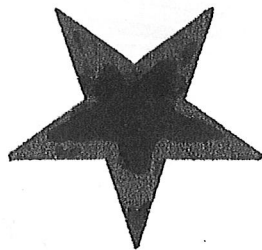


Great Summer Events “BANG” & “EVOLUTION”

In the Widow Jane Mine in July. See inside for details.

THE STAR



A Local Newspaper, Published at

ROSENDALE, ULSTER COUNTY, N. Y.

Gives all the statistics of the famous Cement regions.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AT

\$1 PER YEAR.

A GOOD ADVERTISING PATRONAGE.

WILSON BERTRAND, Publisher and Editor.

MAIN STREET,

ROSENDALE, N. Y.

Advertisement for THE STAR in 1895 Wallkill Valley Railroad Directory

DO NOT FORGET YOUR DUES FOR 2002!

See enclosed membership renewal form

Natural News is a publication of the Century House Historical Society

Snyder Estate

668 Rte 213

Rosendale, New York 12472-0150

Phone: 845-658-9900 Fax: 845-658-9277

E-mail: mail@centuryhouse.org

Web: www.centuryhouse.org

Officers

President — Dietrich Werner

Vice President — Anton Werner

Secretary — Gayle Grunwald

Treasurer — Harriet Lettis

James Wood — Site Facilities Manager

Michael Montella — Webmaster

Board of Trustees

Louisa Duffy Gayle Grunwald Dietrich Werner

Harriet Lettis Susan Lewis Michael Montella

Anton Werner

© Copyright 2002

Welcome New Members

- 325-F Jay Werbolowski & Joyce Bender - Kingston, NY
- 326-I Karlyn Knaust Elia - Saugerties, NY
- 327-F Mark & Elena Brandhofer - Rosendale, NY
- 328-F Lori Childers - Stone Ridge, NY
- 329-I Kurtis Burmeister - Champaign, IL
- 330-I Ruth Baumann - New York, NY
- 331-F Jerry & Rose Marie Williams - New Paltz, NY
- 332-I Susan Gillespie - Rosendale, NY
- 333-I Martha V. Hoffmann - Hurley, NY
- 334-I Valri Bromfield - Rosendale, NY
- 335-F Chris & Nichole Fenichel-Hewitt - Rosendale, NY
- 336-F Lorayne Jarvis & Steve Symonds - Binnewater, NY

Rosendale Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting at Snyder Estate

Presidents Message

The Society has once again mounted a unique special exhibit under the direction of Art Church and Gayle Grunwald. All too often history exhibits focus again and again on the political history of a region, the history of wars or its robber barons. Often times forgotten are everyday events that we all in some manner come into contact with. Such is the focus of this years Special Exhibit "Dirty Laundry - Wash Day Relics & Images 1825-1955".

The seemingly routine matter of getting dirty clothes clean is generally not a hot topic but is rather one of those things that everyone does in some manner and gives little thought to. Visitors, at first perplexed, really enjoy the exhibit. Some of the older folks identify with a life style that is brought to mind by seeing a 1950s Maytag washer and wringer or even the older metal and wood scrub boards. Younger folks are often really perplexed by the exhibit. Late May and early June is when some of the local schools take students on field trips. During a recent visit by 15 fourth graders, boys and girls, not one was not able to identify the Maytag, Voss or Easy washer/ringers as washing machines. For these students the exhibit became a gateway to the past using the most common of human activities: washing. The exhibit will be up till the end of October. So come visit.

The Rosendale Chamber of Commerce held its Annual Meeting and Picnic at the Snyder Estate on Wednesday, June 26. This years Chamber Annual Meeting was the first time the Chamber held a meeting at the Snyder Estate. Since its founding the Chamber has been supportive of the Historical Society's mission. The Society recognized that a strong vibrant business community would be helpful to the mission of the Society.

Mountain Laurel School Visits Snyder Estate

Fifteen fourth grade students accompanied by their teachers Ms Purvis and Ms Foudriat and parent Ms Lisa Sterer visited the Snyder Estate Thursday, May 9. It was a busy day for the students. After viewing the special exhibit "Dirty Laundry—Wash Day in Rosendale" the students explored the Widow Jane Mine. While in the mine they also learned about the discovery of "cement rock" during the construction of the Delaware and Hudson Canal, the growth of the natural cement industry, its peak years and its eventual demise. The students are planning a return visit next year as fifth graders.

GREAT TREASURES FLEA MARKET Low Temperatures/Big Success!

Neither torrential rain, high winds, snow or 41 degree temperatures could keep folks from flocking to the Rosendale Recreation Center Pavilion for the annual Great Treasures Flea Market hosted by the Society on May 18th. A hardy bunch of vendors and flea market enthusiasts had a fun time.

A little heater donated to the Society for sale at our table was retrieved just in time to supply enough heat to keep hands warm. Jay Blotcher, a vendor who had a successful day selling antique books and paper articles at the market, is seen enjoying his "turn" at the heater. Wanda Bare shows off her hand-made knit articles. She probably would have been able to sell lots of gloves that day! Kim Granger and her Girl Scout Troop kept stomachs full with cookies for sale on their table. Vendors offered an array of "expected" as well as "unexpected" treasures for sale. Something for everyone!

