

The Buckland Times ⁰⁸ #5

Buckland, one of the many villages that give Manchester it's charm.

June 1994



257 Burnham St.

The Chaponis Family Farm

Since about 1917 the Chaponis family has lived and farmed on the corner of Burnham and Clark Streets. Their 31 acres there crosses over the boundary line into South Windsor. Today brothers Charles & Sylvester grow strawberries which you'll be able to start picking about the first week of June. When their parents first moved to 257 Burnham St. this was tobacco land, and the family grew tobacco for about 46 years. Later they took on more acres, growing tobacco on a piece of land on Woodland St. and another running between Rt. 84 and the Buckland Cemetery, and other pieces of land large and small.

Charles Chaponis Sr. was born about 1894 and Anastasia Weidner about 1898, both in Lithuania. Charles Jr. believes his mother's father worked for a German railroad in Poland & Lithuania. Anastasia spoke Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and eventually English. I had read that many of the tobacco workers in Connecticut in the 1920's were Polish & Lithuanian, but I did not realize until I saw the Chaponis' wedding certificate that Lithuania was at that time part of Russia. I have learned since then that many Ukrainians were part of that group, and that Poland in part and the Ukraine were also part of Czarist Russia until W.W.I. I went to the old Manchester Directories. Below you will find some of the names I found on Buckland streets in 1922. From the little I know about names what I had read appeared to be true. How did this group of people happen to find themselves growing tobacco in Connecticut I wondered. According to the Chaponis brothers one person helped another. The family that sponsored Charles Chaponis Sr., gave him a place to stay and helped him to get established was the family of John Kildish, who owned a butcher shop or meat market at 54 Union St. in North Manchester. Anastasia's sponsors were her mother's relations the Stanley Waikowski family. If you're wondering how Charles met Anastasia, wonder no more. The Waikowski family lived across the street at 39 Union St.. Both eventually got jobs at the Cheney Mills, and so no doubt they both had to get to the train station at the same time and ride the Cheney R.R. to and from work 5 days a week. That sounds like a schedule made in heaven. They were married at St. Bridget's Church May 23, 1916. It was not long after this that they moved to 257 Burnham St., renting part of the house from the Rowsell family. In 1924 they were able to buy the house and the farm from the Rowsells.

As many of you know, the Cheney Brothers recruited workers from several parts of Europe to work in their mills. They were looking for

