



# HILLSIDE'S INDUSTRIES

*Prepared by the Staff of*  
**The Hillside National Bank**



The year 1890 according to American historians marked the closing of the frontier with establishment of law and order in the west and elimination of vast grants of free land.

It also marks the beginning of the end of the farm community, which twenty-three years later became the Township of Hillside, with construction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad through these farm lands.

Sixty years ago the area was generally known as Lyons Farms for the many families by the name of Lyon who lived in it. A Lyon had participated in land drawings in both Elizabethtown and Newark more than 200 years earlier and at one time fourteen families by that name resided here.

According to George C. Woodruff, local historian, and Dr. William R. Ward, Sr., local doctor, both descendents of Revolutionary families, local industries included the three cider mills of Alfred Jones in Hillside Avenue, the Woodruff family in Woodruff Place near Salem Avenue, and the Tillou family in North Broad Street.

A James Williamson opened a blacksmith shop in the vicinity of North Broad Street and Hillside Avenue and was succeeded by both his son, also James Williamson, and his grandson, William Williamson, who later moved the shop to the corner of today's Williamson Avenue.

Sylvester Looker, father of Horace Greeley Looker, later proprietor of the store and owner of the Hall, operated a wheel wright shop also near today's North Broad Street in Hillside Avenue.

A tomato canning factory was conducted for a time in Conant Street by the grandfather and great-uncle of Miss Marion Earl. Two Conant Street dwellings were later made from portions of the factory.

Fruit orchards and nurseries of the Elizabeth Nursery and Hiram T. Jones and the dairy business completed the enterprises conducted here.

The railroad's first influence in the area according to the local historians was to increase the dairy business. Milk was shipped daily, mainly to New York City.

Shortly after this Daniel Leeds Miller, grandfather of the present vice-president of the coal company, organized his business placing it near the new railroad station.

The station was first known as the "West Elizabeth Station" and subsequently as the Lyons Farms Station until it became Hillside.

Dr. Ward recalls that several residents wanted the area to be called "Lehigh," shortly after the erection of the railroad. Thomas Fitzpatrick, who donated the funds for St. Catherine's Church, objected on the grounds that there were no coal mines here, Dr. Ward said.

The Irvington branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, called the "farm" by the railroad men because it formerly bisected farm land, was erected in 1904 to service the growing lumber and other industries in Irvington.

Railroad records show that the first of more than sixty-six sidings constructed was built in 1909 for the Leddell-Bigelow Company on the site of today's Sun Tube Corporation formed in 1924. A piano factory also was operated at one time at this site and the tube company has incorporated these buildings in today's plant.

By 1913, when the township's fathers sought independence from Union Township, the area had become the quarters for the Roxalite Company located in a swampy area in today's Central Avenue. The company reached by a planked walk manufactured imitation leather bags and belts and was subsequently destroyed by fire about four years later.

Other industries also located in the township at the time according to Former Police Chief Norman L. Sanford included the Hedden Iron

Company which in 1936 was absorbed by the Heil Company, the Richard-Piver Corporation, a chemical concern and today replaced by the research laboratories of the Cities Service Oil Company in Route #22, the Juno Dress Fastner Company in Pennsylvania Avenue and a rubber plant in Broadway.

The year after the township was founded, the H. R. Goeller, Co., Inc., steel fabricators and erectors, moved into the township from Newark and settled on the hill becoming the first of many firms which were to make Hillside an industrial center because of its nearness to New York, accessibility to Northern New Jersey and position on the railroad.

Following the war, in 1919, the Bristol-Myers Company moved to its present location from Brooklyn and at one time produced paris green for the farmers' potato crops. Joseph Hale operated a concrete company from 1919 to 1930 on the site of the present William Hale Coal Company.

The Mundet Cork Corporation's plant was erected the following year when it was understood that the plant would manufacture parts for iceboxes. It wasn't until production started that township residents realized the parts were the cork linings. Since that time, the Township Committee has made it mandatory for all industrial applicants to apply to it as well as the Building Inspector for permits.

The Neil and Spanjer Company, industrial lumber firm serving the East coast and as far west as Pittsburgh, Pa., was incorporated in Newark in 1914 and moved its operation to Hillside in 1921.

Industrial growth in the twenties was slow but constant. The William J. Sweet Foundry was constructed at today's Amersil Company building with Harry A. Cooper as one of the partners. Mr. Cooper subsequently organized his own company, moved to Elizabeth and in 1941 returned to Hillside.

