

BUFFALO IN THE GILDED AGE 1870-1900

By Olga Lindberg

The period following the Civil War was a time of expansion and rapid growth in Buffalo. New industries — milling, lumber, iron foundries, tanneries, breweries, and other enterprises were attracted to the fast growing city of 118,000 people, strategically located where lake, canal, and rail traffic converged. Despite a brief financial panic in 1873 Buffalo continued to thrive and became a city of wealth and culture, where the residents enjoyed luxuries never dreamed of during the pioneer era only fifty years before.

Large comfortable mansions lined the tree-shaded avenues and parkways, with smaller brick and frame homes along the side streets. Beautiful parks, churches, theaters, libraries, museums, and a progressive school system all contributed to make Buffalo a fine residential city. In fact, it had the distinction of being the first city in New York State to have a free public school system. The police department was enlarged to keep pace with the city's growth, and a permanent fire department was formed to combat the terrible fires which plagued the city from time to time.

New public buildings were being planned, and, in 1876, the city celebrated the Nation's Centennial by dedicating the City and County Hall. This handsome building with clock tower served as the seat of both city and county governments for many years.

Most of the social life centered around the family. Entertainments were held in private homes, and elaborate dinners served. Food was abundant and of great variety. Fresh vegetables and meat were brought into the city markets from nearby farms, and more exotic foods such as oysters, fish and terrapin were imported by rail from New York City. This period of growth and prosperity — 1870 to 1900 — is sometimes referred to as "The Gilded Age."

From very early days the citizens of Buffalo worked together to beautify the city. A group, called "The Tree Planters," headed by Mr. Bradford Manchester, supervised the planting of 1,000 trees each year along the parkways. By the 1870's more than 20,000 trees shaded the streets. They formed natural archways along the avenues and Buffalo became known as "The City of Beautiful Trees."



Milford Fish's home and observatory

The Manchester home at the southwest corner of Pearl and Court Streets was a “home” in the true sense of the word . . . a center of hospitality and culture. The house, large and rambling, was surrounded by a garden, “A tangle of roses and hollyhocks and sweet peas, shaded by pear, plum and cherry trees.” On the south wall of the house a sundial told the passersby the time of day, and bore the classic inscription “Tempus fugit” (Time flies).

Many prosperous businessmen lived in the villages near Buffalo. Milford Fish, a Hamburg merchant, was an enthusiastic astronomer. In 1872, he built an impressive house near Hamburg at the corner of Buffalo and Union Streets. On the roof an observatory housed a \$2500 telescope with a 9 inch lens. For many years this was the largest telescope in Western New York and the unusual house and observatory was a familiar landmark on the road to Hamburg.

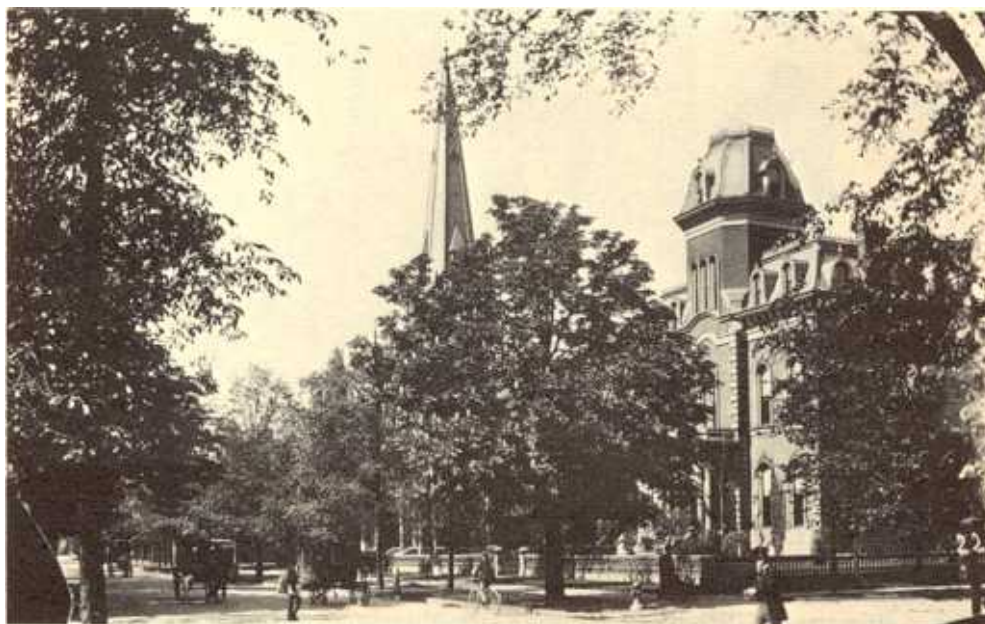
Although many of Buffalo’s early settlers came from New England; during the decade 1880-1890, families began arriving from European countries bringing with them their customs, religions, and languages. Germans and Poles, skilled in carpentry, machine work, and other crafts, established small businesses or worked in the shops and mills. Many Irish and Italians worked at laboring jobs for very low pay, but soon made their way into the business world. All of these newcomers contributed to the cultural life of the city. Music-loving people formed singing societies and bands; others joined folk dancing, handcrafts, and art societies.

