

LAKEVIEW ON WHEELS

Erie Bicycles
 Have won popularity
 Erie Bicycles
 Scientific models \$75
 Absolutely guaranteed
 Erie Bicycle Mfg. at Lakeview by
 Queen City Cycle Co.
 No wheels retailed at the factory
 Send for catalog or call and examine
 Geo. A. Cole, Agent¹

The popularity of the bicycle during the latter part of the nineteenth century created a demand stimulating a large expansion in production facilities in the Buffalo area. Buffalo was a leading center for bicycles and shipped them all over the world.² A wide variety such as the "Ariel", "Fenton", and "The Kensington" were being offered for sale in the 1890's.³ One company, the White Sewing Machine Co., advocated that Buffalo firemen should have "White Bicycles" to double their efficiency.⁴

The Queen City Cycle Co. of Buffalo selected a site in Lakeview to expand its production facilities. This location, near the railroads with sidings still in place from the Gatling episode, near Idlewood Station, and with a supply of cheap labor

¹Advertisement. Angola Record. July 2, 1896

²Statement. Leland A. Hazard. November 20, 1965

³Newspaper Advertisements. Leland A. Hazard Collection

⁴Ibid.

from the immediate area influenced the Queen City Cycle Company to construct a factory there in the fall of 1895.¹

Herb Spittler worked as a carpenter's helper on the construction of the factory for the enormous sum of 15¢ an hour, thirteen hours a day.² The factory was approximately 406' long stretching from its frontside on North Creek Road to the high bluff of Eighteen Mile Creek.³ It was 60' wide with a small section containing the engine and boiler room jutting from the middle of the building on the east side.⁴ A siding from the Pennsylvania Railroad's main line ran along the west side of the building. A basement was constructed under the southern half of the building. Two rooms were located in the basement; the shaping room and the grinding room.⁵ The use of emery belts for grinding the bicycle frames made the latter room very dusty and unhealthy.

The main floor of the building contained two rows of rooms utilized for different operations. The front of the building on the west side contained an office. The office

¹Statement. George Spittler, October 12, 1955.
(Mr. Spittler is deceased.) Document Collection Leland A. Hazard.

²Papers. Leland A. Hazard Collection

³Photograph. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

⁴Statement. George Spittler. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

⁵Ibid.

workers at one time were Jean Owen (Mrs. Frank Frost), Laura Ferrie (Mrs. Albert Shepker), Helen Werner and Norman Werner.¹ The room behind this office was the stock room followed by the tool maker's room. A photograph portrays Frank Egleston of Angola and Herb Spittler of Lakeview during their lunch hour in the tool room.² The last two rooms in line were the machine room and filing room.³

On the east side of the building proceeding from the front to rear there was an assembly room, frame room, superintendent's office, polishing room and an enameling room. The south room was used by girls to wrap the finished enameled parts in protective cloth.⁴ The north room was used by the men who crated the bikes for shipment and slid them down an incline to a loading platform adjacent to the railroad siding.⁵

The economic import of this bicycle factory in Lakeview was great. Production reached its apex during the six winter months when employment rose to 600 men a day. These men were split into two shifts. The day shift worked from 7 a.m. to

¹ Photograph. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

² Photograph. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

³ Statement. George Spittler. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

to 6 p.m. and the night shift ran from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.¹
Approximately 250 bicycles a day were manufactured during peak periods.²

The entire area along North Creek Road took on the atmosphere of a "Boom Town" as it reacted to this sudden influx of economic prosperity. In no time at all five saloons were in business as well as numerous boarding houses. The Union Hotel was a combination saloon and boarding house. It was built in the short period of thirty days.³ The oldest saloon was Slotman's which was in existence before the Civil War.⁴ The other saloons had colorful names such as "The Red Onion", "The Bucket of Blood" and "The White Elephant".⁵

Working conditions in the factory reflected the social evils of the times. Unhealthy working conditions, long hours and short pay were evident. Charles Hocking worked in the nickel plating room for 50¢ a day, ten hours a day with one hour for lunch.⁶ The majority of workers worked for 12-1/2¢ an hour but through a piece work rate they were able to earn more. Some days the men worked from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

¹Statement. George Spittler. Leland A. Hazard Collection

²Statement. Mr. William Heil. Lakeview, New York.
Personal Interview. December 27, 1965

³Ibid. (William Heil's father built and operated this.)

