

# Milwaukee's entrepreneurial age

**M**uch of the foundation of Milwaukee's 20th-century prosperity was forged in one small slice of Walker's Point on the city's near south side.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, that single neighborhood gave rise to or nurtured a group of companies that began as tiny enterprises but would become household names: Harnischfeger, Allen-Bradley, Nordberg, Rex Chainbelt, Kearney & Trecker, A.O. Smith. Situated just a few blocks apart and sometimes in the same building,

firms fed off each other and off the neighborhood's industrial anchor, the somewhat older Edward P. Allis & Co. — which would later become Allis-Chalmers.

Interconnections abounded. Allis engineers with innovative ideas left that firm to launch their own businesses. The founder of what would become Rex Chainbelt worked on his machinery-drive system at the job shop that would become Harnischfeger. Bruno Nordberg got his entrepreneurial start there, too. Lynde and Harry Bradley tested their controls for electric crane motors at Allis and Chainbelt.

The cross-fertilization was all part of what historian John Gurda calls "a world-class flowering of innovation, enterprise and energy," and it shaped Milwaukee for decades to come. The firms from that small neighborhood went on to employ tens of thousands of Milwaukeeans in the high-paying manufacturing jobs that once defined the city.

The great majority of those jobs — and some of the companies themselves — have long since disappeared. But what they started more than a century ago still stands as an example of the transformation entrepreneurship can produce.