Andrew Hatfield who had organized the Hatfield Wire Company in Hackettstown about 1918 incorporated it in 1921, and moved to Hillside in 1922. In 1944, the company became a part of Robinson Foundation, Inc., and in 1946, of American Steel and Copper Industries. Since November, 1947, the Hatfield Wire and

Cable Company has been an operating division of Continental Copper and Steel Industries, Inc.

The Lionel Corporation, then in Irvington, needed expanded facilities and built its present plant in Sager Place in 1929 for the manufacture of toy trains. During World War II and the Korean conflict, the company also was engaged in the manufacture of instruments for the Navy. It is now entering the low-priced stereo-type camera field. The company is the township's largest employer with more than 2,000 persons regularly employed.

The depression years witnessed a recession in industrial building here. However the Jiffy Manufacturing Company, manufacturers of insulated paper bags, moved here from Charlestown, Mass., in 1937.

David O. Evans, building contractor, initiated his extensive building program in 1938. Prior to World War II, he was mainly active in the vicinity of Montgomery Street where the Miller Steel Company, Nieswand and Son, Inc., and N. S. Baer Company buildings were erected.

The Edgcomb Steel Company built its plant in 1941 and the Linde Air Products Company moved in at about the same period.

Mr. Evans resumed his building activities as soon as restrictions were lifted at the close of World War II. The buildings mainly erected in Evans Terminal and the Chapman-Montgomery track were for many Nationally-known concerns.

Some of these warehouses and assembly plants included Kraft Foods Company, General Motors Company, Dillon-Beck Company, Robert A. Johnston Company, Emeloid Company, Firestone Corporation and Allis-Chalmers Supply Company.

The close of World War II also saw the transfer of other plants into the township. Included among these were Schacht Steel Company, Ceco Steel Products Company, Westinghouse Electric Company and American Can Company.

Today there are more than 165 industries in the township. Total township ratables are listed at more than \$40,000,000. It is estimated that there are more than 10,000 persons employed and the total volume of business here is believed to be more than \$100,000,000 annually.

More than 1,000 various items from all states in the country and many foreign countries are imported by these local concerns for manufacturing purposes. Many hundreds of products are manufactured or serviced here. Among these are drugs, toy trains, insulated paper bags, plastic toys, furniture, mayonnaise, chocolate, boxes, overhead doors, automatic sprinklers and ice cream.

In several instances businesses organized to provide individual services having expanded their facilities to include industrial work. Two of these are the fifty-year old firm of Leslie R. Tichenor and Son, plumbers, and the Reinhard Printing Company.

While many of the older companies such as Bristol-Myers Company had early recognized the old Lyons Farm principle of "all pulling together" for the common good, it was not until early in 1947 that an effort was made by the Hillside Rotary Club to sponsor the Hillside Industrial Association.

The group, composed of industries or companies that service industries, was formed because it was generally believed that they could accomplish improvements in the best interest of industries and residents by joint action.

The first major accomplishment of the group was the opening of the Hillside Industrial Branch Post Office, August 28, 1949, after an intensive survey of mail delivery and collection in the township.

While several of the industries have contributed funds for scholarships and others have permitted students and citizens to tour their facilities, the industrial group still felt that many residents were unaware of the products manufactured here.

In order to acquaint them, an industrial exhibit was held for two days in 1950 in the Hillside High School gymnasium.

The industries also have cooperated with the school guidance program by providing speakers from their personnel departments to outline the opportunities in industries.

In December, 1952 the Hillside Industrial Foundation was formed by the group in keeping with the growing recognition by business of the need to simplify the problems involved in cor-

porate giving, to assure greater control over use and distribution of its gifts, and to obtain a more unified and effective support of charitable, educational, religious and civic enterprises in the community.

As its first project it has donated \$3,000 to the Board of Recreation Commissioners for equipment for neighborhood playgrounds and has completed plans to head a drive to collect \$75,000 for a swimming pool and \$10,000 for a field house.

The Hillside National Bank, opened in July, 1920, has had an active part in aiding in the industrial growth of the township by providing necessary banking services.

Some of these include granting loans to expand or replace buildings and machinery, preparation of payrolls, acting as a clearing house for business transactions, providing letters of credit, issuing government bonds for employees through payroll deductions and safe deposit vaults, assisting employees of industries by cashing pay checks, providing loans for financing the purchase of homes, appliances, cars and assistance in other financial matters.