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## Discovering Watertown Part 2

[MUSIC]

**Narrator:**

**On Part Two of Discovering Watertown ... In the mid 1800's, the city transformed from a rugged wilderness into an industrial powerhouse.**

[MUSIC]

**Narrator:**

**A community that invented new technologies, overcame natural disasters, and supported a nation at war.**

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Announcer: Major funding for Discovering Watertown is provided by the Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation. Dedicated to improving the well-being of communities by helping disadvantaged children and families.

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Jefferson County Economic Development.

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**Narrator:**

**The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw Watertown grow into an industrial center generating jobs and economic growth. Industry grew more vibrant, and more and more people moved to Watertown to be a part of the exciting new era. It was a time of innovation and progress. New means of transportation were developed in order to better connect Watertown to the rest of New York State and the rest of the country. The railroad arrived in 1851. Four years later, the Black River canal was completed in 1855. However, railroads everywhere soon proved to be king.**

**Dr. Jason White, Watertown History Researcher:**

*The railroads were the up and coming transportation method after waterways became somewhat obsolete. The rest of New York State was able to have railroads brought into the area. In the early 1850s Watertown had a grassroots effort to bring a railroad to Watertown. And that was the connection to the world. The train would also bring people from New York City or distant ports right to the back of the Hotel Woodruff. The Hotel Woodruff had a tunnel where you could leave the train and go underground, so you would not have to bear the weather in Northern New York and stay a night at a fancy hotel.*

**Patrick Lappierre, SUNY Canton Professor of History:**

*Really in the 1850s they started to make a serious appearance on the American landscape. What they did was they in a sense put canals out of business. It was even cheaper to send things by rail. People became really interested, not only in building railroads but investing in them, speculating. It also became a site of great corruption. Railroad magnates would gladly line the pockets of politicians to get their hands on some cheap land. So railroads really changed a lot about American politics and American economy.*

**Narrator:**

**The Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter. The Civil war was one of the earliest true industrial wars. Railroads, steamships, the telegraph, and mass-produced weapons were used extensively. For the first time, civilian factories, mines, banks, transportation, and food supplies were mass mobilized for the war effort. In fact, Jefferson County sent more soldiers per capita to the Union Army than any other county in the state of New York.**

**Patrick Wilder, Historian:**

*When the Civil War broke out of course Watertown and the people of Jefferson County for the most part supported the effort to keep the Union together. When President Lincoln put out his call for volunteers they came forth in Jefferson County. County officials would also provide a bonus to those individuals who joined. So there was a steady flow of people going in to the Union Army. Many were eager to see a situation where all men were free. Many wanted to see the Union survive. The Thirty-fifth infantry regiment was raised in Watertown, New York and the surrounding area. Also the hundred and eighty-sixth regiment, "A" company was primarily people from Watertown. Others were from Theresa, were from Copenhagen, Adams and even down in, uh one company was raised in Corning, New York, in Hammondsport. But the bulk of them came from Jefferson County. They fought in Northern Virginia primarily, they fought at Rappahannock Station, they fought in the second Battle of Bull Run. They fought in any number of other battles in Northern Virginia. And so it's something we can all feel proud about.*

**Dr. Timothy Abel, Archaeologist:**

*One of the central tenants of any war is that the nation with the industrial might to produce the war machine is the nation that's going to come out victorious. And with Watertown being such an industrious place with having so much industry, I would say throughout every war the United States has fought, Watertown has been not the central focus but a very important part of the industrial machine that built that war infrastructure. During the War of 1812, the Watertown*

*area was very instrumental in terms of being a battleground. But by the Civil War, we had woollen mills in Jefferson County. We had gun making factories in Jefferson County that were turning out uniforms and guns for the Union war cause. Of course the railroad infrastructure was what really, is what really allowed that industrial production to take place. They had an easy time shipping those goods to the front along the south. Of course you go up into World War I and Jefferson County and Watertown are producing not only guns but also ammunition. They're also producing parts for trains that are going to areas in France in order to build the train infrastructure, the rail infrastructure that fueled World War I.*

