During his lifetime, Holly made significant contributions to the fields of mechanical and hydraulic engineering, and held over 150 patents. Many of his inventions continue to be used today. One of Holly's greatest inventions was the pressurized municipal water supply which brought indoor plumbing and water supplies to homes and businesses, revolutionizing how people lived.

Birdsill Holly was first introduced to hydraulic engineering through his father, Birdsill Holly Sr., who worked as a mechanic in one of Seneca Falls' numerous water-driven industrial mills. From this early exposure to the power and potential of water, Holly later became a partner in the Silsby Company. During his tenure at this company, Holly obtained his first patent for a water pump. His work caught the attention of several wealthy and well-connected business men from Lockport, including Washington Hunt and Thomas T. Flagler. In 1859, these two men convinced Holly to relocate to Lockport, providing financing for the Holly Manufacturing Company.⁸⁶

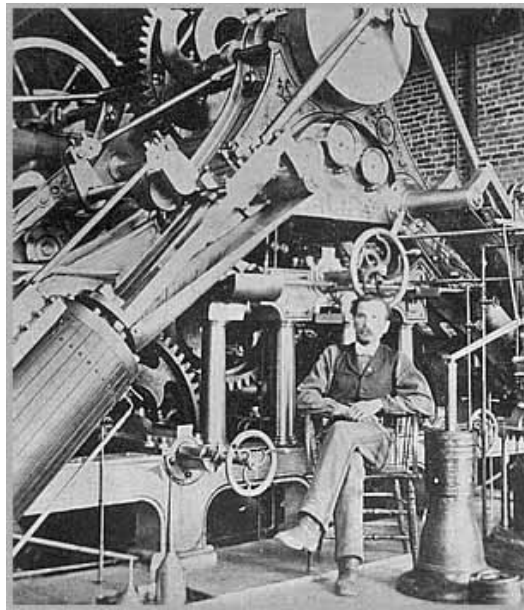


Figure 4.20
Birdsill Holly with his hydraulic machinery (Undated image)⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Pool, 164-165.

⁸⁶ Madelynn P. Fredrickson, "Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Birdsill Holly Inventor." *Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Cave & Underground Boat Ride*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011.
<http://www.lockportcave.com/lockport_eriecanal_birdsill_holly.html>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Holly's Holly Manufacturing Company, organized May 2, 1859, was one of Lockport's most significant industries for many decades. Original stockholders in the company were Thomas T. Flagler, Charles Keep, Silas H. Marks, L.F. Bowen, Washington Hunt, G.W. Bowen and Birdsill Holly. The company constructed a massive manufacturing plant located near the "Flight of Five" locks, on the north side of the Erie Canal. Prior to the Holly Manufacturing Company beginning its operations, they formed the Lockport Hydraulic Company in order to obtain the rights to draw and utilize the surplus water from the canal. The Lockport Hydraulic Company subsequently enlarged the race on the south side of the canal, and then blasted a large tunnel, some 750-feet long, into the hard stone of the Lockport escarpment on the north side of the canal. This hydraulic raceway drew water from the canal above the locks, sent it traveling downward through the tunnel which then turned a water wheel turbine, creating close to 2,000 horsepower to drive Holly's factory machinery. The energy from the turbine rotated a large central shaft, connected by belts and pulleys to individual machines. This system was noted as being extremely advanced for its time, and it attracted engineers from across the country and even from Europe, who came to examine Holly's tunnel system. This system was so successful that the tunnel was later enlarged to supply water some 250-feet to the Richmond Manufacturing Company, and another 700-feet east to the Lockport Pulp Mill Company.

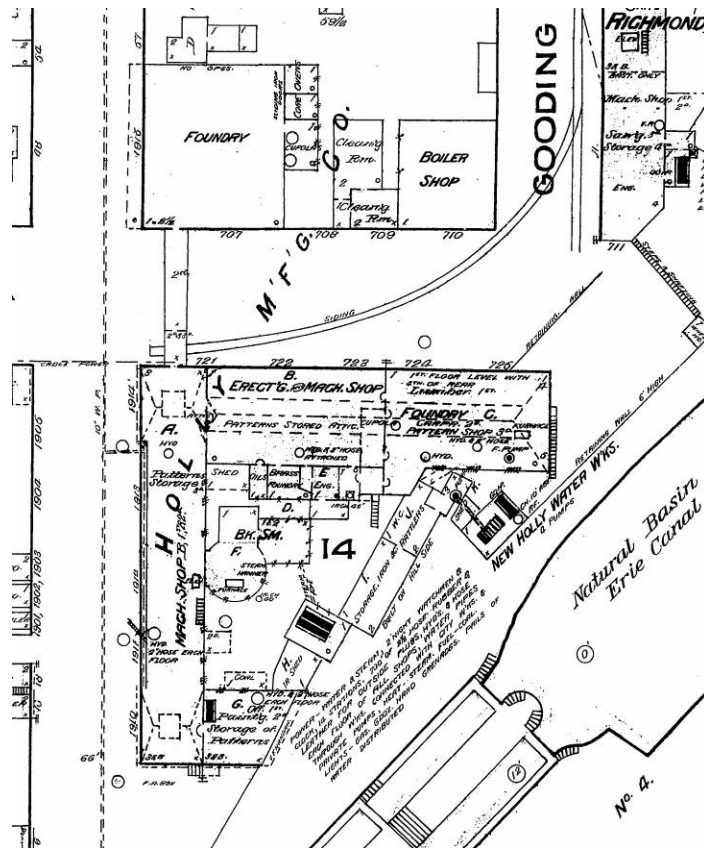


Figure 4.21
Site of the Holly Manufacturing Company (1886)⁸⁶
 A detail of a Sanborn map showing the Holly complex of building, on the north side of the canal, as it appeared in the mid-1880s.

⁸⁸ Detail, 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, sheet 3.

The Holly Manufacturing Company was an extremely successful and large operation, employing during its prime, about 500 people. While the company manufactured a wide variety of items, perhaps the most significant contribution that the company made was the design of the Holly system of fire protection. This invention was what made Birdsill Holly famous, and an inventor on par with contemporaries Thomas Edison or Alexander Graham Bell. The system was made of two of Holly's inventions; the elliptical rotary water pump and the fire hydrant. Pumps powered by steam engines pressurized water and distributed it through underground pipes throughout the city. Holly fire hydrants were connected to these pipes at intervals, making water available to fight fires throughout the city at any time. Fires in the nineteenth century were a constant fear, as fire fighting technology prior to this system consisted primarily of horse-drawn wagons which carried a limited supply of water to the scene of a fire. This invention revolutionized fire fighting throughout the United States, providing an unlimited and steady supply of water, preventing fires from spreading and devastating large swaths of the city. The system invented by Holly is essentially the same system utilized in every city and town throughout the United States and in most of the developed world.⁸⁹



Figure 4.22
Holly Manufacturing Company Building
(ca. 1880s)⁸⁹

This image depicts the size and extents of the Holly Manufacturing Company during the height of its operations in Lockport.



Figure 4.23
View of the Holly buildings from
the Canal (ca. 1880s)⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Madelynn P. Fredrickson, "Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Birdsill Holly Inventor." *Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Cave & Underground Boat Ride*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://www.lockportcave.com/lockport_eriecanal_birdsill_holly.html>.

⁹⁰ "The Lockport Hydraulic Company And The Construction of the North Tunnel Erie Canal ~ Lockport, NY." *Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Cave & Underground Boat Ride*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://www.lockportcave.com/lockport_eriecanal_history.html>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

With this invention springing up in their backyard, Lockport was the first city in the country to install this fire protection system. Although Lockport had suffered the devastating fire of 1854, following the installation of this system, fires in Lockport were able to be better contained and did significantly less damage than to other cities. The Holly Manufacturing Company also built the Lockport Water Works in 1864, and constructed a similar works in Auburn, NY in 1867. The Lockport system involved over 6,000-feet of pipe being laid beneath the streets, and twenty-seven hydrants were set. The pressure from this system was so great that during a test, the stream of water was thrown 175-feet. Not long after, numerous cities across the country saw the benefits in this system, and installed them to aid their communities.⁹² One such city which would have benefited from Holly's fire hydrant system was Chicago, who had rejected an offer to purchase this system. Shortly after, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 occurred; the widespread devastation of this massive fire could have perhaps been contained and controlled to a greater degree had they decided to implement Holly's fire protection system.



Figure 4.24

The Holly Manufacturing Works from the Erie Canal (ca. 1894)⁹³

Draped with black bunting for Holly's death in 1894, note how the buildings of the Holly Works perched on the side of the cliff overlooking the Erie Canal.

The Holly Manufacturing Company completed their massive brick and stone building complex, located on the north side of the Erie Canal, in 1866. Turning to other projects, Birdsill Holly's next invention also revolutionized modern American life; district steam heat. Using his own funds, and demonstrating the process in

⁹² Pool, 166.

⁹³ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

his own house at 31 Chestnut Street, Holly installed a small boiler in the basement of his house, which produced the heat and was similar to later steam and forced water systems. This boiler fed 700-feet of pipe which he built around his own yard. A crowd gathered when Holly turned on his steam heating system for the first time, and once the valve was opened, it worked flawlessly. Having no trouble finding funders after his demonstration, in 1877 the Holly Steam Combination Company was founded, organized to supply steam heat to cities through street mains. During its first season of operation, steam mains were laid on Locust, Genesee and Walnut Streets. These mains provided 30 psi of steam, and every house and building connected to the mains was quickly heated. One interesting problem did arise, however; as the water for the steam system was drawn right from the canal, small fish and other debris quickly clogged the intakes. However, this was remedied by installing a grate across the intake, and a man was paid to regularly clear debris from the grate. This steam heating system was again a successful invention for Birdsill Holly, and shortly after its installation in Lockport, systems were installed in New York City, Long Island and Auburn. By 1880, steam heating systems took off and were installed in cities across the country. Other inventions by Holly later made this system more profitable by reducing wasted steam; in 1881 Holly patented a steam meter, which then meant customers would pay for their steam by volume, and not just have an unlimited supply. However, following the installation of steam meters, use was cut in half. This company later became the American District Steam Company, organized in 1881.⁹⁴ In a coincidental twist of fate, the Holly Manufacturing Company buildings were devastated by fire in 1904.⁹⁵

One of Lockport's most prominent and most successful commercial enterprises in the nineteenth century was Merchant's Gargling Oil. In 1833, Dr. George Merchant of Lockport began experimenting with a medicine to treat diseases in horses. Dr. Merchant went into business with Morris Tucker, proprietor of the local general store located at Main and Cottage Streets, to manufacture and sell the Gargling Oil in an expanded department in the store. A small advertising bureau was established, branding the liniment with an Arabian horse being treated with the medicine. Like many pharmacists of the era, Dr. Merchant was an incredible salesman and marketing genius; he was so successful that he managed to market a product misnamed as "gargling oil," when in reality this could have been toxic as it was a topical liniment. Dr. Merchant's creation became popular among veterinarians and was soon sold extensively throughout the area to people with tired and sore canal mules and work horses.

