

The Irish Experience in Albany County, New York

The first Irish immigrants arrived in Albany County during the 1640s; of these early immigrants, John Anderson of Dublin is the first recorded and most well-known. Anderson arrived in 1645, and due to his industry and good nature, he was considered a well-respected citizen of Albany. Other Irish would follow Anderson's lead and immigrate to Albany County throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Although they would often face arduous conditions, many Irish immigrants would become respected and prominent citizens of Albany during this time.

Irish immigration to the United States was greatly increased in the 19th century due to the famine in Ireland and the need for labor in canal building, shipping, and civil construction works. The numbers of Irish during this period saw significant increases in Albany County. The opportunities to work on projects such as the Erie Canal, the D & H Railroad, and the New York Central Railroad made Albany County a very desirable place to live for Irish immigrants. Albany County also gave the immigrants a chance to succeed. Irish families started to buy their own land, and while many Irish were employed as laborers, an increasing number of immigrants were becoming skilled.

The Catholic faith was a cornerstone for many Irish communities in Albany County. With the increase in Irish immigrants, larger churches were needed to be built. St. Mary's Church in Albany would open, as well as, Saint Patrick's and Saint Brigid's in Watervliet, formerly West Troy.

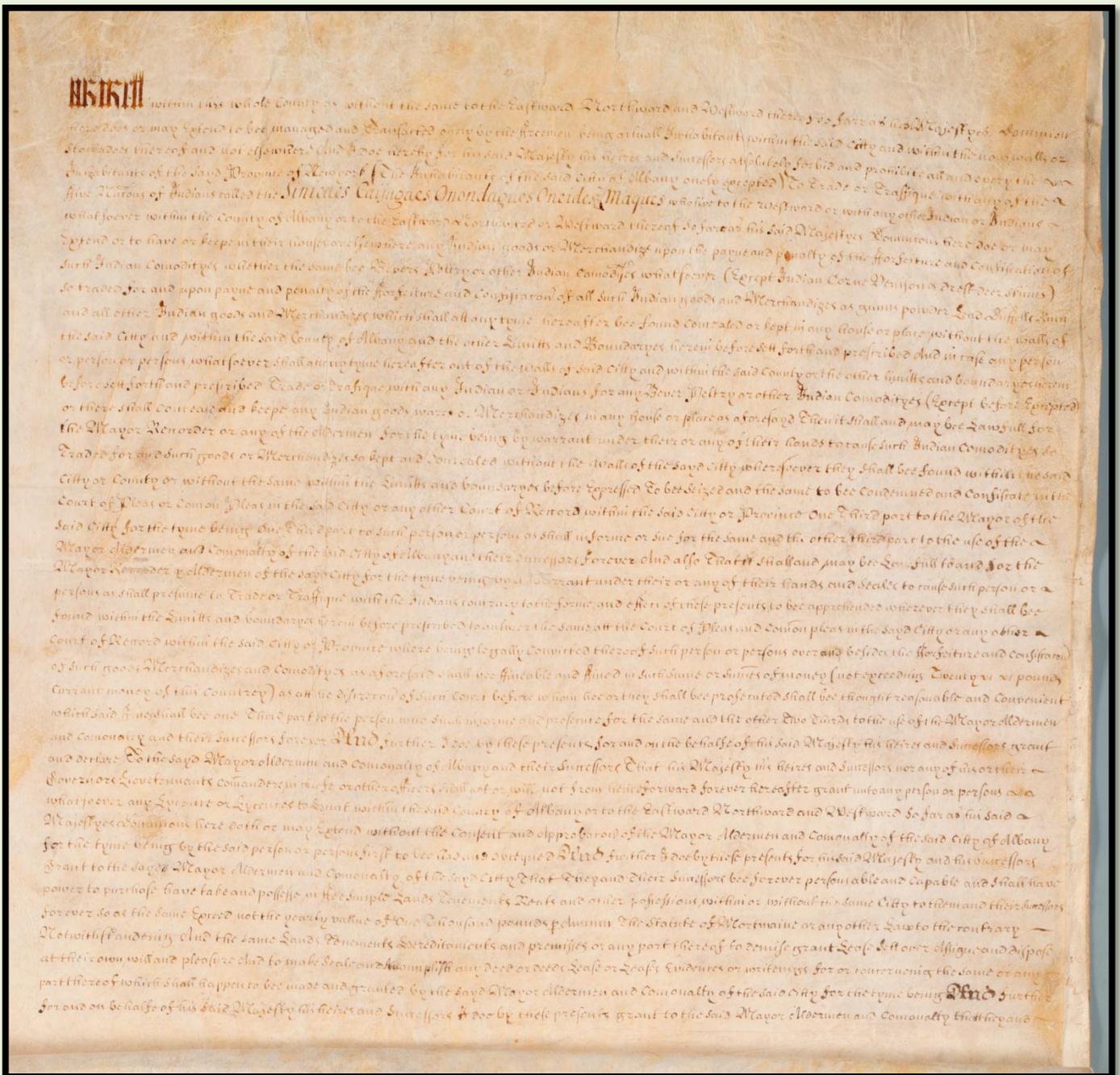
After residing in Albany County for a while, many immigrants decided to become citizens of the United States. To do this, an immigrant would need to go through the naturalization process which changed considerably during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Typically, the process extended over several years.

