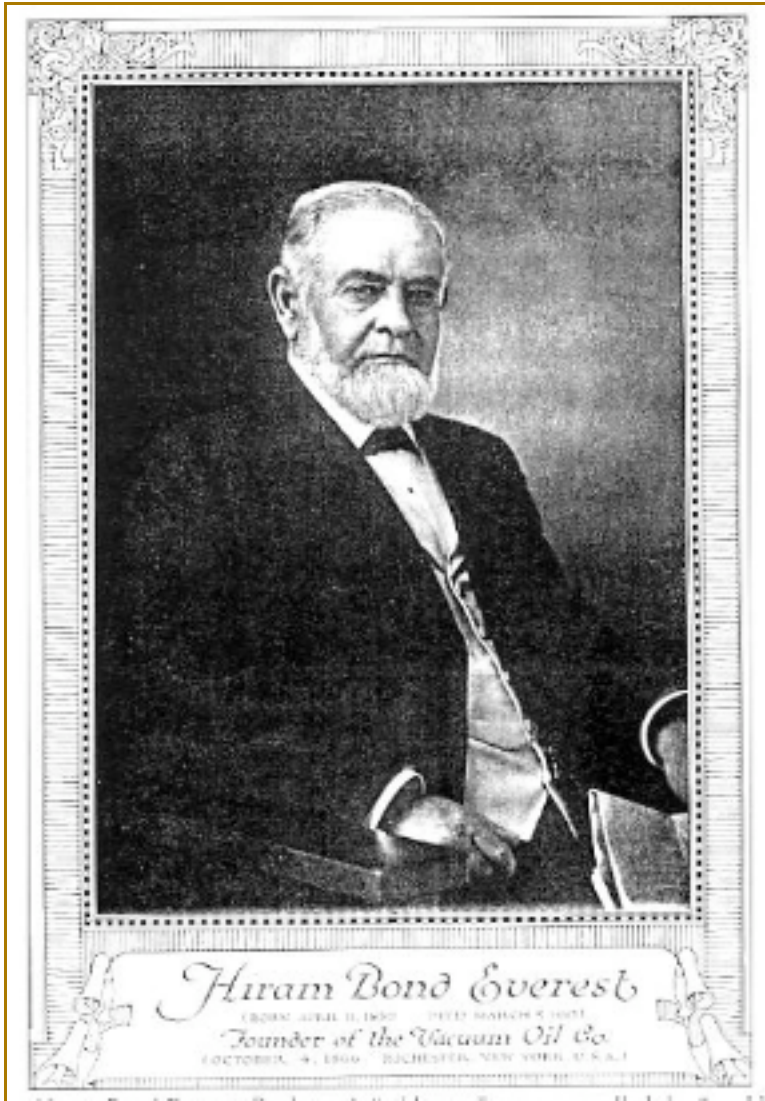


# VACUUM OIL REFINERY

ROCHESTER 1866-1931 CA



**SEPTEMBER 11, 1866** - **Matthew P. Ewing**, carpenter and part-time inventor, of Rochester, NY, received a patent for an "Improved Material for Lubricating and Other Purposes" ("New and Improved Product from Petroleum for Lubricating, Currying, etc."); **new method of distilling kerosene in vacuum that produced high-quality lubricant**;

**OCTOBER 4, 1866** - with partner **Hiram Bond Everest** founded Vacuum Oil Company in Rochester, NY;

**1879** - Standard Oil Co. acquired three-quarters interest for \$200,000; introduced Gargoyle 600-W-Steam Cylinder Oil;