The day started at 6:30 that morning when John Rahl arrived to transport our goods to the Rec. Center. Chris Carlson, Althea Werner, Keith Hedeman and Michael Montella all provided much needed help to make the market a great success. The Society stocked its table with nice gift and bric-a-brac items donated throughout the year. We are able to accept articles for the market at any time. Contact the Society and someone will be waiting to accept your donations. Small, easily transportable items (no clothes, please) are needed. A special thank you to members Don and Darlene Singerhouse who donated several bags of lovely gift items for the market. A special thank you also goes to Carolee Lauria, Dianne Bridges, Rita Sorge and Louisa Duffy for supplying articles for the Society table. Whether the market is a hot chocolate day or one that makes ice-tea the beverage of choice, the Annual Flea Market is something to look forward to!

DIRTY LAUNDRY HITS ROSENDALE!

Ever "bond" with a washing machine? Ever use a clothes wringer (the proper way)? Ever eat heaps of cookies until you wanted to bust? A nice group of folks who attended the opening of the exhibit "Dirty Laundry- -- Wash Day Relics & Images 1825-1955" on May 5th did all these things!

Visitors approaching a particular washing machine told of the memories it brought back to them. They told their stories. They pointed to irons that weigh over ten pounds that you filed

with charcoal and pretty premium glasses with gold trim that Mom took out of her DUZ detergent box on the kitchen table to her delight.

The inspiration for this exhibit came from Kate Mann and Kerrie McCarthy who approached the Society last year with an offer of a washing machine found in their basement. This machine would turn out to be a wooden spring-loaded non-electric model built in Binghamton, N.Y. in 1900. IN FACT, it is likely that cement workers in Rosendale used this machine to clean their very dirty overalls!

Member Art Church spent months as a "hunter and gatherer" finding the treasures that were loaned or donated to the Society for the exhibit. Gayle Grunwald did the research and provided the interpretation for the exhibit and did the exhibit mounting. She was also responsible for encouraging corporate support. The level of participation by members and friends of the Society was incredible! Central Hudson Energy Group supplied copies of rare photographic images from their archives which were incorporated into the "Electric Comes to Town" portion of the exhibit. Several photos of note include those of stores that were owned by utilities in the region in the 1920's and 30's. These stores were designed to introduce the consumer to the wealth of labor saving electrical appliances on the market. One store shows a lovely copper and chrome "EASY" washing machine just like the one the Society has on exhibit! Our appreciation to Frank Ostrander, John Maserjian and Denise VanBuren for their kind assistance.

The Columbus WashBoard Company of Logan, Ohio, the only remaining such company in the nation, came through "Big Time". Jacqui Barnett, who along with her partners saved the company from extinction several years ago, supplied photos of how their company still makes boards on the original equipment. Materials from their archives along with wash boards were sent for the exhibit. The musical washboard was of great interest to the little folks who enjoyed playing tunes on it.

Mrs. Stewart's Bluing company participated by sending literature on the history of bluing along with "crystal garden" kits.

Our appreciation for supplying washday relics which made this exhibit possible goes to: Kevin DeMartine & Bottle Shop Antiques, Millbrook, NY; Tobias Ricciardelli, Stanfordville, NY; Art Church & Dance With Junk Antiques, Wappingers Falls, NY; Nancy Foutz & Antiques & Art, Rosendale, NY; Gary Schwartz & Rural Delivery Antiques, Rosendale, NY; Zaborski Emporium, Kingston, NY; Kate & Kerrie, Rosendale and Shirley and Ron Rifenburg, Hurley, NY

SITE MANAGER'S REPORT NEVER A DULL MOMENT!

By Gayle Grunwald

Ever wonder what it is like be the volunteer Site Manager for the Snyder Estate Historic Site? Well, I thought I might let you know ! Being Site Manager means being ready to say "thank you" at least once every day. Recently, a New York State Department of Transportation crew accidentally dropped a tree onto a utility line to the site. The load snapped two poles on the site owned by the Society and shattered our sign at the entrance to the site. Getting the estimates to repair the damage went smoothly. Completing the claim form for the state took a few hours of paperwork and no essays were required. With pole replacement scheduled and a few coats of paint and re-lettering a sign the Society purchased at Rural Delivery Antiques in Rosendale, I was just about to breath a sigh of relief.

I notice a strange sound. Evidently, the load on the utility line caused a short in the line which resulted in wires touching in the wind. That strange sound was the very live, very "fried" and very dangerous electric line falling to the ground. Our good friends at Central Hudson (and neighbors in the Snyder Estate Natural Cement Historic District—they own lands once part of the Lawrenceville Cement Works) immediately respond to the emergency. A crew rushes over just about the time most folks are sitting down to enjoy their dinner. Showing me the "fried" electrical cable serves to reinforce ones almost natural fear of electric. A.J. Snyder had eight full-time caretakers. In his days, their responsibilities also included caring for property now owned by Iron Mountain. The Society accomplishes about everything that needs to be done on the site with the help of members and friends.

Some folks do some really nice things. Several years past, Keith Hedeman and Louisa Duffy donated an almost new riding mower to the Society. That was a memorable day! Maintaining the lawns of the almost twenty acre site ages any piece of equipment prematurely. Today, several new parts were welded on the "bionic mower" making it serviceable again. This mower has expressed its desire to retire soon so hopefully another group of angels will come forward with a replacement. Remember, donations to the Society are tax deductible. After reading this article, take a few minutes and ask yourself how you might be able to help the Society. Spring into action and remember: **SURPRISES ARE THE VERY BEST!**

Rosendale News "THE STAR"

The Society is very interested In locating issues of THE STAR a newspaper published in Rosendale during the 1890s. The only reference we have been able to find is the advertisement illustrated on the cover of this issue of NATURAL NEWS. The 1895 Wallkill Valley Railroad Directory lists Wilson Bertrand as Editor and prop. Of THE STAR. It lists the newspaper office as Main Street, Rosendale and Bertrand's home as Kingston. Of special interest is that THE STAR touts in its advertisement that it gives statistics of the "famous Cement regions".

