

**INDUSTRIES AND WEALTH
OF THE PRINCIPAL POINTS IN
SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
(EXCEPTING PHILADELPHIA)
EMBRACING
DAUPHIN, YORK, LANCASTER, SCHUYLKILL, BERKS
BUCKS, MONTGOMERY, CHESTER AND
DELAWARE COUNTIES
1890**

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INDUSTRIES OF WEALTH OF CHESTER

As the spot where William Penn first set foot on American soil, Chester is more or less enshrouded by a species of historic halo, but it is what Chester has achieved since that bygone period which forms the theme of this brief sketch, and that she has enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity during the two centuries and more since she was founded is beyond the peradventure of a doubt. It is on the industrial Chester of today that we wish to dilate, to point out her splendid opportunities for manufacturing enterprise, to depict the commercial status she now holds among the business centers of the Union, and to comment upon her affairs municipal, educational, religious and social in this year of Grace, 1890. Today her business men do not know what dull seasons are; today her manufacturers always have orders enough to keep their shops humming with the ceaseless movement of industry. Little did the venerable William Penn and his followers dream that the log huts they were to build on the site of the commercial Chester of today held the germ of a highly industrious center, with its factories and blocks, its steam and horse railways, its electric lights, its telegraph and telephone, its fire department and water works, the very invention of which had not even been imagined in their wildest flights of fancy. While duly allowing for that spirit of enterprise which has ever characterized Chester's citizens, it has to be admitted that the main predisposing cause of her present commercial eminence is to be attributed to the situation of the city, with its noble water front on the Delaware River, navigable for ocean vessels throughout the year; the three great railroads by which freight may be sent north, south and west, and the splendid sites for manufactories with

which the city is abundantly supplied. With these advantages Chester manufacturers are able to defy that foe of productive enterprise, the “dull season,” and the many thousands who depend upon them for the means of livelihood are prosperous and contented. Those opportunities are not yet exhausted. The river front is not wholly occupied. There are good sites along the creeks where canal boats can pass to and fro. The railroads have opened many sites for manufactories. Chester, in fact, is growing daily, and the chances for mercantile enterprise multiply with her growth.

TOPOGRAPHY, POPULATION, etc. – Chester is located on the west bank of the Delaware River, twelve miles by rail from Philadelphia. The city proper is two miles long and from one to two and a quarter miles wide, and is separated from the borough of South Chester, practically a part of the city, by the almost unknown boundary line at Lamokin Run. The population according to the census of 1880 was 22,000, but is now estimated to have increased to 35,000. The most interesting part of the territory is the area of six square miles along the Delaware River, where the manufactories are located, and within which there are 6,000 dwellings, mostly built of brick and stone.

LEADING INDUSTRIES – While the cotton and woolen industry leads in the value of the productions, about thirty mills being engaged in making fabrics of various kinds, those of oil, steel, shipbuilding, boiler and engine building are very important. Besides these there are a large number of other enterprises in successful operation, such as the manufacture of dyewood extracts, edge tools, mill supplies, lubricating oils, brass castings, etc. The smaller industries are in variety and number as indicated in the following list: leather belts, 12; top roll covering, 2; candy works, 5; brick yards, 9; chemical works, 1; brass foundries, 4; sash and planing mills, 4; box factories, 2; coopers, 3; mast and spar makers, 1; kindling wood, 4; pottery, 1; wooden vessels, 1; cigar factories, 12; flour mills 2; breweries, 1; carriage and wagon builders, 5; harness 7; mattresses, 1; blank books, 1. The leading industrial establishment of Chester, however, is the world-renowned Delaware river Iron Ship Building and Engine Works, established by the late John Roach, now managed with extraordinary success by Mr. John B. Roach, the oldest living son of the founder, who is the president of the corporation. These works employ on an average about 1,500 men, and the annual pay roll amounts to \$750,000.

TRADE, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL – Chester’s business houses are sufficient in number and variety to supply nearly all the wants of her citizens, and most of them do a prosperous business. Architecturally, there is room for improvement in many of them, but in this respect there is a gratifying advancement in those recently erected. There are 14 large wholesale dealers and 1,018 retail merchants and men carrying on small trades on their own account.

RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION AND COMPANIES – Three great railroad systems are represented by the lines which run through Chester from north to south. These are the Chester branch of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad, the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and the Baltimore and Philadelphia, and important connection of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The Chester Street Railway Company was incorporated in July 1882, with a capital of \$100,000. The roadway is in excellent condition. The stock consists of eighty horses and mules and nineteen cars. The main line is 3 ½ miles long; Upland line, 2 miles; Twenty-Fourth Street line, 2 miles. Passengers carried in 1889, 1,000,000.

FINANCIAL AND BUILDING ORGANIZATIONS – The banking institutions are as follows: The Delaware County Trust, Title and Insurance Company, the Delaware County National Bank, the First National Bank and the Chester National Bank. There are also twelve building associations in Chester, whose regular monthly receipts amount to \$18,000. They loan very nearly to the full value of a property, and are of practical use to many who cannot obtain private loans because greater margins are looked for by individual investors.

HOTELS – Considering its proximity to Philadelphia, Chester hotels are a credit to the city. The traveler will find in the Cambridge, the Washington or the colonnade all that any reasonable man can expect. These are the leading hotels of the city, and in connection with the smaller hotels they have been sufficient to accommodate comfortably many large gatherings. Good boarding houses are plentiful, and, altogether, Chester is well equipped to take care of the traveling public.

CITY GOVERNMENT – The corporate powers of the city are vested in the mayor and members of select and common councils, and the good work which those bodies have done is shown by the fact, that, although Chester has been making rapid strides in municipal improvements during the last five years, the tax rate has been but slightly increased.

EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS FACILITIES – The people of Chester are amply provided with educational and religious facilities. Within the municipal limits there are thirteen school buildings, all (except one) constructed of brick. These contain seats for 3,500 school children. A corps of seventy-eight teachers, with a city superintendent, has charge of the public instruction, under the control of the legally constituted Board of Directors. In addition to the public schools there are several private institutions for educational purposes in various grades from the kindergarten to the seminary. Notable among these may be mentioned the Chester Academy, the Pennsylvania Military Academy, the parochial school of the Church of the Immaculate Heart, and just beyond the line, in Upland, the Crozer Theological Seminary. There are twenty-four houses of worship in Chester, being

one to about every 1,250 inhabitants; hence whatever form of Christian belief one may hold, he can be reasonably sure of finding some of his household of faith here established, ready to welcome him with kindly sympathy. Chester is also well supplied with halls, libraries and reading rooms in which leisure hours may be profitably spent. Holly Tree Hall and National Hall are well fitted for entertainments, and the Mechanics' Library and Young Men's Christian Association provide home comforts for lovers of good reading.

THE PRESS – There are six newspapers – two daily and four weekly – published in Chester, in order of seniority as follows: The Delaware County Republican, the Delaware County Democrat, the Delaware County advocate, the Chester Evening News and the Chester Daily Times; also the weekly Reporter (law) and the weekly News, published in South Chester.

SOUTH AMENITIES – The social conditions of Chester are everything that can be desired. A number of the old families have been established in the city since the time of its settlement, and the newer element which has come in with the new enterprises, is full of plans for making life pleasant in every way for the people. There is a well-established Young Men's Christian Association, a Ladies' Union Benefit Society, a Woman's Christian Temperance Union and a Reform Club. There are forty-eight secret and benefit societies, of which the following are the more prominent: Masonic, 7; Odd Fellows, 3; Red Men, 2; Knights of Pythias, 2; Brotherhood of the Union, 3; Knights of the Golden Eagle, 3; Knights of Labor, 3; G. A. R. posts, 2; all others, 21. The rooms of Wilde Post, G. A. R. are the most handsomely furnished of any in the state, outside of Philadelphia. Among the miscellaneous societies are the Robert Burns Club (Scotch) Robert Emmett Club (Irish), Briggs Gun Club, McClure Gun Club, Chester Cricket Club, Alpha Boat Club, and Steam Engineers Association.