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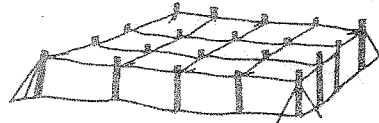
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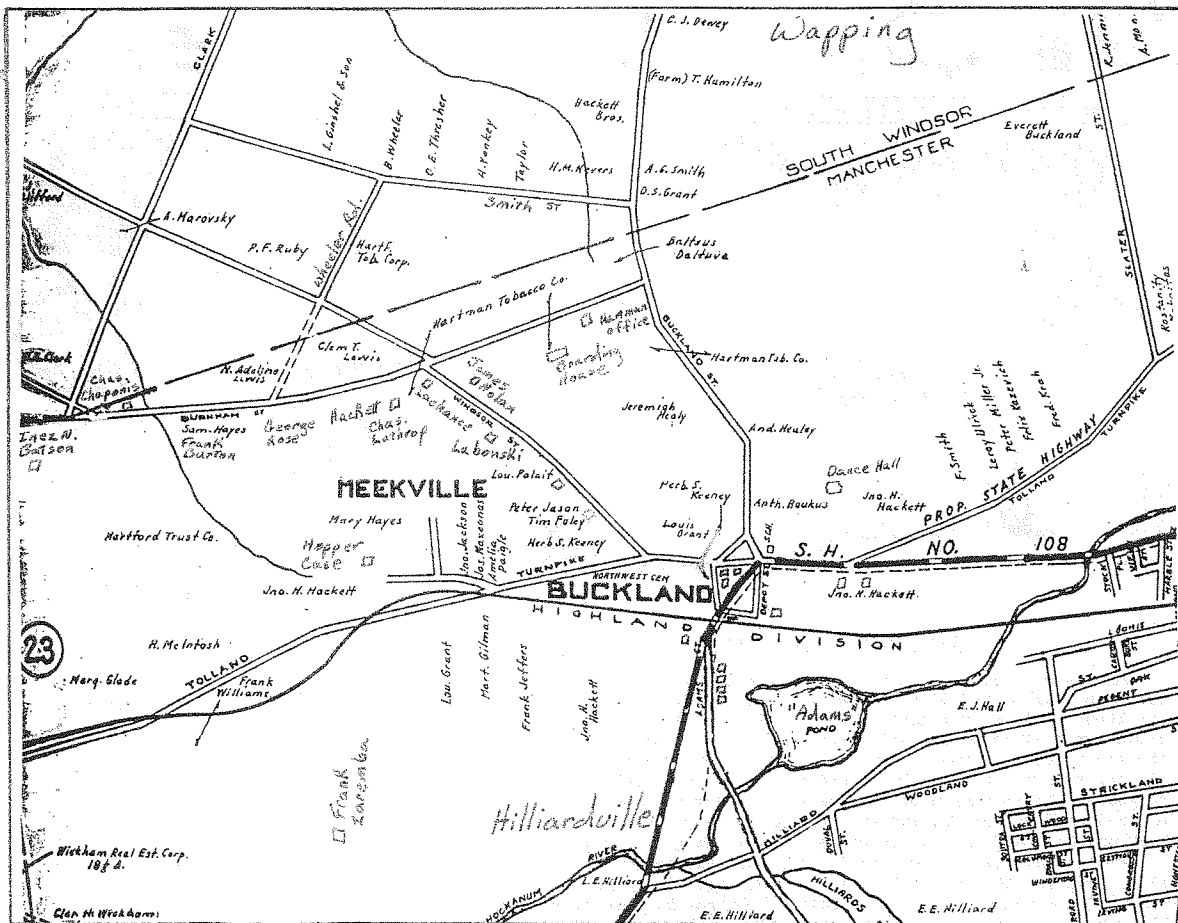
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continued on p. 2 - Generatey June 94

Excerpts from the 1922 edition of the Manchester City Directory showing some of Buckland's residents. Found at Mary Cheney Library and at Manchester Historical Soc. Library. Mistakes are fairly common, but I don't know of any here. Many of these names do not appear in the 1917 edition.

BURNHAM (B) from 312½ Windsor line northwest to S Windsor line	Right Side	Left Side	TOLLAND TURNPIKE (M) from Vernon line west to East Hartford line
Right Side	*29 Stoughton Monroe H 49 Hemenway Henry 119 Healy Andrew J *Keeney Gordon W carp 251 Kasilauskas Joseph 273 Pohl Katherine Mrs	160 Barnes Daniel W farmer Scharl Alfred 182 Parker st *234 Doyle Daniel 268 Oakland st — American Writing Paper Co Oakland Paper Co Div *320 Barnett Andrew T *402 Gillman Jacob 468½ Jefferson st *472 Maxwell Alvin W 560½ Union st *594 Glayre Henry 1022 N Main st 1092½ Depot st *1108 Krieski Anthony Strauss Michael 1110 Kuligowski Bronislaw Linowska Mary Mrs 1120 Hruby Armand F 1122 Crooks James 1126 Adams st 1344 N Y N H & H R R 1444 Zaremba Frank farmer 1562 N Y N H & H R R *1632 Williams Clinton E far	659½ Slater st *669 Krahn Fred A 717 Kazevich Feliks — Miller Peter Jr — Peckham Edward F — Buckland School 1087 Buckland Post Office *Derrick John A 1089 Derrick John A grocer — Czekalski Joseph 1089½ Buckland st *1127 Grant Louis L farmer 1173½ Windsor st 1277 Wylangewicz Charles 1315 Palmes Julian P — Jackson John P 1351 N Y N H & H R R 1533 Boldyga John Wileynski Julius 1549 N Y N H & H R R *1633 McIntosh Herbert far 1701 Glode Henry ice dealer Glode John farmer 1797 N Y N H & H R R
Left Side	38 Parker Ralph H *Wolf William 40 Pilukas August *120 Healy Jeremiah far 312½ Burnham st 318 Quinn James J *354 Clark Sarah A Mrs	WINDSOR (M) from 1173½ Tolland Turnpike northwest to S Windsor line	Left Side
207½ Windsor st *527 Rowsell Clarence F — Chaponis Charles	Left Side	Left Side	Left Side
— Connecticut Sumatra Tobacco Co 44 Curlonies Kostanty Mikus Joseph 44 Zalewski Joseph 60 Godleski Feliks 66 Davis William 72 Dzura Max 80 Murawski Ignacy 208½ Windsor st 278 Lathrop Charles E — Chrzanowski John — Burton Frank L *444 Lewis Burton E 580 Batson Inez M Mrs Whaples Clayton A	76 Foley Timothy 80 Vacant 100 Jason Peter farmer 130 Pallait Louis farmer 206 Labenski Joseph *256 Streeter Raymond V	76 Foley Timothy 80 Vacant 100 Jason Peter farmer 130 Pallait Louis farmer 206 Labenski Joseph *256 Streeter Raymond V	Left Side
BUCKLAND (B) from 1089½ Tolland Turnpike to S Windsor line	Tolland Turnpike (M)—con	Tolland Turnpike (M)—con	Left Side