**MAY 5, 1911** - Standard Oil broken into 34 unrelated companies;

**JANUARY 27, 1920** - registered "Mobil Oil" trademark first used May 1, 1904 (lubricating oils);

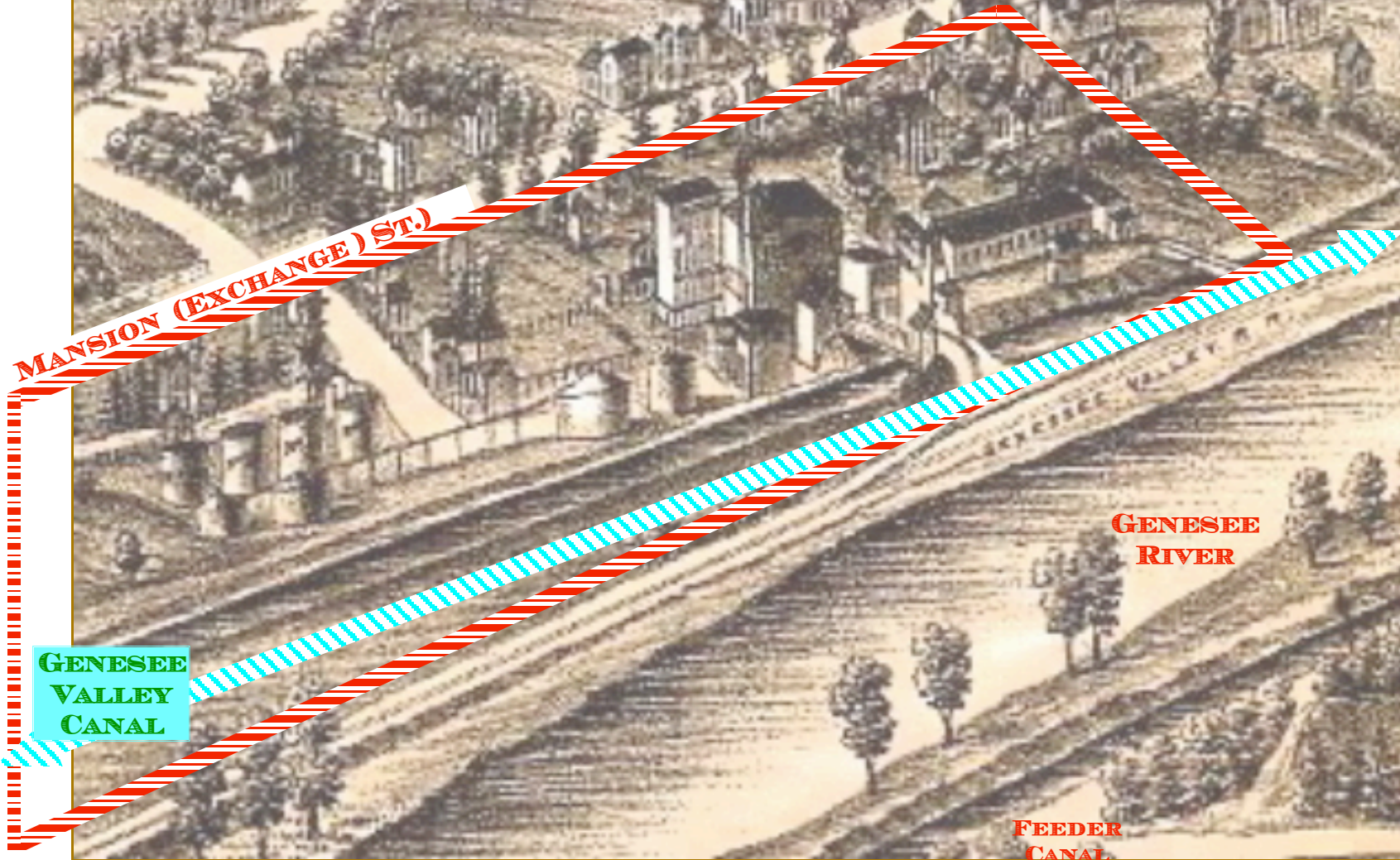
**AUGUST 1931** - merged with Standard Oil Co. of New York (SOCONY), named Socony-Vacuum Corp.;