By 1892 more than one thousand Blacks lived in the city. James M. Whitfield, a Black poet and barber, had a book of poems published in 1853. The Rev. Junius C. Ayler, pastor of the Vine Street African Methodist Episcopal Church, was both a student and author. His studies included Greek, Latin, French, and German, and one of his books titled *Guide Lights* was published in 1887 and another, *The Constitutional Rights of the American Negro* published in 1895.

These various nationalities also introduced new foods, and the city markets offered many varieties of cheeses, sausages, corned beef, sauerkraut, kielbasa, blood sausage, pickles, tortes, kuchen, pretzels, fancy pastries, and many other delicacies.

These hard working, industrious people all contributed to make Buffalo a cosmopolitan city . . . a city with a distinct personality.

By the end of the 1890's, Buffalo had grown to a city of 352,389. Streets were crowded with traffic. Horse drawn wagons, carts, carriages, bicycles, and horse-cars were being replaced by electric trolley cars, and automobiles. The "Gilded Age" was drawing to a close, but the city had become one of the important centers of trade and commerce in the country. The city was then looking forward to the 20th Century with its further opportunities for growth and progress.



Residential area, Delaware Ave. showing trees and carriages, 1880's

HOME LIFE

By the 1870's, in many of the mansions along the avenues, parlor maids, cooks, gardeners, and coachmen were employed, but in the smaller homes the housewife did most of the work. Families were large and much of the wife's time was spent in the kitchen preparing the meals on a large wood or coal-burning stove. The fire had to be stoked and tended constantly. Cooking pots and pans were of iron or enamel and were heavy and cumbersome. Bread was baked several times a week in the built-in oven, and water was heated in a tank attached to the side of the stove.

Children were taught to help around the house, and their daily chores included cleaning and refilling the oil lamps, until these were replaced by gas mantles and burners, and then near the close of the century by electric lights. Children also ground the coffee beans in hand grinders and carried in the coal or wood for the stove. Blocks of ice were delivered to the door daily and placed in an ice box in the pantry. Milk, eggs, and butter were delivered to the door by a farmer, and hucksters brought in wagons of farm produce and fresh vegetables when in season.



Advertisement card—showing the “latest” wood stove and a wash tub in the rear

Laundry was done in a large wooden tub, filled with hot water from the tank on the stove. The clothes were first boiled and then scrubbed by hand on a washboard, wrung through a wringer, and then hung outdoors on a line to dry. When completely dry they were brought into the house and sprinkled and then ironed with a heavy flatiron heated on the stove. This rested on a trivet on the ironing board when not in use.



Canning jar



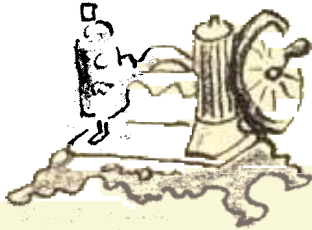
Salt container



Coffee grinder

Every spring the house was thoroughly cleaned, windows and curtains washed, furniture moved, floors polished, and all heavy rugs hung on the clothesline in the yard to be beaten clean with a rug beater. Then furniture, rugs, and curtains were all returned to their accustomed places.

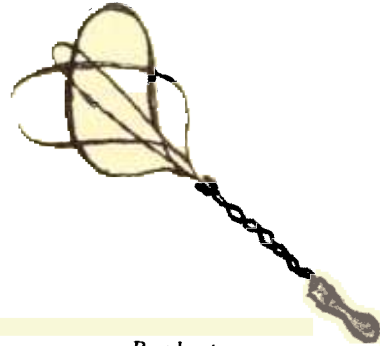
In the fall housewives preserved vegetables, sauerkraut, pickles, and meat for the winter, either by drying or salting down in crocks, and also canned fruits, jams, and jellies in glass jars with rubber rings and screw tight zinc lids.



Early sewing machine



Kerosene lamp



Rug beater

Cloth by the yard was available in the department stores, and mothers did most of the sewing for their families by hand or on hand-operated sewing machines.

Despite their many duties at home, busy women found time to devote to church and charitable work. Many of Buffalo's charitable organizations were founded by women; to mention a few — the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Women's Christian Association. Women also lent a hand with raising money for some of the men's projects such as the Young Men's Christian Association.