**Glenn Curry, Radio Host and Filmmaker, Radio Host and Filmmaker:**

*We were a big factor in all the wars, including the Civil War, because we did have an assemblance of factories at that point, not as much as we did afterwards during the American Industrial Revolution, but as a result of our northern power, if you will, and the expertise of building things, um you know, we were always part of the war effort.*

**Narrator:**

**In 1869, a few years after the War ended, Watertown was declared a city and the wealth and prosperity continued to increase. In addition to being recognized as an industrial city, Watertown was also known as a place of growth and innovation throughout the state. Many inventions were developed here as growth continued to take place. The invention of the portable steam engine opened the use of steam technology to the average farm, replacing horses to drive machinery.**

**In the early 1800's, blacksmith James Liddy invented the box spring, making sleep more comfortable for millions. The story goes that as Liddy was waiting for his wife to finish shopping, he had the idea to adapt the box spring from his wagon seat into a support for his bed mattress.**

**Martinsburg, New York resident and mechanic Walter Hunt is regarded as the inventor of the safety pin. Hunt made the invention to pay off a \$15 dollar debt to a friend. After being issued a patent in 1849, Hunt sold the patent to W.R. Grace and Company for \$400. He failed to realize that in the years to follow, W.R. Grace and Company would make millions of dollars from the sales of safety pins. Hunt also held other patents, including one for the improvement of fountain pens, improvements to the sewing machine, and another for the improvement of kerosene lamps, used before the advent of electricity to generate light.**

**Glenn Curry, Radio Host and Filmmaker, Radio Host and Filmmaker:**

*In the 1870s and through the Gilded Age of the 1880s and 1890s, we had a surge of people of all kinds, especially those who were trained laborers and leaders that established this town as a much bigger place for, I guess you could say, the elite to live in. As a result of that, we created incredible industry up here after the Civil War. That's what led a lot of people up here. We had the infrastructure to get people here first, more so than any other city of its kind. As a consequence, a good one, we had a lot of people here looking to establish their lives forever.*

**Donald Whitney, Historian:**

*Watertown came from this pioneering stage, not knowing what was here, to an industrial might where it's population tripled from 1870 to 1920. It went from 9,000 people to over 30,000 people. So it was a great growth in Watertown. And the companies that were here, the Carriage Factory, the steam factories, Davis Sewing Machine factories. There were a ton of factories that hired a lot of people in the area and certainly the Air Brake. The New York Air Brake, what was moved up to its present location in 1890. So the diversification of Watertown from a timber, Indian hunting grounds to a diversified city was in that short time, I think is a great, great piece of history.*

**Narrator:**

**Then, as now, the people of Watertown were resilient. With strength and courage, they endured Mother Nature's challenges – from harsh winter s to short summer growing seasons, to countless natural disasters.**

**Dr. Jason White, Watertown History Researcher:**

*So, a number of natural occurrences did happen in Watertown and some of these actually strengthened the area. One of the first was actually in the same year that Watertown became a city in 1869. In that year, some of the levies upstream from Watertown broke and led to the Great Flood of 1869 in Watertown. At the time, it flooded out the banks and it actually flooded out a number of the businesses that were in Watertown and were the greatest employers of the time. Fortunately, at that time, that allowed these companies to rebuild and they built, many times, bigger and better than they were prior.*

**Glenn Curry, Radio Host and Filmmaker:**

*There were a lot of fires, but the big one was 1849. It was in May of 1849, which is a good 20-something years before the great Chicago fire in 1871. They were very common because they didn't have any infrastructure as far as hydrants. They didn't have the water supply. The biggest reason was most, if not all, of the buildings were made out of wood, timber. They dried out, and you know, on a windy day if one building especially close to another one went on fire, the likelihood of the entire block was extremely high. As a consequence, a fire started behind the American Hotel right near the American Corner. The wind that day didn't cooperate. The next thing you know, the city had lost over 100 complexes in between the streets we see today; that's Arsenal and Court Street. It started, like I said, at the American Corner and just gradually made its way all around the city, destroying over 100 buildings.*

**Narrator:**

**Watertown's booming economy began to draw large groups of immigrant workers from other areas of the North East to fill its factories and keep production flowing. With the promise of work and a new life, these immigrants began settling in Watertown, bringing with them their own unique cultures, lifestyles, and religious beliefs.**