⁹⁴ Pool, 166. Also Madelynn P. Fredrickson, "Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Birdsill Holly Inventor," *Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Cave & Underground Boat Ride*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://www.lockportcave.com/lockport_eriecanal_birdsill_holly.html>.

⁹⁵ "The Lockport Hydraulic Company And The Construction of the North Tunnel Erie Canal ~ Lockport, NY." *Erie Canal ~ Lockport Locks ~ Cave & Underground Boat Ride*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://www.lockportcave.com/lockport_eriecanal_history.html>.



Figure 4.25

Stamp depicting the Merchant's Gargling Oil logo, ca. 1860s-80s.⁹⁶

In 1853, Dr. Merchant retired from his company, selling it to Tucker, Dr. B.L. Delano and the Honorable Henry Walbridge. It was under their skilled leadership, and with Morris Tucker at the helm, that the Merchant's Gargling Oil company began to really take off. In 1854 the liniment was marketed to humans, used to treat aches and pains, and the product became immensely popular. During this era, the medicine was sold throughout the country, with orders coming from the South and the Western states. As a result of the influx of orders and the exploding growth in sales, a stock company was formed in 1858, with Morris Tucker serving as secretary and managing the company's daily operations.

After Tucker's death in 1860, John Hodge became the driving force behind the company. Hodge had initially started in the company as a teenager in 1861, and eventually succeeded as President of the company by 1886. Under Hodge, the Merchant's Gargling Oil Company truly flourished, becoming a household name throughout the country. Hodge ran a media blitz for the Gargling Oil product, advertising it by any means available. This included painting signs on anything stationary, including barns, along the Erie Canal and even on the "Maid of the Mist," a popular new tourist boat which took passengers up to the falls of Niagara.⁹⁷ Hodge even claimed to have painted an advertisement for the company on the Rock of Gibraltar. Hodge eventually had an elegant four-story factory and laboratory building constructed on Market Street, built of fine Lockport granite. The building not only housed the production of the liniment itself, but also produced an almanac and other advertising materials which marketed the product. The success of the Merchant's Gargling Oil made John Hodge a wealthy man, and in 1871 he constructed the Hodge Opera House (information to follow) next door to the Merchant's Gargling Oil building at the corner of Main and Market Streets.

⁹⁶ "Merchant's Gargling Oil." *Home Page for Rdhinstl.com*. Web. 18 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.rdhinstl.com/mm/rs178.htm>>.

⁹⁷ Riley, 132.



Figure 4.26
The Merchant's Gargling Oil Company Building, Market Street (ca. 1880)⁹⁸

Merchant's Gargling Oil Company had a successful nearly century long lifespan, treating both equine and human patients alike. Like many similar "cure-alls" of the nineteenth century, the popularity of the liniment waned in the twentieth century with the advent of new, safer and more potent medications. The final nail in the coffin for the company came when the beautiful granite building on Market Street was lost to fire in 1928. Shortly after 1:00 PM on February 25, 1928, a fire broke out in the basement of the building, where the flammable "Gargling Oil" was stored, and was fueled by the advertising materials and papers also stored in the building. Damages were estimated at \$100,000 to the building. The company eventually closed following this devastating loss, ending its nearly century-long run as a thriving business which helped to put Lockport on the national map.⁹⁹

One of the signature buildings and cultural institutions in Lockport during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the Hodge Opera House. Drawing on the wealth and success of his Merchant's Gargling Oil empire, John Hodge had the stunning Hodge Opera House constructed in 1871 at the corner of Main Street and Market Street, adjacent to the Merchant's Gargling Oil building.

⁹⁸ From a stereoscope image, "Merchant's Gargling Oil Co's. Laboratory and Office, Lockport, N.Y." *NYPL Digital Gallery | Home*. New York Public Library. Web. 18 Apr. 2011. <<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1>>.

⁹⁹ *History of Niagara County*, 182-183. Also, Riley, 131-132 and Douglas Farley, "ERIE CANAL DISCOVERY: Merchant's Gargling Oil's Tie to Lockport.", *Lockport Union-Sun & Journal Online*. 13 June 2008.. <<http://lockportjournal.com/canaldiscovery/x212280296/ERIE-CANAL-DISCOVERY-Merchant-s-Gargling-Oil-s-tie-to-Lockport>>.

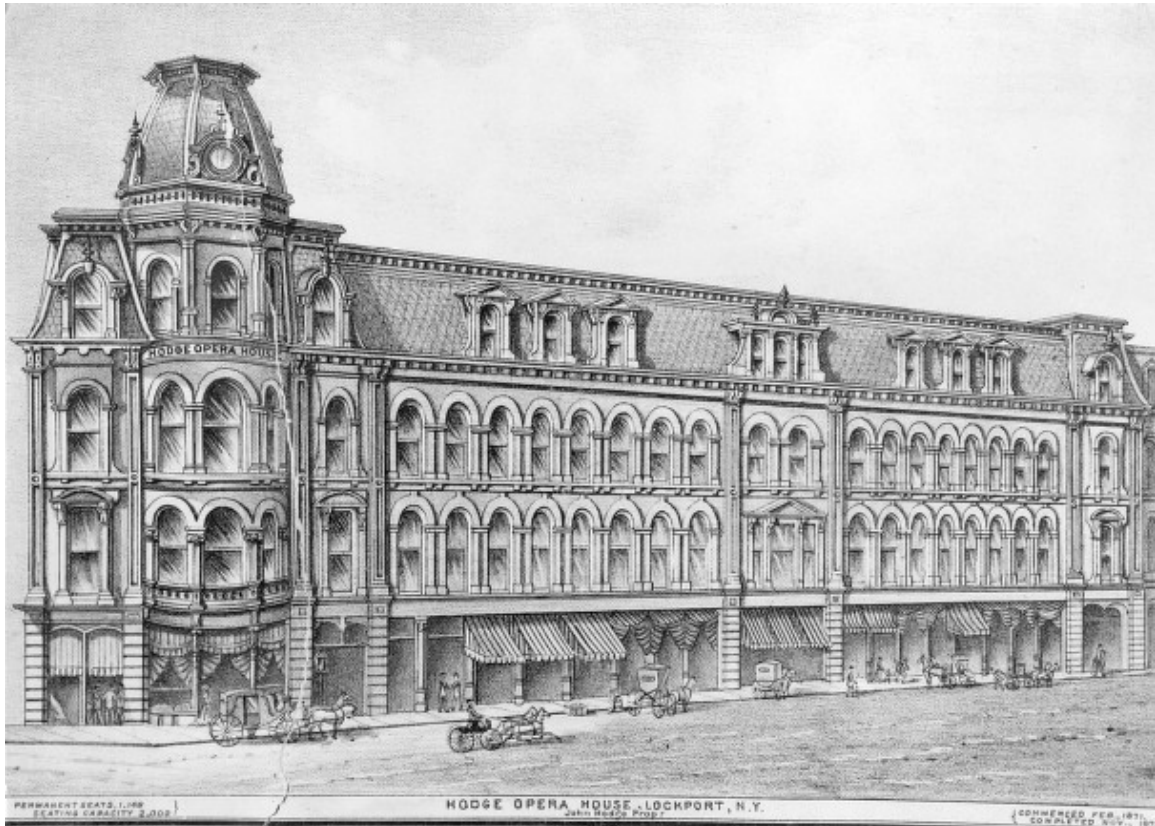


Figure 4.27
The Hodge Opera House, drawing, ca. 1872¹⁰⁰

The original Hodge Opera House was constructed in a Second Empire style, with three floors and a fourth floor mansard roof level. The ground level featured an ornate cast iron façade. Built using 55-tons of Ohio-quarried sandstone, as opposed to the local stone, the building was designed with a unique rounded bay marking the corner of Main and Market Streets, and capped by a curved polygonal tower with a cornice.¹⁰¹ The building was designed using steam heating, provided no-doubt by Birdsill Holly's advancements in engineering, and utilized gas lighting.

Housing approximately fifty offices and stores, the ground level contained businesses such as the post office, a saloon, a bookshop, a haberdashery and other shops. The building also housed the Federal District Attorney's office as well as offices used by several doctors and lawyers. The Opera House itself was located on the third floor, and accommodated an audience of 2,000 people. It was ornately designed, with a large central dome, 38-feet in height, which was frescoed with the muses as well as portraits of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Garfield and other significant figures. It was so lavishly designed it even featured

¹⁰⁰ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

¹⁰¹ Originally, this tower was intended to house a clock, however it was never installed.

a ramp, so that live animals could be brought onto the stage for circuses and other events.



Figure 4.28
The original Second Empire-style Hodge Opera House, constructed 1871-72¹⁰²

The theater's inaugural show in 1872 was a production of *Hamlet*, performed by the leading tragedian of the day, Edwin Adams. At this show, admission prices were \$2.00 for the lower part of the house, \$1.00 for seats in the gallery, and \$15.00 for the boxes. Despite what were rather expensive prices for the day, the entire show was sold out. A wide variety of acts came to the Opera House, including Shakespearean plays such as *Julius Caesar*, and it was also a popular venue for lectures by figures including Horace Greely, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Clara Barton among others.

The original Hodge Opera house was lost to fire on January 5, 1881. Believed to have been sparked by a discarded cigar butt tossed into a sawdust-filled box used as a spittoon, the fire was noticed about 8:00 PM on January 4th when it filled the café run by Henry Levi in the basement of the building. This fire was

¹⁰² "Opera House, Lockport, N.Y." *NYPL Digital Gallery | Home*. New York Public Library. Web. 18 Apr. 2011. <<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1>>.

extinguished, however the flames remained inside the walls, and by 3:00 AM on the morning of the 5th, the fire erupted again. This time, the fire spread through the building and destroyed it. Since the City had stored many of its records in the building, including vital records such as birth certificates and City proceedings.



