

Industrialization

The location of Camden, situated between two water ways, the Delaware and Cooper Rivers, combined with its proximity to Philadelphia contributed to the early rise of industry within that area. The system of ferries and the stage service, which linked Camden to all the important towns of South Jersey, helped Camden attract some early business enterprises in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. These businesses included lumber dealers, manufacturers of wooden shingles, pork sausage manufacturers, candle factories, coachmaker shops that manufactured carriages and wagons, tanneries, blacksmiths and harness makers. In South Camden, Capewell Glass Works founded in 1841 produced quality flint glass.

The latter half of the Nineteenth Century was the most significant period in the developmental history of the City of Camden. Industrial expansion, urban growth, and new immigration radically transformed the City. Richard Esterbrook's steel pen factory, which employed only fifteen workers when it was founded at the foot of Cooper Street in 1858, was now a thriving company. John W. Starr's twenty-five-year-old Camden Iron Works on Cooper's Creek was well on its way to becoming one of the largest manufacturing enterprises in South Jersey. Camden City's lumber firms, oil cloth factories, woolen mills, chemical plants, and carriage factories generally showed growth as well.

More remarkable were the new industries in the city. Where census takers in 1860 had counted eighty manufactories in Camden City, there were 125 in the same area in 1870. Some of them were already major enterprises. The John H. Dialogue Shipyard at Kaighns Point, later called Wood, Dialogue and Company profited by government contracts during and after the Civil War. Though a relatively small firm in comparison to the shipyards on the western bank of the Delaware, it was now engaged in a large repair and iron shipbuilding business. Joseph Wharton's Camden Metal Works, later known as the American Nickel Works, began production in 1862 in a plant on Cooper's Creek near Tenth Street. Its importance was insured since it was the only nickel refinery in the country and served as the major supplier of nickel to the United States Mint for manufacture of coins. Other successful new firms included Henry Bottomley's Camden Woolen Mills on State Street near Cooper's Creek, Charles F. Hollingshed's Cooper's Point Iron Works and the modest canning factory which Joseph Campbell and Archibald Anderson built on North Second Street in 1869.



Great improvements in transportation systems set the stage for the Industrial Revolution. The railroad was the single most important determinant of industrial growth in late Nineteenth Century Camden. The Camden and Amboy Transportation Service established the first railroad service between Camden and Amboy in 1835. Its direct effect on the City of Camden was negligible, but the railroad's great success served as an inspiration to potential railroaders throughout New Jersey.

In contrast the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, while never a financial success had considerably more effect on the growth of South Jersey. Organized in 1852, the line originated in Camden, traveled through the Pine Barrens and terminated at a town to be named Atlantic City. Heavy passenger

traffic, which developed as the sleepy resort grew into a boomtown, brought new business to Camden's ferries.

Following the success of these two railroads, no fewer than six railroad companies were constructed by the year 1881 linking Camden to Philadelphia, Trenton, New York, the Atlantic seashore and points west.

The development of the railroads also created some of America's earliest and most powerful monopolies. The monopolistic practices of the railroads occurred as early as 1840 in Camden when the Camden and Amboy Railroad, owners of the Camden and Philadelphia Steamboat Ferry Company, began to buy out their competitors in an effort to exert complete control over riverfront lands. Isaac Mickle in his diary refers to the same railroad as the "Odious Monopoly".

During the 1880's and 1890's, the Pennsylvania Railroad consolidated control over much of Camden's rail transportation and exerted its influence over the political and economic affairs of the City. Camden Republican political leaders who served as state and national officials had investments in major railroad companies as well as interests vested in utilities and banking organizations. Civil War hero, William Joyce Sewell (1835-1901) who served as both state and United States Senator had charge of the Camden and Amboy Railroad Company, West Jersey Railroad, and the Camden and Atlantic Railroad Companies. Entrepreneur John J. Burleigh served as treasurer, secretary or director of the various electric, water, trolley and railroad companies in which he had extensive investments.