In 1872, Mrs. Jerome Fargo was chairman of a Skating Rink Carnival to raise money for the YMCA building fund. A ticket cost \$.30, and the menu included roast lamb with mint sauce, roast veal with dressing, chicken, all sorts of pies, rich cakes, tarts, coffee, tea, milk, and buttermilk. These tasty dishes were all contributed by the ladies on the committee, and all proceeds turned over to the YMCA fund.



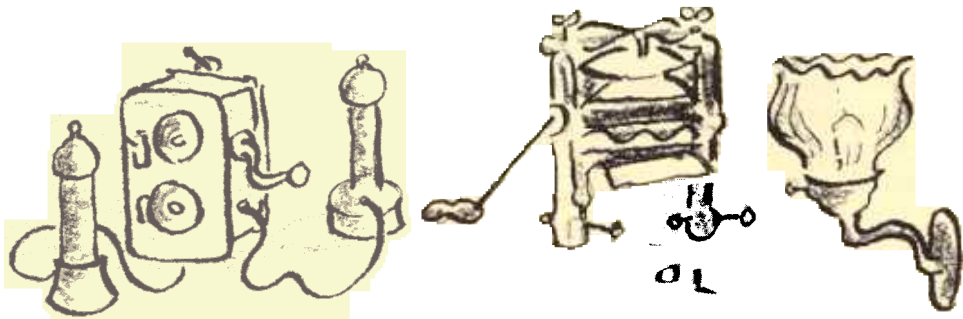
Ice and tongs



Iron and trivet

Wash tub and board

These were not times of “all work and no play” — families enjoyed picnics in the park, band concerts, and boating in the summertime, and in the winter skating was a popular sport. “Delaware pond was crowded with the youth and beauty of the city on skates, enjoying band music and the moonlight,” one observer recalled. Sleighing parties were fashionable. . . . The host provided several large, gaily decorated sleighs, drawn by teams of beautifully matched horses. The guests, tucked into the sleighs with foot warmers and covered with heavy fur robes sang lively songs to the accompaniment of sleighbells on the trip out of town, perhaps to the Cataract House at Niagara Falls. Upon arriving there they would be served hot mulled drinks before a blazing log fire, and later enjoy an oyster stew supper followed by dancing such lively dances as the heel-and-toe polka, the “gallop” or the waltz.



Early telephone

Wringer for wash

Gas lamp

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Three of Buffalo's largest churches were located in the neighborhood of Church and Main Streets and the grassy, tree-shaded park between them was the "Village Common," sometimes called "the Churches."

The history of these churches is one of friendship and tolerance. Growing up, side by side, they helped one another in times of stress. They shared the burdens of war and pestilence, giving comfort and assurance to the citizens when such help was sorely needed. They also shared in the joys and triumphs of the rapidly growing city . . . they were truly good neighbors.

Old First Presbyterian Church, built in 1825, was at the corner of Church and Main Streets — a two-storied edifice of red brick with white frame cupola bell tower. In wintertime the building was heated by three wood-burning stoves, and evening services were conducted by flickering candle light. In summer the Seneca Indians congregated on the steps of the church to sell sassafras and wildflowers and watch the young men playing ball on the Common.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, across from Old First, was built during the 1850's. The building was not completed until 1879. One of the early pastors was the Rev. William Shelton, who devotedly served the church for over fifty years. In 1897, the City Council voted to change the name of the Village Common to Shelton Square in his honor.

In 1821, when Buffalo had only five Catholic families, Rev. Patrick Kelly visited the village, and as there was no Catholic Church he said Mass in St. Paul's Church. On April 23, 1847, a diocese in western New York was established, and the Very Rev. John Timon consecrated as first Bishop.

Bishop Timon's dream was to build a Cathedral in this frontier community, but the villagers had no money, so he traveled to Europe. Visiting princes, the clergy, and many wealthy merchants, he told of the small town in the wilds of America and its need of a Catholic church and returned with generous donations. In 1851, the cornerstone was laid and four years later, July 1, 1855, Bishop Timon's dream had become a reality . . . St. Joseph's Cathedral was dedicated.

Not far from the Churches, Temple Beth Zion was located on Niagara Street between Pearl and Franklin Streets. When a Jewish City of Ararat was planned on Grand Island, many people were expected to attend the ceremonies, but the Jewish Temple was too small to accommodate them. St. Paul's opened its doors to the visitors, and the cornerstone dedication service for the proposed Jewish City was held in the Episcopal Church.



"The Churches": left, St. Paul's Cathedral; center, St. Joseph's Old Cathedral; right, First Presbyterian Church (1880)

When the interior of St. Paul's was destroyed by fire in 1888, the congregation had no place to hold Sunday services, so Rabbi Aaron offered the Temple, and the Episcopalian services were held in the Jewish Temple until St. Paul's could be rebuilt.

Thus did the religious leaders help one another and administer to the spiritual needs of the growing community.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

A plump, energetic little lady drew her Shetland pony cart to an abrupt halt in front of an overloaded wagon on Main Street one day in the early 1860's and refused to let the driver pass until he had rested his horses and lightened their load. She sat stubbornly in his path until the bewildered man, realizing he had no choice, complied with her request.