**Dr. Marianne Peraiaccante (Wrote Religious Ph.D. Dissertation on Watertown):**

*We can't say exactly what percentage of Watertownians regularly practiced religion, but we do know that many were Baptists or Presbyterians, direct descendants from the Puritans – Although many were Vermonters, who were a rowdier crowd of the Puritans than the Massachusetts Puritans.*

**Rev. Dr. Fred Garry, First Presbyterian Church:**

*When people would start a community, they didn't – the church wasn't the afterthought. The church was at the beginning. And the church really was the place in which they imagined themselves building a community. Um, when we think of city planning or building a new town and so on, we may think of it in terms of commerce, or we may think of it in terms of public utility, but people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were building a kingdom of God. They were building a new world. And the church also served as, kind of a for lack of a better, term, moral police or presence of order; a place to have a dispute resolved. It would have been the place to have marital records. The church also served as the center of life. Where today, you know, there's lots of centers of life. Your life might be focused on your work, or recreation, or education. I think a good way to look at this is that, today the buildings we erect are monumental buildings, are things like schools and hospitals. And both of those came out of the life of congregations. Trinity Episcopal was instrumental in starting The House of the Good Samaritan, which would become Samaritan Medical. It's hard for people to imagine today that a hospital would come out of a church. But churches were also the beginning of public education. Um, churches were the place where education occurred, before there was public education. And how the churches brought that about and their role in it, oftentimes gets forgotten.*

**Dr. Jason White, Watertown History Researcher: Interview**

*When the immigrants came in, they were mostly of Irish and Italian descent and brought the Catholic religion. The initial Catholics came with some of the French explorers and set up in different areas, including on Lower State Street. But, as there was more need, they developed more churches and, in fact, the first place that the Irish immigrants came is now what is called the Italian Sandflats. As you can see in the street signs that Casey Street and Duffy Street are all Irish surnames.*

**Narrator:**

**Watertown became a major industrial hub. 19<sup>th</sup> century mills included The Continental Paper Mill, The Watertown Steam Engine Company, The Bagley and Sewall Company, the J.B. Wise Company, the Henry H. Babcock Carriage Company, Tooley's Silk Mill, and the Davis Sewing Machine Company. Brian Taggart, President of the Taggart Paper Mill, invented the paper bag during the Civil War, when there was a shortage of cotton for flour bags.**

**Public Square truly functioned as the center of Watertown. It became the hub of activity for retail stores and offices. Several hotels, like the Harris House, The Globe Hotel, and the Crowner Hotel welcomed overnight guests.**

**With a strong working force and developed infrastructure, the expansion of textile industries led to a new era of prosperity in Watertown, making it a popular destination for wealthy**

northeasterners. This class of new wealth began building homes and living in Watertown, becoming the city's 'elite.' This wealthy class was comprised of influential community members, and the fresh generation of people eager to make a name for themselves. In fact, in the 1890s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Watertown had more millionaires per capita than any other place in the United States.

**Thomas Baker, SUNY Potsdam – Professor of History:**

*And the United States is an interesting place because there's no aristocracy. But there is this notion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that you can make yourself into a gentleman. That's a really important notion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century because when industrial revolution gets started, it's producing all these goods, and not just rich people can have the latest fashions. As a consequence, you had people imagining that they could make themselves into a gentleman. That it wasn't related to class. You might be a working-class person but you could aspire to a kind of middle-class status. One aspect of that was making sure you were respectable, making sure you were dressed nicely. That kind of played into this notion of self-discipline that was a real important part of 19<sup>th</sup> century culture.*

**Narrator:**

**One of Watertown's most influential families were the Flowers. George W. Flower was the first mayor of Watertown. His brother Roswell P. Flower served as Governor of New York State from 1892 to 1894.**

**Suzanne Renzi-Falge, Librarian, Flower Memorial Library:**

*He pretty much lived the American dream. Pulled himself up by his bootstraps and became somebody. He started off at the bottom of the barrel like everyone else working different jobs, started companies on his own, especially in finance.*

