

Daguerreville, at the southerly edge of Newburgh, obviously named for the plant which in 1852 was turning out huge amounts of supplies for the daguerreotype trade, seems as mythical as when I inquired about it here several months ago on the basis of a vivid description in a publication of the time.

The plant itself seems mythical. I presume Daguerreville was a name its proprietors, W. & W.H. Lewis, hoped for advertising purpose to imprint on the map as well as on the industry.

But as Daguerreville and the Lewis plant continued in the realm of myth, the New York City firm of E. Anthony, acquired form and personality through acquaintance with Mrs. Dudley Morriss, long-time resident of Helmes Hill Road, Blooming Grove, grand niece of E. (for Edward) Anthony.

Nostalgic reminder

Abandoned industrial plants usually continue for decades in the public consciousness, advancing in decay, nostalgic reminders to the knowing, tantalizing subjects of conjecture for newcomers and strangers passing by. Meanwhile, memory evolves into tradition that lasts much longer than the ruins of the plant.

But if other business promptly takes the site, then memory may never be transformed into tradition. That must be what happened to Daguerreville on Quassaic Creek just before it enters the Hudson. The Lewis plant there was described in The Daguerreian Journal dated April 15, 1852, as "the largest manufacturer of daguerreotype apparatus in the world." Though the reference was to output, the glowing description suggested that the plant also was both vast and an industrial model.

And now not a trace of it! Unrecorded in Orange County history, forgotten in Orange County lore and, in an overall view, not a major factor in its own industry. My guess is that the Lewis plant operated rather briefly and the business collapsed from over-expansion.

Survived as Ansco

The daguerreotype industry itself was not long-lived. Other manufacturers survived, however, even to the present, by progressing with the daguerreian art itself into the more practical and adaptable process of photography. Among the survivors was the Anthony firm. It exists now in the name and the business known as ANSCO, chief competitor of the great photography supply business created by a former Anthony associate, George Eastman. Anthony and another competitor, Scoville, combined business and names.

The plainly contrived name always has bothered me, because I didn't know what words it represented. To Mrs. Morriss, the former Fanny Huntington Anthony, and to her niece, Mrs. A.V.D., Wallace of Goshen, the circumstances as well as the names that went into the combination are part of family history, the more vivid to Mrs. Morriss because her father, Frederick Allard Anthony, was one of those who brought it into being. Frederick and a cousin, Richard A., had inherited the business from Edward's brother Henry.

Edward Anthony, adventurous as well as inventive, had died when the photographic process was not quite at the threshold of its modern development, but not before he demonstrated that it had value as an instrument of record instead of being limited to portraiture and artistic entertainment.

Daniel Webster credited him with preventing possible serious conflict with Canada in a border dispute which, for New England, took precedence over the catchy "54-40 or fight!" for the line across the northern plains.

It was during the Massachusetts statesman's first appointment as Secretary of State, 1841-43. He claimed that "highlands" in the State of Maine had a bearing on that far Eastern end of the Canadian border. Lord Ashburton questioned the existence of such terrain, as the family story goes, and Webster asked Anthony to photograph the mountains to prove his point.

Because the ruggedness of the almost unpenetrated mountain forests, there was the burden and worry of the vast amount of heavy and delicate equipment required for photography then. But Anthony photographs were a factor when Webster signed the agreement known in history as the Webster-Ashburton Treaty.

1966 Dec 1

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Plant on Quassaic forgotten in history

p-1 of 2

By MILDRED PARKER SEESE

It was disappointing to find that Fanny (Anthony) Morriss of Helmes Hill Road in Blooming Grove, wintering now with her daughter in Illinois, had no mementoes or heirlooms of the Anthony daguerreotype, stereopticon, or photographic supplies business, in which her great uncles, Edward and Henry T. Anthony, were American pioneers.

But the reason was good, though ironic for Mrs. Morriss. Some years ago she acceded to the request of a man in Chicago who was collecting materials of the industry for a museum. She learned later that her contributions had been passed on to Eastman House, the Rochester, N.Y., mansion of the late George Eastman, which, since his death in 1932, has become the chief library and repository of photographic history and early materials.

Roll film

The irony lies in the fact that Eastman got his start in the industry with the Anthonys, left them to establish his own business and shortly gave the first American manufacturers of photographic materials pressing competition at a most inopportune time. The crux of the irony was that the strength of his competition lay in the roll film that made the camera (Eastman coined the word Kodak for his product) an instrument of popular use by reducing the amount and delicacy of the photographer's paraphernalia.

Production of roll film was a source of long controversy between the Anthonys and their former associate and a subject of household concern when Mrs. Morriss was a girl.

The Anthony story was that "rolling film" had its inception in the Anthony shop, the idea of a minister named Godwin.

Mrs. Morriss's father, Frederick Allard Anthony, and others of the firm applied their practical knowledge to the idea. My encyclopedia says Eastman invented a number of photographic materials and processes and "devised roll film."

In any case, the Anthonys also produced roll film. But the pressing competition occurred after Henry Anthony, who had no heir, had died and left the business in the hands of two nephews, Richard A. and Mrs. Morriss's father, Frederick A. They proved as practical in the matter of business survival as they were in the shop.

Though it meant disappearance of the name Anthony from the trade which it had dominated for more than half a century, they combined name and business with Scoville, mentioned along with E. Anthony among manufacturers of daguerreotype supplies in 1852, two years before Eastman was born. That was when a trade publication, The Daguerreian Journal, then in its third year, gave a long and flattering description of Daguerreville, the plant of another competitor, Lewis, on the Quassic where it enters the Hudson below Newburgh.

AnSCO formed

The merging of the two old firms produced the strong Eastman competitor, then and now, called AnSCO.

There was another modern facet also to Mrs. Morriss's memories. It concerned stereopticon views, an early, clever and very scientific branch of the photographic art.

I found (again in the encyclopedia) that the two pictures carefully mounted on a single card, identical at a casual glance, actually were made from positions that differed in proportion to the average distance between a person's eyes. That gave the fascinating illusion of depth that made stereopticon views impressive, when properly focused in a "viewer."

Who evolved that idea and process I don't know. But the Anthonys were early and prolific producers of the materials for such parlor entertainment, which somewhat paralleled the Currier & Ives prints in era and in the presentation of memorable or newsworthy scenes and events. I can attest, however, that not all views were so scientifically made.

There is in our family a viewer and among the cards there is one with identical pictures (also a larger print of the same) identified by my father as Valley Mills, now Alberton, Md., made about 1880 when his father owned the Baltimore County mill, general store, farm and homestead shown in the pictures.

p. 282

Mildred Parker Seese Jan. 19

More on Anthonys of Daguerreville