

Part I

The Evolution of the City and Its Surroundings

Unless you're looking for it, the Chadakoin River is easy to miss as it winds across Jamestown on its narrow, serpentine path. Slipping through forested swamps, beneath bridges, and behind forgotten factories, the river keeps to the shadows—a nearly silent and invisible witness to the city born on its banks two centuries ago.

For many years, the Chadakoin was much more conspicuous. Churned by the wheels of sawmills and steamboats, this outlet of Chautauqua Lake played major roles in Jamestown's settlement and the daily drama of its early residents. As an obstacle, energy source, and transportation route, it shaped the character of the city's physical and economic growth. As an open sewer, its smell, alone, made it hard to ignore.

Now placid and discreet, the river reflects the mature city that surrounds it. Since Jamestown's swift expansion between 1890 and 1930, when its population quadrupled, its industrial prowess peaked, and most of its current infrastructure was built, the city has been a quieter, less turbulent place.

But cities, however quiet, are never static. As their residents adjust to a changing world and react to forces within and beyond their control, they reinvent themselves and the city around them, finding new purpose for a piece of land, a building, a street. Even a river takes on new meaning and uses. Over time, these adjustments add new layers of detail to the built environment, mixing with earlier layers to form a dynamic backdrop to daily life.

Jamestown's built environment expresses numerous cycles of change and reinvention. The city's buildings and landscapes also say something about the human spark—about the drive and ingenuity to sculpt a statue, to splash a building with color and ornament, to render a stirring vista, to cultivate gardens and minds, and to imagine a city on the swift-flowing outlet of a glacier-gouged lake.

Finding a Home, Harnessing the Rapids

Almost two decades after the Revolutionary War, the American frontier crept its way into western New York. Along rough trails and narrow waterways, migrants made their way to uncertain destinations, searching for new homes and new lives. Jamestown's emergence as an attractive place to end one's search began with two participants in this westward wave: James Prendergast, who recognized the location's potential, and Joseph Ellicott, who hatched a plan for developing the wider region.

James Prendergast's journey to the site that would eventually bear his name began in New York's Hudson Valley, where his family, like many

in that area, farmed on land still owned by the wealthy Dutch clans who settled the old New Netherlands colony. Tension between owners and renters in the region was relentless, with frequent disputes over land titles, leases, and rent collection. Some spats turned violent, including a deadly 1766 uprising instigated by William Prendergast—an Irish immigrant and James's father. Convicted of treason and sentenced to death at a trial attended by two-year-old James, William was eventually pardoned by King George III, a gesture the Prendergasts repaid with loyalty to the crown during the American Revolution.

After the war, many young men in the Hudson Valley left in search of good land and economic opportunity—both in short supply in their home region and in the rocky and depleted soils of neighboring New England. James and many of his brothers were no different. Around 1795, after studying and practicing medicine close to home, James began traveling to newly opened territory in the south and west. Tennessee seemed especially promising to James and two of his brothers who had also ventured there. After persuading the rest of the family to resettle, the Prendergasts and a few other eastern New York families formed a Tennessee-bound caravan in early 1805, traveling through New York and Pennsylvania and down the Ohio River before cutting across Kentucky.

Upon arriving in central Tennessee, though, many in the group were underwhelmed by their destination and its short supply of open, purchase-ready land. As they proceeded back through Kentucky and Ohio in search of suitable land to settle, the families eventually split up, with some heading for Canada and others heading back east. James's brother Thomas, who had passed through the Chautauqua Lake region of New York on a previous western journey, urged the family to give it a look. When they reached the lake during the winter of 1805–06, a decision to settle was made, and Thomas bought the family's first tract of land on the west side of the lake.

When they arrived at the extreme western end of New York, the Prendergasts entered a wilderness owned by the Dutch—not the families who controlled the Hudson Valley, but a group of investors eager to lend their latent capital to promising ventures in the young United States. Through their Holland Land Company, they had purchased more than 4,000 square miles of land west of the Genesee River in 1792—including all of present-day Chautauqua County—with the intent of subdividing and selling it off to settlers. With Indian claims expunged by treaties in 1794 and 1797, the company set about devising a plan for its holdings.

Joseph Ellicott, already a surveyor for the company, was appointed resident land agent in 1797 to oversee the property's disposition. In his late thirties when he arrived in the region, Ellicott came from a family

of experienced frontier land developers, having planned and nurtured a milling community in Maryland in the 1780s, known today as Ellicott City. At the same time as Joseph's promotion, his brother and colleague, Andrew, was serving as chief assistant to Pierre Charles L'Enfant in the planning of Washington, DC.