Figure 4.29
The Second Hodge Opera House, constructed in 1882.¹⁰³

Following this devastating loss, John Hodge was uncertain about rebuilding. The citizens of Lockport urged Hodge to rebuild the valuable cultural landmark, and collected \$7,000 in donations for the rebuilding effort. Touched by the effort, Hodge decided to rebuild the Opera House, refusing the public donation.

On February 28, 1882 the Second Hodge Opera House opened. The new Opera House was built at the same location of the original building, and was approximately the same shape. However this new building featured a new Classical-influenced design, reflecting the current tastes of the era. The four-story building featured a simplified, pilastered façade with a continuous cornice marked with finials and a pediment. The rounded bay at the corner of Main and Market Streets was present, similar to the original building, however its form was simplified and incorporated into the mass of the building.

The new auditorium measured 86-feet wide and 76-feet from the front wall to the orchestra pit. The stage was a spacious 36 by 40 feet in size and could

¹⁰³ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

accommodate shows from New York City productions. The theater featured 1,200 numbered seats, and 800 additional seats. Similar to the first building, the new Hodge Opera House also accommodated many commercial spaces and offices including the Harrison Bowling Alleys, Ira M. McCoy bindery, lodge rooms for the Eagles, the Moose and the Ancient Order of Hibernians as well as the business and editorial offices of the Union Sun newspaper. As tastes and technology changed following the turn of the twentieth century, the theater was dismantled and the entire building was dedicated to office and commercial space in 1914.

Tragedy struck the Hodge Opera House yet again in 1928. At about 1:00 PM on Saturday afternoon, February 28th, 1928, a fire broke out in the boiler room of the Merchant's Gargling Oil Company building, located adjacent to the Opera House. This fire, fueled by the flammable Gargling Oil, quickly consumed that building, before spreading to the Opera House. Within twenty four hours, the entire block was destroyed. Eleven million gallons of water were used in fighting the inferno, and trucks from Wilson, Medina, Newfane, North Tonawanda, Niagara Falls and Buffalo were called in to assist. In the dead of winter, the frozen building was an eerie apparition. Damages to the building were estimated at \$350,000.



Figure 4.30
The devastated Hodge Opera House in 1928 following the fire.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ "The History of the Hodge Opera House." *Lockport Highlights in History*. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <www.lockport-ny.com/History/stories3.html>.

It didn't take long, however, before a new building would emerge from the ashes of the former Hodge Opera House. Shortly after the fire, Richard Bewley began planning for a new building at this prominent location. Built by the Bewley-Truesdale Construction Company of Lockport to the designs of Carl Schmill & Son, the Bewley Building opened on March 9, 1929.¹⁰⁵

Built in the footprint of the previous building, uniquely, this new building incorporated some of the ruined portions of the previous Hodge Opera House into its construction. The rear and west walls of the building incorporated some of the older stone walls into its construction, remaining after the fire. Built as a five-story building, rather than the original four-stories of the Opera House, the Bewley Building featured a rusticated two-story base level which housed a variety of shops and stores. The upper floors were of red brick and the building was surmounted by a simple continuous cornice. The Bewley Building featured over 200 offices, and ten ground-level retail spaces. Each office contained sinks with hot and cold water, and connecting doors from office to office in order to create a suite of offices; rare features among contemporary office buildings of the period.



Figure 4.31
The Bewley Building, 2010 photograph.

¹⁰⁵ William Truesdale was President of Bewley-Truesdale Company, George Bewley served as Treasurer, and William Bewley was Vice President and Secretary. The Bewley brothers ran a profitable canning business, and William Bewley also served as a Representative of the First District of Niagara County to the State Legislature. George Bewley was also involved in Bewley Realty Company, which developed Bewley Parkway and Carlisle Gardens.

The Bewley Building was the location of the Niagara region's first self-operating elevator, installed in 1955. In the 1960s the building underwent a face-lift, receiving a new stone plaque marking the name of the building, as well as a new granite façade installed over the old stone. Also in the 1960s, the interior spaces received updates as well. In 2003 the building was partially restored to its original 1920s appearance, including work to the windows, stone, and awnings. Today, the Bewley Building largely resembles its original 1920s appearance, and remains one of Lockport's most desirable office buildings.¹⁰⁶



Figure 4.32

Herbert Champion Harrison, (October 4, 1876 - March 6, 1927)¹⁰⁷

Harrison was a pioneer of improved automobile radiators.

Perhaps the most significant business in Lockport is the Harrison Radiator Corporation, founded by Herbert Champion Harrison. Harrison was born in Calcutta, India to British parents in 1876. He later attended school in England, eventually earning a degree in electrical engineering from Oxford University's Trinity College in 1900. In 1907 Harrison immigrated to the United States, ready to begin working. Shortly after arriving in this county, Harrison became the Vice President of the Susquehanna Smelting Company. When that company relocated to Lockport, Harrison followed.

¹⁰⁶ "The History of the Hodge Opera House." *Lockport Highlights in History*. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <www.lockport-ny.com/History/stories3.html>. Also, Bewley Building Associates. "The Bewley Building - About the Building." *The Bewley Building - Main Page*. 2001-2007. Web. 18 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.bewleybuilding.com/aboutbb.htm>>.

¹⁰⁷ "A Proud Past ... A Cool Future." *Delphi*. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. <http://delphi.com/news/featureStories/fs_2010_08_02_001/>.

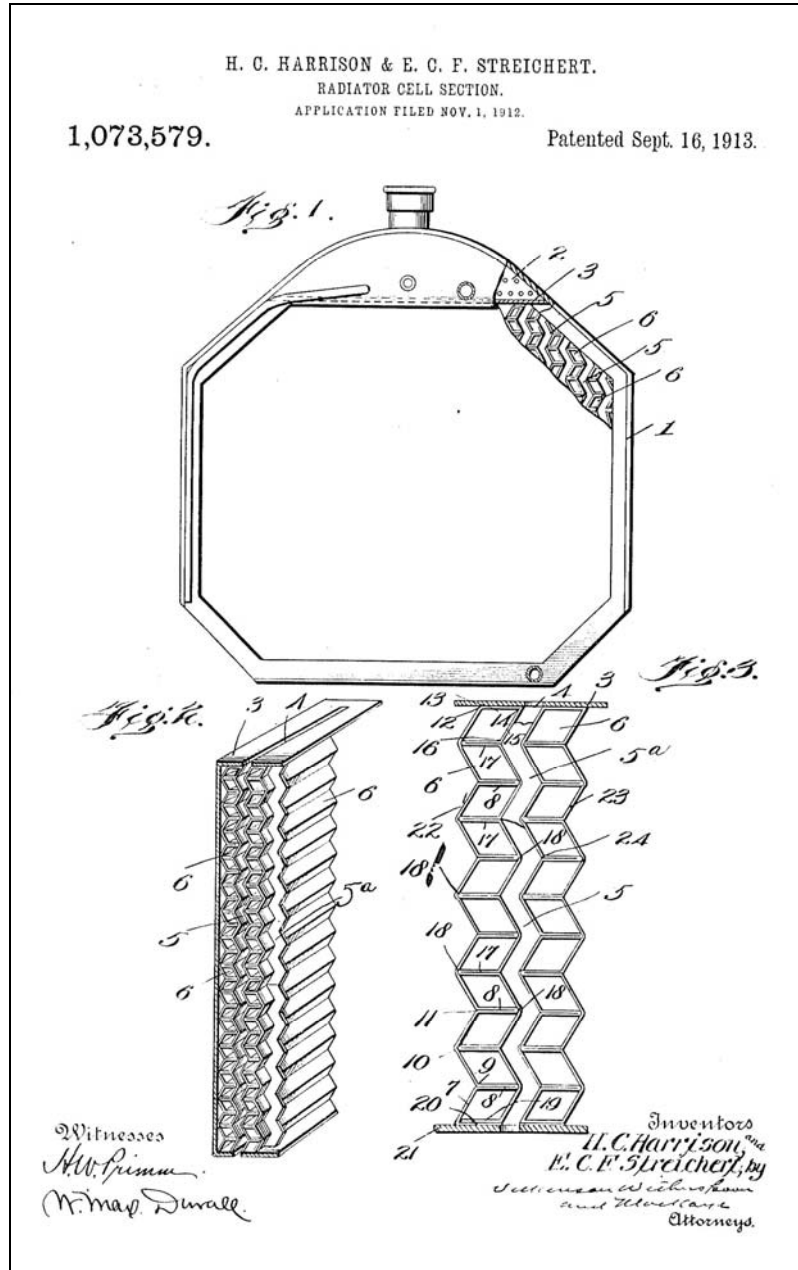


Figure 4.33
Patent, Radiator Cell
Section, #1,073,579¹⁰⁸
A patent for a honeycomb radiator design, issued to Harrison in 1913.

In 1910, Harrison founded the Harrison Radiator Company, housed at 57-61 Richmond Avenue (now Canal Street), overlooking the Erie Canal. Harrison Radiator Company pioneered a new honeycomb-patterned radiator, dubbed the Harrison Hexagon Radiator. With its increased surface area, this new radiator design transferred considerably more heat from the engine and was a significant improvement on the technology of the time.

¹⁰⁸ Harrison, Herbert Champion, and Emil Carl Frederick Streichert. Radiator Cell Section. Patent 1,073,579. 16 Sept. 1913. Print.



Figure 4.34
The Harrison Radiator Company
Building, Elm Street (undated,
ca. 1910s)¹⁰⁸

The second location of the Harrison company, this building was used by the company beginning in 1917 and was demolished in 1923 to make room for the expanding modern factory.