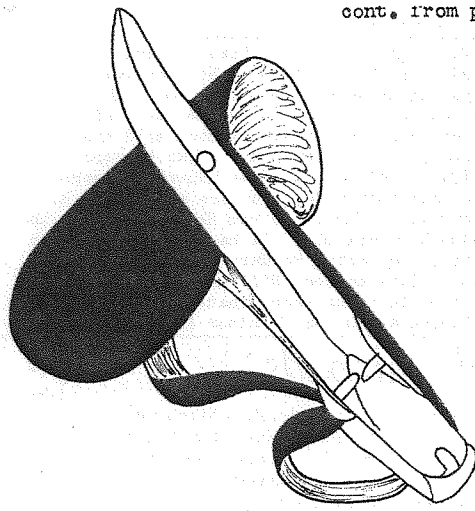
Detail from 1931 map of Manchester found in Atlas of Hartford Co. Conn. by Dolph & Stewart at Mary Cheney Library, Manchester with additions and corrections by Charles & Sylvester Chaponis and Sue Way. "Adams Pond" was labeled Hilliards Pond because in 1931 it was owned by E.E.Hilliard. The pond was always known to residents as Adams Pond, because of it's association with Adams Mill. (--- indicates Bus Line)

skilled textile workers. Eastern European countries were not far advanced in textile manufacturing, and so apparently the Cheney Bros, did not do much recruiting in Eastern Europe. (see "Of Mills and Memories ..." found in Talking about Connecticut: Oral History in the Nutmeg State editors, Bruce Stave & John F. Southerland) The fact that so many Lithuanians, Poles and Ukrainians made their way to the tobacco farms I think suggests that the story of this group of people is a little different from other groups in town. They could get a job at the Cheney Mills and work their way up slowly to a good job, but those who had been recruited tended to promote people from their own groups, so it wasn't easy. (see Southerland p. 30-35) In any case many chose to work on the farms instead. This might tell us that they came from farm country. Tobacco was the main crop growing here, and so they learned to grow tobacco.