What impressed the Dutch investors about Ellicott was the pragmatic and systematic scheme he devised to sell and settle the land. He proposed a thorough land survey to produce detailed maps, division of the land into a grid of roughly six mile by six mile townships, and the subdivision of the townships into smaller retail lots. Prices would be low, terms of credit would be lenient, and some of the funds received from sales would be reinvested in infrastructure (roads and bridges) and in subsidizing selected mills, general stores, taverns, and other amenities to attract further settlement.

Thus, when the Prendergasts arrived in the Chautauqua region, Joseph Ellicott's efforts to jumpstart development were well underway. From his office in Batavia, New York, Ellicott was busy negotiating with buyers, collecting payments, planning road projects, and detailing his activities in annual reports to Paul Busti, his boss at the company's office in Philadelphia. In Ellicott's completed grid of the surveyed territory, present-day Jamestown occupied most of the block designated as Range XI, Township 2.

James Prendergast's first encounter with the Chadakoin River and the land of Range XI, Township 2, came during a search for lost horses. When two of the animals strayed from the family's first log cabin, near the Holland Land Company's satellite office in Mayville, James set off

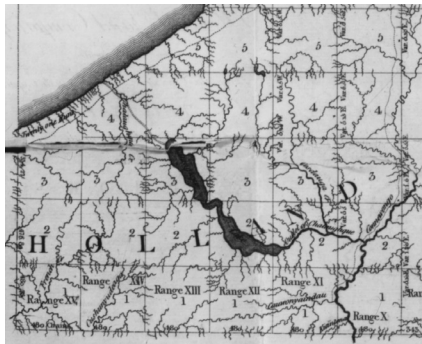


Figure 1.1. Map showing Joseph Ellicott's survey grid with Chautauqua Lake at center. (Archives and Special Collections, Daniel A. Reed Library SUNY-Fredonia)

down the western shore of Chautauqua Lake in pursuit. Before locating the horses in Cattaraugus County, James would observe the slow, meandering water at the lake's outlet being funneled into a series of rapids, as well as the full extent of the region's greatest natural resource—its abundant white pine forests. Although the location was undeveloped and up for sale, it had long served as hunting and fishing grounds for the Seneca Indians (and before them, the Erie), and had been traversed since 1739 by French, British, and American travelers on their way between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River System.

Smitten with the site, James would eventually come to own much of the land surrounding the Chadakoin near Chautauqua Lake. When he moved there in 1811, the 47-year-old James did so with his wife Agnes, their young son, and another married couple. After a few early setbacks, James and Agnes built a simple frame house near the corner of North Main and 2nd Streets, at the geographic center of the modern city.

A viable settlement was soon in the making. With the help of skilled newcomers from eastern New York, James erected a dam and millrace at the rapids to provide mechanical power for milling. A sawmill was built to process the area's trees into lumber and building materials. As farmers began growing crops and raising animals on the cleared land, a gristmill was established to process their grain and a woolen mill to process their sheep's coats. Critically important for farmers and lumbermen who wanted to ship their goods beyond the local market, milling reduced the weight and bulk of raw materials and added value to their products. This reduced their shipping costs, extended their market range, and raised their profit margin substantially.

Despite competition from mills subsidized by the Holland Land Company—including ones at present-day Falconer and Kennedy run by personal friends of Joseph Ellicott—James's mills held their ground and his reputation as a leading citizen grew. When the town of Ellicott was formed in 1813—named for, Joseph, the region's mastermind—James was elected supervisor.

Postmark: Jamestown

As the milling business grew in the area informally known as "The Rapids," so did the number of people willing to bet on its economic potential by settling there. Within a simple grid that established the blocks of today's downtown, James began dividing his land into smaller parcels and selling them off for \$50. Using supplies arriving mostly from Pittsburgh, via longboats on the Allegheny, Conewango, and Chadakoin

Rivers, newly arrived entrepreneurs established the community's first taverns, potteries, tanneries, woodworking shops, and blacksmith shops. By 1817, activity in the settlement justified a post office, which, after short debate, took the name Jamestown in honor of Mr. Prendergast. Ten years later, a village charter from the state of New York made the name official.

The new Post Office did much to relieve the isolation of Jamestown and other frontier places, linking residents to far-flung family members, and keeping them apprised of news and cultural currents through magazines and newspapers. Regular mail service also improved transportation by stimulating a demand for reliable connections between communities. By the early 1830s, Jamestown's nearly 1,000 residents were served by regular steamboat and stage coach service to Mayville and a growing network of improved roads. From Mayville, one could travel down the steep escarpment to Lake Erie and then by boat to Buffalo, where the new Erie Canal provided the fastest and safest route to points east.