In 1913, the growing Harrison company relocated to a plant on Elm Street, just south of Washburn Street, and became known as the Harrison Manufacturing Company. The company then changed its name to the Harrison Radiator Corporation in 1916, and constructed an office building and two-story manufacturing facility at Walnut Street at the corner of Washburn Street shortly after in 1917. This modern factory facility was designed as a reinforced concrete frame “daylight” factory by Rochester architect Jas. R. Tylert and constructed by the prominent contracting firm of the John W. Cowper Company from Buffalo. This construction method was popular for early twentieth century industrial buildings as it was fire-resistant, easy to clean and the non-structural walls allowed for large windows provided ample illumination to the production spaces inside. Interior load-bearing columns created a workspace free of structural walls, allowing for great flexibility in locating machinery, offices and other spaces.

¹⁰⁹ Joe Olenick, "Delphi Marking 100 Years in Lockport," *Lockport Union-Sun & Journal Online*. 12 June 2010. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. <<http://lockportjournal.com/local/x1996924527/Delphi-marking-100-years-in-Lockport>>.

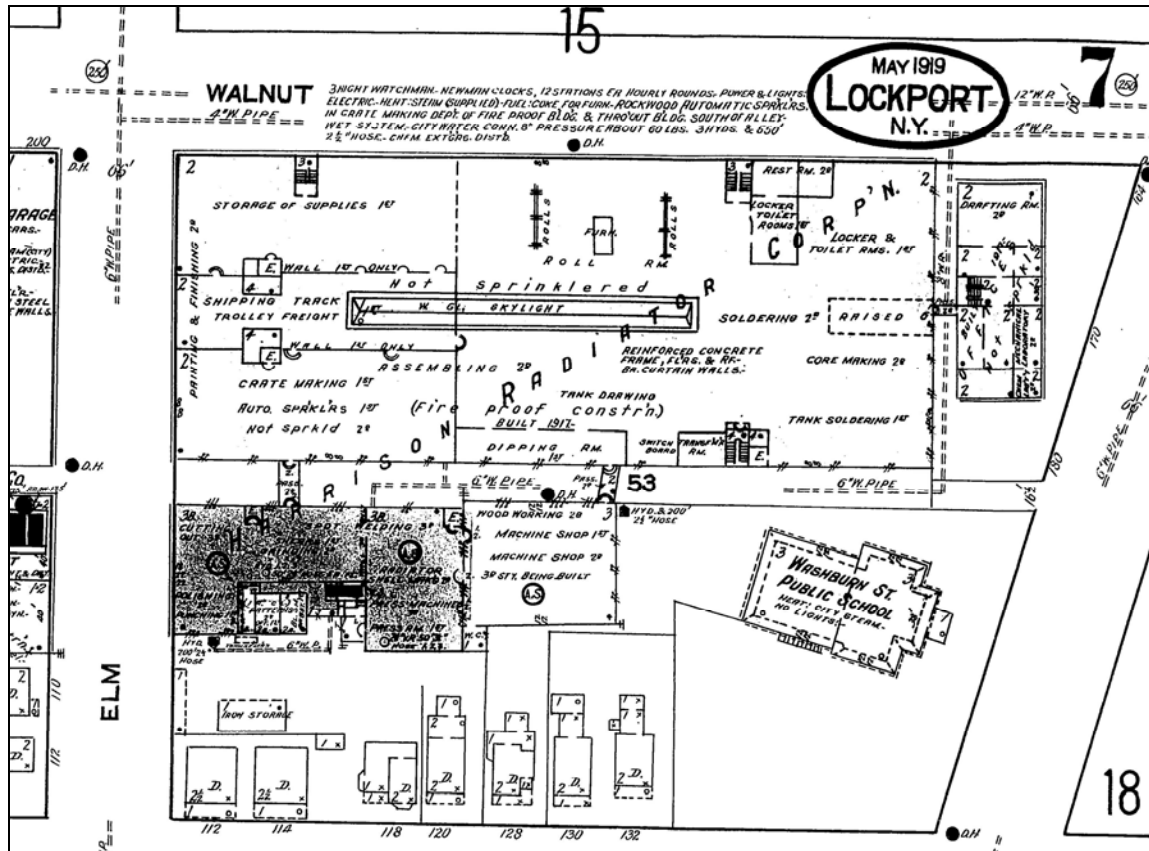


Figure 4.35
The Harrison Radiator Corporation Factory, 1919

This detail from a Sanborn map shows the size and configuration of the factory as it appeared by 1919. The small shaded building is the building which the Harrison company relocated to in 1915; this was subsequently demolished in 1923 when the plant expanded.

The Harrison Radiator Corporation remained an independent supplier of radiators to the thriving American automobile industry until it was purchased by the United Motor's Corporation in 1917. Shortly after, in 1918, this company was taken over by General Motors Corporation, while the Harrison Radiator Corporation continued its operations. The company continued to grow and prosper during this period, and substantially enlarged its factory building at Walnut Street. In 1920 a third-story addition was added to the manufacturing plant, and in 1923 the Elm Street building was demolished to create a large three-story manufacturing building to the south of the 1917 building, nearly doubling the capacity of the existing facility.



Figure 4.36

The Harrison Radiator Division of General Motors, ca. 1941¹¹⁰

This aerial view shows the factory at its largest extents. Note the large rooftop monitors which allowed additional light into the building.

Harrison remained as President until his death in 1927, at which time the company was renamed as the Harrison Radiator Division of General Motors Corporation. Continuing to profit and expand, in 1930 a two-story building used for Experimentation and Manufacturing was added to the west of the existing plant, further enlarging the Harrison Radiator facility. While built utilizing similar reinforced concrete and brick construction, harmonizing with the older portions of the factory complex, this new building was decorated with a prominent stone entry surround done in a vaguely Art Deco design, proudly proclaiming the building as home to the “Harrison Radiator Division of General Motors Corporation.” During this era, the company continued to manufacture radiators, and also became General Motor’s primary manufacturer of air conditioning systems as well.

Eventually in 1952, the Harrison Radiator company established a large facility in outside of downtown Lockport, on Upper Mountain Road in West Lockport, while the downtown facility continued in operation. In 1995, General Motors established the Delphi Corporation for its various component manufacturing

¹¹⁰ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

companies, which included Harrison Radiator which was then renamed as Delphi Harrison Thermal Systems. In 1999, Delphi became an independent company and the Harrison company was no longer under General Motors ownership. In the 1990s, Harrison transferred its operations from the downtown plant to the West Lockport facility, and eventually in 2002 donated the complex to the City of Lockport.¹¹¹ Delphi filed for bankruptcy in 2005. This situation left the future of the Harrison company in question, and as one of Lockport's major employers, this was an uncertain time for many in Lockport. However, the Harrison company was repurchased by General Motors in 2009 as part of the Delphi restructuring, once again becoming part of the giant automaker.¹¹²

4.4c Churches of Lockport

Like any modern City, Lockport contains a range and variety of religious denominations and faiths, many of which have a long history in the area.¹¹³ Lockport's first house of worship was the small log meeting house, erected by the Quakers or Society of Friends, which was constructed on the parcel now bounded by Main, Market and Elm Streets. This modest structure was built for \$300, and the 2-acre property was purchased for \$24. As the first church constructed in the town, this church was eligible for a donation of land by the Holland Land Company of 100-acres, however the congregation declined this offer due to conflicts with their beliefs.

Lockport's First Presbyterian Church, Lockport's second church, constructed a small church on the court house square at the center of the nascent village. The congregation then negotiated with the Holland Land Company for the tract which the Quaker meeting house had refused, successfully lobbying for a parcel some two-miles south of the community. This tract was subsequently sold for \$1000, which the church put into a building fund. The first pastor for the church was Rev. Abatus Kent, who began his services in early 1823. As the population of the settlement dramatically increased, so too did the membership of the First Presbyterian Church, and in 1830 the congregation dedicated a new brick church building, located on the corner of Ontario and Church Streets. By 1832 the membership was recorded at being 355 people. In the years between 1834 and 1838, two different factions developed within the congregation, based largely on the issue of slavery, and the disagreement resulted in a splintering of the membership. One group asked for letters to form another church, which when granted, were used to establish the First Congregational Church.

¹¹¹ Today, the former Harrison plant on Washburn Street is now known as Harrison Place and serves as a business incubator for a variety of industrial and business tenants.

¹¹² "Harrison Radiator." *Generations of GM*. General Motors Heritage Center. Web. 19 Apr. 2011. <http://history.gmheritagecenter.com/wiki/index.php/Harrison_Radiator>. Also, Riley, 141-142. Additional information provided by Robert J. Hagen, retired Harrison employee and historian.

¹¹³ As there are numerous churches and congregations in the City of Lockport, this section focuses primarily on those edifices which are extant within the survey boundaries.

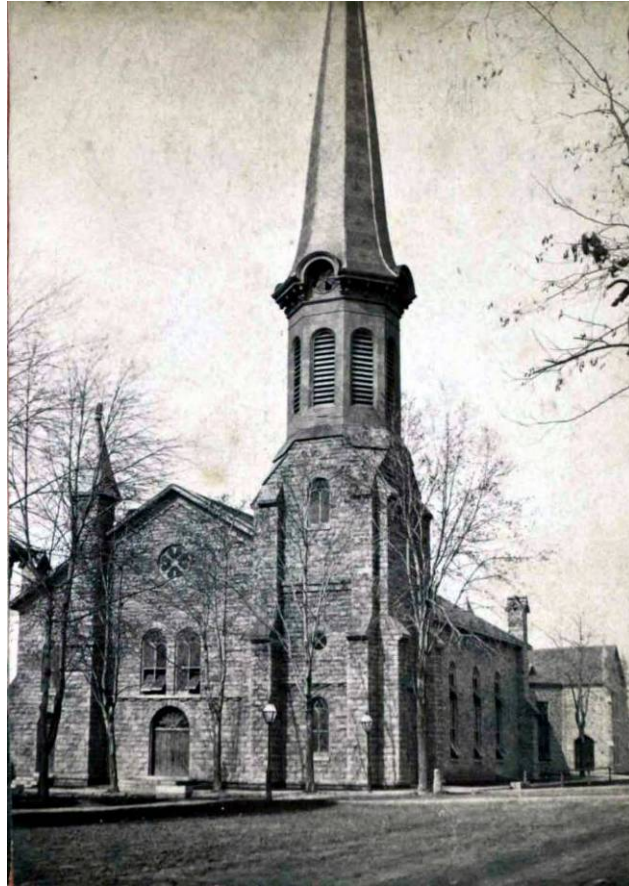


Figure 4.37
First Presbyterian
Church, Lockport
(ca. 1880s)¹¹⁰

An excellent view of the 1855 church building and the 1867 steeple with its original tall spire.

