

## Rosendale Cement

1825

As the Industrial Revolution picked up speed in the Hudson River Valley and the rest of the United States, new building materials were needed to ensure the efficiency and quality of the manufacturing regions. Traditional mortars, with a lime and sand base, were used throughout the US; however, there was a call for a more effective material.<sup>1</sup> Then, in around 1819 natural cement rock was discovered in Madison County, NY; by 1825 it was discovered in Ulster County, and the Rosendale cement industry was born.<sup>2</sup>

The Rosendale cement industry began on the estate of the Snyder family when Watson E. Lawrence opened a cement works there in 1830.<sup>3</sup> Lawrence made improvements to the industry such as making the milling process more efficient, and initiating the use of dry kilns.<sup>4</sup> Rosendale was among the earliest in producing natural cement in the United States and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century remained the most important source of natural cement for New York State.<sup>5</sup>

Natural limestone cement was so much more valuable than previously used materials because it was fast-setting and this effectiveness made it of great use in the Industrial Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Ideal for canal construction, Rosendale natural cement was used in some of the locks of the D&H Canal.<sup>7</sup> Rosendale cement was also used in the construction of many important symbols of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Brooklyn Bridge and even in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.<sup>8</sup>

The Rosendale industry was also successful because of its location in the Hudson Valley. The proximity to the D&H Canal made transport of necessary raw materials like coal very efficient and cheap.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the Canal and the Hudson River helped the Rosendale industry reach markets easily.<sup>10</sup> Burgeoning railroads in the area also made the delivery of Rosendale cement very cost-effective.<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-1800s, cement production increased immensely. In 1850 the industry produced 103,000 barrels of cement annually and by 1870 that number reached 428,000.<sup>12</sup> Towards the end of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Edison Coatings, Inc., "History of Rosendale Cement," accessed March 22, 2010, [http://www.rosendalecement.net/html/history\\_of\\_rosendale\\_cement.html](http://www.rosendalecement.net/html/history_of_rosendale_cement.html).

<sup>2</sup> Century House Historical Society, "Snyder Estate Historical Registration Form," accessed March 22, 2010, <http://centuryhouse.org/nrhptext.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Edison Coatings, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> Century House Historical Society, "History," accessed March 22, 2010, <http://centuryhouse.org/history.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Century House Historical Society, "Snyder Estate Historical Registration Form."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Edison Coatings, Inc.

<sup>12</sup> Century House Historical Society, "Snyder Estate Historical Registration Form."

century Rosendale was in its prime. By 1898, cement production reached 3.5 million barrels annually, nearly 5,500 men were employed, and 41.9 percent of the nation's cement was manufactured in Rosendale.<sup>13</sup>

However, the Rosendale cement industry slowed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1940s the production of natural cement decreased dramatically.<sup>14</sup> While the demand for building materials remained high, competition from the new Portland cement overtook and surpassed Rosendale.<sup>15</sup> Though the last of the original Rosendale cement mines closed in 1970, much of the cement produced in the industry's prime can still be appreciated.<sup>16</sup> Many of the buildings and structures built with Rosendale cement in the 1800s are still in incredible shape today, which speaks volumes about the quality and efficiency of the industry.<sup>17</sup>

-Jane Sheehan '10

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Edison Coatings, Inc.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Greg Childers, "Rosendale, NY, cement a factor again," *McClatchy – Tribune Business News* (November 2007).

## Bibliography

Century House Historical Society. "History," Accessed March 22, 2010.

<http://centuryhouse.org/history.html>.

Century House Historical Society. "Snyder Estate Historical Registration Form." Accessed March 22, 2010. <http://centuryhouse.org/nrhptext.html> .

Childers, Greg. "Rosendale, NY, cement a factor again." *McClatchy – Tribune Business News* (2007).

Edison Coatings, Inc. "History of Rosendale Cement." Accessed March 22, 2010.

[http://www.rosendalecement.net/html/history\\_of\\_rosendale\\_cement.html](http://www.rosendalecement.net/html/history_of_rosendale_cement.html).