

Made in Fredonia

A talk presented to Friends of Barker Library and Museum

By Douglas H. Shepard, 2000

What Jutta and Chris have done is to mount an exhibit that gives a fascinating cross-section of the Museum's own collection and of the craftsmanship, inventiveness, and manufacturing capabilities of the people of our community. What I want to do is supplement their efforts by indicating how many other such activities there were here, and how much more numerous than you might suppose.

You will be grateful to hear that I'm going to be selective, which means I'm surely going to omit someone or some product that you expected to hear about. So I'll apologize ahead of time. After the talk I would love to hear from each one of you about manufacturers, craftsmen, or artists I have missed and whom we should at least have on record. Remember, we are always open to receiving Fredonia-related items to consider adding to the Museum's collection.

I'm going to work backwards from the present, and so that we don't get too lost, I have divided our local history into 50-year units: 1800-1850, 1850-1900, 1900-1950, 1950 to 2000. You will see as we work our way back that handicrafts and manufacturing increase which is not to say we have none today. If you properly understand "made" as in "Made in Fredonia," you know we must include whatever Red Wing is currently processing and selling and whatever is being worked on at the Cliffstar plant on Water Street. And we also should include the pieces offered every year by the College Art Department in its student and faculty shows and sales -- all of it made in Fredonia.

Some of the booths at the Fredonia Farm Festival offered paintings, woodwork and other local hand-made items. If we look for "Made in Fredonia" for the 1950-2000 period, we should include the Titus memorial marble works, the silk-screened T-shirts, those carved rocks Mark **Ruckman** was producing, and the new computer Dave **Kron** made for us just a month ago. On which I typed this very talk. All were made in Fredonia.

I know Ann **Fahnestock** did -- and Kathy **Peterson** does -- weaving. How many others are there I don't know about? Or the dolls Wilma **McAllister** made. Or the dollhouse contents by Joyce **Dunning** in our Museum in the beautiful dollhouse George **Weaver** made. Or Dick **Sheil's** dollhouse version of **Longfellow's** home. Or the poetry of Joyce **Frazeur** he printed himself and had published.

Which is a reminder of all the other publishing going on here today. The Museum has done some itself. Until recently the White Pine Press was operating at the old Fire Hall. The Village and the Fredonia Chamber of Commerce have published material about the Village, all "made in Fredonia." You may not know of the Basilisk Press of Dave **Lunde** at the College, (many, many small books of poetry and fiction) but you surely remember the Penny Saver (Complete file saved?) Or the output of Allen **Benton's** publishing house he called Marginal Media, which published the work of his alter ego Albert Ezra **Fitzwarren**, author of such noted works of poetry as The Nature of Nature from Alpha to Zeta. You certainly know the work by Dan **Reiff** and its second version. How about Collie **Middleton** (later Collie D. **Middleton**)? Laura **Foster's** novels. To these published items made in Fredonia, add work by the Arkwright Press, Express Prints and Copy Boy. Also Robert **Burgess's** "Bob Tales" illustrated by Edith **Curtis**. The title page identifies him as Robert Brettle **Burgess**, U.C.T. A.E.M. That is, United Commercial Traveler After Easy Money. Another writer of our period was Mrs. **Yellott** writing poetry as Barbara Leslie **Jordan**. (Comfort the Dream 1955)

In another area, add the work of photographers like John **Slaughter** and Dan **Sullivan**; before them Bob **Gregory** and the related craftsmanship of Al **Runkel**. In the area of the decorative is Jerry **Raat's** custom decorating. The awnings made by Open View Window on Water Street, custom engraving by **Smith & Smith**. There is also the art work of Mrs. **Wise**, Larry **Urbscheit**, Ruth **Moos**, Diane **Leone**, Carmen **Gilman** and how many others? All made in Fredonia.

Does the craft of the dentist count? I myself am a living exhibit to the skills of Drs. **Ingham** and **Shorr**.

Woodbury Vineyards should be included within our 1950-2000 window. Winston Wine Cellars which the **Stars** opened in 1967 and the Cliffstar Corporation formed in 1971. Which is a reminder of **Mitchell** Foods. Fredonia Food Specialities and Sunset Frozen Foods began in 1952, **Barone** Frozen Foods in 1955, Fredonia Pickle Factory in 1958 and **De Marco** Canning in 1965.