**1955** - renamed Socony Mobil Oil Co.;

**1966** - name changed to Mobil Oil Corporation;

**NOVEMBER 30, 1999** - merged with Exxon Corporation to become Exxon Mobil

# VACUUM OIL 1877



From approximately 1866-1878 crude oil was shipped by canal boat from Pennsylvania on the Genesee Valley Canal. The canal was drained in 1878 and served as the railbed for the Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad until 1971.

detail from lithograph by Rowley & Company, Hartford, Conn. 1879



NEW OFFICE OF  
**J. C. LIGHTHOUSE**  
MANUFACTURER OF  
AMERICAN STANDARD  
**HORSE COLLARS.**

NO. 203 & 205 STATE STREET. ROCHESTER, N. Y.

INCLUDING:  
KAY, PATENT LEATHER,  
SCOTCH,  
IRISH, IMITATION CASE,  
MULE, WOOL,  
SHORT STRAW,  
CANVAS AND FLAG.



Promotional artwork for Vacuum Oil.

The next-door J.C. Lighthouse tannery on Mansion Street, founded in 1865, became the “World’s Largest Horse Collar and Halter Manufactory in the World” using a leather-softening petroleum jelly-type product developed by Vacuum Oil.

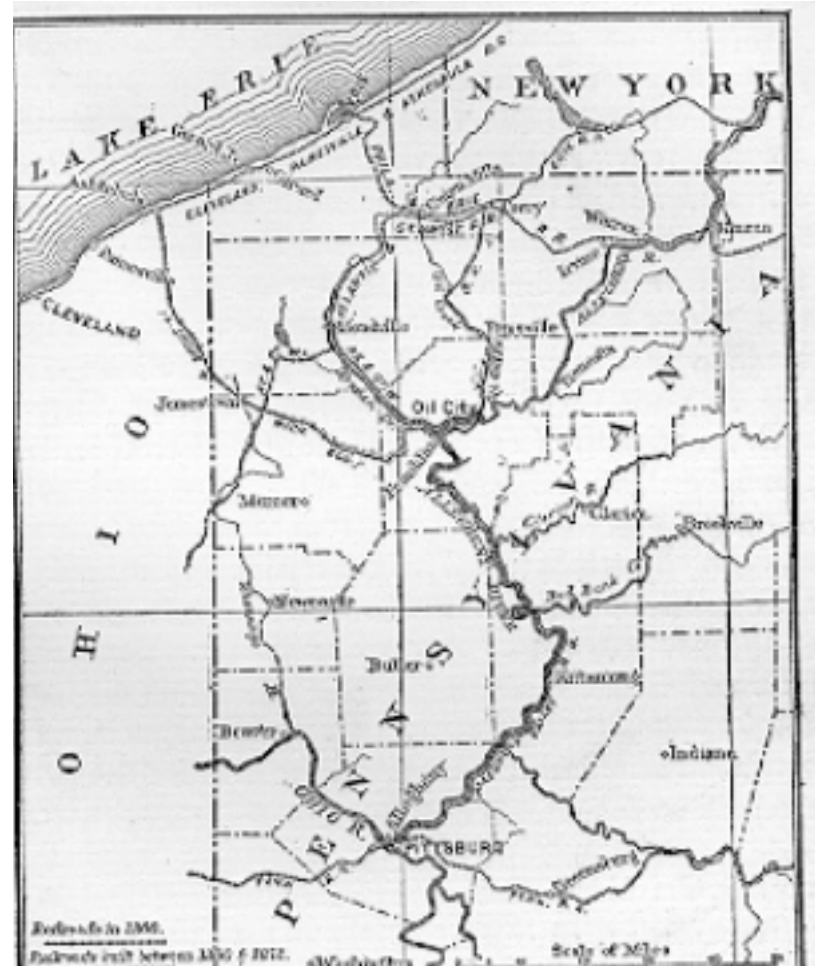


WOODEN TANKS FOR STORING OIL.

Large storage tanks of similar wooden construction have intact concrete base rings evident today at the former oil refinery site. Pipelines carried the petroleum through various refining processes.



