

A Roar of Distant Waters :



The Pictorial History of Akron, New York

**Produced by
the Akron Central School District**



**As a 21st Century Community Learning Centers
Cultural Enrichment Initiative**

Akron, Yesterday



(Lower Falls , Akron)

Akron's first inhabitants were the Haudenosuanees or "People of the Longhouse" . We know them as the Seneca Indians, members of the Iroquois Confederacy.

The Haudenosuanees called this place "See-Un-Gut" or "Roar of Distant Waters". This is a reference to the two waterfalls that lie in the confines of the Village of Akron, in Akron Falls Park. Here, the waters of Murder Creek fall over the ledge of the Onondaga Escarpment.

The “See-Un-Gut”



Murder Creek has fallen over the ledge in Akron Falls Park since before the white man laid claim to its power in the year 1792. The Ledge or Onondaga Escarpment is a ridge of sedimentary rock that was formed at the bottom of ancient seas that covered Western New York 400 million years ago!

The ravine was formed during the time of the glaciers, 12,500 years ago – predating even the Haudenosaunee!

(Lower Falls, Akron on the left and Upper Falls, Akron on the right)

Our Village of Akron swirls in the mists of legend and ancient history. One legend tells of an Haudensuantee maiden, “Wild Rose” who lost her father and the man she was to wed at the hand of a jealous settler named Sanders in 1806.



(Footpath, Akron Falls Park)

History tells that Rose hid for some time in the home of a kind, European settler named Dolph – John Dolph is buried in Ledge Lawn Cemetery on Route 5 outside the Village. It is told that he found Rose some years later, stretched across the grave of her loved one – she had died of a broken heart.

Rose’s restless spirit is said to walk in woods of the Park to this day in search of her lost, love. This is how Murder Creek got its dark and infamous name!

Colonial Settlement of the “See-Un-Gut”



(Map of Town of Newstead)

Newstead was acquired in the year 1792, as part of the Holland Land Purchase.

The Town of Newstead was separated from Clarence in 1823. The new Town was originally called Erie, but needed a name change due to confusion with other towns by the same name.

In 1831, the name was changed to Newstead at the suggestion of the wife of then Governor, Millard Fillmore. Newstead was the home of Mrs. Fillmore’s favorite poet, Lord Bryon. Thus, our Town of Newstead was born.

Taming the wild, “See-Un-Gut”



It was in 1826 that the Ogden Land Company cleared Seneca ownership of several thousand acres of Indian land. This land was offered to European settlers whose names can still be seen in the cemeteries throughout Akron and Newstead today. Peter Vandeventer owned the first tavern in Newstead in 1802. In 1806, Archibald Clarke opened the first store outside of Buffalo, near Vandeventer’s tavern. In 1810 an Irish immigrant named Lawrence McMullen was the first white settler on the banks of the Tonawanda Creek.

The first Town meeting in Newstead was held on May 27, 1831 at the home of Washburn Parker. A man named Edmund Badger was elected the first Town Supervisor that same day.

(Photo of Murder Creek Pond in Autumn)

Colonial Industrial Development of Akron



(Sedimentary Rock in Akron Falls Park)

In the year 1839, a man named Jonathan Delano discovered limestone on the banks of Murder Creek. A year later Delano built a small kiln and manufactured lime cement – the start of what was to become the backbone industry of early Akron.

In those days, it was necessary to be near water as a source of power. Grist mills were built to grind flour, a hotel and stores were built and the Village of Akron was born.

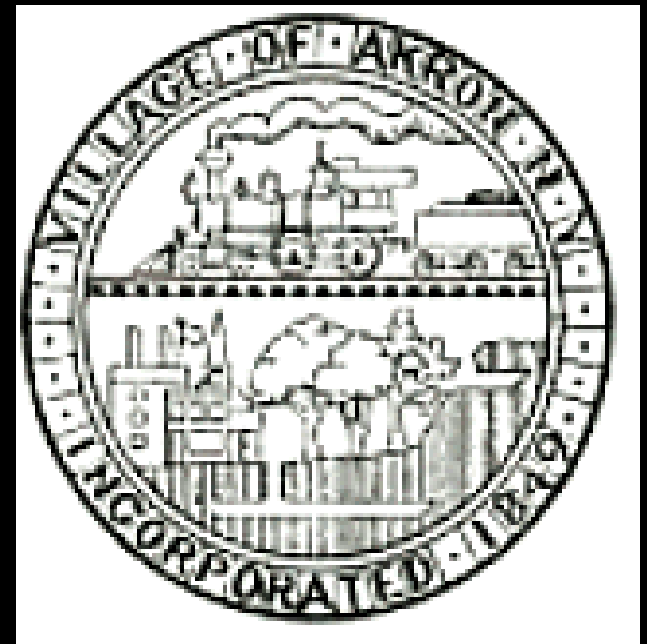
Akron, Yesterday

The Official Seal of the Village of Akron

**Our Village of Akron was incorporated in 1849 in the
Town of Newstead, NY.**

**The name Akron comes from the Greek word “Akros”
which means “a great height”. Other names were
suggested including Millville, Leeds and Brighton.**

**The official seal incorporates visual references to
industry (the train) and the Onondaga Escarpment,
known locally as “the Ledge” – two forces that shaped the
formation and history of our 21st Century Community.**



Early Colonial Industry

Greater economic success was to follow. About 1840, a Seneca Native brought a piece of stone to a man named James Montgomery. The “stone” turned out to be a high quality grade of the mineral, gypsum or “plaster of Paris”. This discovery helped to create the National Gypsum Company.