The remaining group remained strong and active following the split, and continued to prosper and grow under the leadership of Rev. William C. Wisner, who began his pastorate in May of 1842. Rev. Wisner originally began at the Second Presbyterian Church which was organized in Lowertown, however after this church faced economic issues, he joined the First Presbyterian Church. Rev. Wisner was highly regarded and brought numerous new followers to the church, and he thrived in the climate of the religious revivals which were highly popular in New York State during this era. Rev. Wisner was noted as bringing in 150 new members on one Sabbath day alone. Under his leadership, the church continued to emerge as one of Lockport's leading churches and also the region's, the congregation quickly outgrew the brick building they used for their worship. In 1855 a new stone church building was constructed, located on the same site as the older brick building. Typical of the time, the construction costs for the church, and its subsequent 1867 steeple addition, was funded by pew rental. Pews were auctioned off to the highest bidders, and since many of Lockport's most prominent leaders were Presbyterian, these prices provided an ample building fund. The Gardner Memorial chapel, located in rear of the church, was built and dedicated in 1890. Today, the First Presbyterian Church in Lockport is highly

¹¹⁴ From a stereoscope image, F. B. Clench, *View of a Church, Lockport, NY*. ca. 1880s. Photograph. NYPL Digital Gallery, New York. *NYPL Digital Gallery*. New York Public Library, 2006. Web. 14 Feb. 2011. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?G91F096_034ZF>.

regarded for its large collection of stained glass windows designed by the studios of Louis Comfort Tiffany.¹¹⁵



Figure 4.38
First Presbyterian Church, Lockport (Oct, 26, 1946)¹¹⁶
 Note the changes to the steeple and the removal of the spire.

Meanwhile, the First Free Congregational Church, whose members had left the Presbyterian congregation, continued to develop in its own right. Organized on June 7, 1838, the congregation had strong sentiments against slavery. Their first church was dedicated on July 23, 1840 at the corner of Niagara and Church Streets. Perhaps one of the most unusual events in the history of Lockport occurred in this building. In 1852, as the congregation was singing their closing hymn, a violent thunderstorm erupted, and a bolt of lightning struck and killed Deacon Crocker. Also unfortunate for the congregation was the loss of their church building, destroyed in the first massive fire which swept through Lockport in 1854, and was quickly rebuilt on the same property. On October 15, 1857, the congregation dedicated a new stone building.¹¹⁷ The Congregational church persisted despite these trials, and also gave rise to the East Avenue Church in 1890 and the Plymouth Congregational Church in 1920.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Riley, 111-112. Also Pool, 127-128.

¹¹⁶ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

¹¹⁷ This church building was demolished ca. 1940s.

¹¹⁸ Riley, 112.



Figure 4.39

First Baptist Church of Lockport (March 10, 1957)¹¹⁹

A view of the current church, this building also incorporates a ca. 1870s Italianate style house into its campus (not shown in photo).

In addition to the early Presbyterian and Congregationalist groups in early Lockport, the Baptists also had an early presence. On April 13, 1816, missionary John Uptold visited the Lockport area, and met with five believers, forming the base for the Baptist faith in the region. From these first five members who met regularly, the number had grown to twelve members by March of 1817. This group soon after adopted the name of the Cambria Baptist Church, and Samuel Alvord became the group's first preacher. After meeting in various locations, the first formal meeting was held in Lockport on December 6, 1824, and the name was subsequently changed to the Lockport Baptist Church in 1825. Membership in the congregation at this time numbered roughly 50 people. Soon, the Baptists began plans to construct their own church in August 1825; however this work faced several delays. In 1835, the congregation successfully constructed a stone church on Pine Street, at a cost of about \$5,000. The church faced internal discord in the early 1850s, which resulted in several members splintering from the congregation to form the Second Baptist Church of Lockport in 1851. Now with a new peace, the First Baptist Church of Lockport continued its growth and prosperity, culminating in the construction of a new church building in 1867 located at Pine and South Streets. This church building was demolished in the 1950s after the congregation built a large new structure between 1951 and 1954.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

¹²⁰ Pool, 128-129.



Figure 4.40

Niagara Street at Church Street, showing First Congregationalist Church, at left, and First Methodist Church, at right (ca. 1900)¹²¹

A view roughly dating to ca. 1900 which shows this street corner's two churches. Both were demolished ca. 1940s.

A Methodist congregation was also prominent in the Lockport area. The religion took hold in the region following the visits of Rev. Daniel Shepardson. Rev. Shepardson traveled throughout Western NY beginning in 1816, preaching Methodism about once a month in the school house, located about two miles east of Lockport, as well as in Warren's Corners. Lockport was combined in the Buffalo and Lewiston circuit in 1823, and in October of that year a group was incorporated. This group built a small church in 1824, on Genesee Street between Pine and Cottage Streets. This congregation was subsequently dissolved, however Methodism retained a strong place in the local community. After reorganization occurred on April 30, 1827, the Lockport Methodist community began to thrive. The small church was quickly outgrown, despite an addition being made. In 1833 a new building was constructed, at a cost of about \$10,000. As occurred in the Presbyterian congregation, disagreements about slavery also split the Methodist congregation, and in 1840 a group splintered from the main congregation. This group organizationally folded in 1846, and was subsequently reincorporated into the Methodist congregation. The 1833 church building was, like so much of Lockport, destroyed in the devastating fire of 1854. At the time of the loss, the congregation was in debt and only \$7,000 could be raised to rebuild another church. After great effort by the congregation to raise

¹²¹ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

sufficient funds, a new brick church building was constructed located at the corner of Niagara and Church Streets, overlooking the canal, in 1857.¹²² This church building was demolished ca. 1940s.



Figure 4.41

Former Church of the Redeemer Universalist Church (Nov 26, 1967)¹²³

The appearance of this small church building has remained virtually unchanged from its original 1840s construction. Note the cracking asphalt street paving reveals earlier brick paving.

One of the most elegant of Lockport's early churches is the former Church of the Redeemer Universalist Church. The earliest Universalist missionaries to preach in Lockport came to the area in 1835. Soon after, a congregation was formed, with Rev. Job Potter, who is noted as serving as the first minister in 1836-37. The group organized under the banner of the First Universalist Society of Lockport, however unlike the thriving Presbyterian church, membership dwindled and regular preaching was soon abandoned. In the summer of 1841, renewed interest in a Universalist church was kindled upon the visit of Rev. Charles Hammond from Rochester. Rev. Hammond was undeterred by the previous lack of enthusiasm, and set about holding meetings in the court house and in various halls, which were well attended. On April 11, 1842 a new organization was formed, and preparations for constructing a church began. A lot was purchased at the corner of Church and Ontario Streets, and a small stone building was constructed in the fall of 1843. This relatively small and simple edifice was one of the few survivors in the area of the devastating 1854 fire, which swept away many of the neighboring buildings but spared the Universalist Church. Between 1866-69 the building underwent an enlargement, and the exterior was given a

¹²² Pool, 129.

¹²³ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

more Italianate treatment. In 1879 the church changed its name to the Church of the Redeemer, which remained its name until the congregation folded in 1936. Subsequently, the building was purchased by the First Presbyterian Church located across the street in 1941, who used the building to house youth and recreational services. They dubbed the building the Hamilton House. However by 2000, the building had fallen into disrepair as it sat unused and vacant. Fortunately this elegant little church was spared from the wrecking ball, and after funding was obtained, the building became the home of the Erie Canal Discovery Center, housing Lockport-native A. Raphael Beck's painting "The Opening of the Erie Canal, October 26, 1825," depicting the ceremonies during the opening of the Erie Canal.¹²⁴



Figure 4.42
Grace Episcopal Church (undated, possibly ca. 1900)¹²⁵
 Built in 1852-55 at the corner of Genesee Street and Cottage Street.

Grace Episcopal Church is another noteworthy church in the City of Lockport. The church was initially formed in 1829, however this group dissolved and its earliest records were lost. A second organization met on February 3, 1835, and on February 9, 1835, Rev. Orange Clark, rector for the Church Church, signed the necessary paperwork and the new church was officially formed. Under the leadership of Rev. George Denison, the first rector, the congregation began construction work on a wood frame building at the corner of Buffalo and Saxton

¹²⁴ Pool, 131-132. Also "New Life for an Old Erie Canal Treasure." *The Legislative Gazette - Special Section Lockport*. The Legislative Gazette, 2005. Web. 14 Feb. 2011.
 <<http://www.legislativegazette.com/PDF/LockportLayout.pdf>>.

¹²⁵ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011.
 <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

Streets. The church was completed, and its first services were held on February 18, 1838. However like many congregations, the church was soon outgrown. Construction on a new church began in 1852, with the cornerstone being laid on May 2, 1853. The much larger stone building, located on Genesee Street at Cottage Street was dedicated in August of 1855. A rectory was purchased in 1885 and in 1886-87 a Parish House was built adjacent to the church. After a fire swept through both the church and the Parish House, only the stone wall shell and tower remained standing. Rather than abandon their city location, the congregation decided to rebuild their beloved church, rededicating it on Sunday, May 22, 1977.¹²⁶



Figure 4.43
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
(April 1946)¹²³

A view of the stately brick church overlooking the Erie Canal on Buffalo Street.

The old wooden church owned by the Grace Episcopal Church was sold in the 1850s to another congregation, which was growing in Lockport at the time; a German congregation of Roman Catholics who would become known as St. Mary's. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church is now one of Lockport's most recognizable landmarks, with its tall spire towering above the Erie Canal. The congregation began in 1850. Encouraged by the growing number of German Catholics in Lockport, Bishop Timon granted permission for the Germans to

¹²⁶ "History - Grace Episcopal Church - Lockport, NY." *Grace Episcopal Church - Lockport, NY*. 2006. Web. 14 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.gracelockport.org/History.dsp>>.