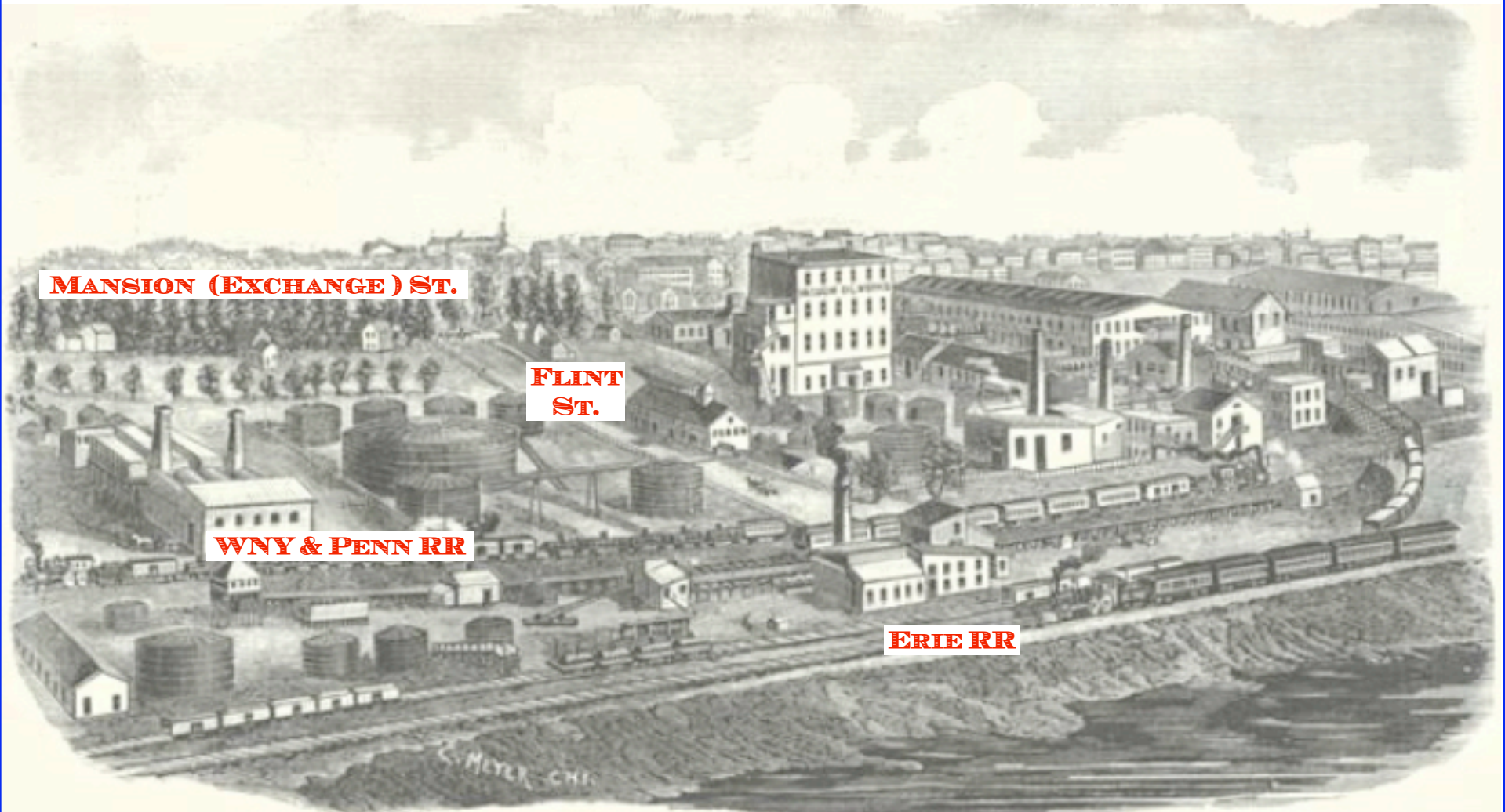
Oil was shipped in wooden tubs attached to railcars in the early years. First shipments came by boats on the Genesee Valley Canal until 1878.