Anyone who may have any information on this newspaper should contact the Society.

We also are interested in any other local newspapers. We would photocopy and return the original to the owner. There were several other newspapers published in our area covering the Rosendale area. Our current local paper that we are attempting to get a complete collection is the Blue Stone Press. Prior to the Blue Stone Press we had the Rosendale News published by Henry L. Dittmar. The Rosendale News was started in 1927 and was published until sometime in the 1960s'

D&H Brochure

The Society is a member of, and your president is on the board of the Delaware and Hudson Transportation Heritage Council. The Council is committed to promoting appreciation and preservation of the historic resources of the Delaware and Hudson canal and Gravity Railroad System and the Pennsylvania Coal Company Gravity Railroad. The Council is a partnership of public, private, and non profit local, state and federal organizations. The Society owns a portion of the D&H canal and towpath as well as the Snyder Canal Slip. About 4,800 feet of the Tan House Brook, a canal feeder stream, runs through the Snyder Estate Natural Cement Historic District. The Tan House Brook runs enters the Snyder Canal Slip, then feeds the canal. The remains of the canal waste weir are on the eastern bounds of the Society's section of the canal. A copy of the brochure released June 1st is enclosed with this newsletter. Visit the Snyder Estate and than plan a trip following the canal to Pennsylvania.

Living on Hollow Ground: The Natural Cement Industry of Rosendale, New York

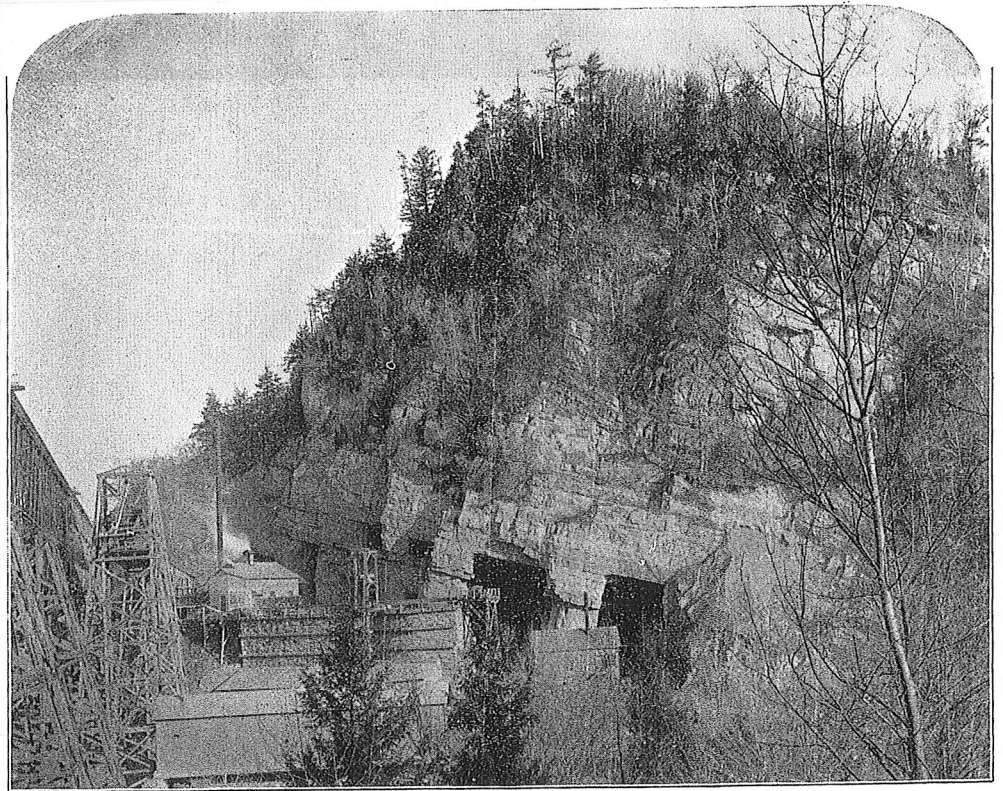
By Brenda L. Wood

For four generations my family in various ways has had a connection to the cement mining industry in Rosendale. My great-grandfather, Alonso Smith of High Falls worked in different Rosendale mines in the early twentieth century. In the 1950's, my paternal Grandfather, Donald Eaton Sr. of Kingston, owned a trucking company contracted by A. J. Snyder to haul cement to various public and private works throughout the state. My father, Leland Eaton and his twin brother Lawrence often accompanied their father on short trips in the summer when school was out and have recited many stories for me about their countless adventures. In the 1960's my mother's brother, Stanley Temple Sr. worked in the Tillson plant for Mr. Snyder until it closed in the early 1970's. Now, I have chosen to renew my family's ties to the cement industry by researching and writing about it for future generations.

"Living on Hollow Ground: The Natural Cement Industry of Rosendale, New York" was inspired by many years of stories to me by my grandparents, Ralph and Hannah Smith Temple of Cottekill and fueled by my love for the town. It is my hope that all of Rosendale's unique historical sites, from the D & H Canal and the former A.J. Snyder Estate to the Wallkill Valley Rail Road bridge will continue to be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

In 1825 in what is today known as Lawrenceville, a small hamlet of Rosendale, New York, men blasting for the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company, discovered

high grade limestone formations which they suspected to be typical of those used in the production of agricultural lime. However, following some basic testing, they learned that the suspicious rock was not just a high grade limestone, but that could produce the highest grade cement of the times. Over the next seventy-five years that discovery not only cause permanent changes in the landscape of Rosendale, but led to a population explosion which increased the population of Rosendale and its hamlets from a mere four hundred in 1844 to more than eight thousand in 1900. This influx brought immigrants and native-born people alike from the over crowded slums of New York City to the Hudson Valley in search of a better way of life. Their arrival created a rich ethnic soup still typical of Rosendale society today, while contributing cheap and plentiful labor which helped to push produc-



View of the New York and Rosendale Cement Company's Mines, Rosendale, Ulster County, N. Y. The High Trestle on the Left is the Wallkill Valley Railroad Bridge over Rondout Creek. Looking Northeast.

tion rates in the cement mines skyward.