The heyday of seed companies was in the previous period, 1900-1950, The granddaddy of them all is Fredonia Seed, begun by the **Roeschs** in 1901, continued by A. F. **French** then **Ostrander** and finally the **Weavers**, George Sr. and then Jr. until it was sold to **Stokes** in 1984. Soon after Fredonia Seed started, there came the **Card** Seed Co 1908, Erie Seed 1918, Good Seed 1919, **Case** Brothers 1924, Empire Seed 1928, Best Seed 1935, Hygrade 1937, Grace **Anderson** Seed 1941, and **Rupert** Seed 1946. That was begun by M/M Don **Reinhoudt** the elder in 1946. He had done accounting for many of the seed companies and learned the business, so they decided to try their hand. Because they were such a small operation, they had no machinery to help. Mrs. R. told me they filled some 50,000 packets at home by hand. Mr. R. also designed and built wooden shipping/display cases, so those too should be included under "Made in Fredonia" along with the seeds, seed packets, advertising brochures, etc. About 1948 the **Reinhoudts** sold to Lewis **Crocker** who kept it going only two more years.

Closely allied to Seed Co's in this 1900-1950 period are the food processors. The biggie of course is the **Cudahy** Packing Co. opening a local plant in 1914 called Puritan Pure Food Products Corp. which evolved into today's Red Wing. But we should also mention, in alphabetical order other food processors who were active in Fredonia in this period: **Bedford** Products, Bison Canning, Brocton Preserving, Buffalo Frosted Foods, **Card** Wine, Cider & Vinegar Co., Colonial Wine, **Drago** Macaroni, Eagle Canning, **Elardo** Macaroni, Empire Distributors, Excelsior Canning, Farm King, Fredonia Fruit Juice Co., Fredonia Macaroni, Fredonia Preserving, **Genuso** Grape Juice and Catsup, **Gervas**, **Gioia**, **Bellanca**, later **Joy**, **Bellanca**, then **Gioia** Brothers, **Gleason** Grape Juice, Grape Ola, Peter **Lanza** & Co., Frank **LoGrasso** Macaroni, **Lazarony** Cider, Old Chautauqua Packing Co., Salsina Canning, William D. **Smith**, Spear Wine Co., United Wine, Gerardo **Vinciguerra**, H. T. **Wilbur**.

By 1907 Dr. **Fenner's** People's Remedies operation was making flavoring extracts under Mr. **Mau**. There were other wine makers too: Charles **Bemus** at 281 Central (**Wolfers** old house moved from 178 Central in 1868 so **Wolfers** could build the brick house.) F. E. **Cooke's** United Wine Co. on Cleveland 1900-1917, Bill **Russo** began wine making in 1914. Other made in Fredonia food products came from Barone's nut shelling business, and numerous local dairies.

Leaving foodstuffs, we move to A. F. **French's** Fredonia Veneer Factory which began in 1912. The veneer culls were used to make grape baskets -- another thriving industry. That bldg burned in 1914. I mentioned the flavoring extracts before. The print shop at **Fenner's** was named Gobe Printing Co. in 1903 and did color printing and turned out cookbooks, pamphlets, etc. A draughtsman named John L. **Telford**, probably working in **McKinstry's** *Censor* print shop designed letter heads such as the one for Arthur **Maytum's** grocery in 1900. (SHOW)

Publishing calls for writers and for 1900-1950 we have Grace **Richmond** and Jean **Webster**. In photography there was **Burton & Cook** 1907, Russell **McLaren** 1918. His son took over about 1946 until 1969. We are lucky to have so much of their work saved. Less artistic items made in Fredonia came from the Empire Mfg.CO. 1901-1911. And don't forget Luke **Kellogg** who invented a combination lock in 1908 and patented it in 1910. (15 Terrace Street). Of course, Frank **Dinsmore's** wonderful Clothes Dryer -- here thanks to the **Boltzes**, and we should mention the seed display rack invented and patented by George **Weaver** Sr. The first of its kind in the industry.