The young village's ties to the outside world, as well as the experience and skills of its incoming residents, had a profound influence on the appearance of the growing community, though little remains from this early period. The buildings that James Prendergast would have seen when he sold his remaining property and retired from the village in the mid 1830s—the homes, the mills, a bank, a dozen stores, several mechanical shops, a school, and a few churches—were swept away by later growth spurts or fires.

However, early Jamestown was heavily influenced by the Greek Revival movement. Popular from the 1820s through the 1850s, the Greek Revival period in American architecture left its most profound mark on young communities throughout central and western New York and the Midwest. While only a few examples remain in Jamestown, surrounding towns and villages are dotted with Greek Revival homes, farmsteads, and churches from the early nineteenth century.

The carpenters, masons, and amateur builders, who applied the design vocabulary of ancient Greek temples to a variety of civic, residential, and commercial buildings, drew inspiration from books by popular designers—who, themselves, were inspired by archeological excavations in Greece. Among them was Oliver P. Smith, a largely self-taught builder and architect who practiced in Jamestown and southern Chautauqua County during the 1830s and 1840s—designing numerous buildings in the Greek Revival style, including the 1846 William Hall house on Forest Avenue—before moving west and becoming a prolific author and lecturer on home design.

Beyond an affinity for the simple dignity and pleasing symmetry of Greek Revival porticos, pilasters, and pediments, Americans such as Smith and his clients were taken by the style's symbolism—the allusion that the United States was the heir to ancient Greece's democratic values. In a nation still searching for its post-revolution identity, the style let builders break away from British colonial precedents while anchoring places like Jamestown to the bedrock of Western civilization.

By the 1850s, Jamestown's American identity was unmistakable. In a few short decades, interactions involving the family of an Irish immigrant, Dutch colonial land barons, trans-Atlantic capitalists, a shrewd frontier surveyor, and westward streams of New Yorkers and New Englanders had formed a lively milling settlement with nearly 3,000 residents and hints of ancient Greece. With a few dozen newly settled Swedish families adding to the mix, an interesting story was unfolding. But the village's prospects for further growth were sharply constrained by its short reach. It processed the natural resources and served the commercial needs of its immediate hinterland—areas less than a day or two away by foot, wagon, or riverboat—but little beyond. The friction of distance was holding it back.

The Railroad Connection

For most of the early nineteenth century, the cheapest way to ship something from the sparsely settled American interior to ports and population centers on the East Coast was down the Mississippi and its tributaries to New Orleans, where goods were piled onto oceangoing vessels for shipment around Florida and onward to their destinations. Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, and New Orleans all flourished as major ports along this north-south alignment.

The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 radically reshaped the nation's trading geography by providing a much shorter and faster water route to the East Coast. By 1835, the Great Lakes–Erie Canal route was capturing 20 percent of outbound shipments from the interior—mostly flour and wheat. Its share rose to 51 percent by 1845 and 69 percent by 1850. Trade within the United States had shifted to an east-west orientation, anchored by New York City at one end and a rapidly growing Chicago at the other.

Jamestown found itself positioned precariously between these two competing routes. The Chadakoin connected the village directly to the Mississippi system via the Allegheny River, but the long winding trip

on shallow waters just to reach Pittsburgh limited its practical use as a shipping lane for all but timber and some other bulk commodities. The Erie Canal was nearby, but the lack of a direct water link to the canal or Lake Erie required overland shipment of cargo by wagon before transfer to canal barge. All of this meant that transportation costs at Jamestown were high compared to more favorable locations, rendering many forms of economic activity infeasible.

The arrival of the railroad changed that equation entirely. Since 1851, Jamestowners had witnessed the advantages of rail in northern Chautauqua County at Dunkirk, which served as the western terminus of the New York and Erie Railroad and enjoyed a short growth spurt as a result. For several years, efforts were made to identify a feasible right-of-way through the Jamestown area and convince investors that existing activity in the village and surrounding communities would generate sufficient business to justify a railroad connection. After fits and starts, a spur from the New York and Erie line finally reached Jamestown in 1860 on a path that followed the relatively level topography of the Chadakoin River. In a few decades, the line would become part of the Erie Railroad's empire, placing Jamestown near the middle of its mainline between New York and Chicago, and fixing it securely to the nation's prevailing east-west trade route.

