



Webmaster's notes: In the early days of the Manchester Historical Society, members wrote articles about the town's past, which were published in *The Manchester Evening Herald*. This article, circa 1969, author unknown, was found and copied by Dick Jenkins and transcribed by volunteer Maureen Hevey in 2019. The Society's Public Information Committee also wrote articles about Town theaters, sports, and prominent contributors to the Town, such as Mathias Spiess, Mary Cheney, and the Pitkin family. – Susan Barlow, webmaster.

Paper making in Manchester

“Rags are as beauties which
concealed lie
But when in paper, how it
charms the eye!
Pray save your rags, new
beauties to discover,
For of paper, truly, everyone's
a lover;
By the pen and press such
knowledge is displayed
As wouldn't exist if paper were not made.....”

Thus in 1769 The Boston News Letter advertised for rags for paper, to insure continuing publication. Similar appeals, less lyrical, appeared in The Hartford Courant, whose young editor Ebenezer Watson promised to pay three pennies a pound for rags, engaged rag collectors, and reminded his readers that a “little bag or basket hung in some convenient place will receive the rags with no more inconvenience than it is to sweep them into the fire.”

“No one article,” began a full-page advertisement in The Illustrated Industries and Geography of America, “has probably contributed more to the advancement of science, the industrial arts and the promotion of civilization than paper.” The year was 1882 and the subject of this essay was Manchester's own Case Bros., whose predecessors had learned paper-making from Hudson and Goodwin, successors to Watson and Ledyard – the same Ebenezer Watson – whose mill at “Five Miles” (Union Village) was Connecticut's second (1776) paper mill.

Now every school child knows that the paper on which The Hartford Courant printed the news of the battle of Lexington was made in Manchester. The number and diversity of other paper mills and paper products through the past century and a half is less known, but economically important and historically interesting.

Editor Watson had advertised earlier in his Courant for rags for Christopher Leffingwell's mill in Norwich – 1767, Connecticut's first. By 1775, he realized that to assure the Courant an adequate supply of paper, he had best go into the business himself. With Austin Ledyard, he set up a mill on the Hockanum River, informing his readers of this in August 1775. Construction lagged. The

Dec.4 and 12 issues were printed on wrapping paper. Not until March 1776 was the mill turning out good quality paper.

Widow at 27

Watson died in 1777 of smallpox. His widow, 27 years old, Hannah Bunce Watson, left with five children under seven, carried on both paper and mill. Circulation, 700 before the battle, was soaring. On Jan. 1, 1778, George Goodwin who had started as a printer's devil at the age of nine, was admitted to partnership. Less than a month later the paper mill burned down. Paper was handmade, and there was little machinery in the present-day sense, but the loss was tremendous - molds, felts used in drying, huge presses operated by levers and screws and manpower for extracting water, 100 reams of printing paper, a great stock of writing paper, rags.

Mrs. Watson and Sarah Ledyard, widow of the other partner, petitioned the General Assembly for help, asking a loan without interest for rebuilding the mill at a cost of about 300 pounds and stating that the mill had supplied 8,000 sheets a week for 8,000 newspapers. The legislators acted the day they received the petition, voting a state lottery of 6,000 tickets at \$6 each - \$5,000 to rebuild the mill and \$31,000 in prizes. Somehow the young widow and Goodwin got the paper out while the mill was being rebuilt.

In 1779 Hannah married a neighbor, Barzillai Hudson. The paper company became Hudson and Goodwin, a partnership which continued for 36 years. Hudson and Goodwin shortly owned more than one mill, made bank note and other types of paper as well as newsprint, printed books including Noah Webster's Blue Backed Speller and a handsome Bible.

1800 Success

In France and in England, inventors were trying to make a machine which would make paper; they did not succeed until after 1800. The paper maker was a craftsman. All day he stood over a vat of macerated rags, on a low platform, slatted so the water could drain off. All day he bent, scooped up just the right amount of stock with his mold, stood, and shook it with what was called the "vatman's shake." The mold was made of closely woven wires, often with a watermark - place, name, symbol, mill owners' name - formed by a thin wire embroidered in at the top or side or center. The mold had a removable wooden frame or deckle which held the stock on the wire.

When the form of the sheet satisfied him, the vatman laid the mold on the stay, a simple narrow platform on one side of the vat where it remained for a few minutes while the stock became firmer. The frame (deckle) was then removed, the mold passed to the coucher.