This determined woman was Mrs. John C. Lord, early crusader for kindness to animals. Laws were desperately needed to protect animals . . . to prevent barbarous treatment of mules on canal boats, and dis-

courage drivers from flogging their teams. Cattle shipped to the stockyards in Buffalo often traveled several days tightly packed in freight cars without food or water, and public dog fights were a popular sport.

A group of Buffalo women took the first steps to correct these deplorable conditions. Mrs. Lord had heard of a society being formed in New York City by Mr. Henry Bergh, who was trying to get a bill passed in the State Legislature to establish a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and she wrote to him asking if Buffalonians could help. He replied by sending petitions to be signed. Immediately the women set to work, and 500 signatures, headed by that of ex-President Millard Fillmore, were forwarded to Mr. Bergh. With Buffalo's added support, the bill was passed.



Mrs. Lord and "Smallweed"

By February 1867, the second SPCA in the state was formed in Buffalo with Mrs. Lord as president. She was a shy woman, with little interest in society but with great compassion for children and animals. She was the daughter of Buffalo's first Mayor, Ebenezer Johnson, and the wife of the pastor of the Pearl Street Presbyterian Church. Although the Lords had no children, they adopted a daughter Frances, and a niece Lilly also lived with them, so the big house on Delaware Avenue was a happy household, bustling with children and pets. The pets included

birds, parrots, cats, and dogs with such unusual names as "Cricket," "Periwinkle," "Peggoty," and "Muggins." Mrs. Lord's favorite was a miniature collie named "Smallweed" who accompanied her everywhere.

Mrs. Lord became a familiar figure driving through Buffalo in a low phaeton drawn by a four-in-hand team of Shetland ponies, with "Smallweed" usually occupying the rumble. Mrs. Lord was modestly attired in a neat black dress with white tissue collar and a frilly white lawn cap tied under her plump chin, and about her neck she wore a fine miniature of her father. Her expression was pleasant, and she had an air of repose, except when she saw an animal being mistreated . . . then she could be quite formidable.

Under the guidance of Mrs. Lord the membership in the SPCA increased, and any problems concerning animals were referred to the Society. They provided a pound for stray animals, and drinking troughs for horses and dogs, and they sent representatives to the stockyards and the freight yards to make sure animals were receiving humane treatment.

Interest in the work spread throughout the country, and Millard Fillmore wrote on November 15, 1873, to Rev. D. H. Mueller of Rochester, N.Y., with reference to starting an SPCA movement there:

"How a Christian community can stand idly by and see the cruelty and torture which are daily affected upon the brute creation is to me inconceivable. . . . Let none shrink from the performance of his duty, and public sentiment will at length sustain them and the result will be that much suffering of the dumb animals will be prevented."

THE WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

By 1865, Buffalo was a city of 94,500 people, and missionary work was needed among the poor along Canal Street and the Terrace. A Sunday School was organized for the children of those neighborhoods, but they could not attend, because they did not have appropriate clothing; so women of Buffalo churches formed the Union Missionary Sunday School Aid Society to sew and provide for these children. This was under the capable leadership of Mrs. Emmor Haines, a Quakeress. The sewing meetings were held in a room in the YMCA headquarters, but soon the Society was asked for further help. Young girls, strangers in the city, needed lodging and employment, and the Aid Society bought a house, furnished it with donations, and provided meals and lodging for these young women.

During one year the House Committee reported it had "22 boarders, 161 meals were served, 47 lodgings furnished free, and 112 situations provided." The Society depended upon generous con-

tributions from the citizens to furnish the "residence." Among donations listed were "a pair of feather pillows, one large heating stove, a barrel of apples, a half barrel salt fish, a dozen eggs, one clock, a grindstone, blankets . . . and concluding the list . . . five kittens."

On November 1, 1870, the Society was reorganized and became the "Women's Christian Association," the 11th in the United States. Mrs. Haines became the first president, a position which she held for twenty years. Many Buffalo women volunteered their services and from time to time the men were also called upon to help.

In 1889, a new WCA building on Niagara Street was dedicated. In less than fifty years, the membership had grown from the small group of fifteen dedicated women in 1865 to over 4,000. Its successor, the Young Women's Christian Association, continues its good work.



Mrs. Emmor Haines

LARS SELLSTEDT—BUFFALO ARTIST

"The Art Exhibit at American Hall is now attracting a large number of our citizens daily who manifest the greatest delight as they pass from one amazing picture to another." This notice appeared in a newspaper during Christmas week 1861. The purpose of the exhibit was to "develop and foster rising genius in our midst" and to give artists an opportunity to compare their work with others. "The gallery is open daily from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. A single ticket 25¢ and a season ticket 50¢. Canes, umbrellas, and parasols must be left at the door."