In 1853, an early settler named H. Cummings started a family business to mine and process the gypsum on the Tonawanda Reservation. The business was closed in 1865, only to reopen later on East Avenue as the Akron Cement Works.

(Photo of Parkview Drive Bridge and Dam)



In 1836, a man named Jonathan Russell donated land for a Methodist Episcopal Church, a cemetery, a town hall and a Village Park. Russell Park on Main Street remains a focal point of the Village of Akron to this day.

Russell Park features monuments to Akron's Veterans and citizens as well as an open-air Gazebo. Concerts have been performed in the Park since the founding of the Park in the 1800's.



Akron's Landmarks



The Rich-Twinn Octagon House stands on Main Street as one of only two such structures in all of Erie County. The house was modeled after a Dutch type mansion and was built by Charles Rich for his wife in 1849. The Octagon House is home today to the Newstead Historical Society. Rich owned a general store on the present site of the Akron House Restaurant in from 1849-1862.

The Akron House Restaurant stands further down Main Street. Built originally in 1872 as the American Hotel, the Akron House once played host to many famous dignitaries, including President Grover Cleveland.

The American Hotel consisted of a lobby, rooms for guests and a third floor Ball Room where Village socials were held through the 1800's.



Akron's Historical Highlights



Akron's streets were illuminated by gas lighting for the first time in 1896. The Akron Light and Fuel Company was started by Richard H. Bell.

Mrs. W.N. Hoag – wife of the owner of Hoag Lumber Company started the Akron Chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union – a society against the consumption of alcohol.

Akron's first successful newspaper, the Akron Breeze was founded in 1878 by Frank G. Smith

The Grant Pole was erected at Buell and Route 5 in 1872 to show support for President Ulysses S. Grant. It is now located at Buell Street and Clarence Center Road.

(Photo of Akron Post Office, at Dawn)

Akron Central Schools

The first school in Akron was taught by a man named Keith in 1807.

In 1883 the Akron Union High School was organized and a large, brick school was erected in 1890. This building burned but was replaced in 1893. The fire destroyed many of the early records of the Village of Akron and Town of Newstead.



Schoolhouse on corner of Akron & Meahl Roads-Akron, NY
0927---

(School House at Akron and Meahl Roads, 1927)



Akron Central High School was built on Bloomingdale Avenue in 1925. The original building has undergone many renovations to accommodate the district's growing population.

Our Children, Our Future

Akron Central Schools instill a sense of community in its young people today just as it they did in days gone by.

Akron's children are our Guardians of the 21st Century and the future of our vibrant, community. Statistics show that a majority of our young people will stay on in Akron after graduation.



Akron's young people today provide the same music and laughter that instilled hope in the hearts of those who carved a Village out of wood and stone over a century and a half ago. Yesterday's children were the builders of Main Street and Russell Park, of the Octagon House and the American Hotel. What will tomorrow bring? Only time and history will tell.

Akron, Today

Much has changed in Akron since its incorporation in 1849. One thing that hasn't changed is the quaint, charm that the Village retains in its "hollow that time forgot". World events have encroached upon the sanctity of this quiet, hamlet but the people of Akron continue to maintain the values of hard work and generosity which have sustained the Village of Akron throughout the centuries.



The Village of Akron today boasts a population of 3,000 people in just over 1,200 families. Gone are the Akron Cement Works, the Rochester Button Company, American Gypsum and the WN Hoag Lumberyard. But Akron's industrial base remains strong as the Village today is home to Perry's Ice Cream, Whiting Door Manufacturers, the Ford Gum Company, and the Strippit Corporation. The Akron Breeze has been replaced with the Bugle and the Akron Central School District has grown from a small, red-brick school house to a sprawling complex providing education to over 1,700 students.

Akron, NY – A 21st Century Community



Akron, New York is in so many ways a 21st Century Community. Born in the 18th and 19th centuries, Akron has always been on the cutting edge of industry and technology.

What mystical power is it that has drew people to this place from across the sea in the late 18th century? Was it fate? Was it destiny? Perhaps the answer lies in the calling that the Haudenosuanees answered so

many centuries ago, before the coming of the first Europeans to the New World. Perhaps the answer lies in the sound that stirred in the hearts of men named Vandeventer and Clarke, McMullen and Ingalls, Cummings and Delano. Perhaps they were drawn by the magic of “See-Un-Gut” – A Roar of Distant Waters.

Our Guardians of the 21st Century



“One hundred years from now, it will not matter what kind of cars we drove, what kind of houses we lived in, how much was in our bank account, nor what our clothes looked like. But our world may be a little better because we all were important in the life of our children.”

author unknown

Acknowledgements



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Akron Central Schools 2001

"Making a Difference" in the Life of Akron!

Written Sources of Akron History



Much of Akron's early written history was lost tragically in a fire in 1890. Some of this written history has survived in other sources. They are :

**A History of the Town of Newstead ,
Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. 1971.**

**The History of the Holland Land Purchase,
Orasmus Turner**

**Western New York Land Transactions, 1804-1826
by Karen Livsey**

We gratefully acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the writers of this material and their efforts in safeguarding our knowledge of history for the generations to come.