The coucher leaned the mold at an angle against the "horn," to drain surplus water; then he laid it flat on felting. Then grasping the mold firmly, he turned it over with a sort of rocking motion and laid the wet sheet on felt. The empty mold was returned to the vatman, who replaced the deckle and started another sheet. This operation went on in perfect rhythm with two molds and one deckle until 144 sheets, between felts, had been built up on the coucher's tray. This collection was put in a press, and the combined strength of all workers was exerted to pull down the long wooden lever, expelling more water.

A lay boy, the third worker, removed sheets from the felts until he had a ream – usually 480 sheets. After another pressing, he gathered four or five together and took them to the drying loft where, with the aid of a T-shaped stick, they were placed on cowhair ropes to dry. When dry, the paper was sized and ready for use. (Editor Watson advertised, along with rags, for calves' pates to be used for sizing.)

Many Mills

It is confusing to try to count and locate the number of mills in early Manchester – saw mills, grist, oil, powder, woolen, cotton, of course silk, and many different paper products. Every stream had several; water privileges were leased, purchased, shared. Ownership changed partnerships were dissolved, companies reorganized. No one family dominated the paper business. Names of families of individuals or of companies occur in some instances but once in the works of early historians; others recur, a few companies have continued to this day. Locations have changed; a few people know where to find ruins of old mills – near the parking lot at the Lutz Museum Nature Center, for one, and on Lydall St. before the gate to the Manchester Water Co. “Fire has always been the persistent foe of paper mills,” remarked a Manchester historian in the 1886 Memorial History of Hartford County. “Not less than 13 have been burned during the last 40 years.” Floods, especially that of 1869, accounted for other losses.

Ten companies are listed on the 1869 Atlas map known to many Manchester residents: Case Bros., the Rogers Co., Salter and Strong, M. Hudson and Sons, Bunce Co., W. and F. Case, C. W. Strong, Keeney and Fitzgerald. Keeney and Wood, White, Keeney and Co., Thomas Duncan, agent for the Waverly Paper Co.

Peter Rogers, from Amsterdam, in 1832 leased of Robert McKee the privilege occupied by a powder mill, converted the plant, and made press boards and binders boards. In 1841 Peter died and in the same year the lease expired. Peter's son Henry purchased the property, and in 1849 erected another mill, others in 1852 and 1860. One burned in 1869. The Rogers mills were on Charter Oak St. and Hartford Rd; the company was incorporated in 1901, expanded by additions in 1901 and 1916. Now the Rogers Corporation makes dielectric board, dielectric sheeted paper, molding boards, plastic forms and other kinds of board, rubber and plastic articles, at its plants in Manchester, Willimantic, and Rogers where it has the largest board making machine in this country.

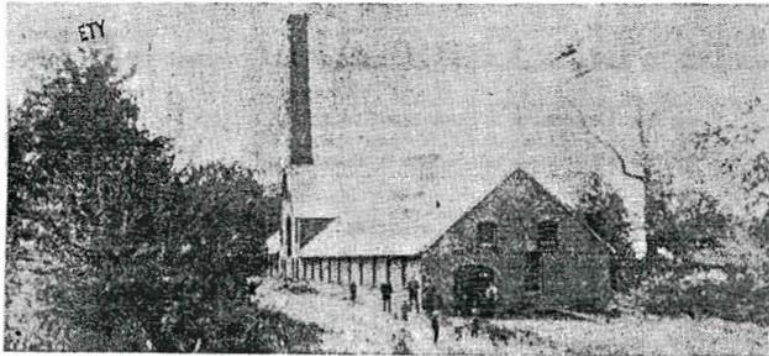
Got Water Rights

In 1832 Henry Hudson secured a water privilege where there had been a sawmill and a grist mill and started a paper mill; his sons and grandsons continued the business until 1864. The mill was deeded to his son Melancthon in 1842; in 1844 another mill was built. (M. Hudson and Sons, on 1869 map.) Cheney Bros. became interested in 1864. The paper mill was reorganized in 1879 as the Hudson-Cheney Co. N. T. Pulsifer bought the property (another historian says he was agent or manager) in 1881, when it became the Oakland Paper Co. When the American Writing Paper Co. was organized in 1899, this mill became one of its charter mills.

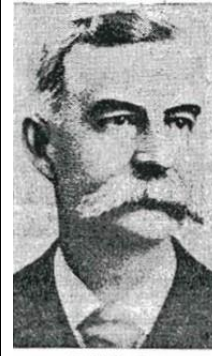
It must have been a source of great pride to Henry Hudson to buy, some time after 1829, the second Connecticut-made Fourdrinier machine – a machine to make paper, for the first use of such a machine in this country dates back only to 1817, in Delaware.