¹²⁷ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

separate from the congregation of St. John the Baptist Church in order to form their own church. On March 6, 1859 the German trustees of the group purchased the former wood church of the Grace Episcopal Church on Buffalo Street at Saxton Street for a price of \$2,000. This edifice became the first home of the St. Mary's Parish. The first pastor for St. Mary's was Father Francis S. Uhrick from Pendleton, who served the church from 1859-1863. During the first Mass, St. Mary's was dedicated under the title of Immaculate Conception. Under the leadership of Father John Zoegel, the first parsonage was built between 1863 and 1864. Like many churches in Lockport, the congregation of St. Mary's continued to grow and thrive, and the church constructed a new school to educate the children of the congregation. Father G. Gill directed the congregation during a significant period of growth and expansion, leading the parish through construction of a new red brick building, replacing the old wood frame edifice. On June 4, 1885 the cornerstone was laid, and it was dedicated in a ceremony by Bishop Stephen V. Ryan. Father Gill also led the church through the enlargement of the parsonage. 1892 saw the construction of a new brick school building, fronting Walnut Street. In 1905, improvements to the church were made at a time when the church eliminated its debt. The church was re-roofed, a new communion rail was installed, and new stained glass windows were inserted. New confessionals, a new heating system, and Stations of the Cross were purchased from Munich, Germany among other improvements. In 1909 the church purchased a Teller pipe organ.



Figure 4.44
St. Mary's Roman Catholic School Building (November 17, 1946)¹²⁸
 The 1892 school building which fronts onto Walnut Street

Despite the Great Depression, the St. Mary's parish continued to flourish through the 1930s and 40s. Under the guidance of Father John H. Christman, St. Mary's

¹²⁸ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

underwent an eight-year renovation program. One of the most significant projects of this campaign is the skinning of the building's red brick with a yellow brick veneer. Each brick was purchased by a donation of a dime from parishioners. The cross atop the building's spire was removed, reinforced, and gilded in 22-carat gold leaf. The front entrance was remodeled in Indiana grey stone, and bronze lanterns were added flanking the entry doors. Father Christman also renovated the interior, adding a new 20-ton main altar, two side altars and a Carrera marble pulpit. Raphael Beck, the renowned painter and Lockport native son, was hired to paint scenes depicting the Good Samaritan and the Death of St. Joseph. Work on the church parish continued into the 1940s and beyond. In 1953 a new eight-room classroom building was constructed on Walnut Street, expanding the St. Mary's school. A new rectory was also built during this era. Under the leadership of Msgr. Paul J. Eberz, a \$100,000 renovation to the pipe organ was organized. As prescribed by the changes of Vatican II, a new altar facing the people was installed, and the sanctuary was modernized. The church was also re-consecrated. Additional updates and alterations would be made to the church were made in the 1990s, including replacing a portion of the wall around the Holy Family stained glass window, installation of new carpeting, the interior of the church was freshly painted, a new church roof was installed, and energy conservation improvements were made on all buildings on the property. After suffering damage from an electrical storm, the church's organ was repaired for over \$21,000. In 2000, the Parish Center building was renovated which is now used for a variety of church and local functions.¹²⁹



Figure 4.45

St. Mary's Roman Catholic School Building and Addition (April 2, 1955)¹³⁰

The 1892 school building and subsequent 1953 addition on Walnut Street. Note the spire of the church building is visible in the background, as it is located on the same city block.

¹²⁹ "History of St. Mary's." *St. Mary's Parish, Lockport*. Web. 15 Feb. 2011.
<<http://www.stmaryslockport.org/history.html>>.

¹³⁰ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011.
<<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

The Lockport survey area also contains several other churches, for which little historical information has presently been discovered. One such church is the former St. Peter's German Evangelical Church also known as St. Peter's United Church of Christ/ Faith Emmanuel Temple, located on Locust Street at the corner of South Street. The German congregation was founded in 1862, constructing a building the following year at a cost of about \$4,000.¹³¹ This church building was constructed in 1863, as noted in an inscribed tablet inset into the building's prominent gable end. It partially reads in German "St. Peter's Kirche," identifying it as St. Peter's Church. The bell tower was added to the building in 1882, and in 1903 the red brick was painted a pale yellowish beige color. A one-story addition was added in 1915.

Another noteworthy church is the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, located on South Street in Lockport. This relatively humble front-gabled meeting house style church building is built of red brick and features several pointed arched windows, giving it a modest Gothic Revival style. An inset tablet in the gable reads "A.M.E. United Church, Erec. AD 1876." Lockport during the Civil War era of the 1850s and 60s was a prominent stop on the Underground Railroad, ferrying runaway slaves to Canada. Following the Civil War, Lockport hosted a significant population of free blacks. The A.M.E. Church was founded by Rev. Richard Allen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1816, and it was significant for being the first major religious denomination founded for sociological reasons rather than ideological due to its strong anti-slavery and anti-discrimination stance. Following the Civil War, the A.M.E. Church provided a sense of community and aided in promoting education and integration of the African American community.



Figure 4.46

First English Lutheran Church (November 26, 1946)¹³²

This English Gothic Revival Church building was the former 1850-built church for the First English Lutheran Church, located at Locust and Walnut Streets.

¹³¹ Pool, 132. Also *History of Niagara County*, 212.

¹³² Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

One of the more modern church buildings, constructed in 1952, is the First English Lutheran Church located on Locust Street. The church was organized in 1837 with about one hundred members, and the first meetings were initially held in the court house. In 1838 a brick building was built on West Main Street at New Main Street, and in 1850 the church constructed a new brick building on Locust Street at a cost of about \$4,000, which was substantially remodeled in 1918. The present Gothic Revival building, with its square tower, was erected in 1954-56.¹³³



Figure 4.47

Trinity Lutheran Church and School Building (November 17, 1946)¹³⁴

The building as it appeared prior to the 1970s addition. Also note the appearance of the school building

The congregation of the Trinity Lutheran Church has existed since 1871. This earliest group had a church located at the corner of Washburn and Walnut Streets, until the present church located on Saxton Street at the corner of Lagrange Street in 1893. An elegant stone Gothic Revival church building, Trinity Lutheran Church is notable for its two non-matched towers. A brick school building once stood on the property, but was destroyed by fire in 1972. In 1974 a new parish building was constructed adjoining the historic church, which houses offices, classrooms, a chapel, a gymnasium and a kitchen. According to the current pastor, Rev. Alan J. Bauch, the church once also had a parsonage which stood next door to the church. This parsonage was picked up and moved to 120 Saxton Street in 1923 to make room for the brick schoolhouse. The parsonage was sold in the 1950s.

4.4d Lockport's Early Schools

Presently, the only extant school building in the Lockport survey area is the John Pound Elementary School, located on High Street, which was constructed in 1930. However, this area in Lockport once contained many other of the City's

¹³³ *History of Niagara County*, 211. Also Peca, 90.

¹³⁴ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

early school buildings. Education has a long and important history in Lockport, and here will be briefly described.

Lockport's earliest schools were informal classes held in association with local churches, and often held in their buildings. The first more organized school was taught by Miss Pamela Aldrich and was held in the Friends Meeting House. Quickly it became apparent to the local community that educating the growing population of children was necessary and R.L. Wilson constructed a log building at his own expense located on Main Street to serve as a school. This school served jointly as a public and private enterprise, students paid a subscription to attend. In 1823 David Nye erected a private school building, in which he taught before selling it to Charles Hammond who continued operating the school. In 1825, School district No. 1 was formed from the large area on the west side of the canal, and subsequently School district No. 2 was created for the east side of the canal. This early school district system provided revenue to the newly established Village of Lockport in these years, serving 542 students at this time. These districts were eventually divided into seven districts in subsequent decades. During this early era in Lockport history, additional classes were held, often hosted in upper floors of commercial buildings and in halls. In 1832, the Exchange Coffee House, located near the main village square, was also transformed into a school.¹³⁵

As the churches and religious groups began to become better organized and have raise sufficient funds, religious schools also began to develop to rival these secular schools. Many in the growing Catholic faith feared that their children would lose their faith if they attended these secular public schools, and formed a separate Catholic parochial school.

Lockport's greatest educational success is perhaps the creation of the Union School system in 1847. This was believed to have been the first public high school established in the United States. The Union School system created a unified, consolidated organization which was composed of both primary and secondary education. This system was highly influential, and was copied in school districts throughout the state.¹³⁶

The Union School District concept began in 1846 with Sullivan Caverno. After his own education at Dartmouth College, followed by his work as principal of the Lewiston Academy, Caverno worked to devise this system of primary and secondary schools. These secondary schools provided an education in three courses of study, the classical, the English and the commercial, and prepared students for programs in higher colleges. At the elementary level, teachers specialized in grades, and students passed from one grade to the next in a more rigorous and progressive manner, comparable to the structure of modern elementary school programs. This was in contrast to earlier elementary

¹³⁵ Pool, 158-159. Also Riley, 118.

¹³⁶ Riley, 118.

programs, where students of all ages and abilities were grouped together and taught by a single teacher.

One of the most notable figures associated with the Lockport Union School was Mrs. Belva A. Lockwood. Lockwood, a native of nearby Royalton, became a teacher of the school in 1857. Although she sought a career as a lawyer, teaching was one of the few professions open to women at the time. Eventually Belva Lockwood would emerge as a pioneer of suffrage and equality for women, and left education to become a prominent attorney in Washington D.C. during the 1870s and 1880s. Lockwood also became the first official woman to run for President of the United States, running on the National Equal Rights Party ticket in 1884 and 1888.¹³⁷