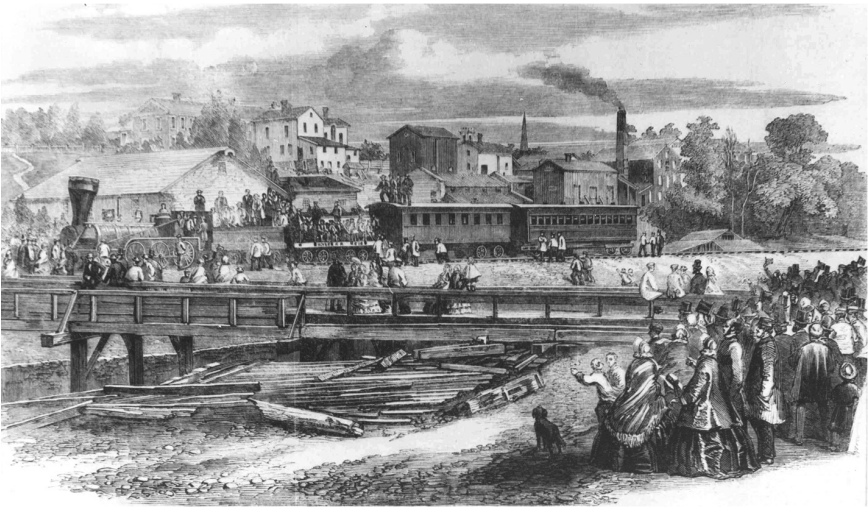


Figure 1.2. Depiction of the arrival of Jamestown's first train in 1860. (Fenton History Center)

The railroad greatly reduced the cost of transporting things to and from Jamestown, which had several transformative effects. First, a wide range of basic and luxury goods—everything from salt and tools, to paper and pianos—could be imported to Jamestown in greater quantities at lower prices. This expanded the buying power of the village's households and businesses, and generally improved the quality of available goods. Small-scale local producers who survived the entry of competition were, themselves, made more competitive by lower commodity prices and, thus, lower production costs. And with the burden of frontier self-sufficiency somewhat removed, they could also become more specialized.

The cost of transporting people also fell. Getting to Jamestown from New York—a common route for immigrants in the coming decades—went from an arduous journey lasting a week or more by canal and stage coach to a trip completed by train in one day. Cheaper, faster and more comfortable travel would enable Chautauqua Lake's emergence as a vacation destination, with people arriving by rail at Jamestown before boarding lake-bound steamboats for opulent hotels, theme parks and, starting in 1874, the Chautauqua Institution.

Most importantly for Jamestown's future industrial growth, railroads had the effect of establishing a national marketplace, allowing entrepreneurs to transcend the constraints imposed by the size of their own communities. Almost overnight, a chair-maker in Jamestown went from competing in a local marketplace with a few thousand customers in southeastern Chautauqua County to the marketplace of millions reached by the nation's growing railroad network. This meant greater competition, but also an exponential increase in opportunity. The industrial revolution—mass production for mass consumption—arrived in Jamestown along with the railroad.

City of Steam

In Jamestown's transition to the Industrial Age, the Chadakoin River was as instrumental as it had been for the village's pre-industrial origins. Water meant energy, but instead of the energy from running water that had powered the early mills, the Chadakoin now provided water as an ingredient for steam, leading to the use of small-scale steam engines in some village factories before the Civil War. Steam's other component—heat—became easier and cheaper to furnish when the new railroad enabled the plentiful delivery of energy-dense coal. With inexpensive steam as their energy source, manufacturers began sprouting up in the narrow corridor occupied by the river and railroad, resulting in a land-use pattern characteristic of nineteenth-century factory towns: an industrialized waterfront.

Two industries dominated this fledgling manufacturing scene. One was furniture, a natural outgrowth of the region's lumber milling and the supply—though dwindling—of local timber. A handful of furniture craftsman had been operating in Jamestown for years, supplying product for local and nearby markets. By the end of the Civil War, though, the combination of local raw materials, access to wider markets, and emerging methods of mass production sent Jamestown's budding furniture industry on a path of rapid expansion. Between 1865 and 1890, at least forty companies—making chairs, beds, tables, upholstered furniture, and a range of other products—were established in and around Jamestown.

The other leading industry—textiles—had more serendipitous roots, owing to the vision of William Broadhead. An Englishman who arrived in 1843 and settled with his family in Busti, Broadhead found work in Jamestown and eventually ran his own clothing store. While visiting England in 1872, he witnessed the workings of a worsted weaving mill and was determined to establish a similar cloth-making enterprise in Jamestown. Using machines and technicians imported from England, Broadhead and some local partners opened the village's first industrial-scale textile mill in 1873. Two years later, he left the venture and, with sons Almet and Sheldon, established the Broadhead Worsted Mills.