It has not been possible to discover, yet, if this was the first use of machinery in a Manchester paper mill. The story of this machine, briefly: A Fourdrinier was imported, at great expense and trouble, from Europe, and set up in a paper mill in North Windham. The mill did not prosper; the machine was sent to Andover and wound up in York, Pa. Two young machinists, however, had seen it, and set out to duplicate it, choosing an out-of-the-way location in Stafford for their secret project. Several young men with hand tools and a lathe built the first paper-making machine, which went to a mill in Norwich in 1829. Henry Hudson bought the second one, and the new company, Smith and Winchester, went on making, for American use and export, similar machinery. Paper-making machinery was also made, from 1869, in Manchester by C. Frank and Henry F. Case

Another success story is that of Lydall and Foulds and the Colonial Board Co., who for years made - among other things – binders board for such book publishers as Houghton Mifflin, now make, here and in Tennessee, - again among other things – shoeboard for millions of pairs of shoes.



When William Foulds, Sr., and Henry Lydall decided to add the making of paper board products to their manufacture of knitting machine needles, they bought this factory in “Parker Village” from the Pitkin Manufacturing Company in 1879.



A. Wells Case



A. Willard Case

A. Wells Case and A. Willard Case, with their brother C. Frank Case, founded Case Brothers Inc. for the manufacture of paper products.

Born in England

Henry Lydall was born Oct. 1, 1831 in Leicestershire, England, one of nine children. He did not learn to read until, at the age of nine, he went to Sunday school; he had little schooling except that which his employer, recognizing a bright boy, required him to have after he was employed. At nine, he went to Derby to work in the cotton mills; presently he was apprenticed to a needlemaker at Sheepshead, his parents paying seven pounds at the beginning of the term and the youth serving seven years while receiving only his board and keep.

In 1855 with a wife and two children he came to his brother’s home in New Britain – a five-week voyage followed by passage on a boat to New Haven and to Hartford. There he set up a needle shop in his brother’s home, presently operated a business that employed eight people.

In 1862 he enlisted in the army, served in 28 battles of the War Between the States. He came back to Manchester, continued with the needle factory; by 1868 had, also, two paper mills. His sons, Edwin A. in charge of the paper mills and Willis J. of the needle factory, continued the business.

Connecticut long held a high rank as a paper manufacturing state. A. Willard Case remarked in a sketch of the Bunces and the Cases as papermakers prepared for Manchester's Centennial. The state ranked fourth, according to the 1840 census, in the amount of annual production of paper, largely centered in Hartford County and especially on the Hockanum. This brings us back to Charles Bunce Sr., who learned paper-making from Hudson and Goodwin.

Bunce Mill

Charles Bunce Sr. started a mill on Hop Brook, the first in the western part of Manchester; he'd come to Hartford in 1788, and about 1800 he bought of Elisha Pitkin an unfinished building designed for an oil mill. In 1811 his son George became a partner; five other sons, Charles Jr., Herman, Lewis, Walter and Edwin, became associates and successors in the business. There were, Mr. Willard Case noted, three mills on the same stream. The one owned by Charles Jr. made press papers by hand; it was sold to Norris and Collins Keeney for making news print, largely for The Hartford Courant. The second mill, that of Edwin and Walter, made candle paper, bonnet boards and press papers. Here C. Frank, A. Wells Case and A. Willard Case began to learn paper making. The third mill, owned by Lewis Bunce and sons Henry and Edgar, was destroyed by the flood of 1869.

After less than two years of apprenticeship at the age of 21, A. Willard and Frederick Case, with a capital of \$135, hired an old mill near the present Catholic cemetery.

Not long after 1862 the A. Wells Case mill for washing cotton waste at Highland Park became the business site of Case Bros.; first products of the first mill there were album boards and binders boards. For many years, and now, an important product is pattern boards – cards used by the textile industry, especially lace-making. A hundred or more punched pattern boards are laced together to guide the needles on the jacquard looms. There is also press paper for school notebook binders – other papers for many business and commercial uses.

Manchester companies have achieved a few firsts: In 1838 Clapp and Keeney was first to use paper shavings, previously burned as waste, in new paper stock. In 1893 Rogers Co. devised, and patented, a method for bleaching (removing ink from) old paper.

This is but a small sampling of Manchester's part in paper making; more research would undoubtedly reveal more details of interest to a paper "buff."

This is one of a series of articles prepared by the Manchester Historical Society. Readers are invited to provide material or suggestions for future columns by getting in touch with the Society's Public Information Committee: Miss Helen Estes, chairman, 36 Porter St.; Mrs. Frank Atwood, 100 Westland St.; Edson M. Bailey, 99 Tanner St.; Mrs. Harry Maidment, 99 Robert Rd. and Herbert W. Swanson, 233 S. Main St.