Charles and Anastasia had 4 children, Ann, Anastasia, Charles Jr, born in 1926 and Sylvester born in 1929. When I first spoke to Syl on the phone he said he would call his brother who was the expert on some of these questions, being 3 yrs. older. Charles Sr. was a member of the Ct. Valley Tobacco Growers Assoc. that formed in 1922 in response to a steep drop in the prices farmers were getting for their crops, a story that was told in the B.T.#3 & #4. According to his membership card he grew 18 acres of tobacco and harvested 30,000 pounds of tobacco in 1922. They struggled through those years and the depression years that followed with the rest of Connecticut's tobacco farmers. Charles Sr. took some extra work hauling sand and gravel with his dump cart for the Hackett Bros. farm. At home they learned to be self sufficient. They kept 2 vegetable gardens, pigs, cows, an apple orchard and chickens. An amazing number of activities went on at the farm on a regular basis. They grew and harvested corn for the animals; made cheese and butter from the milk from their cows; butchered the pigs in the fall and made sausage; harvested apples and hauled them to the Schaller Cider Mill which still stands on Woodland St. at the corner of Fleming St.. The Chaponis farm was a busy place, and they carried on in that fashion when Charles Sr. died in 1933 at the age of 39. Charles Jr. was just 7yrs. old, Syl just 4½. Anastasia married Frank Moskitis in 1941, but from 1933 on she managed the farm herself, with the hired help of Sam Zuk "the Russian", Adam Kiritas, John O'Conner and others. Of course she managed the house as well, and raised 4 children. The boys helped out as soon as they were able. On a farm like this there were lots of chores to be done, some just right for a small boy. They seem to have had some time left over for fun, and for getting into some mischief. I'm not allowed to say what kind of mischief. Charles Jr. was let out of school early at age 11 or 12 to help with the spring planting. Perhaps this need for a little extra help on the farm inspired Anastasia to take on the job of driving some of the kids in the neighborhood to and from school. That soon became an official responsibility when the school system made her their first "bus" driver, for which she was paid \$2.00 a day. She used her 1935 Plymouth and transported kids from all over the Buckland area.

Automobiles had arrived in Buckland many years before. They were still hard for some folks to understand Mrs. Lewis from the farm next door would send over for Charles Jr. once in a while and ask him to start up her 1938 Chevy, turn it around and head it towards Buckland Center. Then she would get in and take off in high gear. But horses and mules were still a big part of farm life. Kris Karlson came around twice a year to shoe the horses and to put oleats on in the winter. The Chaponis farm had 3 horses - Bill, Diamond & Jerry. Bill was blind and had come from the Hackett farm, but for some reason he was the only one of the three horses who did not step on the seedlings as he walked the rows in the fields. Mules could be a handful. One of the mules on the Burt Lewis farm next door was tremendously stubborn about going out to work in the morning, but when he heard the noontime bell ring he took off so fast for the barn you couldn't hold on to him. They could make you laugh, but that stubbornness could be dangerous, too. That mule was eventually sold to the Hartman plantation. One worker who came in to his stall without being cautious enough was kicked in the head and killed. Everyday work had it's hazards. Farmers hoped for good weather, but had to survive the bad weather. The Chaponis brothers recall hail storms in 1929, 1950 and 1953, drought or high winds and too much rain were other hazards.

cont. on p.3



Syl Chaponis has a very interesting collection of old farm implements, including this corn husker above, a corn planter, hay knife, sausage stuffer, tobacco hatchet and many more.

course. Their teachers were Miss Stoughton, Miss Crow, Mrs. Quish and Mrs. Pierce who was also Principal. There were 4 classrooms with 2 grades in each, or about 24 students in each class. Bill Donahue was the janitor. Merv Thresher says that when the boys in his class headed off for their first day at Manchester High School in suits and ties they worried that they might have to stick together and defend themselves, and they made plans to do that. But the boys from South Manchester turned out to be friendly. They could save their fighting spirit for bigger battles which were not far off. Charles Jr. went into the Navy in 1943, and served 2 yrs. 8 months, and 23 days, so he says. I guess he was glad to get home. He served on the USS Forrest and the USS Ranger a CV4 Aircraft Carrier. Syl served in the Army from 1950 to 1952 in Munich, Germany, and their sister Anastasia served 18 yrs. in the Nurses Corp. retiring as a Major.

Charles and Syl married and had families and continued to grow tobacco until 1955 full time, and then part time until 1962. It was still a family business with their wives Marion and Helen and their children working along side their fathers. By 1962 the market for their tobacco was just about gone. They grew corn for one year, and then planted strawberries. They've been growing strawberries for 25 years, and they may be the last commercial farmers in Buckland. In April you may have seen them planting. Those plants won't be ready for picking until next year. It took them some time to find the right variety of strawberries for their land. The same plants that will grow well in Glastonbury won't do well in Buckland. They are well satisfied with the Cavendish and Kent varieties, and I'm sure their neighbors and customers are well satisfied, too.