In the early 19th century two enterprising young merchants, Maurice and William Wurts acquired a small amount of "black stone," that when burned, created "intense heat." Realizing the potential

value of this discovery, they quickly bought up as many acres of anthracite coal rich lands as possible in north-eastern Pennsylvania. Next, they needed to do two things; develop a market and gain investment capital. The two young men packed their bags and headed to New York City's Tontine Coffee House on Wall Street. Here among the wealthy men of the city, they provided demonstrations of their revolutionary product and quickly sold all the available stock in their company. The final remaining hurdle to their success was finding a means of reliable transportation.

Looking to the success of the Erie Canal, the Wurts brothers hired civil engineer Benjamin Wright and two surveyors, John Mills and Edward Sullivan to conduct a survey to determine the feasibility of a canal from Pennsylvania to the Hudson River. In December 1823, at the suggestion of Wright and his soon to be successor John B. Jervis, the survey team began plotting the course from the Hudson River near Kingston, New York to the present day town of Port Jervis, to the Delaware River, then up the river to the Lackawaxen Creek and onto Honesdale, Pennsylvania.

Jervis, Wright, Sullivan and Mills issued their recommendations in a report in January 1824. They wrote that "the channels should be four feet deep and thirty-two feet wide," and their projected cost was \$1,208,632.00. Additionally, Wright suggested that the locks, which would allow the canal to compensate for changes in elevation, be made of natural cement and stone as opposed to wood, to increase durability and decrease maintenance costs.

Obtaining natural cement was going to be costly and difficult. The only known cement, or "water lime" in the United States at that time had been discovered by Canvas White in 1818 in the town of Chittenango, New York a small town just east of Syracuse. Here, he had discovered what he termed "water proof cement" in his application for a U.S. patent in February 1820. However, the poor road conditions and the exorbitant cost of hauling all of which concerned the engineers, became irrelevant when in the summer of 1825, high grade limestone was found in the vicinity of present day Rosendale, New York.

Though accounts vary, like any other tales of discovery, it seems most likely that laborers blasting a channel for the D & H Canal on the property of Jacob Low (e) Snyder, in Lawrenceville, found a homogenous type rock which resembled the prized limestone used in balancing garden soil pH. The suspect rock was taken to a blacksmith shop in High Falls and put through extensive testing. After being burned in the blacksmith's forge, the sample was removed and water was applied to see if

the soft, chalky material would slack and crumble. With much disappointment the sample did not slack, leading them to believe that the stone they had found was something other than the limestone they had hoped. However, after several hours they noted that the material began to harden into a substance harder than its original form. The site engineer, James S. McEntee, because of his previous experience on the Erie Canal project, reportedly began to suspect that his crew had in fact made a valuable discovery, not of agricultural lime, but of natural cement. McEntee gathered several more samples and attempted to recreate the experiments done previously. They again burned, grinded the samples and mixed it with water. The results were amazing "what happened next was probably the closest thing to a miracle that McEntee ever witnessed", slowly before his very eyes, the sample began to set and eventually hardened into a solid mass which was extremely difficult to break.

In 1826 John Littlejohn, a local farmer with little knowledge of the process, was awarded the contract to provide the cement needed for the building of the canal locks. When the project was completed and the canal was opened on October 16, 1828, Littlejohn shut down his works. This however, this was not the end of cement mining in the area. Shortly after Littlejohn shut down his works, Judge Lucas Elmendorf petitioned the New York State Legislature for an act to incorporate which would allow him to open a quarry and cement works in what was to become the hamlet of Lawrenceville. On April 6, 1827 during its fiftieth session, the State of New York granted this right to the Rosendale Manufacturing Company, which later changed its name to the Rosendale Cement Company. The state directed the company to select five directors and to appoint one of them as president. The original board of directors consisted of Joseph Buckley, Lucas Elmendorf, Francis Price, Joseph Titcomb and Enock Wiswall. Elmendorf was chosen to be president. Further, the state directed the company to issue stock certificates at the rate of one hundred dollars per share to equal an initial investment capital of a remarkable \$350,000.00. The company however did not build its own mills and therefore had to quarry and burn its rocks, then haul it to the nearby grist mills of Jacob Low(e) Snyder to be ground into powder form.

The following year, Watson Ephingham Lawrence of New York City succeeded Lucas Elmendorf and built the first commercial mills to manufacture Rosendale cement. On May 4, 1830, Lawrence signed an agreement with Jacob L. Snyder for the purpose of "digging, quarrying and burning cement on his land . . .". In exchange the company agreed to pay Snyder ten dollars for every kiln of three hundred barrels burned on his land. At this rate Snyder was receiving three cents per barrel.

Lawrence's works were small by later standards, but the plant, consisting of a water powered grist type mill and two "pot kilns" was capable of producing twenty-five, 300 pound barrels per week, per kiln. This amount may not seem like much initially, but despite his lack of experience and the lack of knowledge in the industry as a whole, Lawrence's early production was approximately 15,000 pounds per week.