Center of map shows early Pennsylvania oil fields serving Rochester. The Vacuum Oil Refinery began less than ten years after the discovery of oil in Titusville, PA.

Images from: "The History of the Standard Oil Company" by Ida M. Tarbell; McClure's; 1902-4

# VACUUM OIL 1880s



**MANSION (EXCHANGE) ST.**

**FLINT  
ST.**

**WNY & PENN RR**

**ERIE RR**

**GENESEE RIVER**

## Vacuum Oil Co's Lubricating Oils



Example of vacuum distillation process: Frank Robbins ca. 1875  
George Eastman House Still Photograph Archive

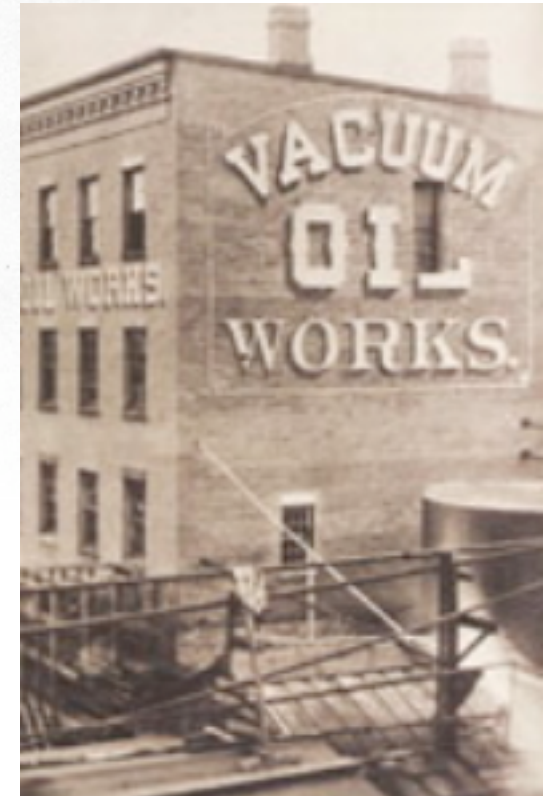


### Illuminating Oils

GASOLENES

NAPTHAS

BENZINES



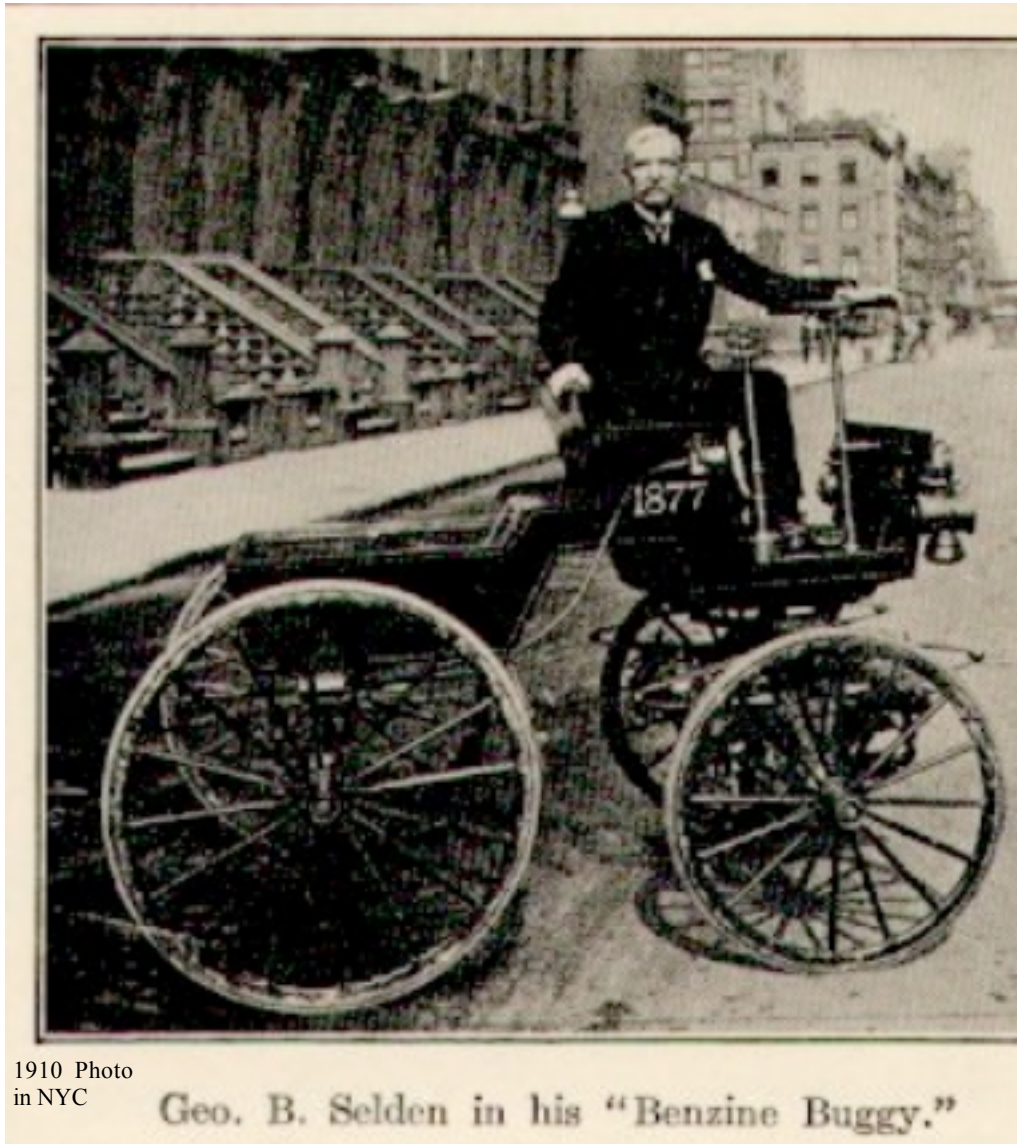
## *Rochester, NY Naphtha Explosion, Dec 1887*

Four Persons Killed, Three Missing and Twenty Injured. An **accidental discharge of 14,000 gallons of naphtha in one of the main sewers** in Rochester, N. Y., on Wednesday, produced the most sensational and uncommon disaster that city or any other ever experienced. Soon after three o'clock the heavy stone covering of a manhole of the Platt Street sewer was blown off by a terrific explosion, and then almost immediately another explosion occurred beneath the Clinton Flouing Mill on Mill street. **The upheavals were followed by sheets of flame that burst out with great fury to a high[sic] of sixty feet.** The Chuton Mill took fire first, and the flames spread quickly to the Washington Mill and the Jefferson Mill. These three mills and contents were destroyed, involving a loss of \$200,000. the first explosion was followed quickly by others along Mill and Platt streets, and at several points on West Avenue (West Main) **making over forty in all, and extending along four miles of sewers.** In each case the manholes were all blown to pieces, and in many places flames shot up and continued to burn fiercely for several minutes. The explosions were so violent as to hurl rocks into buildings and against pedestrians, causing a panic throughout the whole region traversed by the sewers. Four persons were killed, three reported missing and twenty badly injured. The cause of the peculiar disaster was an attempt to pump the naphtha from the Vacuum Oil Company's tanks through a two-mile conduit to the Municipal Gas Company's works near the center of the city. The naphtha became ignited and exploded.

*The Cranbury Press New Jersey 1887-12-30*

# VACUUM OIL 1877

Developed the first reliable motor lubricant to withstand the heat of the internal combustion engine.



1910 Photo  
in NYC

Geo. B. Selden in his "Benzine Buggy."