By 1896, the Pennsylvania Railroad had consolidated most local lines under the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad Company, thereby exerting a dominant force over shore and inland traffic. The railroad owned ferry companies and riverfront lands in Camden determined rights of way, re-routed streets and selected locations of factories. The Pennsylvania Railroad, with nothing short of a monopoly over the internal affairs of Camden during the last decades of the Nineteenth Century, was primarily responsible for the development and expansion of the City of Camden. The only Nineteenth Century structure remaining in Camden representative of the railroad industry is the Brown Station Signal House (c. 1880) in South Camden.

The electric trolley system also radically transformed the City of Camden. The Camden Horse Railroad Company, chartered in 1866 and constructed in 1871, began as an attempt to connect various points of the City with the ferryboats. The trolley lines were greatly expanded in the 1870's. In 1889, a syndicate composed a political leader such as W.J. Sewell and E. A. Armstrong, and real estate promoters such as Edward C. Knight and Edward N. Cohn, purchased the Camden Horse Railroad Company and converted the entire line to electricity. A year later, they extended the electric trolley line along Federal Street to Wrightville, providing a major step towards the development of the agricultural area of Stockton.

Improved suburban trolley transportation was largely the result of a bitter legal debate between the Camden Horse Railroad Company and the West Jersey Traction Company, organized in 1893 to connect Camden with the surrounding towns. Three years later, the dispute over trolley routes was resolved by a merger of the two companies in opposition forming the Camden Suburban Railway

Company. In 1904, the Camden Suburban Railway Company was absorbed by the South Jersey Gas and Traction Company (1900) and, by 1910, was under control of the Public Service Railroad Company.

The new expanded trolley lines connected Camden with neighboring communities and further stimulated both urban and rural development. Vacant riverfront land and downtown property brought top prices as sites for factories and rowhouses. New population concentrations occurred along trolley routes as developers built rowhouses in areas, which were now readily accessible.



The trolley which ran down Haddon Avenue around the turn of the century was an impetus for construction of blocks of rowhousing and on the Avenue. 419-501 Haddon Avenue, now part of the Cooper Plaza Historic District and Haddon Avenue Historic District were built along the trolley route. The development of the Parkside neighborhood by the Smith-Austermuhl Company in 1915 was also aided by the trolley. (Park Boulevard at Haddon Avenue).

The Newton Avenue Car Barn on Newton Avenue and Border Street is the only remaining building representative of the role in which the trolley network had in the development of Camden. The Car Barn, with stepped gables and monitor roofs is also noteworthy as a transit storage and repair facility designed in a popular architectural mode for industrial buildings of that era. Broadway and Jefferson. The four story brick factory building is significant for its Italianate industrial architecture as well as an intact representation of the importance of the woolen and worsted mill industry in Camden. In 1886 at least eight other mills of this nature were in operation.

Other good industrial buildings in South Camden include the American Cigar Factory (c.1900) at 1300 S. Sixth Street and the Eavenson and Levering Factory (c.1920) at 301 Jackson Street. The American Cigar Company, housed in a large five story brick building, was one of at least six cigar companies operating in Camden at that time. Eavenson and Levering Factory consisted of a huge facility used primarily for the manufacture of wool scouring soaps.

Blocks of rowhousing in the vicinity provided homes for factory employees. Among these were “Factory Row Streetscape” as 1701-1827 S. Fourth Street and the 1900 block of Fillmore Street. Both consist of three story brick houses.

East Camden, largely agricultural and residential, did not have as many industrial sites as did other areas of Camden. Most of the industry was located along the Cooper River. The J.L. Cragin Soap Factory at the southwest corner of Seventeenth and Federal Streets was established in 1879. J.L. Cragin manufactured “Dobbin Electric Soap” and “Bradford’s Fig Soap” for woolen and worsted manufacturers. Other factories formerly located along the east side of Cooper River included the Overbrook Wool and Worsted Mills established in 1879 at the corner of Seventeenth and Stevens Streets, and at Sixteenth and Stevens Streets, the Atlantic Dye and Finishing Work erected 1882.