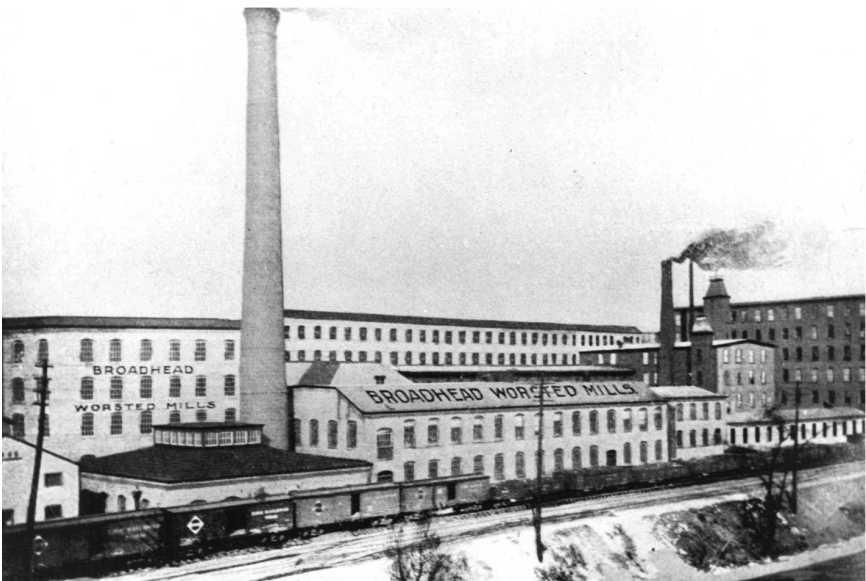


Figure 1.3. Broadhead Worsted Mills on East 1st Street. (Fenton History Center)

The worsted industry's long, red-brick buildings, soon occupying vast stretches of Harrison Street and East 1st Street, would eventually employ thousands of workers, many of them women. Between those mills and the booming furniture business, Jamestown became a place where the demand for labor outstripped the supply. As word of employment opportunities spread, vacancies were filled by newcomers. During the 1860s, the village's population swelled from 3,155 to 5,336, and then nearly doubled to 9,357 by 1880.

Many of the village's new residents came from rural areas not far from Jamestown, part of a national wave of internal migration as small farmers and farm workers—newly displaced by labor-saving techniques and the westward movement of agricultural production—streamed into urban centers to find work. They were joined by former lumbermen, whose work dwindled as the forests they harvested thinned and disappeared. Also arriving from mostly rural precincts were European immigrants, including many from England who followed the lead of workers imported by William Broadhead to get his worsted mills up and running.

The largest and most distinctive group of newcomers came from Sweden. Seeded by a handful of families who arrived in the 1850s, Jamestown's Swedish population exploded after the American Civil War,



Figure 1.4. Eastward view along Harrison Street, circa 1900, showing industry and workers' housing in close proximity. (*Jamestown and its Surroundings*, 1900)

when hundreds of thousands of Swedes crossed the Atlantic to escape overpopulation and social repression. Most traveled well inland, establishing farms in the upper Midwest and turning Chicago into America's Swedish capital. Jamestown was one of the few places east of Chicago to receive Swedes in large numbers. By 1890, over 5,000 native Swedes lived in Chautauqua County—mostly in Jamestown—giving it the tenth largest Swedish population of any county in the United States. Among places with more Swedes, only Rockford, Illinois, and three Minnesota cities (Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul) had them in greater concentration.

Besides encouragement from Swedes who were already living there, many skilled Swedish craftsmen were drawn to Jamestown—as they were to Rockford—by the furniture industry. Swedes soon became dominant in the industry's workforce and began starting their own furniture companies, often using the cooperative model of employee ownership. The names Johnson, Olson, Linblad, Norquist, Carlson, and Bloomquist could be found on signage above busy woodworking shops and stamped on the pieces that left those shops for bedrooms, parlors, and furniture showrooms across the country.

While leaving their mark on Jamestown's premier industry, the Swedes also made their mark on the village, forming an enclave around Chandler Street that would spread eastward up what came to be known as Swede Hill. Institutions also sprang up, from Lutheran churches and Swedish language newspapers, to fraternal societies and an orphanage.

During this period of rapid development that coincided with the Swedish influx, Jamestown's builders and architects—including the prolific Aaron Hall, another self-taught architect—continued to follow national design trends established by leading architects and featured in popular books and magazines. By the 1860s, America had gravitated away from Greek Revival and toward a wide assortment of European revival styles that were frequently mixed and matched. The term Victorian is often attached to this period—referring not to a specific style, but to a time of eclectic and garish tastes.