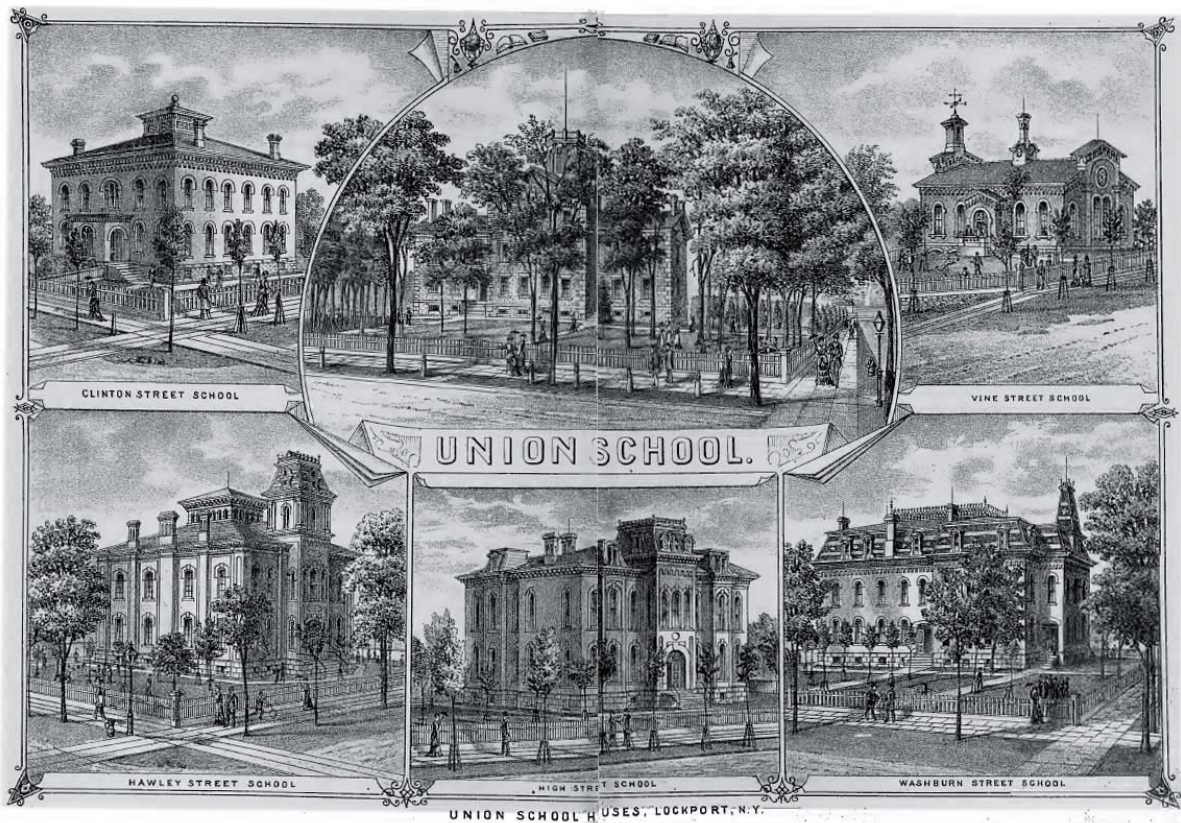


Figure 4.48
Lockport's Union School Houses (1878)¹³⁸

This 1878 image depicts the early Union Schools of Lockport. The Union School at center served secondary education purposes, while the other schools building served as primary education facilities. The mansarded Second Empire-styled High Street School (bottom center) was located on the site of the present John Pound Elementary School.

¹³⁷ For more information on the life and career of Belva Lockwood, see Jill Norgren, *Belva Lockwood: the Woman Who Would Be President*, NYU Press, 2007.

¹³⁸ *History of Niagara County*, plate between pages 192 and 193.

Shortly after it was established, the new Union School building was constructed. A parcel was purchased on Chestnut Street at Washburn Street, and a stone building was erected in 1848. The building was designed with a three-story front-gabled wing, flanked by two symmetrical wings. The design was overall simple and functional, in a vaguely Greek Revival design, with a unique faceted cupola at the center. Subsequent school buildings were constructed throughout the district between the 1850s and 60s, including one located on High Street at the site of the present John Pound Elementary School. In 1890 a new, larger Union School building was constructed, located on Walnut Street near Elm Street.¹³⁹



Figure 4.49
The Lockport Union School (ca.1890s)¹⁴⁰

A ca. 1890s photograph showing the simple design and functionality of this early Greek Revival styled school building. Note the unusual cupola on the roof, and the symmetrical entry porches, likely one for girls and one for boys.

¹³⁹ Pool, 160-161.

¹⁴⁰ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.



Figure 4.50

The Former Lockport Union School (October 20, 1946)¹⁴¹

The last days of the former Union School in Lockport, prior to its demolition. Note it remained largely intact for approximately a century, from 1848 until at least 1946.



Figure 4.51

Lockport High School, former Union School (1910)¹⁴²

Constructed in 1890, this larger school replaced the earlier Lockport Union School and later served as Lockport High School. It was located on located on East Avenue between Elm and Washburn Streets.

¹⁴¹ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

¹⁴² Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

4.4e The Streets of Lockport¹⁴³

As the community of Lockport grew from the early pioneer wilderness into a thriving and successful industrial center, the community laid and improved a network of streets and roads. The development of Lockport's streets generally correlates to the dates of the buildings typically located on the street, which helps in identifying the approximate dates of construction for many of the houses and buildings which were reviewed in the survey.

Like many communities in Western New York, at the dawn of the early nineteenth century, there were few roads in the Lockport area. The earliest roads were generally trails used by the Native Americans. These trails were often utilized by the area's earliest settlers and traders. In 1802, settlement had not yet begun in the area of Lockport, with only a few rugged pioneers forging their way across the frontier into Western New York. Gradually a handful of these settlers located in the Lockport area, and the roots of the community were laid.

The West Transit meridian, which would become Transit Street, was perhaps the first "roadway" cut through the area of Lockport. This route was cleared during Joseph Ellicott's survey work around 1804. Not surprisingly, Main Street was the first major road to be established in the settlement of Lockport. Initially known as the Mountain Road when carved through the forests from Cold Springs to Cambria in 1815. At its eastern extents, this road was also known as the Batavia Road. In 1819 this primitive road was improved by Nathan Rogers, who cut a strip 19-rods wide from near the West Transit meridian/Transit Street to Locust Street. While stump-filled, this mud road was the primary artery through the growing community in the pre-Canal age.

Once the Main Street was established, plank roads soon radiated from the developing community in all directions. These early plank roads were known as the Akron and Batavia Road, the Lockport and Transit Road, and the Lockport and Clarence Hollow Road; aptly named for the two communities they connected. Other roads ran to Cold Springs, Niagara Falls and to Warren's Corners. These early, and still primitive, plank roads provided a vital connection between the settlement of Lockport and its neighbors, providing improved access to mills and other services and also encouraging settlement.

In 1826, New York State mandated that a State Road be constructed, running from Rochester to Lockport along the canal. This road was subsequently renamed as Market Street in the vicinity of Lockport in 1827. Market Street would form the backbone of the Lowertown settlement area, which was gridded and developed for settlement beginning in 1827.

¹⁴³ Drawn primarily from Kaiser, Mrs. Charles A. *The Streets of Lockport with Notes on the Early History of the City*. Lockport, NY: Niagara County Historical Society, 1948.

Jesse P. Haines 1830 map of Lockport (see figure 4.11) is the municipality's first map, created shortly after the construction and opening of the Erie Canal. The map depicts a roughly gridded street plan, bisected by the diagonal route of the canal. The primary area contained in the survey area is largely laid out, even though many areas were not densely settled during this early age. The map identifies that the Old Niagara Road, running east-west, was named First Street. Generally, all the streets identified on Haines' map were given numerical names at this point in history. East Second Street would later become Pine Street, West Second Street was later Church Street, West Third Street became South Transit Street, and East Third Street became Locust Street, named for the abundant locust trees on the street. East Fourth Street was later renamed Elm Street, East Fifth Street became Washburn Street, East Front Street became Cottage Street, and West Front Street was later Lock Street. Also depicted on this map from 1830 were Buffalo, Canal and Saxton Streets, which retain those names today, as well as an unnamed road from Main Street to the canal.

Once the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, bridges quickly became a necessary structure to connect the bi-sected community. Lockport's first bridge to cross the Canal was located at Canal and Main Streets. This early bridge was formed from two log stringers run from bank to bank, laid with split logs, which were placed bark-side facing up. This early bridge was described as being so narrow that one wagon could cross at a time. What a contrast this early, narrow log bridge was to the present bridge. Known as the "Big Bridge," this bridge was expanded in the late 1800s and into the twentieth century to become perhaps the world's widest bridge. The Big Bridge was so wide it often accommodated a street market; today it serves as parking for the Lockport Municipal Building, with many people not even realizing it is a bridge. For additional information on Lockport's bridges, refer to section 4.4a.

During this time, following Lockport's becoming a village in 1829, additional streets radiating into the surrounding landscape were constructed around Lockport. Also during this era, Center Alley vied with Main Street as the community's primary artery. It was recorded that Center Alley, which ran parallel to Main Street just to its south, contained a first-class boarding house, with 17 boarders lodged in a small yellow house. During the 1820s and 1830s, the core business district of Lockport developed around Prospect, Hawley, Transit, Canal, Buffalo, Niagara, Lock, Church, Saxton and Main Streets.

As the fortunes of Lockport continued to rise through the nineteenth century, the streetscape of the city also improved. Kerosene lights were installed to illuminate the streets, and watering troughs and hitching posts appeared to service the horses. One of the most important pedestrian improvements was the installation of plank sidewalks and crosswalks, to traverse the muddy, roughshod roads. Consisting of oak, pine or hemlock planks which were two-inches thick, laid crosswise and spiked down onto oak stringers, these plank walkways were solid and helped encourage pedestrian travel along the busiest commercial

thoroughfares. In 1841 the cost for installing a plank sidewalk on the north side of Main Street from Market to Elm Street, one relatively typical block, was \$12.91. The cost of the sidewalk was paid for by several local businesses located on that stretch of Main Street, indicating that these sidewalk improvements were generally self-funded and not funded by the Village of Lockport itself.

Paving of the dirt and mud streets first occurred on Main Street. In 1852, the inmates at the county jail broke stone which was used to pave Main Street at the west end where the plank road terminated. This same crew also completed paving of Locust Street, indicating its early prominence and significance during this era. In 1864, Center Alley was paved. Canal Street also began to develop during the mid-1800s. In 1852 the Steele livery stable on Canal Street was rebuilt, necessitating improvements to the front portion. Canal Street was also noted as being one of the busiest streets in Lockport during this age, due to the numerous businesses and industries located along this route near the Canal. In 1899, this street was renamed Richmond Avenue as an attempt to “dress up” the character of the street. Recently, a portion of the street between Niagara and Ontario Streets has been renamed as Canal Street, harkening back to this earlier era and rightfully tying the character of this street to the Erie Canal once again.

Saxton Street originated with a small clearing for the log house of Jared Comstock in 1823. As the community grew, the need to expand the street became necessary. However, a house and shop belonging to a man named Howe were located in the route of the road extension. After legal action, the extended Saxton Street was opened in 1854.