But the previous period, 1850-1900 was also an active time for inventive minds. One was Justus **Hinman** who invented and built a 3-wheel buggy with a hood (1857). The hood wasn't a new idea, but

the tricycle effect was supposed to prevent tipping over on tight turns. He isn't heard of again, so it may not have worked.

Back in 1850 John **Hamilton** was manufacturing chemical soap. Of course water had already been invented, so he then jumped to the next stage which was a new kind of clothes drier. Apparently it replaced the wooden bars of the old fashioned kind with rope covering some 50 to 75 feet. 1883 Benjamin F. **Frey** patented a "Fredonia Washer" (17 Hamlet Street) In the same year, 1883, **Park & Parker** manufactured it. In 1884 U. E. **Dodge** invented a coal sifter to separate the unburned coal from the ashes without getting yourself dirty.

Turning to the arts, we had Julia **Parker Clark**, Clara **Lane**, Rufus W. **Lester** who did a bust of Capt. **Cushing**, Harriet **Mason Ely** who did shell and waxwork and taught painting at the Normal, Mrs. **Darling** who taught Kensington painting, Lizzie **Lester** who taught French decorative art and Mary A. **Bunnell**. All making works of art in Fredonia.

In photography we had G. R. **Martin**, Mr. **Tarbell**, Damon P. **Clark**, Salmon P. **Halstead**, B. W. **Ladd**, **Beckwith** and **Whitney**, Charles **Pringle**, Jr., and Harry **McNeill**. When **Barker** Library first opened in 1882, **McNeill** was the one who lent an album with photos of the old settlers that he was just then in the process of creating. When he died in 1890 he was succeeded by E. R. **Hough** and Charles O. **Mason**. There were also Arthur **White**, **Montgomery & Cook**, Clarence A. **Gibbs**, C. H. **Sisson**, Amos **Wight**, Maud M. **Adams**, and John and Mary **Korb**, a brother sister team at 39 East Main.

Clearly there was no dearth of creative activity in Fredonia in the 1850-1900 period. In July 1910 Louis **McKinstry**, in a talk about the period of the 1850s said "Our Village has not the relative importance in the county it had [then] There is not such a diversity of manufacturing as we had then...". What he was talking about, for example, was Clarence **Lewis** who established a handle-manufacturing factory on Chestnut Street. (It was **Lewis, Tunstall & Co.** in 1873) He had Charles **Luke** working for him by 1883. They made axe, hammer, sledge and pick axe handles. In 1891 Charles, Henry and John **Luke** bought it from **Lewis** family and it became the Fredonia Handle Mfg. Co. In 1896 they moved to Cleveland Ave. and just to finish the story, in 1899 it was C. F. **Luke & Son** and in 1900 Benjamin **Luke**.

There were a slew of carriage makers like **Mason & Dickinson** 1852, later **Mason & Parker** 1855. Francis B. **Parker** at East Main and Cushing. **Mason & Dickinson** built one of the first omnibuses to run along the plank road, Dunkirk St., (Central Ave.) to and from the new RR depot in Dunkirk. Another company was Hascal **Taylor** in Center St. in 1856. In 1858 Festus **Day** joined to make it **Taylor & Day**. 1864 added Thomas H. **Prushaw** to make **Taylor, Day & Co.** In 1873 they built a new 3-story building that Charles **Pringle** Jr. made photos of. In 1875 **Taylor** sold out to H. D. **Crane** to create **Day, Prushaw & Crane**. In 1886 **Prushaw** bought out **Day** to make **Prushaw & Crane**. The company was sold off in 1888, but not before the bookkeeper Miss **Prushaw** met and married young Arthur **Maytum**, grocer. The rest, as they say, is local history.

The carriage works called for painters to decorate them. They are the same people who decorated the fire parade wagons and hose carts. They also did signs -- like Aaron **Barmore** who did a large gilded sign for **Case & Zahm's** hardware store in 1886 and for **Maytum's** grocery, now a proud possession of the Barker Museum. There were lots of other interesting signs "made in Fredonia" such as the one at **Howard's** jewelry store which was a large watch in a frame with effigies of Father Time on either side.

