

Paper Making

August 1973

YPSILANTI GLEANINGS

PAST SCENES and OLD TIMES

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY ~ PUBLICATION ~



Ypsilanti Historical Museum
~ 220 N. Huron Street ~

AUGUST 1973

THE HISTORY OF PAPER MAKING IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
August, 1973

THE HISTORY OF PAPER MAKING IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

by Daniel L. Quirk, Jr.

The use of paper may well be considered a measure of the culture and the business activity of the people making up a community or a nation. Since the beginning of modern ~~civilization~~ paper has been a fundamental necessity to culture and business. It was a prime necessity in the early life of the American colonists but, like numerous other commodities produced in the Mother Country, its manufacture was restricted largely to the home country and therefore, even though a necessity, it was a luxury to be used by the few who could afford it.

In 1690 the first paper mill was licensed to operate at Germantown, then just outside of Philadelphia. This mill, a part of which still stands, produced a few pounds of hand-made paper a day, using the most primitive methods in reducing rags to pulp and fixing the fibres in the pulp in sheet form in a hand mold. Not until the outbreak of the Revolution was there a serious need of paper in the Colonies, for the limited purposes to which it was put, and this need brought very interesting appeals from the local Colonial governments and from the Continental Army to save rags from which paper might be made.

Very slowly small mills were built in Massachusetts and New York and the paper needs of the new country were met in a way. For more than a hundred years after the first mill was built at Germantown, the growth of the industry was exceedingly

slow. Processes were simple, almost primitive, mills were isolated, and there was but one raw material and that was cotton and linen rags.

The financing of a paper mill in Colonial days was a very simple matter as plant and machinery cost a few hundred dollars, as compared with modern mills costing hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars. As with most of the early industries, the paper mills were largely family affairs, seldom employing more than a few men or boys outside of the family of the owner.

With all the primitiveness of the early paper mills, and with these mills turning out pounds where today tons are produced, the paper was usually of a very high grade, comparing favorably with the best grades of the rag content papers produced today. One has but to see some of the books printed in ~~esrly~~ colonial days to appreciate the fact that the art of paper making was in a way as well understood in 1727 as in 1944.

The growth of the pulp and paper industry in the United States from 1765 to 1865 was slow but steady. With the exception of the introduction, in 1798, of the Fourdrinier (moving wire) upon which the sheet of paper was formed, thereby greatly speeding production, there was very little improvement in machinery in the paper mill between 1765 and 1865. Cotton and linen rags continued to be the principal raw material. Rags were collected much as they are today, taken to the mill, cleaned, and made into pulp by cooking and bleaching, and then through the use of quantities of clear water the fibres of the pulp were carried onto the wire and formed into a sheet. The paper as it came from the wire was cut into sheets and hung up in

lofts to dry. These was much skill used in the formation of the sheet and naturally much hand labor entered into the handling of the paper, from the rags as they were carefully sorted and cleaned to the paper as it was taken from the drying loft to be bundled and shipped.

With the industrial development which began following the Civil War, there was a growing demand for cheaper paper which could be more widely used. The pulp and paper manufacturer was ever on the outlook for new processes which would make it possible for him to meet the demand for more paper. In the late '60's, certain manufacturers, some of whom are still active in the industry, learned that a process for the reduction of wood to pulp and the use of pulp in the manufacture of paper had been perfected in Europe. Some of these men went to Europe and brought back with them licenses for foreign patents under which they could produce pulp from wood. The foreign ~~patents~~ under which they could produce wood pulp was crude indeed and for some time there was doubt if wood pulp could be used in producing the better grades of paper. Gradually methods of bleaching the pulp were perfected, and through the 1870's and 1880's wood pulp and paper made from wood pulp were produced in increasing quantities.

In considering the development of the pulp and paper industry of the United States it is interesting and significant to note that the paper industry is the only great industry which has changed its raw material in large part with a human generation. Rags are still used in large quantities for the production of the better grades of paper for use where durability and permanence are essential, but more than 90% of the fifteen

million odd tons of paper produced in this country in 1943⁴
was made from wood pulp.

The demonstration of the fact that paper could be made from an abundant and cheap raw material, the supply of which in the years preceding 1900 seemed absolutely inexhaustible in this country, brought home to the minds of the consuming public the idea that it was possible to use a cheaper grade of paper in increasing quantities for printing and other uses. It is not too much to say that the modern printing press, now turning out the great metropolitan newspapers and books by the hundreds of thousands, resulted from the successful demonstration that paper could be made cheaply from wood.