Buffalo Street was also developed during this same period. Initially it became a convenient dumping ground for the excess stone excavated from the Erie Canal construction during the 1820s, and piles of stone were noted as being located in the street for nearly a decade following.

East Fourth Street was renamed as Elm Street in 1831. In 1845, the street was improved and cleared to a width sufficient to accommodate two wagons. The work was done by Mr. Biddle from Asa W. Douglas’ farm and took about a half-day to complete. He was paid \$1.50 for the work. Elm Street continued to be subsequently improved. A sewer main was installed in 1870 at a cost of \$1149. In 1904, it was curbed, graded and paved in brick.

4.4f Urban Renewal in Lockport (ca. 1960s-70s)

Like many American cities in the decades after World War II, Lockport faced challenging times. Many of the businesses and industries which had formed the backbone of Lockport’s economy, driving prosperity and wealth in the community since the 1820s, began to decline or close their doors. Prominent companies including the Upson Company, manufacturer of fine-quality wall board, prospered and expanded in the early part of the twentieth century; however by the 1970s

the company went out of business as it had failed to keep pace with modernization of the industry, and closed in the 1980s. Lockport also faced the decline of its downtown core in this era. Typical of many cities in Western New York and elsewhere, improved roadways and highways coupled with new ways of living gave rise to retail developments in outlying areas such as shopping malls, plazas and “big box” stores. These factors served to funnel business and traffic from the traditional Main Street shopping district. As a result, numerous small shops and stores in Lockport closed their doors. These factors led to the overall decline of the City of Lockport downtown, which had been built by entrepreneurs during the Canal and horse-and-buggy and lost value in the automobile age.



Figure 4.52

Big Bridge, looking north (June 7, 1957)¹⁴⁴

Demolished for the Lockport Municipal Building in 1974, this area contained a typical mix of small scale commercial and mixed-use development prior to the Urban Renewal era.

Urban Renewal is a concept of land redevelopment, particularly in dense urban areas, which sought to clean up and reorganize the urban environment as a means to revitalize areas, such as Lockport, which were devastated by urban blight and decay. Urban renewal projects can be traced back to projects such as Baron Haussmann’s work in Paris during the 1860s and Daniel H. Burnham’s 1909 Plan for Chicago, which effectively demolished large swaths of the older cities to create new, organized and harmonious streets and buildings as part of

¹⁴⁴ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

an overall, comprehensive city plan. The modern urban renewal movement in Lockport was part of a larger national movement, stemming from Lyndon B. Johnson's "Great Society" program and government-led visionary city planning.



Figure 4.53

North side of Main Street near Cottage Street (April 2, 1955)¹⁴⁵

The Clinton Building (far left) remains standing, but much of this dense historic urban fabric was either significantly altered or lost to demolitions.

Lockport embraced this new approach. One of the first areas in Lockport which was targeted for renewal in the early 1960s was the Lowertown neighborhood. However, city fathers soon decided to focus on revitalizing and modernizing Lockport's primary commercial core of Main Street. Since the nineteenth century Lockport's Main Street was characterized by continuous rows of three and four-story mixed-use buildings, with ground level commercial space and residential apartments above. The wide variety of shops and businesses, eateries and residences, located in close proximity to each other were born of a diverse, pedestrian-oriented and thriving downtown for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Lockport. As these businesses were forced closed their doors as zoning favored sprawl and people moved out, and the buildings were left vacant and neglected, Lockport's Main Street by mid-century was stagnating. While Lockport had once optimistically seen itself as a thriving center for business and trade, the decline in population, coupled with rising unemployment took a toll on the spirit of the community. A series of broken promises and clashing strong personalities of local political figures also fueled this image of

¹⁴⁵ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

One case study for Urban Renewal on Main Street in Lockport, and the promises of renewed success for the community, is the City's South Block development. Located on Main Street between Locust Street and Pearl Alley/Heritage Court, this area became referred to as Lockport's "million dollar block"; a prime area in the City containing some of its most lucrative and valuable commercial property. Once of the most prominent properties in this stretch of land was the Williams Brothers Department Store. Founded in 1879 at 78 Main Street, the Williams Brothers store was a Lockport landmark for many generations. In 1972, the store which was located in this prime commercial property was forced to relocate, apparently through governmental pressures. However, once the Williams Brothers Department Store closed its doors, it was never to reopen again as planned. The loss of the Williams Brothers store, a cultural institution which came to represent the history and heritage of Lockport retailing, was seen by residents as a direct result of urban renewal activities in the City, becoming a potent symbol of the broken promises and growing skepticism.



Figure 4.55

The Jackson Block, Main Street at Cottage Street, looking south (1970)¹⁴⁸

The Masonic Temple (extant, ca. 1851) is visible at the far left of this image. The row of intact ca. 1850s commercial buildings was later demolished and now the site of a Friendly's restaurant.

While Urban Renewal wiped out significant portions of Lockport's historic streetscapes along Main Street, some new growth and development did occur during this era, spurred by area developers who worked in concert with the Lockport Urban Renewal Agency. New projects included the Lockview Plaza

¹⁴⁸ "Jackson Block, Buffalo & Cottage Streets, Lockport, Niagara, NY." *Historic American Building Survey (HABS)*. Library of Congress. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hh:18:/temp/~ammem_yhFH::>.

(located on Main Street at Pine Street, overlooking the Erie Canal) and Heritage Square, a shopping plaza located on Pine Street. Also created during this era was the Basset Travel Agency and Greyhound Bus Terminal at Elm and Walnut Streets. While these projects did create new modern spaces for retailing, the automobile-oriented shopping plazas did little to encourage the vitality of the earlier walkable city streets.



Figure 4.56

Aerial view of Lockport, looking west from east of Washburn Street to corner of Market and Main Streets (1977-78)¹⁴⁹

This view of Main Street reflects the loss of so many vital historic commercial buildings along the City's commercial corridor by the late 1970s and the abundance of surface parking lots surrounding commercial "islands."

Downtown Lockport continued to stagnate in the 1970s and into the 1980s, and the promises of revitalization from urban renewal and demolitions appeared to become less likely as time went on. Plans to create the 70,000 square-foot Manor Mall, anchored by Manufacturer's Hanover Bank of New York City, became another symbol of the failed promises of new development in Lockport. This project faced several revisions, delays and name changes, eventually becoming dubbed the Regency Row, yet despite all the hopes of this a large-scale new development which promised to reignite the prosperity of Lockport, the

¹⁴⁹ Western New York Library Resources Council. *Western New York Legacy*. Web. 08 Feb. 2011. <<http://www.wnylegacy.org>>.

project became another disappointment for the City. The project resulted in hostilities and accusations among developers, law makers and city leaders.

By the 1980s, Lockport's commercial Main Street was a shadow of its former self. Devastated by sprawl and abandonment and exacerbated by urban renewal demolitions, few of the City's old historic commercial buildings remained. The planned developments for the South Block area failed to come to fruition, and for over a decade the vacant, overgrown lot remained a painful reminder of the broken promises of new development and new growth. The failure of this project, coupled with the loss of one of one Lockport's signature companies in the Williams Brothers Department Store, are a constant symbol of the impasse between developers and the City in creating new growth and opportunities. New commercial development outside of the City, including the Lockport Mall built in 1971 and its surrounding commercial strip, continued to drain commercial activity from Lockport's Main Street. By the 1980s, optimism for the salvation of the downtown commercial core through urban renewal had dimmed.

4.4g New Growth and New Possibilities in Lockport

Despite these challenging economic times, the City of Lockport has emerged in the past decades as a newly revitalized community with renewed hope and new strong leadership. Recent successful projects, as well as new plans on the horizon, promise to help Lockport reclaim its prominence as a thriving Erie Canal community.

After years of struggling to recover the South Block property, following its stalled development efforts, the City of Lockport was eventually successful in reclaiming this valuable and symbolic land. On July 15, 2004, Mayor Michael Tucker announced plans for a new project for the South Block property after the City made an agreement with developer David Ulrich, through his Ulrich Development Company. The Ulrich Development Company had already been successful in reusing several of downtown Lockport's bank buildings, including the former Manufacturer's and Traders (M&T) Bank located at 45 Main Street.

The result of the collaboration is Lockport's City Centre, a project which has reestablished commercial activity on Lockport's South Block. Costing roughly \$5 million dollars, the project was largely funded by Ulrich, and supported by additional funds won by the City from the previous developer and additional state aid. Designed as two rows of historically-derived buildings, one along Main Street and the other along Walnut Street, the Ulrich City Centre contains a central village square. The complex contains 13 storefronts and is home to a mixture of shops, restaurants, day spas, and music venues. When large retailers failed to be interested in being tenants, Ulrich turned to smaller local businesses to great success. The project's approach of returning to entrepreneurial, small business-oriented development which drew on historic precedence of street-front

commercial with parking hidden behind has proven to be a success story for Lockport. According to Ulrich, in 2010 the new facility was 90% occupied.¹⁵⁰

The City has also recently invested in reclaiming its Erie Canal legacy on the former Richmond Avenue, now known as Canal Street. Overlooking the canal, this small block contained some of the City's only remaining stone commercial buildings in this area. In an over \$3 million dollar rehabilitation project, the City has brought these buildings back from the brink of demolition and further decline, and these buildings now await new tenants.¹⁵¹

Over the past several years, Lockport has taken positive strides forward in reclaiming its pride and heritage. New development has restored some of the optimism and hope, and strong new leadership both in the public and private sectors has also contributed to the upswing in Lockport. Lockport has also embraced its unique heritage and legacy as a premier Erie Canal City. Revisiting the City's earliest draw as a traveler's destination, the City has returned to utilizing its historic architecture and engineering for a renewed heritage tourism industry. Mayor Michael Tucker also cited historic preservation as a key tool for new growth and development in Lockport during his State of City speech in January 2011, reaffirming the City's dedication to reusing its remaining historic buildings for new business and vitality. By establishing a Certified Local Government and Historic Preservation Commission, Lockport has made a commitment to utilize its history in planning for its future.

¹⁵⁰ Prohaska, By Thomas J., and Scott Scanlon. "A Renaissance in the Heart of Lockport." *The Buffalo News*. 4 Oct. 2010. Web. 20 Apr. 2011. <<http://www.buffalonews.com/city/article209497.ece>>.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* Also Riley, 143-145.