— Rick Romell

## Nordberg



Bruno Nordberg

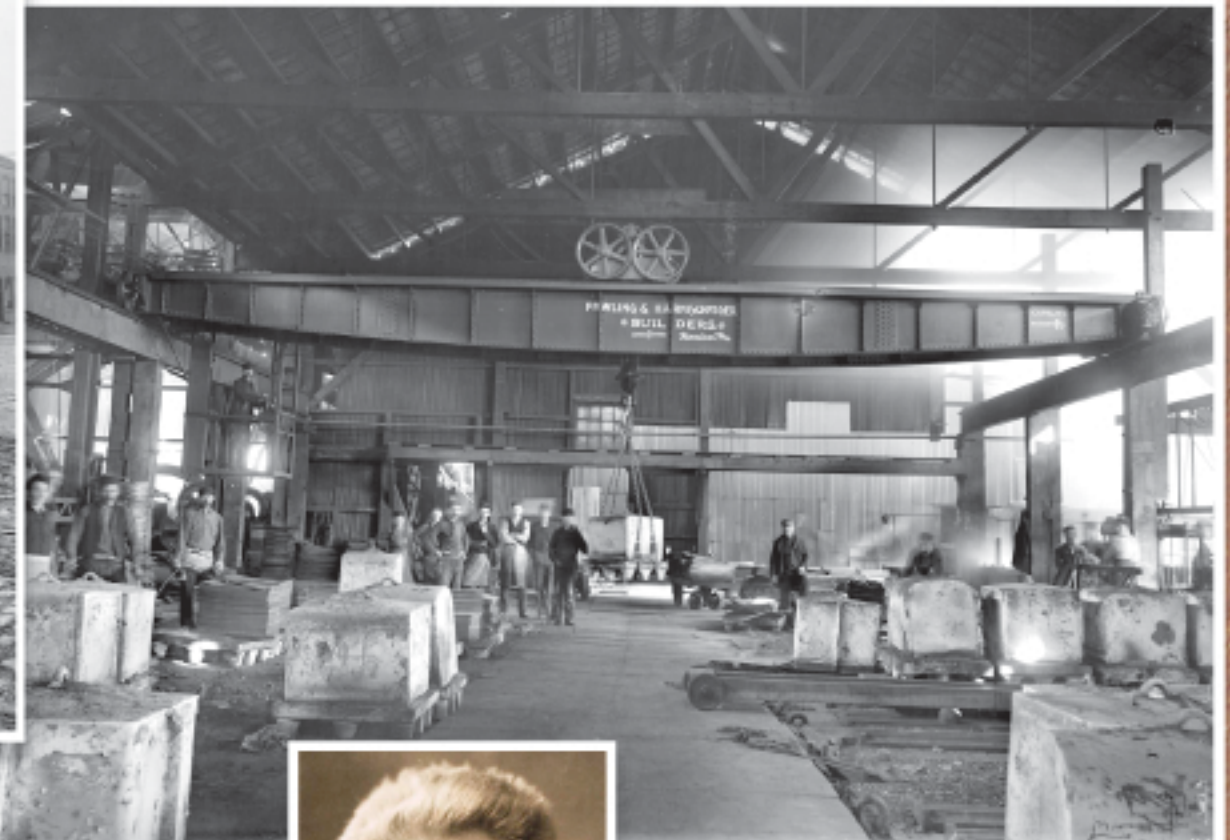


Nordberg Manufacturing Co. uses a P&H hoist crane, circa 1890-1910.



Above: Pawling & Harnischfeger's new shop opens in 1886. Right: A P&H 5-ton traveling crane, circa 1910.