Lawrence soon acquired a business partner, John Apstin, a former U.S. Federal employee, who was able to bid on and win several contracts to provide cement for federal projects. However, to fill these new federal contracts, expansion was necessary, requiring new buildings and mills to be built. Lawrence's cement business was becoming a huge success and was either directly or indirectly employing a large number of Rosendale's population so, in his honor, the hamlet of Lawrenceville was named.

During the late 1820's the young United States was bursting at the seams with pride. The republic had emerged onto the international scene, quickly gaining prestige. The U.S. government, looking to build monuments to its success and put into action the notions of "Manifest Destiny," began to plan massive infrastructure expansion projects. In 1830, to aid this expansion, President Andrew Jackson approved numerous federal endeavors, including the building of several canals, roads and rail lines to the tune of an astonishing ninety six-million dollars, an amount that both shocked and excited the nation. Enterprising men began to see the potential for great wealth on the horizon as construction companies began to emerge. Some of these young start ups correctly believed that a source of great wealth lay within the cement industry.

Beginning in the 1830's the rush was on. Like the later California Gold Rush of 1849, the budding region of Rosendale experienced a rush excited, fortune seeking men.. One enterprising young man who converge on the town, was later a three-term congressman from the Saratoga district, the "Honorable" Hugh White. In 1836, Hugh, the youngest brother of Canvas White who had

discovered natural cement in 1818 while an engineer for the Erie Canal project, came to Ulster County and opened a large cement works in what is now known as the hamlet of Whiteport. The main site consisted of three mills, cooper shops, storage sheds, a company store house, living quarters, barns, quarries and kilns. From these mills, White supplied the cement for the building of the Croton Reservoir and its numerous aqueducts. Coincidentally, or maybe not, the resident engineer on the Croton project was John B. Jervis who had worked under Canvas White, Hugh's eldest brother, during the construction of the Erie Canal. The two were reported to have " . . . worked remarkably harmoniously together . . .", becoming good friends in the process.

In 1832, New York City with its rapidly expanding population, was faced with an insufficient water supply. In the fall of 1832, the New York Common Council's Committee of Fire and Water ordered several extensive surveys of The Bronx and Westchester Counties be done to find a way to meet the demands for clean, abundant water. In March 1835, under the suggestion of civil engineer Canvas White, the committee agreed to seek public approval via a referendum to build the Croton Reservoir, dam and aqueduct. Though no evidence of an investigation can be found, nor any proof of any "graft" having taken place, it seems odd that the elder White supervised the survey, his good friend was appointed a resident engineer and the younger White got the contract to supply the cement for the project. Further adding suspicion, in November 1848 the works of Hugh White were sold, to the Newark & Rosendale Lime & Cement Company, strangely coinciding with the near completion of the Croton reservoir. Cement had made Hugh White his early fortune which he then in turn used to speculate on other property. At the time of his death in 1870, his estate was valued at \$300,000.00 a huge sum for the times.

Hugh White sold his works to Newark & Rosendale Lime & Cement Company in 1848, and by the time they repaired the run down works formerly owned by White, Rosendale cement was gaining an admirable reputation in engineering circles. By 1850, according to the U.S. Census Schedule of Industry, the Newark & Rosendale Lime & Cement Co. were in competition with two other works in Rosendale and another two works

in the neighboring town of Marbletown. However, by 1880, just thirty years later there were fifteen cement manufactures in Rosendale and another five in Marbletown and by 1898 these twenty cement manufacture's were working six days a week to produce 3.5 million barrels a year, equaling a remarkable 41.9 % of the U.S. total. Second in production of natural cement was Louisville, Kentucky where fifteen works produced 1.75 million barrels, supplying only 20.9% of the total production.

Rosendale natural cement was in great demand and was used in some of the nations most notable structures

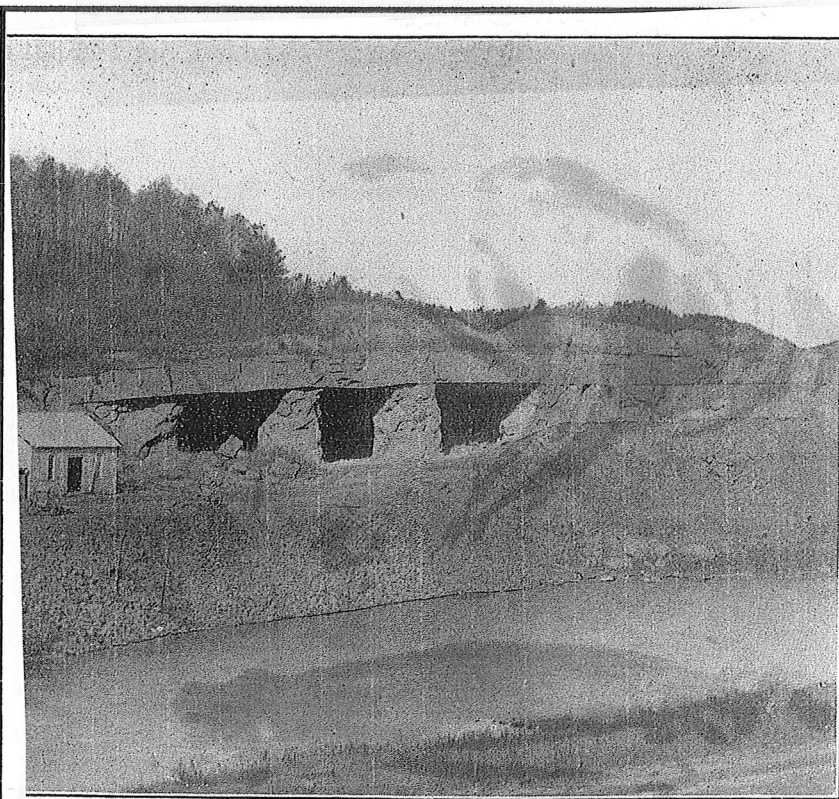
including: The Brooklyn Bridge, the base of the Statue of Liberty, the wings of the U.S. Capitol Building, the Washington Monument, Madison Square Garden, the Museum of Natural History, The Old Tweed Courthouse, the New York State Thruway and Green Haven Prison. These rising demands and soaring production rates however came at a considerable price to the population and the environment. Cement workers were exposed to dust and smoke with little protection other than a wet handkerchief tied around their nose and mouth. As a result, lung disease was common. By the late 1800's the air quality in Rosendale was very poor. According to the census records of 1890, there were fifteen cement works, all of which relied on coal to power their mills and kilns. Three of