Though experiments were conducted earlier it was not until about 1874 that the first chemical treatment was applied to wood to separate the individual fibres so that they could be used for making paper on a commercial basis.

The period of the rapid growth of the industry, from 1865 to 1925, brought the segregation of mills in certain districts where there was available water for power and process and where raw materials were easily accessible. So we had a great group of mills in Massachusetts manufacturing the bulk of fine paper produced in the U.S. Another segregation of mills came in northern New York and again in northern New England, where for many years the better grades of book paper and the coarser papers, such as newsprint and wrapping, have been produced in large quantities. Westward we had such paper mill districts as those of Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. More recently there has come the rapid development of mills in the south and the Northwest.

River valleys presented the logical organization, for to a great extent they follow the chronological order of the mills. The first mill in Michigan being in the River Raisin Valley, that was the first development area in the state; the second mill being in the Huron River Valley, this was the second development area.

Thus there were five major divisions in this Michigan history:

1. River Raisin Valley includes Monroe, Dundee, ~~MA~~ Manchester, Adrian, and Tecumseh.
2. Huron River Valley includes Dexter, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and the intervening and surrounding small towns.
3. St Joseph River Valley includes Three Rivers, Niles and St. Joseph.
4. Kalamazoo River Valley includes Kalamazoo, Plainwell, ~~OO~~ Oshego, Allegan and Vicksburg; Watervliet which, although not on the Kalamazoo River, had mills started as off-shoots of the Kalamazoo mills by Kalamazoo men.

The first paper mill in Michigan was located in the River Raisin Valley at a small town called Raisinville, about 3 or 4 miles west of Monroe. There a man by the name of Christopher McDowell had erected a small shack containing a crude machine approximately 30 ft. long and 38 inches wide, on which the paper was dried by passing it around a drum 10 feet in diameter containing a wood fire. This mill was called the River Raisin Paper Company, but it was not connected with the present company of that name. The man who owned the mill lived on the opposite side of the river on a farm which is now owned by the President

of the existent River Raisin Paper Company.

The McDowell mill manufactured, at first, a butcher's wrapping paper made from straw. This product was taken around in carts and sold to the merchants of the village stores. Shortly after its inception the mill branched out and began to manufacture other kinds of paper. Later companies were organized and other mills built in this locality.

The second developmental area, chronologically, in the Michigan paper and pulp industry was in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Here probably was located the second mill in Michigan. There is no conclusive data to prove this but it is known that there was constructed in Washtenaw County a paper mill some time between 1840 and 1850, and in a Detroit paper published in 1842 we find a reference to one paper mill in Washtenaw County in addition to several saw and grist mills there.

The next mill of which there is a record was one in which Volney Chapin purchased a half-interest in the year 1851. This was the J.H.Lund mill at Ann Arbor. This mill later burned. In 1854 this same Volney Chapin helped build the Geddes Mill called the Lund, Chapin and Company. In 1865 Lund sold out and it was merely Chapin & Company. This mill was eventually sold and the business discontinued.

The first mill in Ypsilanti was the Cornwell & Company's Paper Company, which was organized in 1855 or 1856. At that time Cornelius Cornwell bought the land where the lower paper mill stood, and with it one half the water power. Mrs. H.W. Larzelere put in the west side water power for a certain amount of stock in the paper mill. Mr. VanCleve put in \$1,000, and

thus the first paper factory was established. This can properly be called the beginning of paper making as an industry in Washtenaw County, because this marked the first enterprise on a large scale. All previous mills were merely small concerns making wrapping paper which they sold to local merchants, but this mill, utilizing both water and steam power, manufactured ~~newsprint~~. In 1863, Van Cleve and Mrs. Larzelere sold out to Cornwell. In 1871 the mill was partially destroyed by fire and they suffered from another a little later, but the enterprise pushed onward.

In 1874 Cornelius Cornwell, his son Clark, and brothers erected a paper mill one and a half miles about the Peninsular mills, and in that day it was acclaimed the most extensive paper mill in the state. The water power at this point was considered the best on the Huron with a head of 17 feet. This power is still in existence and owned by the Detroit Edison Company, known as their Superior Plant. Water power head is still 17 feet.