Immigrants from Eastern Europe

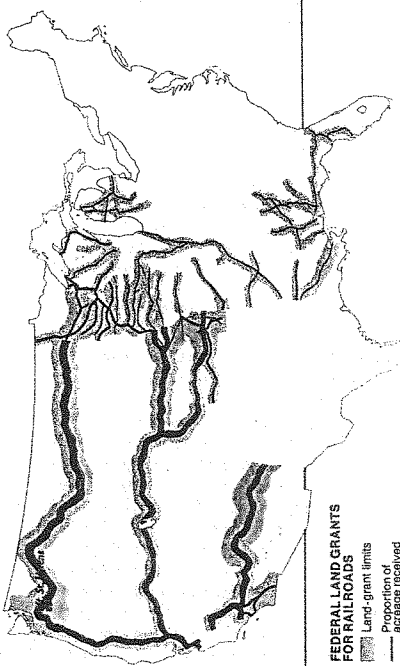
Lithuania is a small country on the Baltic Sea which has been recognized as a country since about 710 AD. It's neighbors are Poland, Latvia, and White Russia. The Lithuanian language is much older. It is said to be more like the first language of Europe than any other. At one time Lithuania was the largest country in Eastern Europe (1377), at another time Poland was the largest. From 1569 -1772 they were united as the Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth, but the neighboring Empires of Prussia, Russia, and Austria were always eager to expand. By 1772 they were powerful enough to divide parts of Poland and Lithuania among themselves.

Following the American and French Revolutions, the monarchies of Europe spent most of their energies trying to hold on to the power and privileges they had gained over the centuries. They had some legitimate concerns. They considered themselves to be the guardians of culture, education and order. The French Revolution had gone to violently destructive and murderous extremes, and so the upper classes feared for their lives as well. Democratic forms of government were seen as a threat. England had often led the way in Democratic forms of government over the years, but they had the good fortune to be surrounded by water. England has not been successfully invaded since 1066. When Poland attempted to reform its government in 1790 and establish Democratic institutions they were unfortunate enough to be surrounded by the Prussian, Russian & Austrian Empires with no physical boundaries to help protect them. These empires simply divided Poland among them. Poland disappeared from the map of Europe for more than 100 years until after W.W.I. The potato famine and crop failures of the 1840's were a great catalyst for reforms. When we think of the potato famine we usually think of Ireland, but the disease that killed the potato plants in Ireland actually spread all across England and Europe over a period of several years. The ordinary people of Europe were in very serious trouble and felt they needed more control over their own lives and more say about the policies of government. There were farm labor revolts in England severely put down by the English government. Many of the protestors were transported to Australia with little hope of ever coming back, leaving wives and children behind. But England eventually managed to reform itself. In Continental Europe the Revolutions of 1848 were intended to establish democratic institutions, but these were violently put down by the monarchs. And so began the great exodus of Irish and Germans to America. They came by hundreds of thousands.