SANITARY CONDITIONS, WATER SUPPLY, ETC. – As regards sanitary conditions, Chester is most admirably situated, its elevation from the river front making drainage a simple matter. The paved streets are all sewered, and leading physicians state that the city is free from all local disease. Chester and Ridley Creeks form natural channels for carrying off the city's waste, and the sewers are an important factor in preserving the health of the city. There are now over twelve miles of streets which are paved with asphalt or Belgian blocks, and no city of its size, east or west, has more or better paved streets than Chester. The city is connected with Philadelphia and Wilmington by telephone and there are 165 subscribers in Chester alone. The service is uniformly good. Gas was introduced in 1856, and the company operating the works have tanks capable of storing 160,000 cubic feet. The Chester Electric Light and Power Company furnishes 276 city lights of 32 candle power to burn all night, and 260 business houses, dwellings and manufactories are supplied; 2640 lights, and 22 motors are in daily operation.

The present system of water works consists of three reservoirs on an eminence about three miles northwest of the city, with a capacity of 12,000,000 gallons; a pumping station 100 x 60 feet; two Gaskill pumps made by the Holley Manufacturing Company, each of 4,000,000 gallons capacity daily; five boilers aggregating 300 horsepower, and 5 ½ miles of force and supply mains. The total distribution mileage is thirty miles. The average pressure is 75 pounds, sufficient to run the largest sized water motors. Comparison with twenty cities of the same class in the United States, shows that none are more thoroughly equipped than Chester in this respect.

THE BOARD OF TRADE – Like other enterprising places, Chester has a public spirited Board of Trade, which does everything in its power to advance the interests of the city. Among other features constant with an organization of this type, the Board of Trade makes a business of watching the interests of persons who wish to invest in property in Chester to start manufactories or other enterprises, seeing to it that they receive the advantages which ought to be accorded to concerns who have it in their power to materially advance the permanent prosperity of the city. The concern which has done more than any other to make the city of Chester what it today is, is that of

THE DELAWARE RIVER IRON SHIPBUILDING AND ENGINE WORKS – With John B. Roach, President; William Parker, Secretary and Treasurer – The name of Roach will ever be commemorated in American history as that of the father and founder of iron shipbuilding in the United States. The late Mr. John Roach was a practical shipbuilder and mechanical engineer of great inventive ability, who after years of practical identification with the trade, in 1871 succeeded to the proprietorship of the Delaware River Iron Shipbuilding and Engine Works, which had been founded in 1860, by the old firm of Reaney, Son & Archbold. The interests were duly organized as a company in 1872, with the late Mr. Roach as president, John B. Roach, secretary, and Mr. William Parker, as treasurer. The works were greatly enlarged and improved, with latest tools and machinery introduced, and in every respect were the model concern of the kind on the continent. During the war these yards were kept busy constructing government vessels, and which rendered an excellent account of themselves in the work of blockading and naval expeditions of the Confederacy. Mr. Roach, and his associates, after the war was over, found a great field of usefulness in building a merchant marine for the coastwise trade, and the type of iron steamers he designed and built were in every way and are still, the best for the trade, roomy, stanch and fast vessels, specially qualified to pursue their voyages in all weathers. Mr. Roach's lamented decease while yet involved in the troubles and losses of a suspension, caused by political rancor, and the willful delays in acceptance of such magnificent ships as the "Dolphin," etc., need only be referred to here. His demise