On a larger scale, after Addison **Crosby** took over his father's business in 1857, he built a 25-horse steam engine for **Colburn's** flour mill and he apparently put wheels on one of his own steam engines and chugged it down Temple Street frightening the horses. Much more sedate were the broom factories. One near Laona, on Eagle Street extension (near Dunn Street) was V. **Dunn & Sons**. Thomas **Wellman** worked for them. In 1890 **Wellman** Bros. bought it and moved the business to the Street Railway Co.'s building on Center Street, At that time, L. L. **Crocker** had a grape basket factory there . By December **Crocker** needed all the space, so the **Wellmans** bought the former marble shop (112 East

Main) from Harrison **Parker** (son of the late Francis B. **Parker** who had had the carriage factory across the street) and moved the broom factory there.

Another active business in the period was ink making. The earliest I've seen is W. D. C. **Brown's** "Chemical Writing fluid" 1873. In 1875 the Victor Ink Co. began making and selling Paragon Ink at 59 West Main. In the same year the very aggressive grocer Jesse **Starr** began the Empire State Ink Co. (**Starrs** later began publishing a newspaper, the *Up-To-Date*, primarily to advertise their grocery. One premium for subscribing was the Village Directory of 1899-- the first one with the modern numbering system. The Museum has I think the only copy as well as a file of the newspaper. Its predecessor was Perry **Bartram's** 1883 Directory using a numbering system he devised. He just happened to make house numbers as well that you were welcome to buy. There may be some affixed to older houses in the Village under coats of paint. If you find one that doesn't match your current house number, let us know.

I got away from the ink making game. In 1888 M. M. **Fenner** bought out the **Victor** Mfg. Co and began making writing ink in the People's Remedies building at Center and Barker streets, where his patent medicine business began in 1869. There's another very important product of the period, the **Howard** Bros. watches, under various names. They began selling watches about 1865 and actually making them from 1875 in a small building behind the Baptist Church. In 1876 they bought **Pettit's** and **Barker's** Eye Salve Co. In 1880 they moved the building to East Main Street and added to it. They did so well that in 1882 they built a new building on Cleveland Avenue just for the Eye Salve manufacture. In the same year they bought Mr. **Durrell's** tapping machine and moved it to Cleveland Avenue from Dunkirk. So they had watches of various kinds being made, patent medicines, and machine nuts threaded on the new high speed patented machine. However in 1886 they moved to Peoria IL. Replacing them were the **Taber** Felt Factory (felt boots etc.) in 1887 and the Glidden Felt Collar Pad Co. in 1888 which took the Cleveland Avenue building. So add winter boots and horse collar pads to the "made in Fredonia" roster.

Another category is the seed companies such as **Dodge & Hinckley**, then **Hinckley** and **Matteson**. (**Hinckley** was involved with O. H. **Kelley** in establishing the first subordinate grange in Fredonia). David **Wright** also started a seed packet business in 1851 and bought out **Hinckley** in 1880. To those add the **Gardner** Brothers on East Main Street, I. W. **Losee** in 1867, Eliza **Denton** 1873, and S. M. **Skidmore** 1883.

However the really significant business in Fredonia in this period was the food processing industry. Initially the cans were made locally. Food was processed, put in the cans, the lids with a tiny air hole were soldered on, and the last bit of air was expelled. Then the hole was plugged with solder. So when we talk about canned goods "made in Fredonia" we mean the can as well as its contents.

Some of the old fruit drying operations, an earlier method of preserving, appeared from time to time: 1867, 1878, 1881. In addition to canning there were other food-related processes such as cider and wine-making and others. In roughly chronological order of beginning date: Silas **Clark** mfg. 1859, L. M. **Wheelock** cheese factory 1881, Sunset Canning Co. 1882 in 1898: Tony **Liberty's** Macaroni factory, Bert **Flagg** Wine making on Center Street, (became **White & Flagg**), Dr. Wm. **Park** wine cellar on Eagle Street, Henry T. **Wilbur** on Central Avenue (where Fenton Hall is). In 1899: U. S. Canning Co.- and Meyer **Star's** winery leased from **Wilbur**. It operated as Fredonia Products Co. until 1902 when the **Stars** bought the old winery at 200 Water Street.)