Russia was perhaps the most iron fisted of the Empires. "Until 1863 the Lithuanian farmers was in bondage to the landed gentry. The farmer's property, his honor, and his very life were at the disposition of his master. There was no way to improve his lot. . .". p. 22 Lithuanians in America by Antonas Kavacas. In 1861 the Czar abolished serfdom under pressure, but the farmers were only allowed to keep $\frac{1}{2}$ of their land and they had to pay for that. This in a country where for the most part they were not working for money. It was an economically impossible situation. The Poles led a revolt against the Russians from 1863-4 which was crushed. Afterwards the Russians did their best to suppress native cultures by making Russian the official language, closing universities and so on. So for economic, political reasons and to escape compulsory service in the Russian Army, Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians began to make their way to America." Lithuanians had to prepare for their journey secretly. To cross the German border, closely watched by the Russians, (especially for young men of military age) was very risky and required the services of a high priced agent" p. 26 Lithuanians in America. But those who left in those early years were very lucky. There were much worse things to come during W.W.I and the Russian Revolution. Charles Chaponis remembers his mother saying that she left on the last ship to leave that port in Germany for America in 1914. If Americans know something about W.W.I they generally know something about the western front where American served. There was of course an Eastern front as well, and most of those battles were fought in Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia and hundreds of thousands died in those battles. Those who had made their way to Connecticut must have known how lucky they were. Like other immigrants, they took the work that was available to them, and so many found themselves mining coal in Pennsylvania. Those who came to Connecticut first worked in Waterbury and nearby towns where the metal working industries were looking for workers. This was true of the Kaselauskas family. Joseph first lived in New Britten, his wife in Waterbury. They later made their way to the tobacco farms in South Windsor. From there they moved to Buckland where Joseph was in charge of caring for the horses on the Hartman plantation. They lived in one of the plantation houses with the understanding that Mrs. Kaselauskas would take in three boarders. The Kaselauskas family seems to have been one of the first Lithuanian families to live in Buckland. Their son Charles who lives in Vernon now, lived in Buckland for 71 years. The tobacco farms always needed lots of willing workers. Although they could earn more money in the factories at first, there were many it seems who preferred the farming life.

257 Burnham St. where the Chaponis family lived for many years may have been built by William Vinton. William Vinton of East Windsor bought this property from Samuel T. Wolcott of E. Windsor in 1844. No house is mentioned on this deed. William and his wife Elizabeth seem to be living there at the time of the 1860 U.S. Census. There is a house marked on an 1855 map at the Manchester Historical Soc. near the corner of Burnham and Clark Sts. with the name Ann Vinton. Before 1842 this property was part of the town of E. Windsor. The town of South Windsor did not exist yet, and Manchester was originally almost a perfect square. According to William E. Buckley in A New England Pattern p.310 a group of land owners north of the

N.W. corner of Manchester petitioned the Legislature in 1842 to become part of Manchester. E.Windsor was a very large town. The center of Manchester was closer to Buckland than the center of E.Windsor was. It would be interesting to know what their reasons were specifically. South Windsor became a town in 1845. To learn the earlier history of this property you would have to go to the E.Windsor land records. After 1842 the records are in the Manchester Town Clerk's office, and they show that William Vinton sold the property to Julia Simpson in 1867. This deed mentions a "dwelling house, barn & oorn house & two tobacco sheds. So this farm was growing tobacco before 1867. Julia Simpson's children sold the land to RobertW. Burnham in 1892. Robert Burnham built 2 of the tobacco sheds that stand on the farm today, they are marked R.W.B. 1913 and 1914. Robert Burnham's widow Hester married Clarence F. Rowseil in 1919. It was Hester who sold the farm to Charles Chaponis SR. 24 Nov. 1924. So, the house may be some 140 yrs. old. It has not changed very much in outward appearance. The dormers were added, a porch removed. According to Mary Janette Elmore who was a young girl in the 1840's and left an account of her memories of life on Long Hill Rd. not far away, none of the houses in her neighborhood were painted. It's interesting to think about that- inside & out. (see Long Hill South Windsor, Ct.. Reminiscences, by Mary Janette Elmore at the So. Windsor library)



The landed railroads

In the 1850s few thought the nation could afford more than one transcontinental railroad; by 1883 three had been built. The government paid for them with land grants, as it had sometimes paid for canals and wagon roads. Yet never had the bargain been struck on such a scale--the federal government would ultimately trade 131 million acres of public domain for 19,000 miles of railroad.

In the first flush of transcontinental travel, settlement followed the rail lines. Stations along the way spawned towns. Railroad agents coddled prospective settlers with free lodging, land discounts, and farming tips--for today's land buyer was tomorrow's shipper of cattle, crops, and lumber. Norwegian immigrant Frithjof Meidell wondered at houses that could be shipped in freight cars and installed in place: "In half a day's time they can be nailed together." All was done to court the settler.

With their huge portfolios of western land, railroads became the major boosters of the stark, forbidding prairie. "Let the settler avoid the shelter of

groves," advised an Illinois Central Railroad pamphlet in 1861. "Dig wells instead of resorting to surface water ... erect a comfortable frame house instead of the common log cabin."