these cement works, the Rosendale Cement Company, the Newark & Rosendale Cement Company and the Lawrenceville Cement Company, burned a reported 4,700 tons of coal in that year alone, with no filtration system. In a letter to the editor of the *Rosendale News*, Eugene H Keator writes of this smoggy, polluted air as he recalls his childhood home in the hamlet of Lawrenceville, where he lived for the first seventeen years of his life:

"...I spent seventeen years from my infancy, with seven kilns within fifty feet [of] our kitchen window, . . . in this room surrounded by dust and fumes we ate our daily meals, causing us to wonder if in these days of improved sanitary conditions we pos-

sessed sufficient physical resistance to survive".

Keator's concerns were in fact justified. For a period spanning thirty years, from 1850 through 1880 the leading causes of death were in fact respiratory related. In 1850, for example, 27% of all deaths reported in Rosendale were respiratory related and by 1860 that number had skyrocketed to an astounding 52%. The second leading causes of death in those years were communicable diseases such as typhoid, measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever, and diphtheria. In the neighboring town of Hurley, which had no cement mining, the leading



ent Company's Mine, Fifth Binnewater, Ulster County, N. Y. The Upper Cement Bed has been Stripped Off. Looking Northwest

causes of death during the same time period were dysentery, consumption and measles with respiratory illnesses usually ranking second or third.

According to Robert Ernst, of the more than 1.9 million immigrants who entered New York City between 1850 and 1860, only slightly more than 298,000 stayed.. Life was tough and times were hard in a city where only 50% of the Irish immigrants and 47% of the Germans were employed. Additionally, the cost of living was high in New York City compared that of rural New York. In 1890 an immigrant living on East Tenth Street wrote: " This room with two windows giving on

the street, and a rear attachment without windows, called a bedroom by courtesy, is rented at \$12.25 a month". In that same year George Countrymen, an employee of A.J. Snyder & Sons, one of the numerous Rosendale cement manufacturing companies, rented similar accommodations from his employer for a mere \$4.00 a month.

By the end of the 1880's, cement production rates were soaring due to the combination of increased investment and the influx of cheap immigrant labor which was plentiful and the competition among them for jobs, great. As waves of immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Ireland and Prussia came into New York City, many quickly left, like the ripple effect when a stone is thrown into water, hundreds of these immigrants found their way to the Hudson Valley searching for jobs and a place to call home. In his essay, Charles Barnett describes the rich "ethnic soup" that welcomed his grandparents to Rosendale in 1900 and fascinated him as a small child shortly thereafter. Barnett describes a neighborhood of:

"Old mountain men, unschooled Turks and Yugoslavians fresh from the old country . . . the Handabaka's and the Kisic's, Germans like the Geisler's, Ziebold's and the Jaeger's and a farm couple from Alsace - Lorraine. So international in flavor was the Mountain Road home of my childhood that I remember one home where if you knocked at the front door, a parrot inside answered back in Serbo-Croatian."

However, not all neighborhoods welcomed these immigrants with open arms. At the Tillson Reformed Church in 1909, pastor Archibald Stewart organized a local chapter of the Klu Klux Klan. Kenneth Clark recalls that his father, Leonard P. Clark and fellow Klan members were not "anti-racial", but were "anti-Catholic". This anti-Catholic sentiment arose according to Clark during the canal and cement mining days when "the majority of the people were foreigners, Hungarians . . . and Polish . . . they were all Catholics". These "foreign Catholics" resided predominately in large clusters along Main Street in Rosendale, while the white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants lived in the hamlets. Further tensions arose when the Catholic community of "foreigners" raised enough money to build St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church. This massive, imposing brick structure, situated on top of a hill overlooking the entire village of Rosendale, endures today as one of the oldest, continually run churches in Rosendale.

Many of these "foreigners" went to work in the cement mines as laborers, quarrymen and kiln operators while others were employed in ancillary industries such as

black smithing, coopering, carpentry and canaling. For those who did not find industrial life appealing, there was still ample opportunity to make a living. Some men such as Irish immigrants John Kelly and B.N. McCabe operated saloons and inns, while German immigrant M. Deichelman became a barber and Abraham Hoffman opened a local newspaper, *The Rosendale News*. Still others like Charles Barnett's grandfather, Dr. Alfred Mooney found work as professionals either in law or medicine. Women too could find ways to earn a living in Rosendale. The Brown sisters for example owned a dress making shop and Miss Sara Mc Clafferty owned and operated a general news and stationary shop. However, the largest numbers were employed by one of the numerous cement works either in Rosendale or one of its many hamlets.