Unlike the dearth of examples extant from the Greek Revival period, Jamestown retains several impressive buildings from the middle-to-late nineteenth century. The Gothic Revival, a style drawn from medieval England and typified by the pointed arch, is well represented by Aaron Hall's First Congregational Church (1869) on East 3rd Street. Variations of Italianate design, with its bracketed cornices and shallow gables, are seen in Reuben Fenton's mansion (1863), with its landmark cupola, and the Alonzo Kent mansion (1859), with its wide veranda. The Tew mansion (1882) on North Main Street, with its prominent mansard roof, is a

prime example of the Second Empire style, popularized in the rebuilding of Paris in the 1840s.

These and other large buildings of brick and stone reflected the accumulation of wealth in the growing, industrialized village. Their relative permanence also signaled confidence in the community's future—a confidence that bolstered the movement for cityhood in 1886. The establishment of the city of Jamestown, however, was mostly driven by functional needs—becoming a city in New York meant a greater borrowing capacity and the ability to provide a wider range of public services to address the consequences of rapid growth. With 16,000 residents in 1890, Jamestown's list of growing pains was long: more garbage to dispose of, dirt streets with more ruts and congestion, more people crowding into bleak apartments, greater risk of fire and crime, dangerous working conditions in the steam-driven factories, and rising public health concerns in the absence of treated water and sewage. A Danish immigrant named Jacob Riis would have observed these common urban conditions during his brief time in Jamestown as an itinerant laborer in 1871—years before his influential career as a photojournalist covering the dismal living conditions of New York City's poor.

In the years immediately after the granting of Jamestown's city charter, the local government's role in addressing public health and safety issues expanded—but still remained small and spotty. In 1890, restrictions on land use and pollution were limited to nuisance claims by neighbors or covenants placed on property by private owners (zoning in American cities was decades away). As was custom in most cities, a private water company supplied well water to 1,400 public and private taps. Sewerage and other waste was buried, removed by private contract, or found its way to the Chadakoin River through private outflow pipes, buckets, or gravity. Fires were fought by volunteers operating equipment from two municipal firehouses. The growing school system occupied ten buildings, with school grounds doubling as public parkland. The 70-mile street network was illuminated at night by 236 public gas lamps, but was mostly unpaved. There was a jail, but no municipal police force.

As businesses and residents demanded services in greater quantity and quality to meet their rising needs and expectations, influence on the shape of the city would gradually shift from a handful of powerful private citizens toward the more collective interests represented by an elected city government. As the nineteenth century closed and the twentieth century began, a combination of these private and public forces, wielding new technologies and ideas for improving cities, would mold much of the city we see today.

Going Downtown

In a few short decades, steam-driven forms of transportation and production had radically reorganized Jamestown. Its economic function, its land uses, and its population had become wholly different from the frontier village left behind by James Prendergast. The newly chartered city's transformation was about to accelerate, however, and once again improvements in transportation would prompt the greatest changes.

Like all of America's rapidly growing cities in the late nineteenth century, Jamestown had become a daily exhibit of a transportation paradox. In a generation, long-distance travel had gone from arduous to easy, with trains shrinking travel times from days or weeks to a matter of hours. One could leave Jamestown on an early train and, without sweating, reach Manhattan or Chicago in time for dinner. Movement within cities, though, lagged far behind the speed and comfort of intercity travel. Stepping outside the train station meant stepping over—or into—piles of manure left by the horses that still formed the backbone of urban transportation. Freight, carried swiftly through the countryside by rail, had to be off-loaded onto wagons and lugged to its final destination at a mere trot.

This slow-going within cities limited their outward expansion, keeping most activities tightly clustered around the ports, waterways, and railways where interaction with the outside world took place. In Jamestown of 1890, most of the people and businesses were within a brisk ten-minute walk of the train station at the foot of Cherry Street. And walk is what most people did, enabled by a mixing of land uses that kept residences, stores, and factories close together by necessity. Living away from the crowded bustle of the city center was a luxury. Uphill from the noise and grime, the well-off commuted by horse and carriage from small urban estates to the north (5th and 6th Streets, and northward along Lakeview) and south (Forest, Prospect, and Broadhead Avenues).