Inscription at Rochester's Mt. Hope Cemetery:

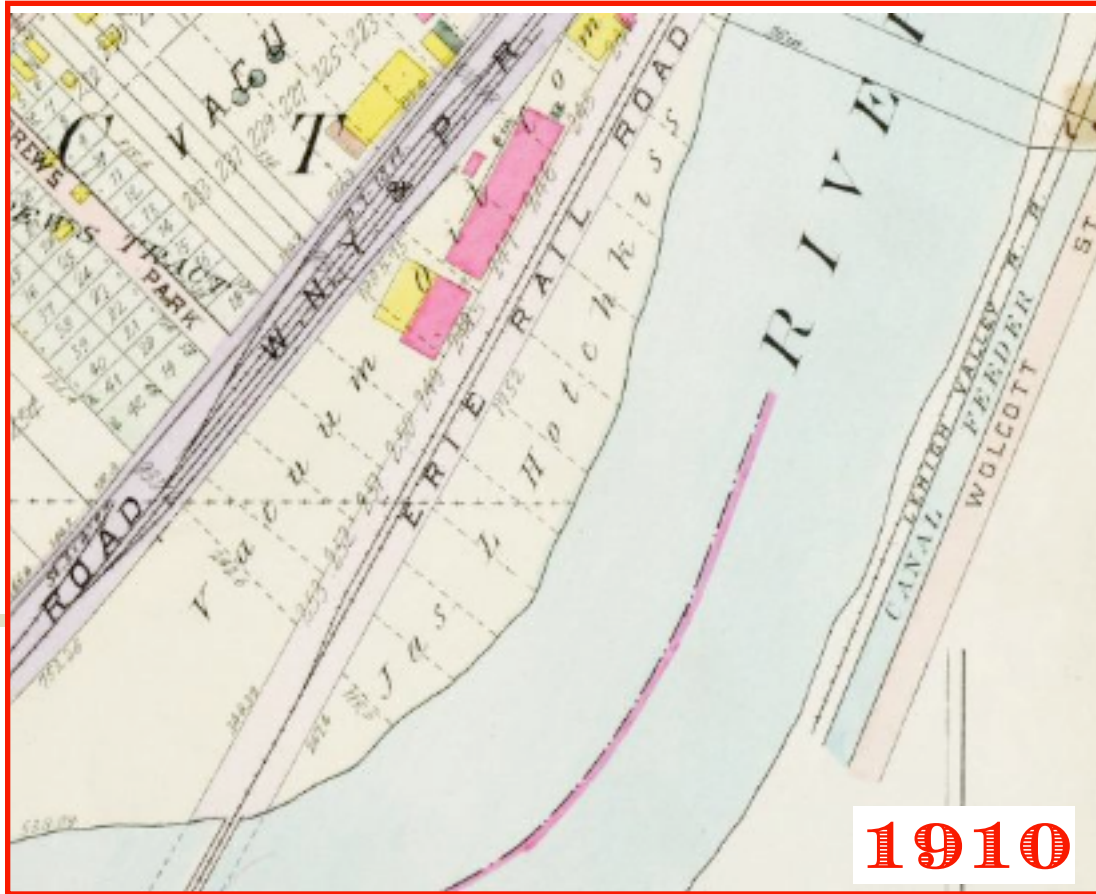
*INVENTOR OF THE GASOLINE AUTOMOBILE*

# VACUUM OIL REFINERY 1918



**57,000 Oil barrels:** Presumed location is along Genesee River edge serving the parallel Erie RR and Pennsylvania RR rail lines near Flint Street.