From author William Kennedy to former mayor Jerry Jennings, many of Albany's many prominent political and cultural leaders can trace their roots to Ireland. This exhibit will showcase the impact that Irish immigrants had on both the city and county of Albany.

Albany's First Charter...

In September 1682, Thomas Dongan was appointed to the position of provincial governor of New York. Dongan was born in Castletown Kildrought, County Kildare, Ireland and was a member of the Irish Parliament. In 1682, Dongan was appointed as provincial governor to the Province of New York. Governor Dongan established Albany County as one of the twelve original counties of New York in 1683. Dongan also enacted the Dongan Charter which incorporated Albany as a city in 1686. The Albany County Hall of Records holds the original Dongan Charter.

Page 2 - 01-04997 County Clerk, Dongan Charter of the City of Albany, July 22, 1686.

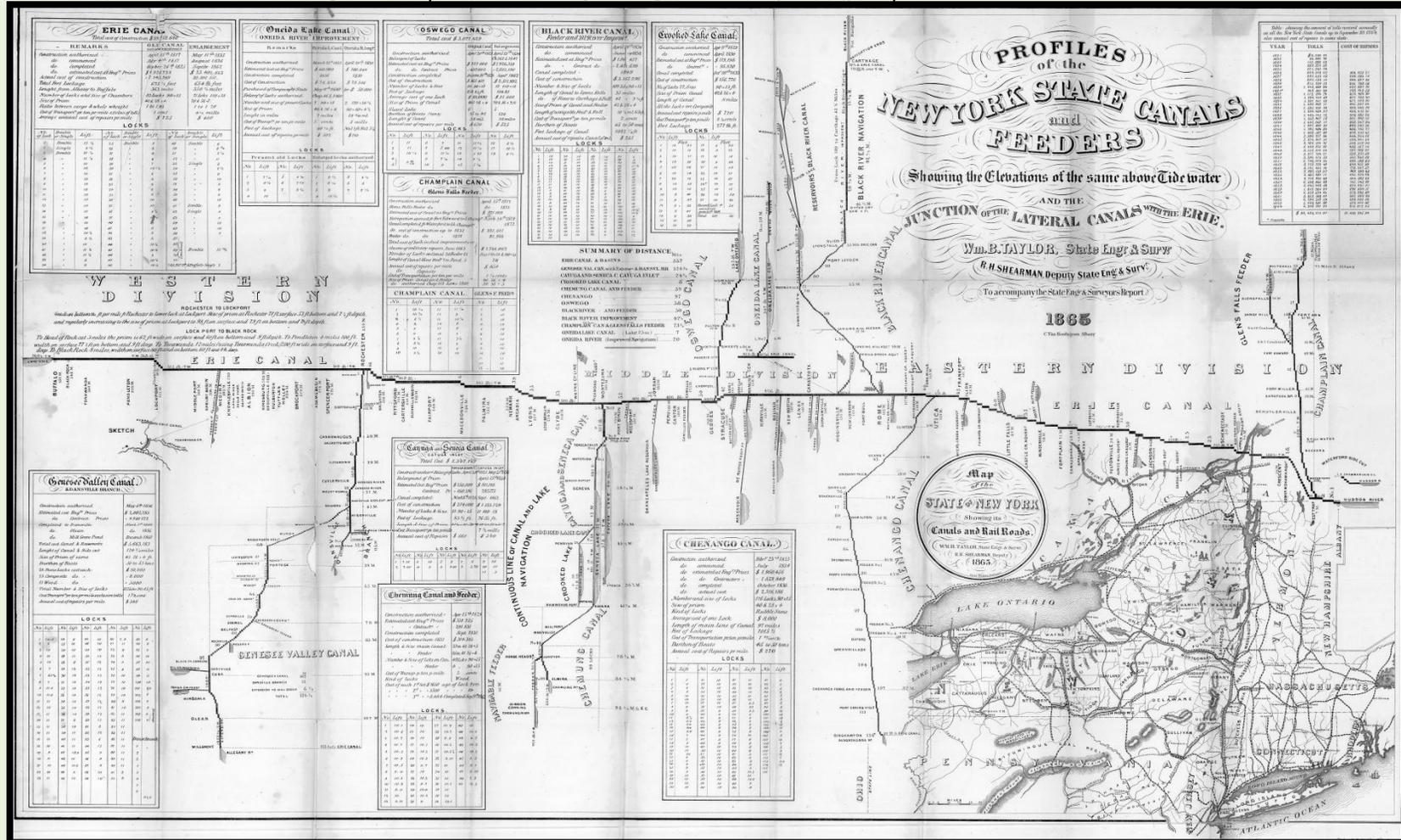


Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection

Great Lakes to the Atlantic...