⁴Article. Buffalo Courier Express. June 22, 1957

⁵Statement. George Spittler. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

In 1896 the Queen City Co. sold out to the Day Mfg. Co.¹ The Day Co. manufactured the "Day Cycle" which was re-tailed in Buffalo by the G. H. Poppenberg store.²

The area around the bike factory became known as Idlewood as a result of the proximity of the Idlewood Station. Idlewood developed socially as well as economically. In athletics they did exceedingly well. A baseball team known as the "Prospects" represented Idlewood and in one season they won 28 games. They played their games on a field located between the Union Hotel and the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks.³ A photograph of the team identifies the players and their positions as follows:

1. Herb Spittler, second base
2. Charles Byron, pitcher
3. Cowan, bat boy
4. Earl Benjamin, catcher
5. Bert Farrow, right field
6. Frank Maniski, left field
7. Cliff Caswell, first base
8. Gary Dengman, third base
9. Frank Young, Manager
10. Phil Fraly, Shortstop
11. George Heath, center field.⁴

The construction of new bicycle factories in Western New York with better production facilities soon put the Idlewood factory in a poor competitive position. The faulty construction

¹Statement. George Spittler. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

²Advertisement. March 5, 1899. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

³Photograph. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

⁴Photograph, labeled. Leland A. Hazard Collection.

of the building forced long periods of shut downs for repairs. The lathes were turned by belts attached to wooden shafts which ran overhead. These shafts would become mis-aligned and require major overhauls.¹

Although the problems described above contributed to the demise of the bicycle works at Idlewood, the prime reason for the cessation of production was Mr. Fries, the manager of the factory. He took a hasty trip to Europe with all the money.² The factory discontinued operations in the spring of 1903 and the building was purchased by a canning company. The building was torn down and the lumber shipped to Westfield to be used in the construction of a canning factory. As of 1960 this factory still existed.

The machinery in the bicycle factory was purchased by a group of men who had worked in the factory. Stanley LaSchoe, Jacob Glass, Bill Heil and Frank Schoetz were some of the men involved. They installed the equipment in Bill Heil's barn on Lakeview Road, Lakeview, and made bicycles there until February, 1904, when they established the Emblem Bicycle Company in Angola. In 1919 William Heil resigned his position in the Emblem Company and with his brother, George, started a bicycle business in Buffalo where they became very successful.⁴

¹Statement. William Heil.

²Ibid.

³Statement. Leland A. Hazard.

⁴Statement. William Heil. December 23, 1965.

The end of the bicycle manufacturing at the Idlewood site in Lakeview brought an end to economic innovations in the area. The "Gatling Boom" of 1893 closely followed by bicycle production (1895 - 1903) presented a period of change in the economic structure of the community as well as a change in population distribution. The name Lakeview almost became Gatling and North Creek Road for a time was the business street of the community.

The hamlet of Lakeview as it is known today was more firmly established after the closing of the bicycle factory. Twenty four houses built during the "Gatling Boom"¹ were sold for \$150 to \$400 each and moved to Lakeview Road and Center Street in Lakeview. Spittler's store in Lakeview was once a boarding house in Idlewood owned by a Mrs. Fritchie.²

The men who worked at the bicycle works sought employment elsewhere. Many of them, because of their acquired skills, were employed by the Emblem Bicycle Company in Angola. Others found work in Lakeview with the railroads.³ The saloons closed

¹Promotion Article. Gatling Weekly News. June 1, 1893.

²Statement. Donald Spittler. Lakeview, New York December 31, 1965.

³Statement. Richard Fierle, Lakeview, New York. His Father worked at the bicycle factory in Idlewood and worked for 40 years as a railroad foreman in Lakeview. Personal Interview. December 13, 1965.

down on North Creek Road and Slotman's, the oldest, burned down in 1957.¹

A ride down North Creek Road today would give little evidence of the business activity which once existed there. The paucity of houses, the verdancy of summer and the rustic nature of the area make it hard to believe that a colorful period in the history of Lakeview had transpired here.

¹Article. Buffalo Courier Express. June 22, 1965.