Sections of grant land typically alternated with government land in zones six miles deep on either side of a railroad. Homesteaders forbidden to claim lands within grant zones complained bitterly, for proximity to trackage meant easier access to eastern markets. Settlers who paid for such proximity often saw their profits eroded by the high rates that many railroads, both land-grant and private, charged. Stockholder John R. Robinson likened the Central Pacific Railroad to an "octopus ... ever reaching out its tentacles, never ceasing in its efforts for supremacy and control."

Anti-railroad sentiment peaked in 1871 after Congress approved 20 million acres in grants; they were the last made. That year also saw the first Granger legislation restricting railroad charges and practices. Laws reining in the iron horse would be passed into the next century.

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In The Buckland Times #3 I mentioned the completion of the transcontinental Railroads and their effect on the Eastern farm economy. Here are some of the facts according to The Historic Atlas of the United States published by the National Geographic Society 1988 .

Eminent Domain

If I hope to write about some of the more recent history of Buckland I will have to write about several families who have had their homestead taken from them by the town through the laws of eminent domain. This was done to facilitate the building of the J.C.Penney Warehouse and other commercial development in Buckland. While listening to these stories questions have formed in my mind, and I thought my readers might have some questions, too. Specifically I wondered under what circumstances can the town or state take property and potentially cause harm to some of its citizens in order to promote the economic interests of some of its other citizens.

At the State Library I was directed to American Jurisprudence Vol. 26A A Modern Comprehensive Text Statement of American Law 1966. I found these passages which I thought might be of interest. p.670 "Government . . . does not have the power to authorize the taking of the property of an individual without his consent for the private use of another, even on the payment of full compensation." "... the constitutions of some states authorize the taking of private property for private use as for example, ways of necessity, reservoirs, drains, flumes, or ditches for agriculture, mining, milling, domestic or sanitary purposes- or any other use necessary to the complete development of the material resources of the state or the preservation of the health of its inhabitants." p. 681 "The fact that incidental private advantage to certain lands are expected to accrue from the construction of an improvement does not derogate from the public nature of the use, if it is constructed for the use of the public." p. 684 "It is a well - settled general principle that incidental benefits accruing to the public are not sufficient to make the purpose of an improvement or enterprise a public one. Thus, where the chief , dominating purpose or use is private, the mere fact that a public use or benefit is also incidentally derived will not warrant the exercise of eminent domain." And finally p. 684-5 "Generally it may be taken as established law that the incidental benefit accruing to the public from the establishment of a large factory, mill, department store, or other industrial or commercial enterprise, is not a valid ground for ranking such an enterprise as a public use and entrusting it with the power to acquire a suitable site by eminent domain. Private enterprises that give employment to many and produce various kinds of commodities for the use of the people are not necessarily public uses. Every legitimate business to a greater or lesser extent, indirectly benefits the public by benefitting the people who constitute the state, but that fact does not make such enterprises public business."

After reading this I find it difficult to understand how we've gotten to where we are today. There would seem to be a lot of room for legal argument here, but I don't remember hearing those arguments raised. Other questions have been raised to me about whether or not it was actually necessary to take some of these houses and whether the property owners were fairly compensated. These are serious questions. I don't know if the Buckland Times has the time or resources to answer these questions completely, but perhaps I can give it a start. Does government have the right to promote the economic interests of some of its citizens at the expense of others? If so who decides which families or businesses are going to benefit and which are going to lose their homes or find their businesses disadvantaged, the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Board of Directors, or a majority vote in a public referendum? Who among us has the wisdom or the right to do this? or to decide how much economic development is more important than the work done by a community of families to provide stable, safe and healthy homes for their children? Were all parties treated equally under the law? I think these are reasonable questions that need to be asked. Do Americans sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that because majority rules, the majority is always right and therefore individuals can be sacrificed? The first citizens of the U.S. refused to ratify the Constitution until a Bill of individual Rights was added. Beyond legal questions you would think that Manchester of all towns should have learned from its history just how much one family or one business can do for a town. The Cheney family didn't come with a table saying handle with care. Responses from all sides are welcome.