And always keep in mind that as far as Made In Fredonia goes, the above operations besides involving people making cans, also included those making grape baskets, barrels, boxes, shipping crates, excelsior for packing, labels, letterheads, billing slips, advertising matter, etc.

Finally we come to the last segment, the first in our history: 1800-1850.

We can begin with the fine arts -- painters like Corbin **Kidder** who painted M/M Levi **Barker** , L. S. **Watkins** who did various portraits, Tompkins **Matteson** who did the Discovery of the Witch Mark, Amos **Wight** again and Alvah **Bradish**, Frederick **Young** who painted M/M William **Cutler** on the wooden

panels, in the **Belden** gallery. In an allied field, the earliest photographers, included daguerreotypists like Dr. J. P. **Clark** 1844. Also include the signs done by local craftsmen : A. N. **Clark** had the sign of the Golden Pestle. **Clark & Havens** could be found at the sign of the Mill Saw. And there were other decorative pieces like the weathervane of the 1820s now at the Winterthur Museum.

Another kind of bringer of beauty was Grandma **Brigham**, according to Fanny **Risley Brigham**, who brought root cuttings from Madison County when she came in 1808 and had her flower bed around a high stump near their log cabin. One of the plants was digitalis which, Fanny **Brigham** said, spread so that the woods were full of it in later years. So if there is any foxglove growing wild near **Brigham** Road it was made in Fredonia by Grandma **Brigham**.

There was not much beautiful writing going on back then, but there was publishing. The Chautauqua Gazette started in 1817, and Mr. **Hull** published the Minutes of the Holland Purchase Baptist Assoc. in June 1818. That seems to be the first book printed in the County. The *Censor* started in 1821. In 1823 there was a spelling book published by **Burton & Spafford**, which had been printed at the *Fredonia Censor* office on paper made at **Burnham's** Mill near Shumla. A copy was given to the **Barker** Library in 1896. **Frisbee** also published *A Contrast Between Christianity and Calvinism* from the *Censor* office in 1824.

In another category, we have Henry **Bosworth**, who fixed watches, who was also a gold and silversmith. He made silver spoons from coins. 6 silver 1/2 dollars made six tea spoons. In the 1840s he was on East Main Street. Nearby was Joshua **Turner** who made saddles and harnesses. Benjamin **Douglass** had a tannery where he made boots and shoes, that was back in 1818 and Leverett **Barker** had the same, although he stayed in business longer. Earlier than either one, Charles **Burritt** made shoes at 2 West Main Street from 1808. Then he moved to 59 West Main, and later on he decided he was a druggist. P. H. **Stevens** had a hat factory on East Main and across the street was Obed **Bissell's** carriage works. Our friend Amos **Wight** was a carriage maker as well in the 1840s and may have honed his painting skills decorating his work.

William **Hamilton** built a stone bridge replacing **Risley's** original 1809 bridge on West Main in 1830. **Hamilton** also manufactured gravestones with Joseph **Damon** who was hung for murder in 1835. His brother Martin **Damon** was a stone cutter and tombstone maker as well. Pioneer Cemetery has many of his creations. **Damon** was in the Cascade Hamlet -- that huge three-story U-shaped building at 100 West Main from 1818 to 1832. William **Norcutt**, blacksmith was there. As were E. **Shepard** & R. **Buck** carriage makers, Martin **Damon**, R. **Coffman** Windsor chairs, Myron **Chapin** who made spinning machines and paper cutters, Uriah **Wentworth** the cooper who made barrels of all kinds, N. **Randell** who was a tanner and shoemaker, S. **Willson** tin and coppersmith, making pots and pans, lanterns, trays, weathervanes, etc., Sala **Todd** wheelwright, making the wheels for all those carriages.

Some important cabinet makers were Nathaniel and Pearson **Crosby**. Pearson is the one who invented the "Portable Prairie Saw-Mill" in 1838 and after the circular saw was invented by the Shakers, in 1851 he had an improved Sawing Machine described in detail in Scientific American. When the **Crosbys** gave up their mill it was taken over by Jason and Pliny **Smith** who built the catamaran for Dr. William **Park**. Still later it became a churn factory, and at one point there was a comb factory there or in the vicinity.