When Jamestown's first mass transit service began in 1884, it did little to displace walking as the dominant mode of travel in the city. A private horse-drawn railway with a fixed route and schedule, it operated a small loop around Main, Allen, Windsor, East 2nd, and East 3rd Streets, with a waiting room in the Sherman House at Cherry and West 3rd Street as its hub. Passengers arriving at the hub from locations along the loop could connect with other modes of transportation by walking down Cherry Street to the railroad station, continuing on the street railway to the boat landing at Fairmount and West 8th Street, or getting on a stage coach bound for the rail junction at Falconer to catch trains going north to Dunkirk or south to Pittsburgh. Traveling at speeds rarely surpassing



Figure 1.5. The Gokey Mansion—later destroyed by fire—on Lakeview Avenue at East 8th Street, one of several large and elaborate homes built by wealthy industrialists. (Fenton History Center)

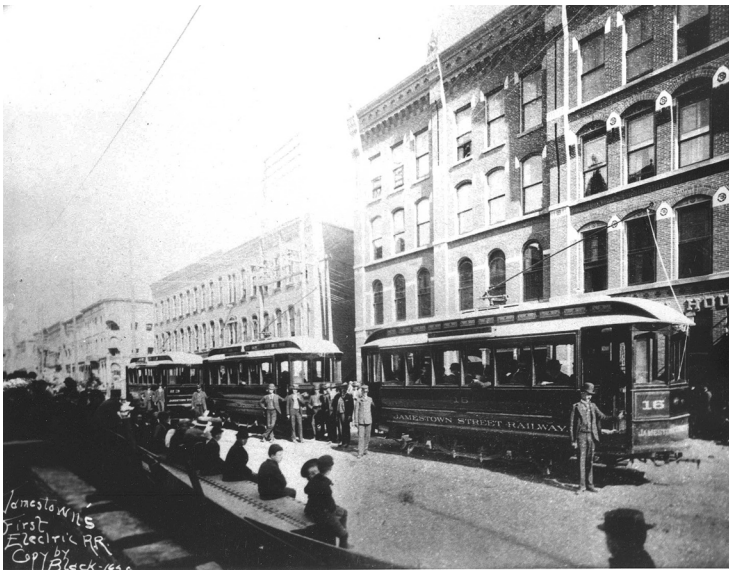


Figure 1.6. The streetcar hub at the corner of West 3rd and Cherry Streets. (Fenton History Center)

five miles per hour, the horse-drawn transit service was occasionally convenient but not a revolution in urban travel.

The street railway did not become truly practical for the average Jamestown resident until 1891, when the Jamestown Street Railway Company replaced horsepower with electric motors. Based on technology first tested in Richmond, Virginia, in 1888, the electric streetcar, or trolley, produced a revolution in urban form by increasing the speed and range of travel within cities (though horses were still needed, for the time being, to haul freight). The trip from Falconer's rail depot to the center of Jamestown, previously a 50-minute journey by foot or 30 minutes by stage coach, was compressed to 20 minutes, at most.

In addition to the new Falconer line via East 2nd Street, trolley lines were soon whisking passengers west to Lakewood and Ashville, north toward the Lake View Cemetery, and up the steep hills on the city's southern and eastern sides. As the system expanded, so did Jamestown's physical footprint. Neighborhoods sprang up near the trolley lines on land made far more accessible—and valuable—by this transportation improvement. A migration away from the city's center, toward newer, cleaner, and more spacious living quarters, began.

While streetcars enabled the movement of households away from Jamestown's center by making it possible for people to live farther away from jobs and services, they also created economic pressures that pushed residents outward. With its multiple lines radiating from, and converging at, the city's established core, the streetcar system made the center of Jamestown the most accessible location in the city. Heavy human traffic, generated by this funneling effect, made the land extremely valuable to retailers and service providers, who were willing to pay much more for use of the city's center than residents, factories, or other potential users. Unlike the pre-streetcar city, where accessibility was evenly distributed, this new arrangement gave a few blocks at the center a clear and pricey advantage.

As the center of Jamestown became more and more commercialized, it evolved into an urban form unique, at the time, to North American cities: a central business district or downtown. While *downtown* originally referred to the southern tip of Manhattan, it became a generic term for a city's primary commercial district—all of which, whether in Jamestown, Chicago, or Lower Manhattan itself, were shaped by the same forces. Spurred by high foot traffic and high demand for space, landowners built at increasingly high densities to maximize their useable space and income, using every square inch of every parcel and even borrowing space from the sky with the help of two crucial innovations: elevators and steel-frame construction. By 1900, the Wellman, Fenton, and Gokey



Figure 1.7. The Wellman Building at West 3rd and Cherry Streets, one of several multistory office buildings developed in response to growing demand for space at the city's center. (*Jamestown and Its Surroundings*, 1900)

buildings, each with five or more floors, had joined the shoulder-to-shoulder huddle of downtown's commercial blocks, competing with church steeples and casting shadows on their two- and three-story neighbors.