## Harnischfeger



Henry Harnischfeger

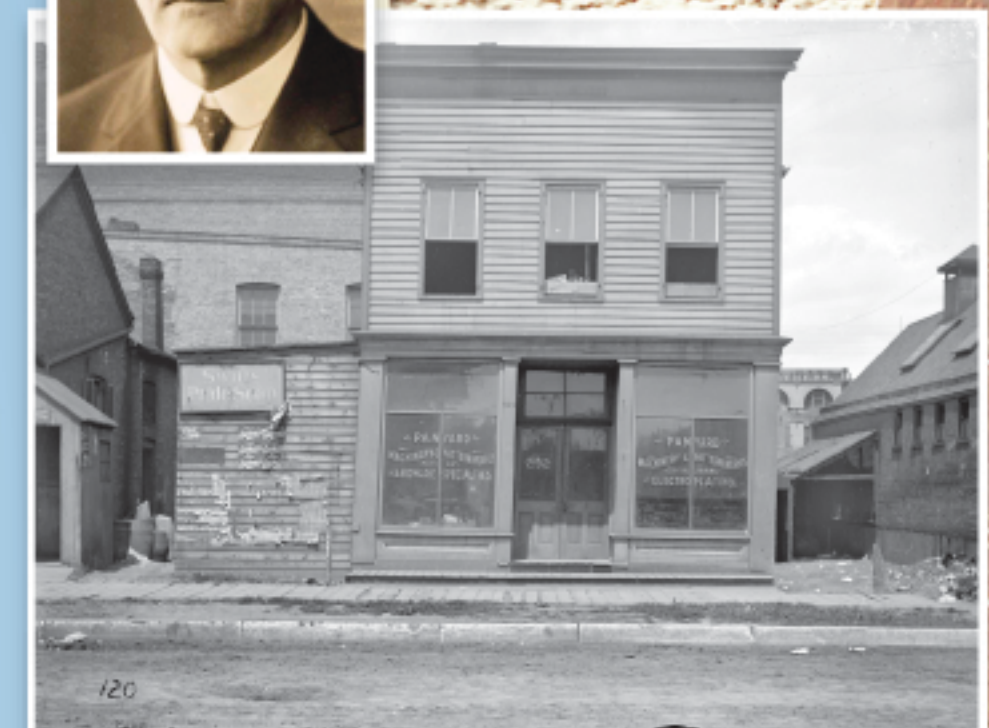
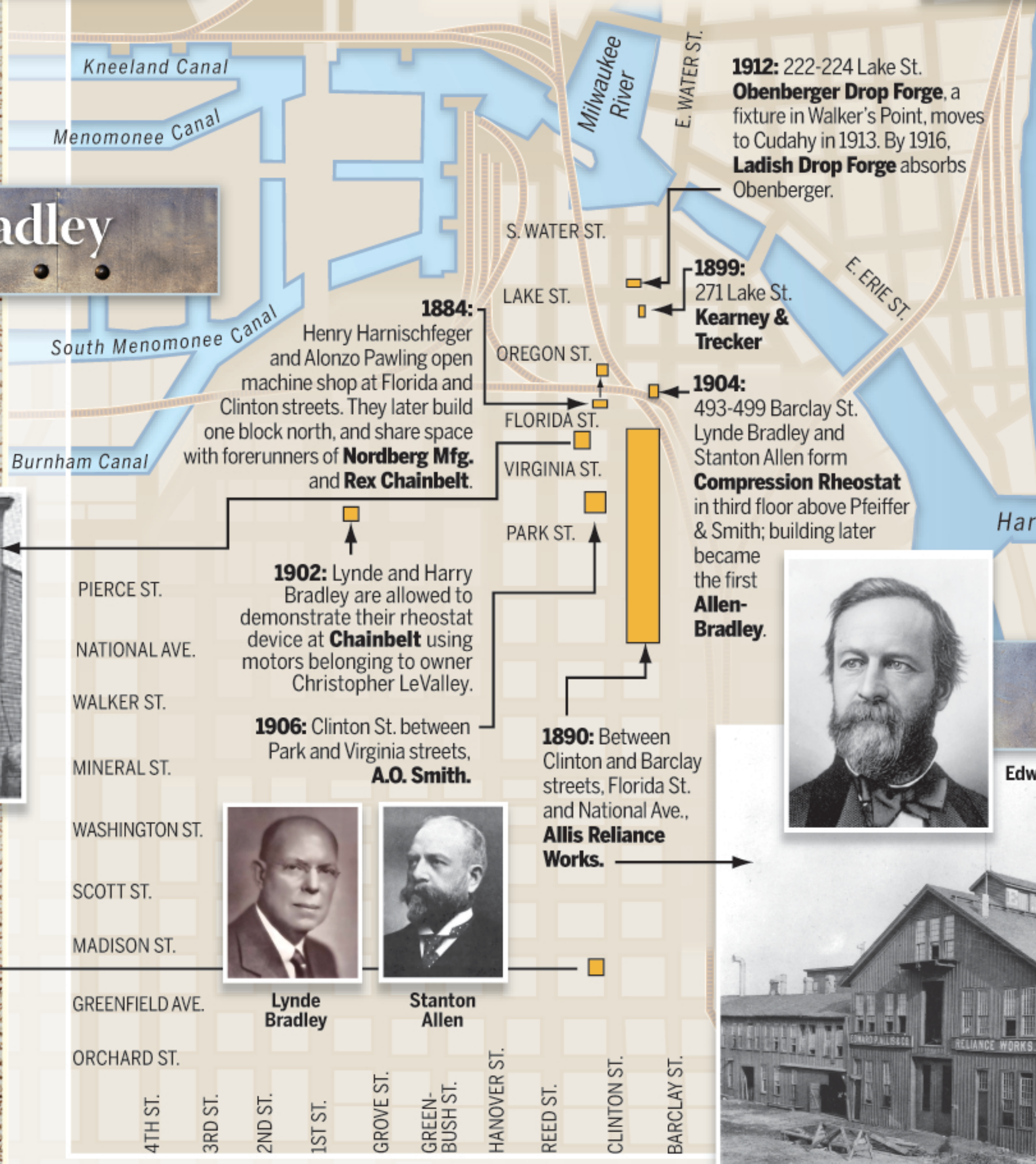
1912: 222-224 Lake St. **Obenberger Drop Forge**, a fixture in Walker's Point, moves to Cudahy in 1913. By 1916, **Ladish Drop Forge** absorbs Obenberger.

## Allen-Bradley

1902: Florida St. between Reed and Clinton streets, **Lynde and Harry Bradley** rent space and tools at Milwaukee Commutator Bar Co.



1904: Lynde and Harry Bradley rent office space at Clinton and Madison streets. This site becomes home to Allen-Bradley and later, Rockwell Automation.



The first P&H machine shop, early 1880s.

## Allis-Chalmers

Edward P. Allis



**Geographical note:** Street names reflect era. For example, Clinton St. running north and south eventually became 1st St., and Lake St. running east and west became Pittsburgh Ave. Locations are based on best available information.