Previous to 1861 there had been a Fine Arts Committee in Buffalo, a standing committee of the Young Men's Association whose aim it was to

promote cultural activities. Founded in 1836, this Art Exhibit in 1861 was to celebrate their 25th anniversary. Edward S. Rich was Chairman, and Lars Gustaf Sellstedt, a local portrait painter, Exhibit Chairman.

The gala opening on Christmas was a great success. "The hall was hung with drapery of dark green and gas light, a new feature, had been installed especially for the exhibit."

In glancing through the catalogue the titles do not differ too much from the titles in an art catalogue today — "The Old Mill," "Fall Scene," "Peaches and Grapes," and "A View of the Hudson." Among Buffalo artists exhibiting were Thomas LeClear, who later went on to fame and fortune in New York City as a portrait painter, and Miss Alice Penfield, the only lady listed among the amateurs. Titles of her paintings were "Picnic Party" and "Violets: Two Cents a Bunch." Story-telling art was much in favor.



Lars G. Sellstedt

Lars Sellstedt was a leader in Buffalo art circles. He was a sailor, artist, man of letters, and founder of the Fine Arts Academy. His autobiography "From Forecastle to Academy" reads like a Horatio Alger story. Born in Sweden in 1819 he received a good education in his early years, but left home because of a domineering stepfather. For the next fifteen years he traveled around the globe as a sailor, and in 1845, arrived in Buffalo to sail on the Great Lakes. Shipping was slow, however, and he began earning a living as a portrait painter, at first selling pictures for \$15.00 each. He married a Buffalo girl, and his home and studio were located at 78 West Mohawk Street. Down through the years his popularity increased, and he painted portraits of many prominent citizens including Fillmore, Cleveland, Letchworth, Fargo, Porter, Spaulding, Walden, and Wilkeson.

Although a self-taught artist, he rose to leadership in art circles. In appearance he had broad, expressive features, and curling hair and beard. He walked with a sailor's gait, and his talk was rich with anecdote. In 1862, he became one of the forces behind the formation of the Fine Arts Academy. Soon the Academy began assembling a fine permanent collection of paintings, and Buffalo became one of the pioneers in the art world in America . . . the only other cities having permanent art galleries at the time were Boston and Philadelphia.

SPORTS IN BUFFALO

Buffalonians have always been sports fans, and in the era following the Civil War, curling, bowling, and baseball were among the popular games played by the young men of the city.

Curling was introduced by David Bell, a sportsman and also an influential figure in the iron industry. A millwright by trade, he came to Buffalo from Scotland and formed the Bell Steam Engine Company. During the Civil War his company built tugs for the United States Government. Later, under Mr. Bell's direction, an engine was designed and installed in the Dart Grain Elevator, the first storage and transfer elevator in the world. This greatly facilitated handling grain, one of Buffalo's largest industries. In 1865, his company built the first locomotive to be constructed in Buffalo, a monster engine named "David Bell" which weighed 30 tons and could draw 22 cars. This engine added to Buffalo's prestige as a rail center.

Always interested in training young men to become mechanics, Mr. Bell apprenticed many, and taught them the intricacies of foundry work in his own company, and, in 1869, he founded the Mechanics Institute where they could receive technical training.

An enthusiastic sportsman, Mr. Bell's favorite game was curling. Under his supervision curling clubs were formed and on Thursday, January 5, 1865, the International Curling matches between Canada and Buffalo were played on a rink in Black Rock Harbor.

The Canadian teams arrived the day before, and on the morning of the match all the players met at "The Churches" (Shelton Square) and were taken by horse-car out Niagara St. to Black Rock. One newspaper reported — "The day was one of exceptional wintry beauty, but the cold was intense and a searching wind swept across the ice." The tournament began at 11 a.m. and continued until 5 o'clock. Throughout the day refreshments and hot drinks were served on board a vessel which was ice-bound in the harbor, and when darkness fell, the scores were totaled, and the Canadians were victorious.

That evening all the players and many of the fans gathered for dinner in the American Hall. The Coronet Band played lively Scottish airs during the evening, and after a day in the brisk winter air, the "beef and greens" and other delicacies were voted "truly delicious."

The genial host, David Bell, President of the National Curling Club, presented trophies following the banquet. Toasts were offered — "To the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. Under his administration may the Union be restored and peace and prosperity again visit our land." A toast to Queen Victoria . . . and a special toast by Mr. Bell to — "The day of the Great International Curling Match. May no more bitter strife ever exist between Canada and the United States than this day has been exhibited."

BOWLING

When the Prince of Wales visited Niagara Falls in 1860 he played a game of Tenpins, and *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* reported "He doffed his coat and went seriously to work at that peculiarly American game. He seemed to enjoy it very much and was tolerably successful in his maiden efforts at Bowling."