The Erie Canal was an ambitious project. Beginning in 1817, and working only with men and horse power, New York State Governor Dewitt Clinton hoped to create a waterway from Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean. Although the builders of the canal would face strenuous conditions, it was completed in 1825. The completion of the canal had a dramatic effect on New York. Settlers flocked to Western New York, trade increased exponentially, and the population of cities in New York would expand. Many of New York's cities were very close to the Canal's trade routes, and the jobs created by the Canal would draw various immigrant groups to these cities. In Albany County, Irish immigrants would settle in cities near the canal and many worked on enlarging the canal. The success of the canal spurred the creation of many other canals. The map below shows the various canals of New York State in 1865.

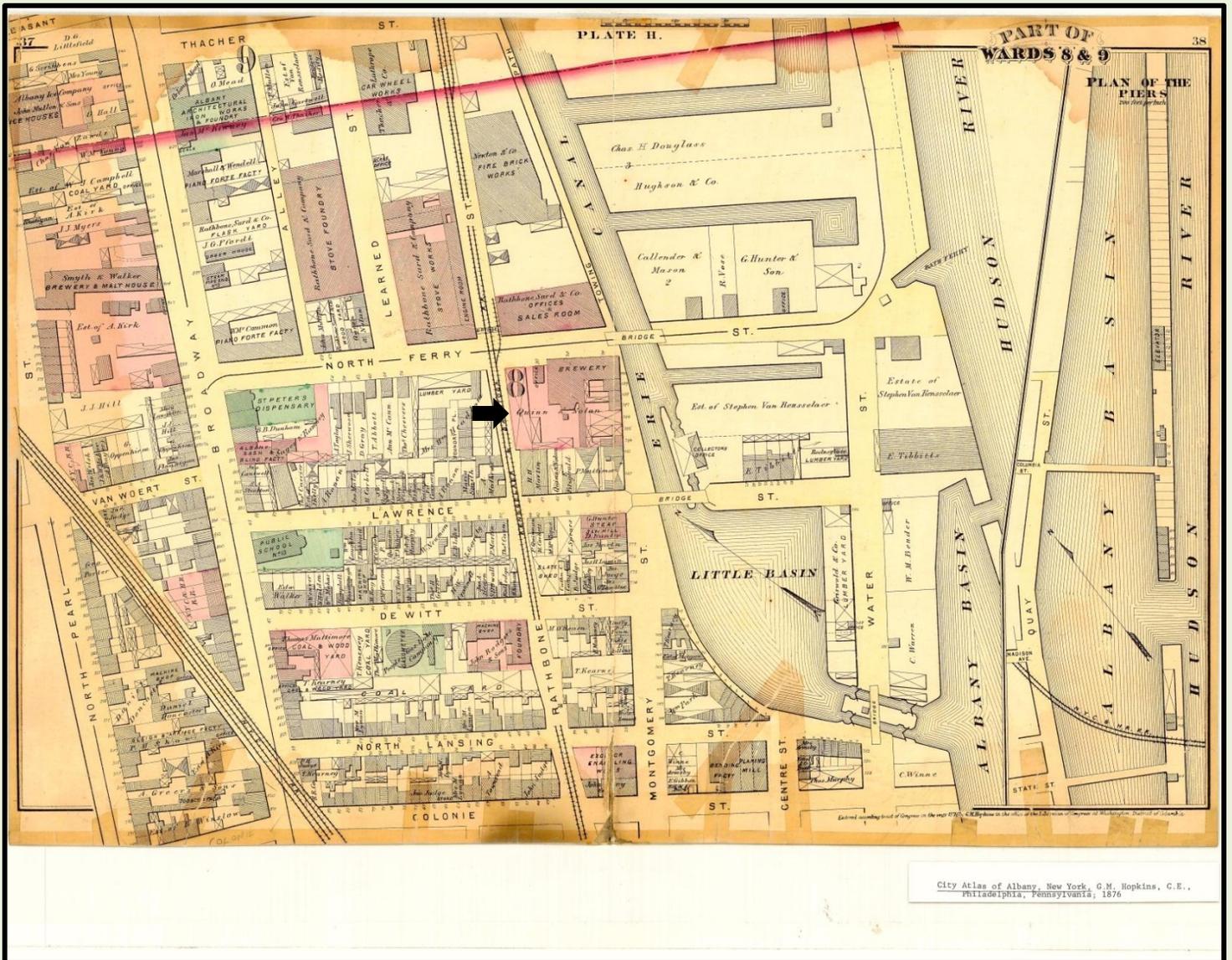
84-00801 Bureau for Historical Services, New York State Canals and Feeders, 1865



