

# The Rogers Mansion

**This large, graceful mansion was at 65 Prospect Street, along the route of several of our history walks.**

*By Susan Barlow, July 2013*

## The Mansion

The Rogers family built a house at 65 Prospect St. about 1834 (it's on the 1849 map) near their first paper mill. The house was updated and expanded to a 16-room white Italianate mansion by architect Stanford White, who worked on several Cheney houses. Stanford White added steel girders in the cellar and steel reinforcement rods to the columns. He purportedly lived there for a year. The mansion had six acres of manicured lawns, lofty trees, landscaped gardens, and orchards. It was built before electricity and had a huge central hallway that brought natural light into the house. Henry Rogers was an amateur horticulturalist and saw to the expert landscaping.

Gertrude Rogers (1866-1943) lived in the mansion until her death. Frank and Alice Reed purchased it from the estate 11/29/1945; they sold it to the State of Connecticut 11/1/1967. The house was demolished in 1968, when the current I-384 was under construction.

## Rogers Paper Mills

Peter Rogers, from the Netherlands, founded a paper mill in the south end of Manchester in 1832. For 70 years, the mill made specialty paper products for the textile and electrical industries. When Peter became too ill to run the company, his son Henry, age 19, took over. Upon the father's death in 1841, Henry bought the formerly leased property where the mill was located. Fire destroyed the original mill in 1865, and Henry rebuilt. Henry built another mill in 1868 at what is now the east end of Charter Oak Park. Henry discovered a process for bleaching printed paper so it could be re-used. He did not apply for a patent, but kept the process secret for ten years. Henry Rogers died in 1906 at the age of 83, leaving a son, Knight, and a daughter, Gertrude. His son, a "ne'er-do-well," according to some sources, ran the business (until his illness, possibly tuberculosis, and suicide in 1913). Gertrude (1866-1943) then ran the business, hired non-family-member management. Gertrude was a philanthropist, and set up a large trust fund for Manchester Memorial Hospital.

In 1925, the company bought a paper mill on Mill St. in North Manchester (off Oakland Street) that had belonged to A. W. Case, one of the Case brothers with mills in the Highland Park section of Manchester, Burnside, and other locations.

In 1927, the company went public, and, in 1936, it purchased the Goodyear Rubber Plant in Rogers, Connecticut. The company, still in business today in Killingly, makes components and materials for the plastics industry, including computers and other electronic equipment, automotive materials, gasketing and electrical insulation, in 14 manufacturing plants in 5 states and 3 foreign countries. But, getting back to Manchester, in the 1930s, Rogers owned paper mills at three locations, but sold off the Prospect and Charter Oak Street operations in 1945, retaining just the Mill Street, North Manchester, and the Rogers, CT operations.



Paper mill founder Peter Rogers, who died in 1841.



1965 photo, Rogers mansion. *Anthony and Pearl Lotane lived there at the time.*



Demolition, 1968. *Photo by Sylvian Ofiara, Manchester Herald.*

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