Bowling became a popular pastime, and by 1889, there were eight bowling clubs listed in a sporting directory of Buffalo — among them The Olympics, Niagaras (employees of Barnes Hengerer Co.), the Pleasures (employees of the Adam, Meldrum and Anderson Co.), the Doctors, and the Jupiters.

"There is no pastime perhaps more purely natural in its origin than the game of bowling," said one reporter. "Whilst it demands no violent exertion, it calls into salutary action the muscular system in general and it also imparts a healthful and vigorous tone of mind by the interest which the procedure of the game invariably creates."

By 1889, ladies were trying their skill at the game. The Sporting Directory shows the ladies teams as follows — "There are four regular Ladies' Bowling Clubs in the city. In deference to the wishes of the ladies their names are not made public herein." And it gallantly goes on to say "In whatever branch of physical training the ladies have entered, they have been able to hold their own. Among the devotees of bowling are married and single ladies and girls." Department stores and banks had ladies' teams, and other companies also promoted the sport.

BASEBALL

The game of baseball was played in Buffalo as early as 1857, but it did not become a popular sport until after the Civil War. Soldiers played ball in the army camps, and it is recorded that President Lincoln used to

leave the White House of an afternoon to "watch the camp teams play ball." When the boys returned home, they continued to "play ball," and by the end of the 1860's Buffalo had many ball teams, among them the Niagaras, the Cliftons, the Travelers, Comets, and Perrys.

In the early days the game was sometimes called "Towns licker." There were the same number of bases as today, a catcher and pitcher, and as many fielders as wanted to play. There were no basemen. When the batter hit the ball and could reach the base before any of the players got the ball and hit him with it, he was safe . . . if not, he was out.

The regulation baseball of those days was an ounce heavier and one inch larger in circumference than today, and the bat was a heavy ash bat. The players wore no gloves, masks, or body protectors . . . as John Durant quotes an "old-timer" in his "Story of Baseball" . . .

"We used no mattress on our hands,

No cage upon our face.

We stood right up and caught the ball

With courage and with grace."

The attention of the whole country was upon the Niagaras because of their remarkable record. They twice won the gold baseball (worth \$500) representing the championship of western New York. On June 17, 1868, the Niagaras played one of the greatest games in their history. At that time the Atlantics of Brooklyn held the championship and boasted that they "had never been beaten and never would be beaten." Then they came to Buffalo to play the Niagaras.

The day was warm and sunny, and excitement ran high in the city. The Brooklyn team arrived with a large following of enthusiastic fans. People came from far and near, arriving at the ball park in coaches, by horsecar, in carriages, and on foot. There were many ladies in the audience, and their brightly colored summer dresses and large, top-heavy hats added a note of gaiety to the assemblage.

The Atlantics were "athletic fellows, browned and hardened by constant play," but the sports reporter continues, "The Niagaras, although not so heavy, are wiry and nimble and decidedly good stayers." They certainly proved their mettle that day as the headlines announced — "Buffalo Victorious — The Champions Beaten — Niagaras defeat Atlantics by a score of 19 to 15 — a Gallant Contest."

By 1877 Buffalo had 40 baseball teams, and that year the Buffalo Baseball Association set up ball grounds at Niagara and Rhode Island Streets with a seating capacity of 3,000. The ball park had firm, grassy sod, a roofed grandstand, and wooden planks for the bleachers. The same year the National League was organized, and Buffalo played its first professional, international game in London, Ontario, losing 7 to 3.

Then, as today, the ball fans had their favorite players . . . stalwart, handsome fellows with wavy hair, their young faces adorned with sideburns, mustaches or beards. Atwater and Van Velsor were local baseball heroes. Atwater was a famous pitcher for the Niagaras, and Van Velsor could bat “the wickedest ball” of the day.

Fame is fleeting, and now only the records of the games remain to remind us that those old-timers really could “play ball.”



The “Ramblers” bicycle club, 1880’s

BUFFALO’S TRANSPORTATION IN THE GILDED AGE

As Buffalo grew, traffic increased, and the streets were crowded with horse-drawn wagons, carts, carriages, push-carts, bicycles, and horse-cars. Although many families owned their own carriages and horses, by the 1850’s public transportation was needed, and by 1863, there were 11 miles of well built, double-track street railways through the city. The cars were drawn by horses, and “greatly facilitated travel between distant sections of the city.” On December 24, 1890, electric cars were first operated on a permanent basis on Main Street. Electric power was transmitted from Niagara Falls and in the downtown area hundreds of wires were strung on high poles to accommodate the trolley lines, the new telephone lines, and other power needed in the city.

Many families still owned private carriages, and by the curb in front of many homes stood a carriage mounting stone, and a hitching post. Drinking troughs for the horses were placed conveniently throughout the city, a project sponsored by the SPCA . . . and many trees along the avenues were circled with wooden slats to protect them from nibbling horses.

