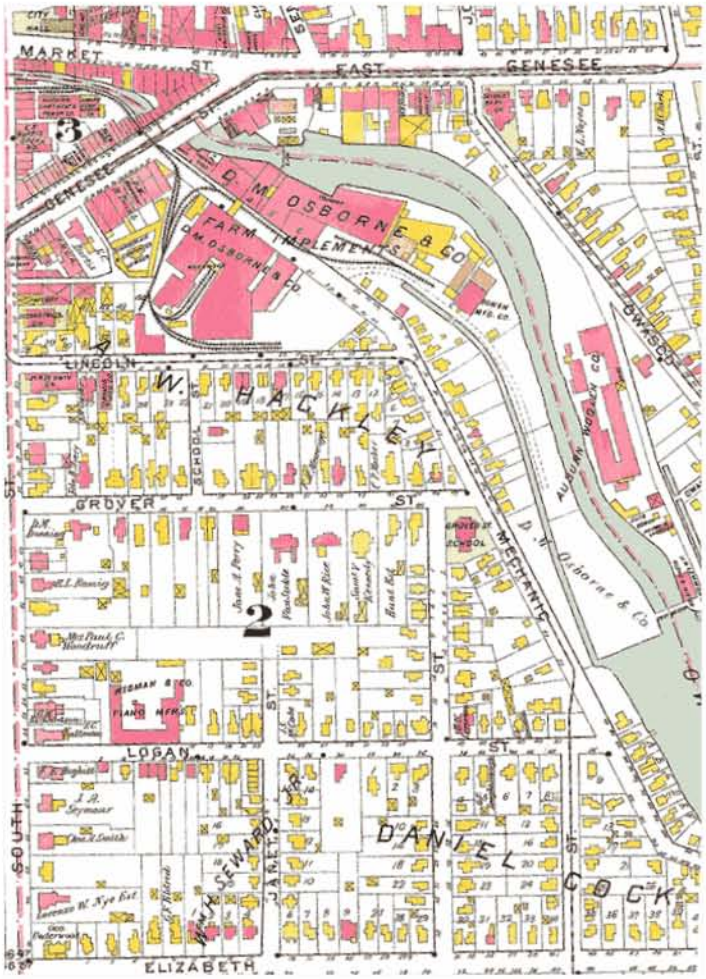
AUBURN ROOTS

A Legacy of Social Reform, Invention, Industry & Expansion…..

Sweet Auburn, Loveliest Village of the Plain

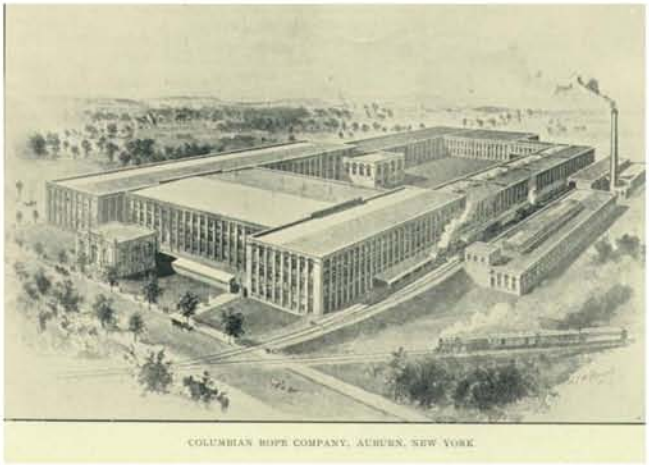
AUBURN HISTORY'S HOMETOWN

Founded in 1793 by John L. Hardenberg, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, our community built up around Hardenbergh's mill and home and became known as Hardenbergh's Corners. In 1805 the name changed to Auburn, taken from an Oliver Goldsmith poem, which describes "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain." Auburn incorporated as a village in 1815 and received its city charter in 1848.



The potential for water power along the Owasco River encouraged mill and factory growth. Some of these industries included flour mills, sawmills, a brewery, a paper mill, and cotton factory. In 1816 the Auburn Prison (now Auburn State Correctional Facility) was founded and spurred additional development along the River. Commercial enterprises such as retail, service, and inn/tavern establishments soon followed. In the late 1830s the Auburn & Syracuse Railroad line was constructed and transects the northwest part of the City. Land in the outlying towns was cleared for agricultural industries consisting of vegetable and dairy production.