The Erie Canal and “Limerick”, New York

The following map shows the Erie Canal and part of North Albany. Public works projects like the Erie Canal played an instrumental role in the lives of Irish immigrants. Many immigrants would come to live near the canal as it brought industry and opportunity to North Albany. The neighborhood of North Albany still carries the nickname of “Limerick” in honor of the Irish village from which many of its 19th-century families came. This map also shows the Quinn and Nolan Brewery which was owned by Jim Quinn and Michael Nolan. The financial success of the brewery led Nolan to become the first Irish Catholic mayor of Albany.

84-00826 Bureau for Historical Services, Hopkins Atlas: Map of Wards 8 & 9, 1876.



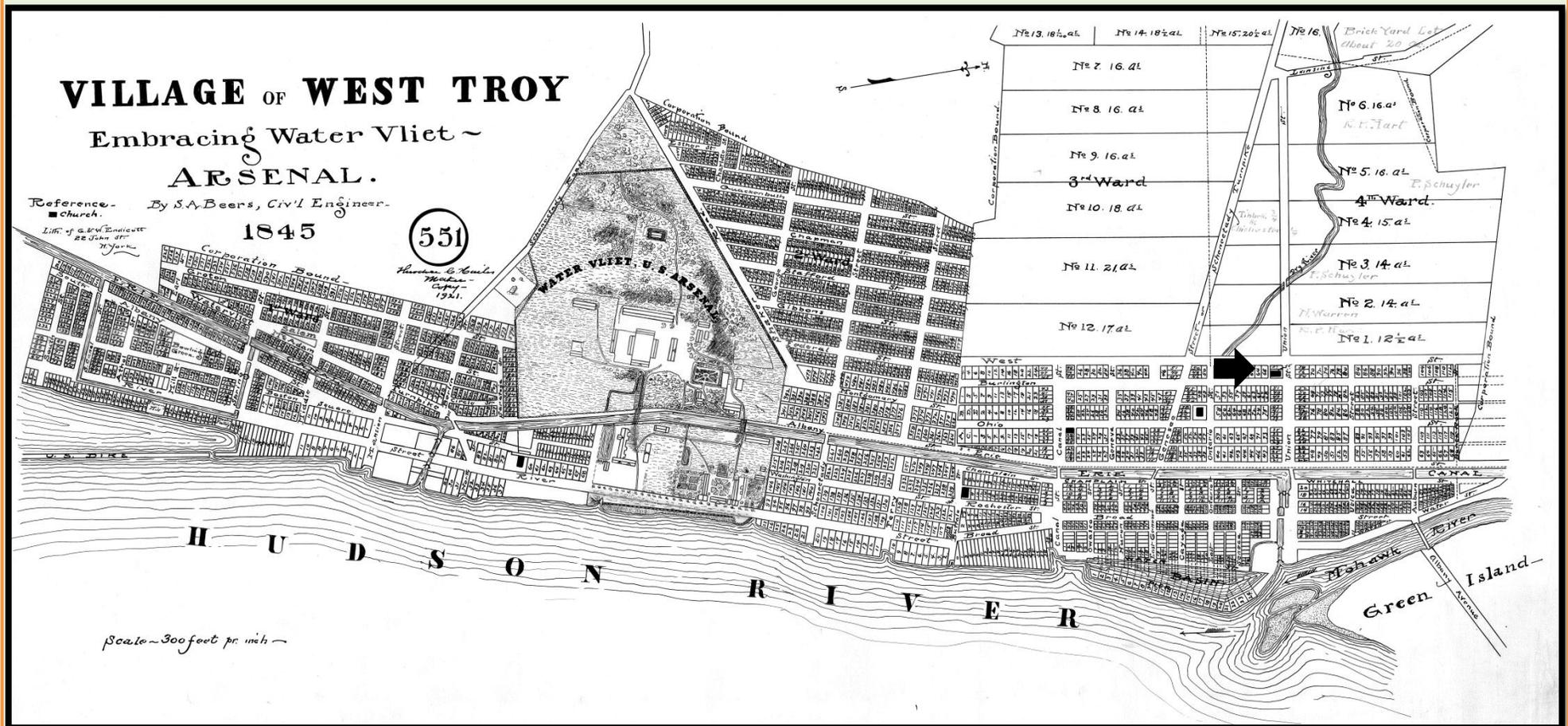
City Atlas of Albany, New York, G.M. Hopkins, C.E., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1876

Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection

Irish of Watervliet/West Troy, New York...

With the Erie Canal running through the center of the city and the Hudson River bordering the city on the east, Watervliet offered many opportunities to the newly arrived Irish immigrants. Similar to St. Mary's Church in Albany, St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's were the main place of worship for Watervliet's Irish community. The first St. Patrick's church is marked on the map, and can be seen on the corner of Burlington and Union St. Due to an increasing number of members St. Patrick's Congregation, the construction of a new church began on July 4, 1889 and the first mass occurred on December 25, 1891.

86-01864 County Clerk, Hailes Map 551 Village of West Troy Embracing Watervliet Arsenal, 1845



Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection

99-00775, City Clerk. New York State Census, Watervliet, West Troy, Westerlo, 1855.

This census record shows some of the Irish families that lived in Watervliet during the 1850s.

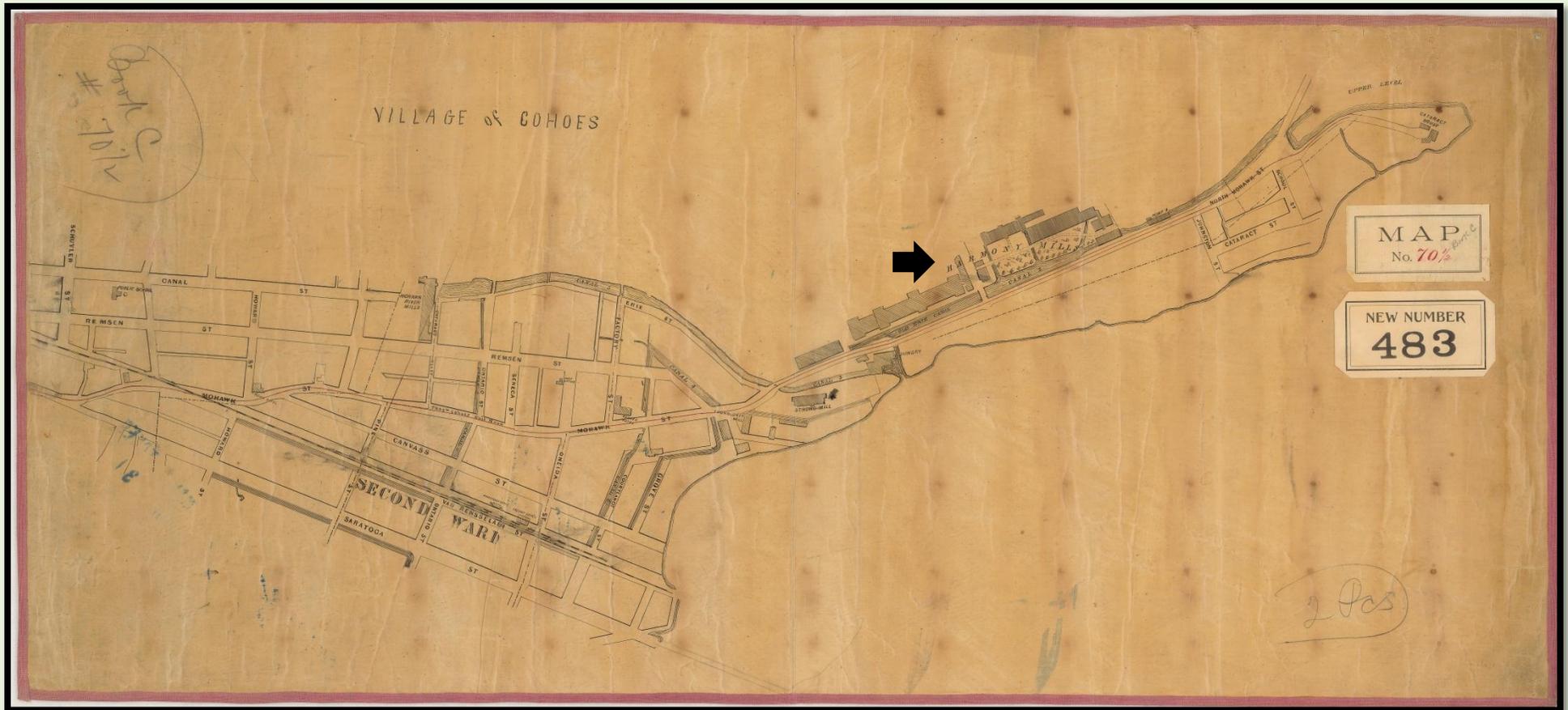
Population - CENSUS of the Inhabitants in the Third Election District of the County of Albany taken by me on the Tenth day of June, 1855.