Bicycling was a popular means of transportation. This item appeared in a newspaper of October 11, 1880 . . .

“Mr. Guard, the champion of the Bicycle Club, is a graceful and easy rider, and propels his machine in a manner that attracts universal admiration. His splendidly proportioned form mounted upon the aerial seat just kills the ladies.”



Large tricycles were very popular with men and women. Virginia Bartlett is shown riding near Angola, N. Y.

By the turn of the century, a new vehicle was introduced which caused quite a stir when it first appeared on Buffalo streets . . . the automobile.

THE AUTOMOBILE

When in 1897 Dr. Truman J. Martin drove his Stanhope Electric down Delaware Avenue on his daily round of house calls, his friends smiled indulgently . . . “Let the good doctor have his fun,” they said, but they were firmly convinced this new contraption would never take the place of the dependable horse and buggy, or become as popular as that other handy device, the bicycle. They nicknamed the car “The Pioneer,” and wherever it was parked a group of interested people would gather to discuss, to admire, or scoff . . . and probably secretly envy the doctor his smart conveyance.

When Dr. Martin traveled to Hartford, Conn., in 1896 to purchase the car from the Pope Mfg. Co. there were six cars on the showroom floor, each priced at \$2,750. When Dr. Martin protested the high prices, Col. Pope explained that the cost of building the cars had been excessive — \$10,000 each. However, he was offering them at these greatly reduced prices, to get them on the market and distributed to the larger cities in the country.

There were no cross-country highways, so Dr. Martin had the auto shipped back to Buffalo. Because the electric car batteries had to be recharged every fifty miles, Dr. Martin housed it in a stable behind his home at 279 North St. and used the current from the nearby Lenox Hotel for recharging the battery.

The newly paved streets in Buffalo were ideal for “motoring,” and about the same time several other prominent businessmen purchased automobiles. In fact, at one time there was a controversy as to which

car was really Buffalo's first automobile. The car owners were doctors, lawyers, and such prominent citizens as Spencer Kellogg, Sr. and Jr., Dr. V. Mott Pierce, George S. Gatchell, Burt Wright, Ellicott Evans, H. A. Meldrum, E.R. Thomas, and Edward H. Butler.

Many roads in the vicinity of Buffalo were called "one-day tour roads" — the Lake Shore Road as far as Erie, the Batavia Road to Batavia and Rochester, and the road to Niagara Falls. At the end of each "run," the electric cars had to be recharged for the return trip.

Soon automobiles became so numerous in the city that courtesy rules had to be issued and speed restrictions enforced. One reporter commented, "The authorities are expected to regard the auto with watchful care which eliminates much of the pleasure of the sport — that of driving at express train speed. The city ordinances require that autos shall not run faster than the bicycle or 8 miles an hour." Speed limits within the city were 5 miles an hour on Main St., 8 miles in less congested areas, and 15 miles in streets where traffic was exceptionally light.

It is said that owners spent more time under their cars than they did driving them, because the cars needed constant mechanical attention. The first automobile repair shop in Buffalo was at 240 West Utica St. and was called The New York Electric Vehicle Transfer Co. In 1900, the Buffalo Automobile Club was organized, and by then there were many models beside the Electric.

But what about the ladies? They enjoyed automobiling, too. "Ladies have become expert in guiding and running autos. The electric vehicles are their favorites, few try to handle the gasoline or steam vehicles."

Dr. Martin's wife was among Buffalo's first women drivers. They had recently been married in London, England, and he brought his new wife to live in Buffalo. She had been a student at Oxford and a journalist, so soon she became a member of the literary club, "The Scribblers," and later joined the League of American Pen Women. However, in those early days she was often seen driving her electric phaeton along Delaware Avenue on a shopping trip, or to attend a club meeting.

Cars of all sorts, shapes, and sizes were soon seen on Buffalo streets from small three-wheel rigs to a gigantic Packard touring car, owned by Mr. Edward H. Butler of the *Buffalo Evening News*.

The Old Testament prophet Nahum in 612 BC predicted —

"The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways; they shall seem like torches, they shall run like lightnings" . . . and by the turn of the century, his prophecy had really come to pass.

BUFFALO BIDS GOOD-BY TO THE GILDED AGE AND WELCOMES THE 20th CENTURY

The birth of a new century is an event which does not occur in everyone's lifetime, so the citizens of Buffalo felt it only fitting to give the 20th Century a "rattling" reception.

The 20th Century Committee estimated the cost would be between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and each day the newspapers reported their progress. One of the more impressive spectacles of the evening would be the City and County Hall (now Erie County Hall) brilliantly illuminated from basement to clock tower . . . by gas light.