Historians use the year 1837 as a year of transition for Auburn. In addition to a nationwide financial panic, a devastating fire on Genesee and North Streets abruptly disrupted the era of initial development in the commercial district. Nevertheless, industrial development along the Owasco Outlet continued incrementally. In the mid 1850's waterpower on the River was improved by raising the upper dam and removing obstructions. Hydro-power continued to be the main power source for industries well into the 1870s.



COLUMBIAN ROPE COMPANY, AUBURN, NEW YORK

Increased industrial output spurred the development of new residential neighborhoods and the expansion of the central business district. These developments in turn created a need for citywide gas and water service lines, most of which were installed from the 1850's through the 1860's. Following the

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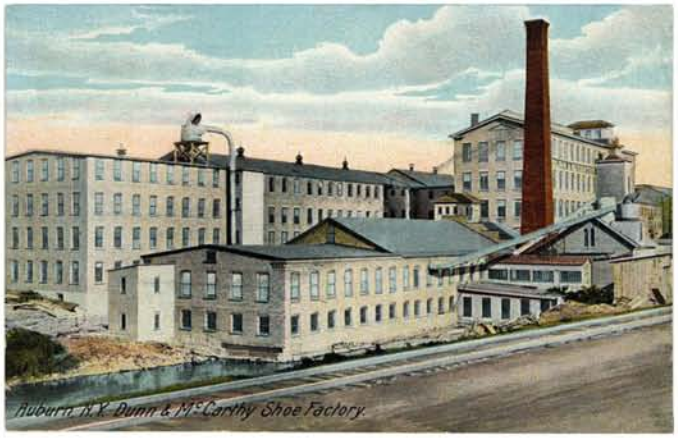

financial panic of 1873, Auburn renewed its industrial expansion. With the advent of steam and hydroelectric power, new industries located in the northwest sector of the city away from the River. New state regulations abolished the contract system of prison labor. At the same time, the increased scale of local manufacturing required a larger workforce.

The population of Auburn increased dramatically at the turn of the 20th century as thousands of people from southeastern Europe immigrated to ethnic neighborhoods in northwestern Auburn. Much of the new housing was created through infill in existing neighborhoods, although some new suburban areas were also developed during this period. Infrastructure improvements included electric, telephone, streetcar, and publicly-owned water services – all in place by the early 1890s. Through economic ups and downs, the industrial base of Auburn continued to expand and the city prospered with the population growing to 30,000 by mid-1930. At its peak, over 35,000 residents lived in Auburn and worked at industrial giants employing thousands of people. Over time, many of these factories closed or relocated to lower cost areas both within and outside the Unites States. They have been replaced by small to mid-sized companies using high-tech processes to manufacture a rich diversity of products and component parts.

Factories of Our Past

- American Locomotive Company
- American Wringer Company
- Auburn Woolen Company
- Birdsall Company (farm implements)
- Bombardier (rail/aerospace components)
- Boyle & Everts Co. (windows, doors, blinds)
- Columbian Rope
- Dunn & McCarthy (ladies shoes)
- D.M. Osborne & Company (farm implements)
- E.D. Clapp Manufacturing (carriages)
- International Harvester (farm implements)
- McIntosh, Seymour & Co. (steam engines)
- The Nye & Wait Carpet Company
- Wegman Piano Factory

OUR INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Industrial giants of the past have been replaced with small to mid-sized companies; our City's present day industrial fabric remains rich and diverse.

Traditional use of the Owasco River for industrial purposes has almost totally declined, although several municipal utility functions are currently served by water drawn from the river. Today Auburn's economy is a healthy mix of small to mid-sized manufacturers, retail and service industries. The City has implemented numerous projects in order to demonstrate innovation and leadership in energy conservation, attract new business, and become a national model for sustainable smart community planning. To highlight a few:

Memorial City Hall and the Police/Fire Station are heated and cooled geothermally; the HVAC systems were purchased through McQuay International which operates a production facility in the City. The City now recovers methane gas from its landfill, converts it to electricity and hot water at its co-generation plant, and uses the power to operate its City's wastewater treatment plant. Citywide, streetlights were recently replaced with energy efficient LEDs. And, the Auburn Municipal Power Agency was created in 2004 in order to buy and sell energy and to develop additional alternative energy systems. Auburn's future is bright indeed, as we continue to embrace new opportunities to build on our deep manufacturing roots.