From a member of the Cornwell family, Mr. Edward Cornwell, for many years associated with the Peninsular Paper Company, I am able to ascertain the names and locations of their various plants, but no dates:-

1. Mill at Foster's, manufacturing wrapping paper and later destroyed by fire.
2. Mill at Hudson above Dexter, manufacturing groundwood pulp, which also burned.
3. Mill just below Barton Dam, manufacturing groundwood pulp and later dismantled. (Cornwell Mill)
4. Mill at Superior, the site of the Detroit Edison Company's Superior Plant. This was destroyed by fire in 1906 (Cornwell mill)

5. Mill manufacturing paper southeast of Ypsilanti on the outskirts of the city where the present Ford Plant is located. This mill was partially destroyed by fire in 1871, rebuilt and finally dismantled in 1886.

6. Mill at Jackson located just north of the prison, manufacturing soda pulp. This was destroyed by fire.

From the above you will gather the importance of the Cornwell Company's interest. The Cornwell family was the pioneer family of paper makers in Michigan.

The one and only existing paper mill in Washtenaw County at this time is the Peninsular Paper Company at Ypsilanti. This company was ~~incorporated~~ in 1867 with a capital stock of \$50,000.00. The original incorporators were: John W. Van Cleve, Wm. H. Myers, Samuel Barnard. The original stockholders were: Samuel Barnard, Lambert A. Barnes, Wm. H. Myers, and Daniel L. Quirk. The first Board of Directors elected May, 1868, consisted of: Samuel Barnard, Lambert A. Barnes, Isaac N. Conklin, William H. Myers, and John W. Van Cleve.

The construction of the mill was begun in the spring of 1867 for one paper machine, and the first paper was made in 1868.

An important factor in the decision to build the mill at this time was the fortunate circumstance of obtaining a ~~contract~~ from the Chicago Tribune to take the output of the mill in newsprint. At that time newsprint was made from rags, and it is interesting to note that the price on this contract was 17¢ per pound.

After the mill was built and operating, the Chicago Tribune insisted that the Peninsular Paper Company build another mill,

far enough removed from the original mill to safeguard the newspaper's supply in case of fire. May 8, 1876, therefore, the capitalization was increased from \$50,000.00 to \$100,000.00 and another one-machine mill was erected on the north side of the Huron River. This was operated until September 28, 1898, when it was destroyed by fire. All salvaged machinery was then removed to the original building which was enlarged to accommodate two paper machines and the additional equipment for increased output.

By this time, 1898, wood pulp and groundwood were being used extensively in the manufacture of lower priced papers, particularly newsprint, which had greatly reduced the cost of manufacture and therefore the selling price, and the company found it difficult to compete with the larger mills equipped with their own pulp-making and wood grinding machinery.

During all these years, the Peninsular Paper Company had been making rag papers. The machinery of the mill had been selected and installed for rag paper production; the paper makers were "rag men." At that time, long lines of rag gatherers' carts and wagons extended each morning for a long distance down the river awaiting the opening of the mill. Since newsprint was no longer being made of rag stock, it was perfectly natural that the men in charge of the mills business should turn to other kinds of papers for which their experience and facilities were best adapted, and in which some rag stock as well as wood pulp could be used.

The new lines of the Peninsular Covers and other specialties were introduced and placed on the market about 1900. It

was necessary to make many changes in both equipment and manner of operating the mill to suit the new conditions and to further increase the production. The sales plans and policies had also to be changed. The company has been operating ever since on more or less specialty lines until World War II, when it became necessary to make papers essential to the government, directly and indirectly, and to war defense plants, in order to obtain raw material and supplies which are allocated by the government. The Peninsular Paper Company is a very ~~small mill~~, as mills go today, but being small, it has specialized in papers that can be made to order in smaller lots, and are not as competitive, and for which the customer is willing to pay an extra price.

* * * * *

Daniel Lace Quirk, Jr. researched and wrote the splendid history of paper making and the impact the industry made on Washtenaw County and the City of Ypsilanti. Much of this material was read at meetings of the Ypsilanti Rotary Club and the Washtenaw County Historical Society.

Daniel Lace Quirk, Jr., joining management of the Peninsular Paper Company at the close of the 19th Century, served as President-Treasurer of Peninsular from January 14, 1914, until June 26, 1950 when he became Chairman of the Board having devoted 52 active years to that remarkable company. The officers then became: Daniel Trowbridge Quirk, President-Treasurer; Daniel Grover Quirk, Executive Vice-President and Florence S. ~~Gillmore~~ continued as Secretary. Paper .

