Milwaukee's entrepreneurial age



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.

Harnischfeger

- Rick Romell

Henry Harnischfeger

Contract of the state of

The first P&H machine

shop, early 1880s.





Kneeland Canal

South Menomonee Cana



Milwaukee River

S. WATER ST.

LAKE ST.

OREGON ST.

FLORIDA ST.

VIRGINIA ST.

PARK ST.

1884:

Henry Harnischfeger

and Rex Chainbelt.

1902: Lynde and Harry

demonstrate their rheostat

device at Chainbelt using

motors belonging to owner

Bradley are allowed to

Christopher LeValley.

1906: Clinton St. between -

Park and Virginia streets,

and Alonzo Pawling open

machine shop at Florida and

Clinton streets. They later build

one block north, and share space

with forerunners of Nordberg Mfg.

1912: 222-224 Lake St.

fixture in Walker's Point, moves to Cudahy in 1913. By 1916, Ladish Drop Forge absorbs Obenberger.

Obenberger Drop Forge, a

1899: 271 Lake St. Kearney &

1904: 493-499 Barclay St.

Trecker

Lynde Bradley and Stanton Allen form **Compression Rheostat** in third floor above Pfeiffer & Smith; building later

became the first Allen-Bradley.

Allis-Chalmers

Edward P. Allis

Harbor inlet

Lake

Michigan

Menomonee Canal Allen-Bradley

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

Nordberg Manufacturing Co.

uses a P&H hoist crane, circa

1890-1910.

Bar Co.

1904: Lynde and Harry

at Clinton and Madison streets. This site becomes home to Allen-Bradley and

Bradley rent office space

later, Rockwell Automation.

Burnham Canal

PIERCE ST.

NATIONAL AVE.

WALKER ST.

MINERAL ST.

WASHINGTON ST.

SCOTT ST. MADISON ST.



Allen

A.O. Smith.

Lynde Stanton GREENFIELD AVE. Bradley



3RD ST. 2ND ST.

GROVE ST GREEN-BUSH ST.

BARCLAY ST. CLINTON ST.

1890: Between

Clinton and Barclay

streets, Florida St.

and National Ave.,

Allis Reliance

Works.

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.



Sources: Wisconsin State Historical Society; John Gurda; Journal Sentinel research