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AUBURN HISTORY'S HOMETOWN

Revolutionary Residents

Over the years, numerous prominent visionaries and reformers have resided in Auburn, New York. Many of these individuals have left an enduring mark on the nation and the world. We honor their legacy through historic preservation of their homes, commemorative naming, artistic interpretation, cultural celebration and documentation. We invite you to explore our City's rich history, and to learn more about these revolutionary risk -takers that called Auburn home.

William H. Seward served as the 12th Governor of New York State, was a United States Senator, and Secretary of State under Presidents Lincoln and Johnson. He had the extraordinary vision to purchase Alaska from Russia; the heavily ridiculed transaction was completed on March 30, 1867 for $7,200,000 and was thought by many to be "Seward's Folly." Seward was also a devoted and outspoken abolitionist who offered his own home to hide escaping slaves. Today, the public can visit this historic home located in downtown Auburn. The Seward House Museum offers guided tours of this beautifully preserved mansion and its gardens, and offers dynamic programming to highlight many of the fascinating aspects of this era. William H. Seward is buried in Auburn's Historic Fort Hill Cemetery. www.sewardhouse.org

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Harriet Tubman was an abolitionist, humanitarian and Union spy, scout and nurse during the Civil War. Born into slavery in Dorchester County Maryland, she escaped to freedom in Philadelphia in 1849. Immediately, she returned south for what would become over a dozen risky rescue operations along the Underground Railroad. After the Civil War, Harriet's friend William H. Seward encouraged her to settle in Auburn, where she started a home for aged blacks and was active in the suffrage movement for the last half of her life. Dubbed the "Moses of her People" who lead over 70 slaves to freedom, Harriet has become an international icon. Efforts are underway to establish a National Historic Park in Auburn and Dorchester. Harriet Tubman is buried in Auburn's Historic Fort Hill Cemetery; each year, hundreds of people make the pilgrimage to visit her gravesite and her Auburn home. **www.harriethouse.org**

Thomas Mott Osborne was born into a wealthy and prominent Auburn family that was at the forefront of social reform movements; Thomas's grandmother Martha Coffin Wright and her sister Lucretia Coffin Mott were among the organizers of the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls in 1848. Thomas's family also owned the DM Osborne & Co. in downtown Auburn. Thomas served as President of the Company from 1886-1903; during this time it grew into North America's third largest producer of agricultural implements. The Company merged with International Harvester Trust Company, and Thomas turned his attention to social service. He served two terms as Mayor of Auburn, and chaired the State Commission on Prison Reform. In this capacity, he went undercover as prisoner "Tom Brown" at Auburn Prison for a week, in order to experience the true conditions. This voluntary stay was an experience destined to change Osborne's life and the way this country looked at its prisons. Before Osborne left prison he threw himself on his knees and prayed for the strength to spend the rest of his life trying to reform the prison system. For the next 13 years, until his death in 1926, he spoke out against the senseless brutality of the prison system, seeking to turn the "scrap heap" of the prison system into a "human repair shop", which would fit men for a return to society.

Theodore Willard Case an Auburn native, founded the Case Research Lab with his father, Willard Case, in 1916 at his estate home in downtown Auburn. This is where the first commercially successfully system of sound film was invented. Today, this site is owned and managed by the Cayuga Museum of History and Art. The Museum's facilities encompass the Willard-Case mansion, the Case Research Lab, and the Carriage House. The Museum collects, preserves and interprets objects and archives that document Cayuga County's past. The Museum also preserves and promotes the international legacy of the Case Research Lab, birthplace of talking movies. The Case Research Lab Museum exhibits the working spaces of the darkroom, chemistry lab, and recording studio; the first sound camera; experimental recording equipment; and a history of the commercialization of sound film including such ventures as Phonofilms, Fox-Case Company Movietone, and Fox Films (now 20th Century Fox). **www.cayuganet.org/cayugamuseum**