The elevators that made taller buildings practical and gave the American skyline its iconic profile were enabled, like the streetcar, by the emergence of electricity. While streetcar systems generally produced their own current—the Jamestown Street Railway Company had a power plant near the boat landing—smaller consumers of electricity had to purchase their power. The Jamestown Electric Power and Light Company, formed by a group of industrialists in 1886, provided direct current to a small number of factories and electrified a few street lamps. The city of Jamestown entered the business in 1891, producing power to convert most of its street lamps from gas to electric. In 1897, the city expanded its coal-powered generating capacity to sell power to commercial and residential customers, competing directly with the private utility (which became part of the much larger Niagara, Lockport & Ontario Power Company in 1922) until the city purchased those assets and folded them into

the municipal system in 1931. Strongly supported by an increasingly influential class of Swedish-American civic leaders, especially Samuel Carlson, who served as mayor for 24 years, the municipal electric system and other expansions of municipal service provision in the early twentieth century—including water service, a hospital and, at one point, a city milk-bottling operation—were emblematic of a period of experimentation in municipal governance, as cities across the country developed new tools to address a range of civic concerns.

Urban Life, Well-Lived

From early land speculators to modern strip-mall moguls, growth in the American city has always been a business in its own right—a venture with high risk and high reward, where luck and political savvy can determine riches or ruin. In the late nineteenth century, those who succeeded at this game became powerful city-builders, controlling and shaping large swaths of their growing communities. In Jamestown, William Broadhead and his sons, the wizards of worsted, played such a role, gradually assembling a business empire that prodded—and profited from—Jamestown's expansion.

Their empire, built over decades, was broad and eclectic. As transportation barons, the Broadheads controlled the Jamestown Street Railway Company, a line of Chautauqua Lake steamers, and rail systems on both sides of the lake. As recreation gurus, they operated the Celoron and Midway amusement parks—which, not coincidentally, boosted ridership on their trains and steamboats. They even made bricks for paving streets—at a time when Jamestown was busy buying bricks to pave its streets. Every day, thousands traveled on Broadhead streetcars and street surfaces to jobs at Broadhead factories, or to relax at a Broadhead pleasure park. Jamestown's growth, in itself, had become a Broadhead enterprise.

As civic entrepreneurs, the Broadheads were simply following in the footsteps of James Prendergast, whose mills and land dealings became more and more profitable with each new settler. By the end of the nineteenth century, the wealth generated by James's activities allowed his descendants to focus less on making money than on giving it away. As philanthropists, the Prendergasts engaged in a form of city-building quite different from the construction of mills, trolley lines, and factories. As exemplified by their most generous act, the Prendergast Library, they wanted to make the city not just a place to live or make a living, but a place to live well, a place of inspiration and cultivation that was worth



Figure 1.8. Old City Hall by local architect Aaron Hall, built in 1896 at the corner of East 3rd and Spring Streets. (*Jamestown and its Surroundings*, 1900)



Figure 1.9. Jamestown's 1897 Erie Railroad Station at the foot of Cherry Street. (*Jamestown and its Surroundings*, 1900)

caring about. Their new library was a considerable investment toward that goal.

Today, the Prendergast Library remains one of Jamestown's most loved buildings. Completed in 1891, the library was one of several prominent Jamestown buildings of the 1890s influenced by the work of Henry Hobson Richardson, considered America's greatest nineteenth-century architect. Though not designed by Richardson himself, the Prendergast Library, First Lutheran Church (1893), old City Hall (1896), the old armory (1897) and the city's second railroad station (1897) all hinted at Richardson's Romanesque style, with round Roman arches and picturesque medieval flourishes. Out of this group, the only survivors—the library and church—were the most refined.

That many of Jamestown's new and impressive buildings were built for civic and religious purposes—the library, armory, city hall, and numerous churches—reflected a city whose institutions were growing and maturing, requiring more and more space for increasingly specialized uses. The city government needed more than a few rented offices for its growing departments and functions. The library needed more than just a storefront to pursue its ambitious mission. Churches needed to grow with their congregations and parishes and to signal the strength of their devotion in glass and stone. Even the Post Office, which spent the nineteenth century renting space in taverns and hotels, needed more



Figure 1.10. The 1904 Court House and Post Office at the corner of West 3rd and Washington Streets—demolished in 1962. (Fenton History Center)