*For their era without a doubt they would be considered the royalty of Watertown. In fact, Governor Flower vacationed here every single summer. His vacation home was on Arsenal Street where the current Jefferson County Court Complex is. He lived right there, spent his summers there. Beautiful flower beds in the back and trees. It's hard to imagine that now, but they still loved their hometown.*

**Narrator: Emma Flower-Taylor married Jack Byron Taylor, and shortly thereafter, the newlyweds set to building their own home. Their historic two and a half story mansion in Watertown was built in 1896 and 1897 was made from Medina sandstone, that was hand-cut on site.**

***(Emma Flower-Taylor actual film footage)***

**Suzanne Renzi-Falge, Librarian, Flower Memorial Library:**

*I know that she loved to throw parties. We actually have original party invitations and party plates from a Charles Dickens themed party that she had in the community. So, we know that she loved to teach Sunday school. She used to have all of her Sunday school children over to her*

*house for lunch and she would teach them right there in her beautiful mansion which still stands on Clinton Street.*

*She spent her entire life as a philanthropist. She never had to work a day in her life. Lucky lady. Lived off the millions. She donated the money for the library and there were a bunch of other organizations and foundations that she played a key role in as either volunteering there, volunteering her time or volunteering her money.*

**Narrator:**

**Despite great wealth, Emma's life was not without hardship. Emma suffered through a very public affair that her husband Jack had with his stenographer, Mrs. Edith McMillan.**

**Emma Taylor:** [Sobbing] Oh, how could he? Such a scandal to be splashed all over the city! I shall not be dragged down into the mud, no matter what the papers say. I will carry on my work, Papa, I will make you proud. I will make sure the name Flower remains untarnished.

[MUSIC]

**Narrator:**

**Emma sued for divorce and secretly hired a detective to help build her case. On June 30, 1910, Emma was granted a divorce, and the case was sealed to prevent any further public embarrassment. A judge ruled that Mr. Taylor would not be allowed to remarry in the state of New York for five years. The scandal cost Mrs. McMillan her marriage as well, and she moved to Delaware with Jack, where they were later married. When he applied for the wedding license, Mr. Taylor said his previous wife had died.**

**Following in her distinguished father's footsteps, Emma gave millions to charity, often anonymously. The Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library, on Washington Street in Watertown, opened to the public in 1904. Emma gave the library to the city, along with its elaborate furnishings and many of its books.**

**Another notable member of the Watertown community was the founder of the five and dime stores, F. W. Woolworth. Frank Winfield Woolworth was born in Rodman, New York, in 1852. He grew up on a family farm, and was expected to take over the family business. But Frank had other ideas. In 1873, he began working at the Augsbury and Moore Dry Goods Store on the American Corner of Public Square in Watertown.**

**Glenn Curry, Radio Host and Filmmaker Interview:**

*He came up with the idea of setting up a table that would sell merchandise for no more than a nickel, which later became the five-and-dime idea that would create his own empire, otherwise known as the Woolworth's stores. Later on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he built the largest skyscraper in the world, which would remain the largest building in the world for over 16 years in lower Manhattan. There's a young man from Rodman who lived also, by the way, as an adult with his wife on Franklin Street and came up with this incredible idea. He opened up a location in the*

*Utica area, which failed, but then he went to Pennsylvania and opened up a very successful five-and-dime store, which later led to his empire. I would definitely say, in my opinion, Frank Woolworth and Roswell P. Flower were definitely two greatest men who ever walked the streets of Watertown.*

**Narrator:**

**The Flowers and the Woolworths were esteemed members of the Watertown community who, like many others, used their influence to improve their town.**

**Emma Flower Taylor's uncle, Henry Keep, was born into poverty and spent much of his childhood as an orphan in the Jefferson County Poorhouse. As a young apprentice, Keep ran away from his abusive master. Keep's master took out an ad in the Watertown newspaper, offering a 2 cents reward for his apprehension and return. It's said that Keep kept the ad in his pocket as a constant reminder of his good fortune.**