Household or Family No.	Of what male (of full age)	Value	Name and address of the head of the family	Age	Sex	Color	Relation to the head of the family	In what county of this State or in what other State or Foreign Country born.	Married	Years married in this city or town	Profession, Trade, or Occupation	VOTERS							
												Male	Female	White	Colored	Free	Slave	Foreign	Native
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			Samuel Kelly	1	M	White	Head	Albany											
31	Stram	300	John Lee	40	M	White	Head	Ireland			Blacksmith								
32	Stram	600	Richard Mara	40	M	White	Head	Ireland	1		Blacksmith								
			Ellen Mara	16	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
			Margaret Mara	15	F	White	Child	Ireland											
			Mary Mara	14	F	White	Child	Ireland											
			Martha Mara	12	F	White	Child	Ireland											
			Patriek Mara	9	M	White	Child	Ireland											
			Bridget Mara	1	F	White	Child	Connecticut											
33	Stram	600	Thomas Bore	25	M	White	Head	Ireland	1	2	Labourer								
			Julia Bore	26	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
			Thomas Bore	2	F	White	Child	Albany											
			Daniel O'Brien	35	M	White	Head	Ireland	1	1	Labourer								
			Ellen O'Brien	22	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
			Mary O'Brien	2	F	White	Child	Wales											
			William O'Brien	7	M	White	Child	Albany											
34		34	Timothy O'Brien	40	M	White	Head	Ireland	1	4	Labourer								
			Mary O'Brien	40	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
			John O'Brien	10	M	White	Child	Ireland											
			Peter O'Brien	7	M	White	Child	Ireland											
			Thomas O'Brien	4	M	White	Child	Ireland											
35		35	William Coakley	19	M	White	Head	Ireland	1	10	Labourer								
			Bridget Coakley	16	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
			Richard Coakley	10	M	White	Child	Albany											
			Margaret Coakley	9	F	White	Child	Albany											
			John Coakley	8	M	White	Child	Albany											
			Bridget Coakley	6	F	White	Child	Albany											
			Mary A. Coakley	4	F	White	Child	Albany											
			William Coakley	2	M	White	Child	Albany											
36	Stram	500	William Foley	40	M	White	Head	Ireland	1	10	Labourer								
			Mary Foley	40	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
37		37	Thomas Kester	41	M	White	Head	Ireland	1	4	Labourer								
			Margaret Kester	38	F	White	Wife	Ireland											
			James Kester	15	M	White	Child	Ireland											
			Richard Kester	11	M	White	Child	Ireland											
38	Stram	700	Walter A. Stone	36	M	White	Head	Albany	1	6	Labourer								
			Lavinia M. Stone	35	F	White	Wife	Albany											
			Mary E. Stone	14	F	White	Child	Ireland											
			Charles C. Stone	11	M	White	Child	Connecticut											

Irish women and the Harmony Mills Factory in Cohoes, New York...