Paper making thru the centuries had always been based on pulp made from rags, and during the rag paper years at Peninsular, girls and young women were employed as 'rag pickers'. Many of these women were beauties and became the wives of prominent young men in Ypsilanti. But during the 19th Century woodpulp had made many technical advances and could not be ignored. The last rag paper that Peninsular made was in 1942.

The year 1898 was the year of decision for the Peninsular Paper Company. That was the year the paper mill built in 1876 on the north side of the Huron River, across from the present plant, burned completely, leaving a mute rubble and the 75 foot brick chimney which for many years was an exciting hazard for boys who dared climb to its top. The disaster meant the termination of the newsprint contract with the Chicago Tribune, a major business loss. D.L.Quirk, Jr. joined the company at this time. The decision was made to not rebuild the burned mill but to change production to specialty papers. Soon several changes were made in the personnel, John P.Cooney replaced Benjamin S. Boyce as Superintendent and the young vigorous automobile companies changed the old style newsprint catalogues to attractive, smooth paper, colorful brochure type catalogues.

Peninsular Paper followed the trend into special papers requiring special machinery to make them. John G. Haviland came from the East as an experienced paper man and took over there as Sales Manager. In 1912, Enis Robtoy and Joseph J. Ely were hired as hourly workers. Enis Robtoy advanced thru the years, to the important position of Traffic Manager, retiring in 1962. Joseph J.Ely became familiar with all departments of the mill

and retired in 1959 after serving several years as Mill Superintendent. After the untimely death of John G. Haviland in 1917, D.L.Quirk, Jr., assisted by Lee Mulnix, took over sales, followed by Jack Shepherd who died in 1937 because of terminal cancer. 12

After World War LL, it was necessary to make several major changes in machinery and an increase in the size of the manufacturing plant. In 1947 a Water Filtration System was installed allowing the use of more water from the Huron River. In 1951, \$200,000 was expended for a new boiler, and in 1954, new dryers were add ed to Machine #1.

The Quirk family had two poignant losses in the 1950s. Daniel Lace Quirk, Jr., died October 14, 1955, and December 1, 1959, his sister, Mrs. (Edward) Jennie Quirk Cornwell passed away at the age of 99. She was a large stockholder in the Mill, always had a keen interest in its operation, often giving s age advice for important decisions. (There is a very noticeable, unusual vitality in the Quirks, - D.L.Quirk organizer and long time President of Peninsular Paper Company died at age 93, and D.L.Quirk, Jr. died at age 84.)

Harrison P.Quirk, after graduating from the University of Michigan in Engineering, joined Peninsular in 1959 as Chief Enginee r and representing with his brother, Daniel Grover Quirk, the 4th generation of Quirks in that Company.

As the demand for specialty papers increased, more warehousing and machines were needed. \$350.000 was spent in 1957 for warehousing and in 1962 the physical plant was expanded, new offices built. By 1966 it was necessary to rebuild Machine

#1 at a cost of \$446,000. Frank L. Wright became Sales Manager in 1967. In 1969, Florence S. Gilmore retired after ably serving many years as Secretary for the Company. On August of that year, Harrison P. (Hoddy) Quirk became President of the Company and Daniel Trowbridge Quirk became Chairman of the Board. October 22, 1969, Daniel T. Quirk passed away after 43 years with Peninsular Paper Company. On February 24, 1970, Jeanne G. Quirk, widow of Daniel T. served as Chairman of the Board and was succeeded by her son, Daniel Grover (Punk) Quirk as Chairman, February 16, 1971. On that date Harrison P. Quirk was elected President and Treasurer of Peninsular, placing the 4th generation of Quirks in command of the oldest, most successful manufacturing business in the State of Michigan.

The story of paper making and the history of the Peninsular Paper Company would not be complete unless more background material is given for the Quirk generations. The Quirk story has been told several times and in several places but it is unique and bears repeating.

Daniel Lace Quirk was born on the Isle of Man in 1818. (The Isle of Man was the first European community to allow women to vote.) He came with his parents to the United States in 1827. As a young man he learned the trade of carpentry, later building many houses in the Ann Arbor area. While living in Belleville, he conducted the one and only store in that village and was appointed there by President Franklin Pierce. His tremendous energy took him into politics and he was elected Auditor for Wayne County. Early investments included several hundred acres of land, a cooper and blacksmith shop, and a saw and grist mill in Belleville.

concerns. In 1904, D.L. as he was also so often called, built the two story brick structure on the west side of North Washington Street- the first building in the City lighted by electricity and heated by steam. He served as City Alderman, Ypsilanti School Board member, was prominent in organizing the Boy Scouts in Ypsilanti in 1910, served as Board Member of the Highland Cemetery Association and organized the Little Players Group early in 1915 when the Little Theatre idea was a new venture nationally and in Europe.