was a severe blow to the interests of American shipping, but not an irremediable one, as Mr. John B. Roach, his son, had grown up in the business, and when the company reorganized he was chosen as president, and worthily sustains the old time reputation of the works, which, newly refitted and with ample resources at command, are now driven with orders for the largest size, coastwise, sea-going steamships; also vessels for the new navy, etc. These vast works and yards cover an area of twenty-eight acres, being the largest of their kind in the United States. They occupy an admirable location on the Delaware River, and have deep-water frontage, with large ways and all conveniences for building and launching. There are here large machine shops, foundry, boiler shops, pattern shops, erecting shops, etc., each a substantial building of extended dimensions. The average force employed is 1500 hands – machinists, shipwrights, riveters, boiler makers, carpenters and joiners, draughtsmen, etc. The yards are a scene of busy industry, and there are now under construction half a dozen large sized steamships, with contracts ahead for others. It would be impossible in these limits to refer to the vast fleet, 150 in number, of magnificent river, sound, and ocean steamers turned out from the Roach yards during the past twenty years, but it will be of special interest to state that on March 8, 1890, there was launched here, the twin screw United States gunboat “Concord,” 230 feet long by 36 beam, and of 1,700 tons displacement. She is a beautiful model, constructed in the most careful manner of steel, and with her battery of six six-inch rifled guns, and torpedo tubes, she is a most valued addition to the American Navy. The gunboat “Bennington,” of similar type, is now approaching completion, while there is a splendid new steamship for the Ward Line service; and the magnificent new Fall River Line sound steamboat, the “Plymouth,” launched April 3, which will eclipse all previous efforts in which the United States are so famous.. “Pilgrim” and “Puritan” are marvels, yet here will be a boat their superior in every way; a great “heavy weather” steamer prepared to plough the sound at railroad speed during the stormiest weather. She is the first side-wheel steamer to have triple expansion engines. The company is also building two large steamers for the Brazilian service, of special model and design, for the lengthy intertropical voyages. They are to have four decks and be especially fitted for passenger accommodation as well as cargo storage. The company has every modern appliance at command; it has a large staff of designers and draughtsmen, and has the enviable reputation of doing the finest and most accurate work of any American ship yard. Its specimens of marine architecture have every element of speed, stability and capacity, they give special satisfaction in all weathers, and today over thirty coastwise steamships of their build are plying regularly between New York and Philadelphia. Mr. Roach devotes close personal attention to the direction of the company’s vast and complicated interests. He is a shipbuilder of sound judgment and executive

capacity, is universally respected, and one of Chester's most valued citizens. IN Mr. Parker he has a worthy lieutenant, a practical businessman of great experience, and who ably and faithfully discharges the onerous duties devolving upon him. The works are justly a source of pride to every American, and of the utmost value to the flourishing city of Chester.

H. B. Birtwell, Cotton, Woolens and Worsted Machinery, No. 343 North Third Street, Philadelphia, and No. 130 East Sixth Street, Chester, Pa. As a center for the trade in manufacturers' supplies, Chester has, in view of its size, attained great prominence, and is becoming more than ever a favorite purchasing point. This satisfactory state of affairs is almost wholly to be attributed to the energy and enterprise of the leading dealers in this line. Prominent among the number and one of the oldest established in Mr. H. B. Birtwell, who began business about 1873, and has during the intervening period, developed an influential connection, and a trade of great importance. Mr. Birtwell is an authority on all descriptions of cotton, woolen worsted and hosiery machinery, and deals both in new and second-hand mill supplies of this type, likewise shafting, pulleys, belting, pipe, tools, iron, metals, etc. He also contracts for the fitting up or repairing of cotton and woolen mills with a complete outfit of machinery, and has built up a large and growing trade in this line in Chester and the adjoining counties. His premises, which are centrally and eligibly located at No. 130 East Sixth Street, comprise a spacious and commodious three-story building, 25 by 100 feet in dimensions, equipped with adequate steam power, and every accessory in the way of improved machinery and appliances which might tend towards the advantageous prosecution of the business. Mr. Birtwell is a thoroughly practical business man of thirty years' experience, and as he personally superintends all contracts entrusted to his charge and employs only the best of skilled labor, he is enabled to guarantee that everything emanating from his establishment shall rank as perfect in every particular. He is of English nationality and has lived in Chester since early boyhood. He has achieved a reputation accorded only to those whose transactions are based upon the strictest principles of mercantile honor, while his enterprise, intimate knowledge of his branch of business, and equitable methods, entitle him to a still further enlargement of trade. He also conducts a metropolitan branch at No. 343 North Third Street, Philadelphia.

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