

A Brief Sketch of the Bunces and the Cases  
as Paper-Makers.

Connecticut long held "a high rank as a leading paper-manufacturing state, ranking fourth in the amount of annual production according to the census of 1840. Much of this business was concentrated in Hartford County and especially on the Hockanum River in Manchester". This importance was largely due to the business ability of the Bunce family.

Charles Bunce, Senior, having learned paper-making of David Bunce in New Haven, of the firm of Hudson and Goodwin in Hartford and of John Butler, started a Mill on Hop Brook - the first in the western part of our town. His six sons, Charles, Jr., George, Herman, Lewis, Walter, and Edwin, became his associates and successors in business from time to time. "Together they built other Mills and were celebrated paper-makers for sixty years".

There were in all three Mills on the same stream. The Mill owned by Charles Bunce, Jr., made press papers by hand; this Mill was sold to Norris and Collins Keeney for making news print, largely for the "Hartford Courant". The second Mill was the property of Walter and Edwin Bunce; here the paper was made on a wet machine, the products being candle paper, bonnet boards and press papers. In this Mill C. Frank, A. Wells and A. Willard Case began to learn paper making. In later years Case Brothers owned the Mills of Charles, Jr., and of W. & E. Bunce. These Mill properties were finally sold to Cheney Brothers for the water privileges and hence are no longer in existence. The third Mill, owned by Lewis Bunce and Sons, Henry and Edgar, was destroyed by the flood of 1869.

In less than two years of apprenticeship at the age of 21, A. Willard Case, with his brother Frederick, hired an old Mill near the present Catholic cemetery in the western part of our town. The capital was \$135.

In 1862 A Wells Case had come to the southeastern part of the town - now Highland Park - for the purpose of washing cotton waste - cotton being very scarce on account of the Civil War. Not long afterwards he offered this location to A. Willard and F. L. Case and went into partnership in the paper stock business with W. T. McLean of Hartford.

The products of the first Mill at Highland Park were album boards and binders' boards. In 1869 C. Frank, Henry F. and A. Wells Case began to make card middles in a Mill at the Falls, below the one just named; which Mill was sold after five years to Brown Brothers. Later A. Wells Case came into partnership with A. Willard and F. L. Case, and continued with the former during his life.

In 1869 C. Frank and Henry F. Case built a machine shop, now standing, to make paper machinery exclusively. H. F. Case had learned the trade of Samuel Loomis, a very remarkable machinist at Manchester Center, and there developed his natural mechanical and inventive ability to an unusual degree.

The first location of Case Brothers at Highland Park - close to the dam at the bridge - was soon changed to the present site, on which a three story structure was built and steam power introduced. Owing to the combustible nature of a paper mill and the lack of fire apparatus - so common now - this mill was burned in August 1875. In order to resume business as soon as possible, a low building was erected. As the machinery was not badly damaged, the Mill was running again in about 40 days. In 1881 and in 1890 great enlargements of the plant took place, brick being substituted for wood. Press-papers - made as early as 1871 - were at first sold to manufacturers of hosiery and woollen cloth, but for 30 years and more, such products were usually shipped to electrical companies for insulating purposes, Jacquard cards for weaving, as well as press papers for pass-book covers and letter files, have also formed an important part of the products of Case Brothers.

The death of A. Wells Case occurred in October 1908. During these years he had been very alert in promoting the expansion of the business and the sale of its products. Added to this - because of his love of nature - he laid out and improved the Park with the skill of an engineer. The first part was finished in 1903, the second, reaching the top of the mountain soon after. The last part on the east side was finished in 1909 by his son, Lawrence W. Case, who succeeded his father in partnership with his uncle, A. Willard Case. Mr. L. W. Case received his technical education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and like other members of the family has an inventive turn of mind.

Case Brothers, Incorporated, employ about 100 men and the output of the Mill is 12 tons per day. As for the extent of the business of the Case family, the Mill of the A. Willard Case Company is at North Manchester, of Case Brothers, Inc., at Highland Park, South Manchester; the Case Manufacturing Company in Unionville and of Case and Marshall in Burnside, with which A. Willard, Lawrence W., and Raymond S. Case are connected. Albert L. Crowell and Joseph N. Viot, sons-in-law of A. Willard Case, are also associated with the business. A. Willard Case at the age of 82 is still active and inventive.

Case Brothers received awards at the expositions of Paris and Melbourne and their present exportations are very large. The success of the business is to be attributed to their progressive spirit to meet the demands of the times, to unstinted capacity for labor of brain and hand, and to the inventive power of various members of the family, combined with enthusiasm for their work.

(Signed) Ella M. Stanley

Authorities:

"The History of Paper Making in the  
United States"  
Lyman Horace Weeks  
1916

and

Personal recollections of A. Willard Case.

Paper-making, Bunce and Case families

Webmaster's notes: this "sketch" by Ella M. Stanley (1856-1940) was written in 1922, based on her comment that A. Willard Case (1840-1925) was 82 years old.

Thanks to Susan Beach, Case family archivist, for this carbon copy (literally!).

The reference to the "Catholic cemetery in the western part of town" probably refers to St. James Cemetery, which today is reached from the southern end of Broad Street, but formerly from Griswold Street (off Center Street, which was formerly called Olcott Street).

- Susan Barlow, webmaster, December 2018.