**Henry became a savvy businessman who founded several banks, and invested in railroad stocks. At the time of his death in 1869, he was president of the New York Central railroad, as well as the Cleveland and Toledo railroad. Henry Keep was also known as a philanthropist. His wife, Emma Keep-Schley, established the Henry Keep Home for the elderly, which is now known as the Samaritan Keep Home.**

**Near Public Square is the historic Paddock Mansion, built between 1876 and 1878. It was the home of local banker Edwin Paddock, and his wife Olive. The mansion was bequeathed by Olive to the Jefferson County Historical Society upon her death in 1922. Since 1924, it has served as the Historical Society's home.**

**The Paddock Arcade, just down the street from the Historical Society, is the oldest continuously-operated mall in the U.S. The Arcade was built by Loveland Paddock in 1850, after the former Paddock Block had burned down in the great downtown fire of 1849. The arcade was built in gothic style, topped with a glass roof that allowed daylight to filter through. The Paddock Arcade was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1976.**

**Two brothers who would both become very influential grew up in Watertown. John Foster Dulles, born in 1888, became President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Secretary of State. The Washington Dulles International Airport in Washington, DC and the Dulles State Office Building in Watertown are both named after John Foster Dulles. John's brother, Allen Welsh Dulles, was born in 1893. The younger Dulles brother served as director of the C. I. A. from 1953 to 1961.**

**Glenn Curry, Radio Host and Filmmaker Interview:**

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was perhaps the most robust time in Watertown history. By that point, obviously, more cars were being seen. Some manufacturers, including the Babcock family, were making their own cars here. We had the factories here already. We were major contributors to



the world so we had what it took with skilled laborers to make things right here in our own backyard.

**Narrator:**

**It was a prosperous time for Watertown. But despite great successes, Watertown was not immune to events happening in the world. World War One and its tumultuous aftermath was the first challenge of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

**Patrick Wilder, Historian:**

*Watertown went from having the brake shop with about seven-thousand people employed there in World War One, but when that war came to an end in November of 1918, these seven-thousand people were for all intents and purposes laid off because they were working on military equipment. So the Great Depression in some ways starts early. They are now forced to go into developing new products and this takes time. So many people were laid off in the earlier 1920's around Watertown. This impacted Watertown until World War Two broke out and the United States became involved and then the brake shop was in a position to hire a total force of maybe five or six-thousand people. Not as many as World War One because now they had new technology where one person could do the job that two would do in 1917, 1918.*

**Narrator:**

**In 1929, the stock market crashed, leading to financial hardships world-wide. In Watertown, dozens of businesses and mills had to shut down or lay off a considerable portion of their workforce. The economic hardships continued until the advent of World War Two, when the U.S. went to war for the second time in less than thirty years.**

**Patrick Lapierre, SUNY Canton – Professor of History:**

*Manufacturing increases tremendously during wartime. It's one of those sad ironies of war, of course, is that you boost an economy at the same time people are giving their lives up. And World War I and World War II are examples of this. Um you know, if you think about what happened during the wars that you have to reorient your economy from a peacetime to a wartime economy, so you have to go from manufacturing various consumer products to manufacturing artillery and bullets and you know, other such things. And what happens is the companies have guaranteed contract and that they can pay their workers well and workers don't want to go on strike. So, a lot of manufacturing gets a big boom from this.*

**Narrator:**

**As World War II drew to a close in 1945, Watertown began a new era. Changes, challenges, and more awaited Watertown as it headed into the modern era.**

**On Part Three of Discovering Watertown ...**

**Glenn Curry, Radio Host and Filmmaker:**

*So the aesthetic value of a lot of cities, especially a town like Watertown, was really lost in the mid 1960's, because of the Urban Renewal plan.*

**Jeffrey Graham, former Mayor of Watertown:**

*A lot of paper industry was moving away, other plants were either downsizing or closing as well.*

**Carl McLaughlin, FDRLO:**

*They were putting into the economy about 221 million dollars a year. It has been well over a billion dollars a year since then.*

**Mel Bustler, WWNY-TV Sports Announcer:**

*And the woman said, 'Oh, that boxer is so sweet,' and Jack Casey said, 'Yeah, sweet as sugar.' Bang! Goes back to the Times and writes a story, Sugar Ray Robinson.*

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