While many Irish men worked at the ports, lumber yards, and the iron industry, women were employed as laundry workers, collar workers (mainly in Troy, NY), and in the textile industry. Harmony Mills was a major player in the textile industry and employed many Irish women as unskilled laborers. Harmony Mills also harnessed the power of the Erie Canal with water-powered turbines. The map below shows the buildings of Harmony Mills, as well as part of the Village of Cohoes.

88-03344 County Clerk, Map of Cohoes showing Erie Canal, Harmony Mills and Troy Railroad 1863

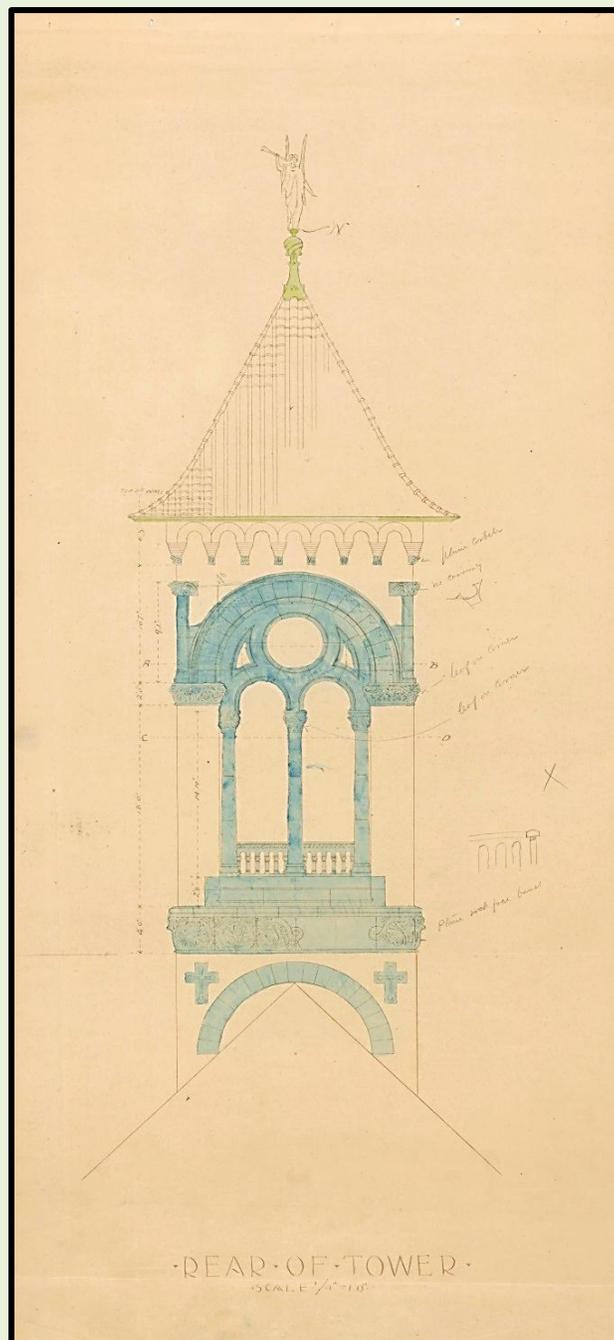


Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection

St. Mary's Church...cornerstone for Albany's Irish Catholics

Officially incorporated in 1796, St. Mary's is the second oldest parish in New York State. The original parish boundaries served Catholics from much of New York State until other churches were built. Albany's Irish Catholics laid the cornerstone for the first St. Mary's Church in 1797 at the corner of Pine and Chapel streets. Due to the increasing number of Irish Catholics, the original building was replaced in 1820. This building served Albany's Catholics until the 1860s when structural problems caused Pastor Clarence A. Walworth to plan for the construction of a new church. Walworth played a large part in the design of the church and personally paid for the construction of the statue of Gabriel. This drawing shows the upper part of the tower and statue of the angel Gabriel of St. Mary's Church on 10 Lodge St.

92-00735 Division of Buildings and Codes, Drawing of the tower of St. Mary's Church, 1895.



Albany County's Irish Immigration...

This page from volume 22 of the Naturalization volumes shows just how many Irish immigrants were being naturalized in Albany County at this time. Out of the thirty-three people listed here, twenty-five list their nationality as Irish.

86-02156 County Clerk, Naturalization and Index, Volume 22, June 1858 - March 1884.