That catamaran reminds me of earlier boat building. William Risley said that one of the first boats on Lake Erie was built here in 1810 -- an open boat about 40 feet long. In 1827 after the opening of the Erie Canal, an association of farmers bankrolled the building of a canal boat by Zattu **Cushing**. He built the Enterprise on the flat ground below Fort Hill and had it towed by 100 yoke of oxen to the Lake. Captained by Mr. **Tuttle** it was towed to Buffalo by a steamer and then worked the canal for a few trips before giving out. This was a very significant occurrence because it signaled the beginning of the end of commercial isolation for Fredonia and a drastic change -- over time -- in what would be Made in Fredonia.

We wax nostalgic about whatever old stuff we can find that was actually made here in the good old days. As far as Fredonians of the time were concerned, they used what was made here because that was what available or affordable. After a season or two, enough land was cleared to raise enough to sell to newcomers who were the only people who might have some cash. No one did locally. It was the only way to get money because, Wm. **Risley** explained, "there was not any article sent off to have money returned for."

The first and only articles sent to market for a number of years after the first settlement were pot and pearl ashes....Montreal was the market until the Erie Canal opened. That means from 1805 to 1825 nothing else could be exported for sale. H. C. **Frisbee** helped his father drive teams up Temple Street by way of the mouth of Canadaway Creek almost to lighthouse point in 1818. They hauled casks holding 400-500 pounds of the ash product.

There was great excitement when Joseph and Ralph **Plumb** brought on a load of goods -- the first landed in Dunkirk. That was in 1816. Wooden horses were put out in the water and planks laid on them to reach the small boat. All of that helps explain the whiskey trade. Like potash, the only way to compress grain sufficiently to make it worth hauling to markets far away was in the form of whiskey. At one point there were 11 distilleries operating here and one or two breweries. The first was in 1813 just west of the bridge. Later they were built up and down the Creek. What 11 distilleries meant was a need for implements to handle the grain, wagons, cribs, rakes, and thousands and thousands of barrels.

But you see all of that was a matter of necessity. There was an Old Settlers Reunion here in 1873. Huge turnout. Lots of exhibits lent by the old timers or their descendants. Do you know what they had lots of and showed with the greatest pride? Anything from before they settled here: A saddle then 130 years old (in 1873). A chair over 100 years old brought here in 1826, a pewter platter 100 years old, a foot warmer ditto, an Indian snow shoe 200 years old, a carpenter's square of 1703, an axe made in 1575, and so on.

The point is that much was made in Fredonia because they couldn't get anything from outside until the Erie Canal, plank roads, steamships and finally the Railroad opened up affordable commerce. William **Risley** described a typical home with hand cards, spinning wheels for wool and flax, a loom in the corner, a dye tub in the corner near the fire. The colors were primarily blue butternut or madder red. (Does that account for our flag?) Women's winter clothing was generally flannel. Linen for towels, table linens and lighter clothing. The tow carded from the flax was spun on the large wheel for men's summer clothing. Wool also on the big wheel for stockings.

Norton & Howard's mill across from **Colburn's** not only ground corn and rye, it also carded wool, and fulled and pressed cloth. **Frisbee** described our community in 1828 as having a woolen mill, a paper mill, an oil mill (linseed oil) a casting furnace for ploughs, a rifle factory, a powder factory, a pail factory, a nail factory and a bedstead factory. A busy, busy place. In finishing up, let's add the manufacturing of cheese presses, **Pettit's** Eye Salve and Canker remedies beginning in this period, and a machine for reeling silk. We must include the early seed companies before 1850: the **Risley** Brothers, Thomas **Warren** and Joel **Parker**. Plus the people making the paper packets, the small boxes, the shipping crates and the wagons themselves.

Now, the very last item is one fundamental to our whole exhibit. In the summer of 1819, Levi **Risley**, then 15 got a job working at Mr. **Turner's** brick works on Chestnut Street. He tended the oxen going round and round working the straw into the clay. He also shaped the bricks in the molds before they were fired. They made 200,000 bricks that season of which Leverett **Barker** bought half, which were used in building his home, completed in May 1821. So as you walk around admiring the various artifacts on display, keep in mind that you are, at the same time, INSIDE one of those artifacts -- the **Barker** home, now our Museum, which is also very much "Made in Fredonia."