This tremendous job was to be accomplished by Supt. William F. Fisher. He reported that 1500 gas jets were to be lighted by 11 o'clock New Year's Eve, and they would remain "in full head" until 1 o'clock. City employees were to report at 9 p.m. as it would take 2 hours to light the gas jets, and 2 hours to turn them off. The cost would be about \$25.00.

A mammoth parade was planned, marchers to assemble in front of the City and County Hall at 10 p.m.; and the line of march was through the downtown streets (bypassing Shelton Square out of respect to St. Paul's and St. Joseph's Cathedrals where watch-night services were held) . . . then up Main Street to Virginia and back down Main Street to Lafayette Park.

On the last day of the old year, as darkness fell, more than 100,000 people assembled in the downtown area. They had come into the city by rail, trolley cars, carriages, wagons, and on foot. The evening was clear and brisk, but about 8 o'clock soft, fluffy snow flakes began to fall. By the time the parade started the ground was covered with a thick blanket of white. The jaunty Parkside Wheeling Club abandoned their bicycles and marched briskly along swinging canes. Each unit of the Buffalo Fire Department was dressed in gala attire — each of the Sprudels was togged out as Father Time carrying scythes. The Buffalo Exempt firemen wore straw hats and rode on mules. Members of the Rag Time Pleasure Club were dressed like hoboes. Reminiscent of pioneer days a colorful group of Indians, dressed in full warpaint, joined in the march.

Main Street was a blaze of light. The City and County Hall glowed brilliantly, the flickering light from the 1500 gas lights reflected by the snow. Electric lights (new to Buffalo) were strung on the front of the Iroquois Building in the form of numerals 1901, and at the top of the Prudential Building a cluster of powerful electric lights were used to signal the midnight hour.

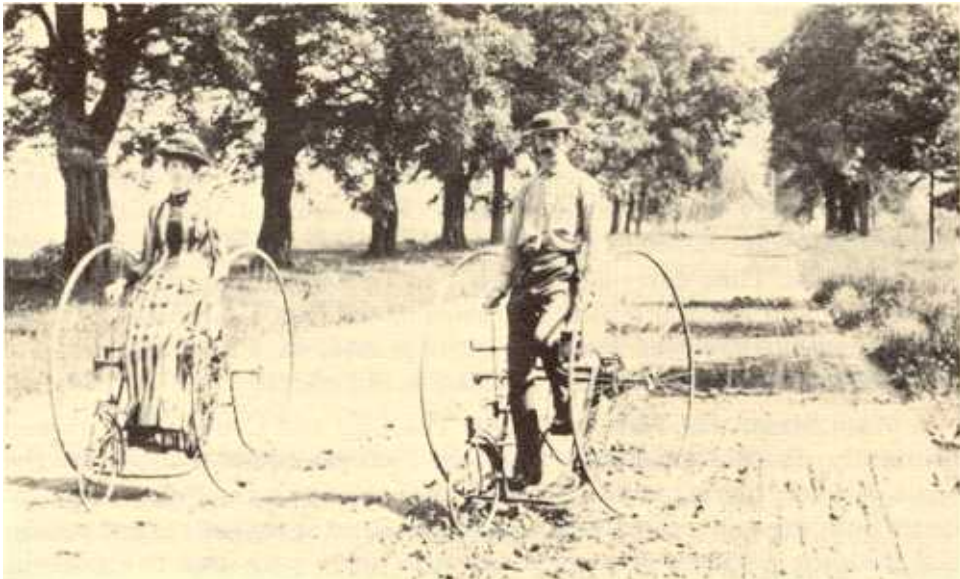
By 11:55 the snow was still falling softly, the street lights dimmed, and after a moment of silence, the lights on top of the Prudential Building blazed forth. Then pandemonium broke loose . . . bombs bursting, fireworks blazing, horns blowing, bells ringing. “The noise fairly tore the welkins to shreds,” and the crowd went wild.

Then as the clamor gradually subsided “Buffalonians went home to bed” — sorry that the old year had gone, but glad that the 20th Century with all it held of promise and progress had come at last.

Congratulations poured into Mayor Diehl’s office — greetings came in from all over the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The mayor of Toronto said — “I trust that the past 100 years of marvelous progress may be the forecast of greater things in store.” And the mayor of Detroit — “Buffalo, like a few other of her sister cities of the Lakes, is the epitome of the 19th Century, and American pluck, energy and perseverance. May the coming Century of life in Buffalo be filled with events as important as those that mark her first Century of life.”

One reporter wrote prophetically—“Buffalo has taken a place well in the front of the nation’s industrial advance. With such a start there is no reason why the city should not march on through the 20th Century with constantly increasing credit to itself and prosperity to its inhabitants.”

Such a celebration was a fitting farewell to the city’s “Gilded Age” and a welcome to the 20th Century, with its promise for Buffalo’s continued prosperity and growth.



Virginia and George Bartlett ride with their tricycles near Angola, N.Y. (1880's)