When the United States entered the War in 1917, Mrs. Quirk organized a Patriot Service League which later became the Community Fund and Mr. Quirk served as a Major in the Red Cross in Europe. In Europe he met many famous persons and those connected with the arts and the theatre. At the close of the war he returned to Ypsilanti and devoted his energies to the Bank, the Paper Mill, Civic problems and expanded his Little Theatre, soon attaining national recognition in that endeavor. Today, the theatre on the campus at Eastern Michigan University bears his name. In later years, he arranged for the location and the building of the Gilbert Residence at 203 S. Huron Street. A remarkable man who had many friends in the business world as well as in the academic world and the arts.

The Quirk genes continued passing on the energy and intelligence, so noticeable in the older Quirks, to Daniel Trowbridge Quirk, the oldest son of D.L. Quirk, Jr. This third generation Quirk, not only managed the Paper Mill in its program of manufacturing fine cover papers, but entered into Civic affairs, serving 8 years on the Ypsilanti School Board, was Mayor of Ypsilanti for 5 years, President of the Chamber of Commerce, head

16

of the United Fund for 3 years, and found time during the summers of these busy years to travel with the Ringling Brothers Circus living the strenuous life of the roustabout which provided him with a very interesting, colorful hobby.

As has been stated, the early paper mills were located where there was ample water supply as well as water power. Another unique point about these early mills was that the venture was always owned and operated by a family. As the mills flourished and increased in size, the family talent for paper making was lost or sought other outlets. The remarkable Cornwells are a local example.

The Cornwells had woodpulp mills and were paper makers more than a decade earlier than all others in Washtenaw County. But early in the 20th Century, Edward Cornwell, born in Ypsilanti in 1862, was the only Cornwell in the business of paper making. He served with Peninsular Paper Company, retiring 10 years prior to his death in 1949. His engineering talent was invaluable when Peninsular made the drastic change from newsprint to cover papers.

Today there are less than a dozen mills in the United States manufacturing special papers and Peninsular is now the only one owned and managed by the 4th generation in a family whose progenitor, more than a century ago, organized the company. The Quirks can be proud to make that claim.

The Present Quirks now managing the Company, are Harrison (Hoddy) P. Quirk, President-Treasurer, and Daniel (Punk) G. Quirk, Chairman of the Board.

Hoddy Quirk has served in many capacities in the Ypsilanti area: Director and President of the Washtenaw County Humane Society, Board member of the Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Corporation and also served as President of the Ypsilanti Rotary Club. Several years ago he became interested in building and racing inboard hydroplanes in the 850 cc class. This has become an absorbing hobby and he has driven his boat in many national races and just this month in Dayton, Ohio, became national champion in the 850 cc hydroplane race there.

Punk Quirk, after serving in the Army in Europe as an M.P., returned to take up civilian life with the Paper Mill and entering into the civic life of the community. His civic interests have been: President of Industrial Development Corporation, promoter of real estate and investments, Director Ypsilanti Savings Bank, Chamber of Commerce, Ypsilanti Rotary Club and the Washtenaw County Humane Society. His hobby in addition to providing storage for the Quirk family letters and records dating back to 1840, is the collection of the old whistles used by so many of our industrial plants as a time signal for the 10 hour day, 6 days a week: time to go to work, time to quit.

Under the guidance of these energetic young men, Peninsular Paper with 125 employees - 100 hourly and 25 salary - manufactures 10,000 tons of specialty papers each year and every day 600,000 gallons of water are used in the process. Production remains quite constant with wholesale paper merchants taking much of the product. The Company also has several nationally known Greeting card accounts ~~such as Hallmark and~~ American Greeting card, and consider it an honor to list the Milton Bradley Company of Springfield, Massachusetts as a valued customer for more than