In 1890, the average days pay for a quarryman was about \$1.00 to \$1.50, while specialists like kiln operators could draw a handsome rate of \$2.00 per day. The work day was grueling, lasting an average of ten hours, Monday through Friday and about six hours on Saturday. For some, like the stable keepers, kiln operators and company boatmen, they may also have been required to work a few hours on Sunday.

By current U.S. standards, the pay rate of \$1-\$2 dollars a day seems meager, however in the 19th century this was usually sufficient for most people to meet their expenses. These men had no health care benefits, vacation time, sick time, life insurance or unemployment insurance, nor did hard work afford them the chance to retire early. The only people who had any kind of financial security were the wealthy owners. In 1888 for example, George Countrymen who was employed by A.J. Snyder & Sons as a laborer was paid an average rate of \$1.50 per day while the owner, Andrew Snyder I, drew a salary of \$250 a month. Countrymen's annual pay was \$379.71 while Snyder's was \$3000. From his salary in 1888, George Countrymen spent \$260 at the company store for various items such as food, boots, shoes and clothing and \$48 for rent. The balance may have partially gone to meet other expenses such as church tithing, doctors bills, leisure time vices such as whiskey, women and cards which were not uncommon among young miners.

The company store maintained by A.J. Snyder

& Sons carried a vast array of items which their employees could purchase on account. The items for sale were reflective of the cultural diversity of his work force. Among the items for sale was what we would consider essential goods like sugar, flour, eggs, milk, butter, and cheese. Additionally, fresh fruits like lemons, limes, apricots, cranberries, bananas, peaches, huckleberries and strawberries were big sellers. Vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, onions and peas were frequently bought as well as various types of meat including hams, sausage, beef, bologna and bacon. In addition there was also demand for items such as Irish whiskey, ale, pickles, tobacco, oysters, clams, salmon, shad, cod, mackerel, olives, coconut oil, rice, beans, mustard, ketchup, coffee, various spices and chocolates. Household goods such as brooms, matches, coal, kettles, dishes, cloth, ribbon, needles, pins, thread, sulphur ointment, ink, paper, brushes, towels, and soap were also sold. Specialty items and newspaper subscriptions could also be ordered through the store clerk. For example, on December 24, 1896, the Snyder family received perfume, handkerchiefs, ladies gloves, men's gloves, a neck tie and a pin presumably to exchange as Christmas gifts with one another.

Work in the mines could be extremely dangerous. In the early years of cement mining, drilling rock to prepare for blasting required two men, one of the men held a pointed iron rod, while the other struck it with a large sledge hammer. The rock was hard and the bits required frequent sharpening, sometimes taking hours to drill one hole sufficient for blasting. The drill teams were often paid either by the hole or by the foot, which required them to work quickly and efficiently if they were to draw a decent pay. When the drilling was complete, the "blowers" came in, filled the hole with black powder, and a fuse, made of paper soaked in salt peter and dried. The fuse was inserted into the hole and sealed with clay. The treated paper was then twisted tightly and ignited by the charge man who then ran for his life to shelter, hoping that the fuse would do its job and not fizzle out. "There were many men who vanished from the payroll when returning to relight a delayed fuse". An example of the dangers facing the mining crew can be found in an article written in the *Peoples Press*, a Kingston newspaper of the times. On February 22, 1864 an accident occurred at the Coutant cement mines when the neighboring mines of the Newark & Rosendale Cement Company set off a blast warning. It was reported that "Cornelius Driscoll, an Irishman, ignored the blast warning and tried to pass by on his way to dinner and was hit in the side by a large rock and killed". Additionally in 1880 a twenty-six-year-

old English immigrant and a forty-eight-year-old Irish immigrant were accidentally killed in two separate mining accidents. Living in close proximity of the mines could also be dangerous. In 1860 according to the U.S. Census Mortality Index several people are reported to have died in mine related accidents. Grown ups and children alike occasionally met their death when they either drowned in the canals, fell into quarries, were hit by flying debris or were run over by carts hauling cement. However, since not all deaths were reported or recorded, the official accidental death rate among miners, laborers and community members was never more than 5%.

Though cave ins did occur, they were not frequent due to the room & pillar mining technique adopted early on. This technique of mining, where sections of the bedrock are left in place to act as pillars, supports the overburden of the ceiling. These pillars are typically twenty to thirty feet in diameter with spacing, from center to center of twenty to forty feet. This type of mining typically extended from the opening, as far back into the bedrock as natural lighting permitted, with some works opting for kerosene torches for added light. The chunks of limestone removed after blasting left a smooth ceiling and floor. The remaining caverns dipped into the earth, closely following the limestone deposit. The removed limestone was then broken down into chunks of about ½ cubic foot each and was removed to the kiln for burning at low temperatures (about 1000 degrees). During the burning process, a chemical reaction took place in which the magnesia began to vitrify while any moisture trapped in the limestone was driven out, leaving the rock soft and chalky.

The kiln, a tall chimney like structure, was loaded from the top in intermittent layers of coal and raw stone, ignited and allowed to bake for a prescribed period of time until the kiln operator, a highly experienced and skilled individual determined the load to be done. Typically, he withdrew only ¼ of the load per day through the bottom and refilled the upper layers, making it a continuous burn operation. The burned rock was then sorted by an "expert" with either over-burned or under-burned rock being discarded as waste. The properly burned stone was taken to a mill where it was ground down to a fine powder and put into wooden barrels or cloth sacks and in later years, paper bags

(A wooden barrel contained 285 pounds while cloth sacks contained 95 pounds and paper 71 pounds.) The containers were then either stored in a warehouse or placed directly onto waiting canal boats for shipment.