From the Albert Stone Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center

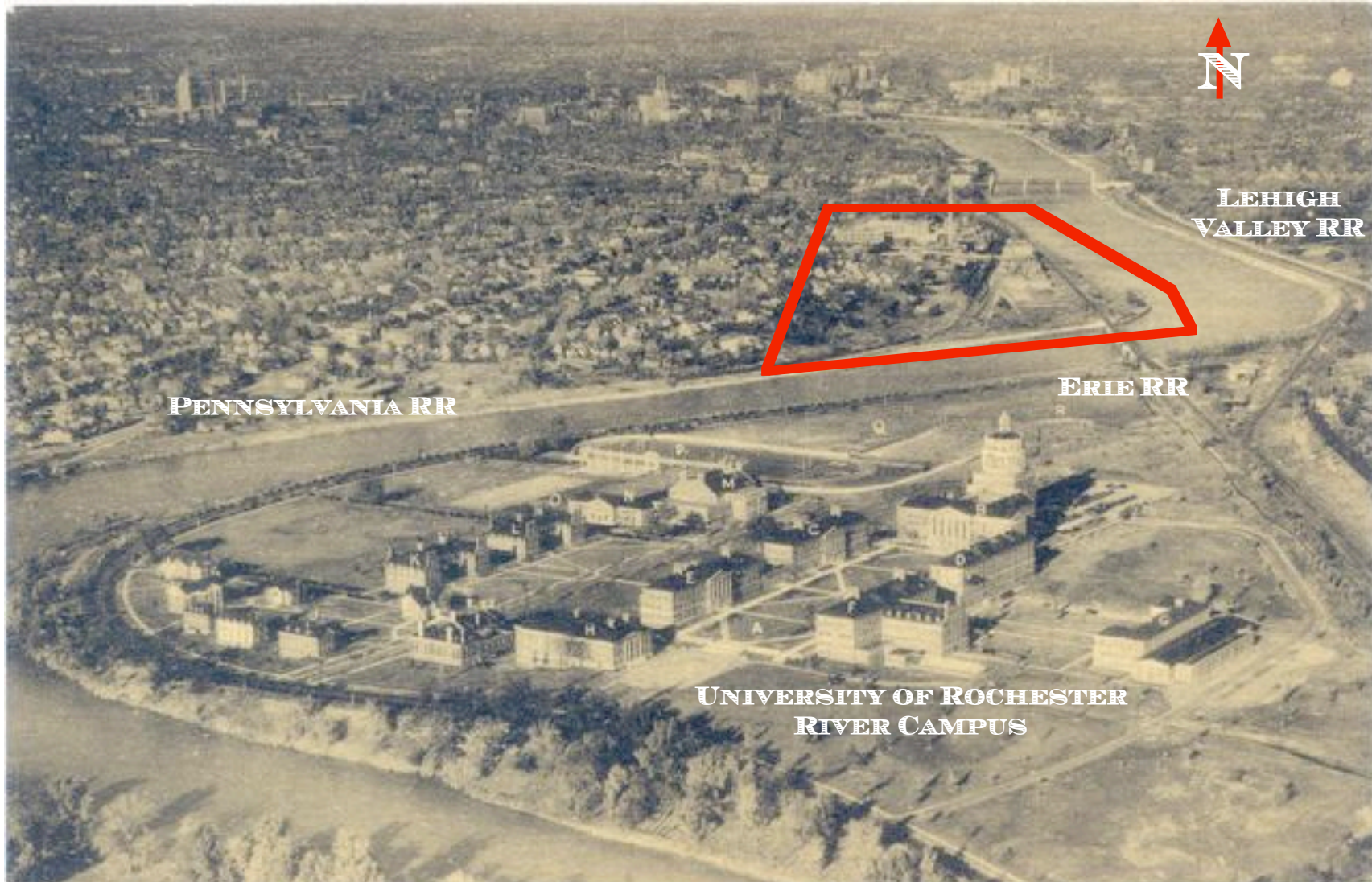


# VACUUM OIL



# VACUUM OIL

1935 CA



At the time of this photograph, the Vacuum Oil Refinery storage tanks have been razed and some buildings demolished. Sears moved in to some of the buildings owing largely to the railroad connections, storage space and distribution capabilities. The Erie Railroad spur remained active until the 1980s providing coal to the University of Rochester. The Pennsylvania Railroad continued until around 1971. Its railbed is now the Genesee Valley Greenway hiking and cycling route extending into northern Pennsylvania.

Rochester Images: postcard