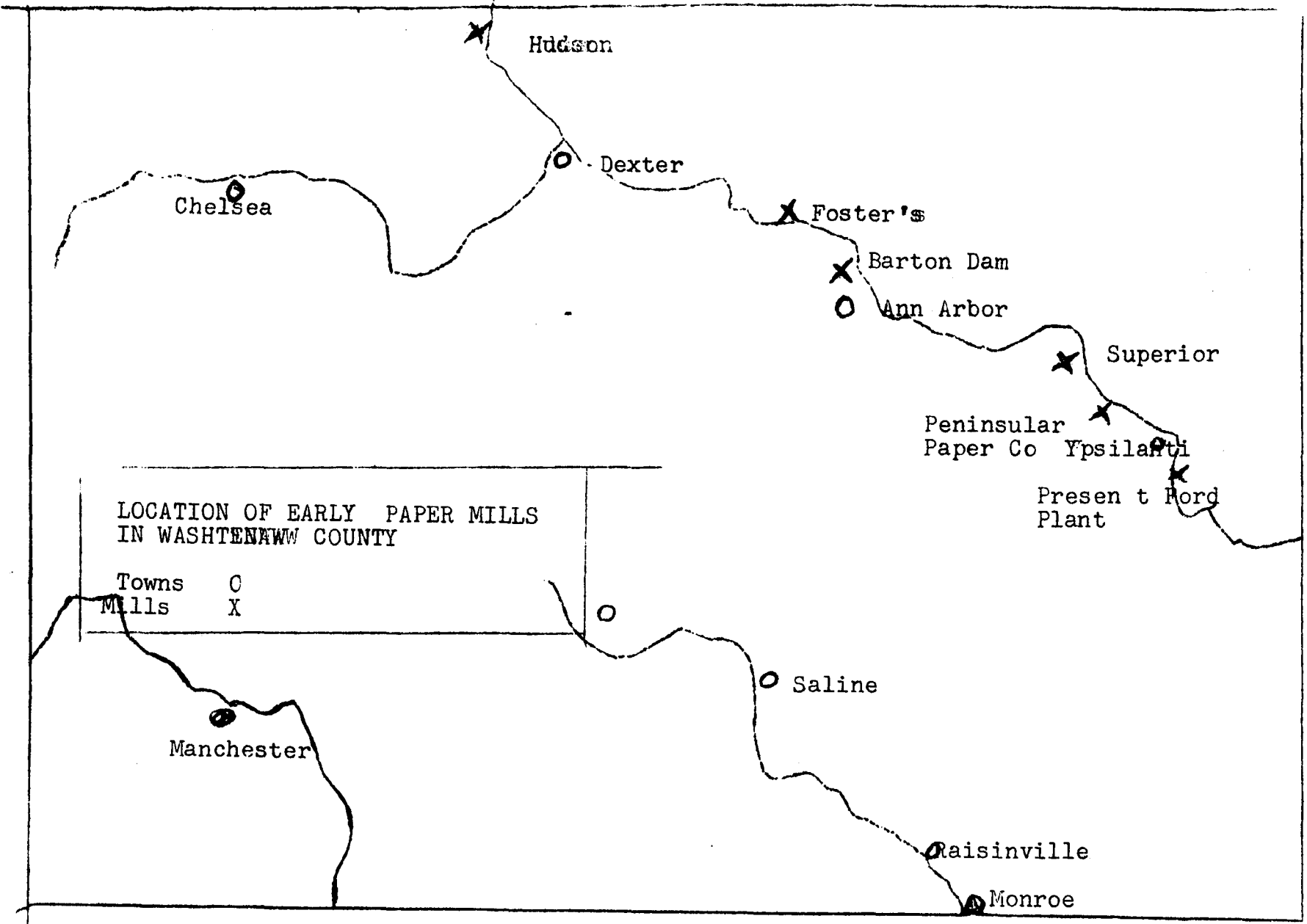
Punk states that the big difference in the papers made today from those of the old days, is the brilliance of colors, a cleaner pulp giving a very white paper and technological improvements making better control for a uniform product.

The Peninsular Paper Company is within the boundaries of the City of Ypsilanti and its success reflects on the entire County.

The Quirk Family:

Daniel Lace Quirk	June 15, 1818 - December 5, 1911
Daniel Lace Quirk, Jr.	February 26, 1871-October 14, 1955
Daniel Trowbridge Quirk	June 8, 1903- October 22, 1969
Daniel Grover Quirk	December 9, 1926
Harrison P. Quirk	December 1, 1932

D.L. Quirk, Jr article was condensed and edited and the additional information on the Quirk family and the Paper Company was researched and written by Foster Fletcher, City Historian. Research was done in the Archives of the Museum.



LOCATION OF EARLY PAPER MILLS
IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Towns	O
Mills	X