Name of Person Naturalized.	When and Where Declaration of Intention was made and took.	From what Nation and Allegiance.	Residence.	Name of Witnesses.	When and Where Taken.
Cullen George	28 Oct 1870 here	Ireland A. F. M.	Albany	Richard Luddy	24 Oct 1874 H. P. August
Crossin John	here with	Ireland P. G. M.	Albany	Michael Delaney	24 Oct 1874 H. P. August
McCormick James	here with	Scotland	Albany	John Doran	27 Oct 1874 H. P. August
McCormick Paul	11 Nov. 1872 here	Germany	Albany	Ernest W. Morgan	25 Nov 1874 H. P. August
McCormick Hugh	Columbia Co Court 26 Oct 1872	Ireland	Cohoes	Thomas O'Day	5 Feb 1875 H. P. August
McKullough Michael	11 Feb 1873 here	London England	Albany	John O'Connell	18 Feb 1875 H. P. August
Cochran James	13 June 1870 here	Scotland Dumfriesshire	Albany	James Hamilton	16 March 1875 H. P. August
McCombs Patrick	here with	Ireland	Albany	Thos Mulligan	18 March 1875 H. P. August
McKishen Charles	24 Oct 1871 here	England	Albany	Thos W. Hephner	24 March 1875 H. P. August
McCann James	24 March 1873 here	Scotland	West Troy	John Patten	30 March 1875 H. P. August
McKee James	2 August 1874 here	Ireland	Albany	John J. Morgan	20 June 1876 H. P. August
McLaughlin Thomas	here with	Ireland S. D. M.	Albany	Wm. Dunbar	24 March 1875 H. P. August
McMahon Hugh	19 March 1873 here	Ireland	Albany	John Burke	1 April 1875 H. P. August
Cherry Patrick	N. Y. Sup. Court 24 May 1872	Ireland S. D. M.	Albany	Richard Smith	1 April 1875 H. P. August
Crossin Felix	26 Dec 1872 here	Ireland Ch. M.	Albany	John Martin	1 April 1875 H. P. August
McCates John	Discharged Soldier	England	Albany	James Chisholm	3 April 1875 H. P. August
McCullin Patrick	19 Oct 1872 here	Ireland	Albany	Edw. Van Wie	12 April 1875 H. P. August
McCullin John	11 April 1872 here	Ireland	Albany	Patrick Lavin	14 April 1875 H. P. August
McCombs Thomas	29 Oct 1872 here	Ireland	Albany	Patrick Conly	23 June 1875 H. P. August
Curtis Dennis	8 March 1873 here	Ireland. B. M.	Albany	James Hughes	13 July 1875 H. P. August
McCormick George S.	here with	Ireland	Albany	D. P. Kelly	3 Sept 1875 H. P. August
McCombs Luke	April 21. 1871 here	Ireland	Albany	James Ward	28 Sept 1875 H. P. August
McMurry Michael	3 Dec 1870 here	Ireland	Albany	James Fitzpatrick	4 Oct 1875 H. P. August
Carroll Michael	5 May 1873 here	Ireland S. P. M.	Albany	Patrick Sawyer	Oct 12. 1875 H. P. August
Cole Henry	here with	Ireland S. P. M.	Albany	James Cook	Oct 13. 1875 H. P. August
Cole Richard	here with	Ireland S. H. M.	Albany	James Cook	Oct 13. 1875 H. P. August
Cole Samuel	here with	Ireland S. H. M.	Albany	James Cook	Oct 13. 1875 H. P. August
Conly Carlton	Discharged Soldier	Canada S. H. M.	Albany	James Hampton	Oct 14. 1875 H. P. August
Carroll James	Oct. 14. 1872 here	Ireland W. M.	Albany	John Carroll	Oct 15. 1875 H. P. August
Cuppin Thomas	July 14. 1873 here	Germany	Albany	Thos. Morgan	Oct 15. 1875 H. P. August
Clark James	here with	Ireland S. H. M.	Albany	John Morgan	Oct 19. 1875 H. P. August
Cutler George	14 Nov 1872 here	England S. H. M.	Albany	Robert Oliver	Oct 20. 1875 H. P. August
Coburn James	16 Oct 1872 here	Ireland M. M.	Cohoes	Edward Nelson	Oct 21. 1875 H. P. August
McConnell Thomas	5 Aug 1873 here	Ireland	West Troy	Michael Doyle	Oct 21. 1875 H. P. August

Courtesy of the Albany County Hall of Records Archival Collection