Rosendale cement producers enjoyed a wild, profitable ride until the early 20th century when Portland Cement became popular among civil engineers. Portland cement which is made from a "carefully proportioned chemical combination of calcium, silicon, iron and aluminum" is then burned in a scientifically controlled environment at high temperatures to force the combination of the lime, silica, alumina, and iron oxide. This process yields a cement that "is not subject to atmospheric influences and will not, like other cements, vegetate, oxidate or turn green, and weather's climate changes well". Additionally, "Portland Cement dries faster and is a more predictable product of consistently high quality". Making it more desirable for large projects where time and predictability is of the essence. Consequently fewer and fewer orders were placed for natural cement.

"During the period of 1904-1909 the output of cement increased 110.5 % in quantity, all of the increase being in Portland cement, while output of natural cement decreased greatly. Natural cement production in 1904 had been 4,866,331 valued at \$2,450,150, but by 1909 only 1,537,638 barrels were produced, valued at \$652,756"

As the demand for natural cement declined, Rosendale's cement companies began to close or consolidate. These falling production rates set off a chain reaction in which companies closed and people moved away to find other means of employment. Rosendale's population by 1920 had plummeted to 2,514 from the 8,118 of its heyday just twenty years earlier, making Rosendale into a virtual ghost town. By 1940 only one cement company remained in business in Rosendale, the former A.J. Snyder & Sons, then operating as Century Cement Manufacturing Company. The company which had expanded to include the production of both natural and Portland cements had outlived all of its competitors, spanning three generations from 1831 to 1970 when Andrew Snyder II decided to close the business.

The abandoned cement mines of yesteryear now lay dormant, pocking the Rosendale countryside. With the exception of three, most have been abandoned by man and inhabited by beast. Of the three still in use, none are used for mining, but other adaptive uses. One, located on

Binnewater Road, is a records management facility owned by Iron Mountain Inc. another is situated along route 213 and is owned by Turco Brothers who pump and truck drinking and pool water from the site and the third, known to locals as "The Widow Jane" is located on the grounds of The Century House Historical Society. Several others attempts have been made to utilize various other mines ranging from the storage of produce, to the farming of trout, but eventually failed.

Visiting Rosendale today, it is hard to believe that 100 years ago, it was the cement mining capital of the U.S. . All that remains of the once prosperous natural cement industry is abandoned mines, partially filled in canals, abandoned homesteads and churches and the enduring "Widow Jane." Photographs, personal accounts, tools, and numerous other items from this bygone era can be viewed in the museum of the Century House Historical Society, where on a quiet summer's day, if you listen carefully, you just might hear the clacking of horses hooves, the clatter of hammers and the shouts of miners. After all, it is often said that just as much went on underground in Rosendale as above.

This paper would not have been possible without the help of my dear friends Gayle Grunwald and Dietrich Werner at the Century House Historical Society. Thanks to their hard work and dedication to the preservation of the Snyder Estate and all of Rosendale's history, cement industry archives still exist. I am indebted to Dietrich for the many hours he spent with me in Albany at the New York Library and Archives. He has been an incredible inspiration to me, and an inexhaustible source of information. Thanks must also go to Professor Susan Lewis from the History Department at SUNY New Paltz.

I want to thank my Husband for his patience and support and my children for sharing me with this project. I also need to thank my mother for the many hours of child care she provided during the six months it took to complete this project. Special thanks go to my son Kyle who gave the work its title [Editor's note. The 2 photos are from Economic Geology of Ulster County by Frank L. Nason. 1893]

DO NOT FORGET YOUR DUES FOR 2002!

See enclosed membership renewal form

CENTURY HOUSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

. * EVENTS * .

“BANG”

A prize-winning apocalyptic comedy written by LAURA S CUNNINGHAM

July 12, 13, 19, 20, at 7:30 pm

In the Widow Jane Wine

“EVOLUTION”

A n evening of ART, MUSIC and DANCE

SAT. JULY 27 at 8 pm

In the Widow Jane Mine

“DIRTY LAUNDRY”

‘Wash day Relics & Images 1825-1955’

ONGOING SPECIAL EXHIBIT

Every Wed, Sat & Sun 1-4 pm

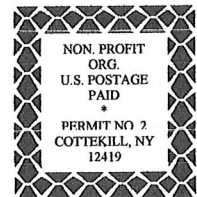
The
Century House
Historical
Society

The Snyder Estate
Rosendale NY 12472-0150

NATURAL NEWS

Spring 2002

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1



ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS,

When making Contracts, will not forget that

12,000,000 Barrels

“**H**OFFMAN”
CEMENT.

Have been used on important works throughout the United States.

No other Cement Company
can show such a Record.

LAWRENCE CEMENT CO.,

Sales Office, No. 1 Broadway, New York.

Advertisement in Architectural Record 1898

Thanks for your continued support.

Rosendale, New York 12472-0150

A.J. Snyder Estate

Please make checks payable to: Century House Historical Society

Total amount enclosed _____ (Note: donations are fully tax deductible)

Membership Number _____ Dues _____ +Donation _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Name _____

**Century House Historical Society
2002 Membership Dues Notice
Where have you been?**

**Century House Historical Society
2002 Membership Dues Notice
Where have you been?**

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Membership Number _____ Dues _____ +Donation _____

Total amount enclosed _____ (Note: donations are fully tax deductible)

Please make checks payable to: Century House Historical Society

A.J. Snyder Estate

Rosendale, New York 12472-0150

Thanks for your continued support.