

O. P. Ramsdell

ORRIN PALMER RAMSDELL 1811 – 1889
BORN MANSFIELD CENTER, CONNECTICUT
DIED BUFFALO, NEW YORK

ORRIN PALMER RAMSDELL 1811-1889 - NOTES

Investor; founder M&T Bank, Buffalo & SW Railroad; Erie Basin Grain Elevator

For over half a century the name of Orrin P. Ramsdell was prominently identified with the commercial interests of Buffalo, and his memory is cherished as that of a business man of sterling worth, and a citizen whose life was one of great usefulness and beneficence. He was born in Mansfield, Connecticut, July 19, 1811, and was of Scotch descent, and in his life exhibited those qualities of frugality and industry so characteristic of the race.

In his boyhood he attended the village school of his native place, and at the age of sixteen years he went to New York City, where he was employed in a clerical position in a large dry goods establishment. He did not remain long in that position however, and having succeeded in borrowing one thousand dollars, he engaged in the boot and shoe business for himself in New London, Connecticut. Although his business prospered, his ambition sought a wider field of usefulness, and he removed to Buffalo in 1835, and opened the first boot and shoe store in this frontier settlement.

He was eminently successful here, and soon opened a wholesale department, which, under his able management, attained important proportions. He invested in railroads while in the infancy of the industry, when it required courage and foresight to venture, and he lived to see the wisdom of his act, and he became identified with many railroad enterprises. He also made large investments in real estate. He was the chief organizer of the Erie Basin elevator, and was one of the foremost in establishing the Manufacturers and Traders bank, of which he was a stockholder, and in every way was active and energetic in advancing the interests of Buffalo.

His private life was exemplary, and his charities were many and liberal. The Buffalo General Hospital and the Buffalo Orphan Asylum were favorite objects of his bounty, and both institutions were left liberal bequests in his will. He was for a long period a trustee of the North Presbyterian church. He was a competent and artistic musical critic, and largely through his influence the sweet tuneful service of the church to-day has been substituted for the mournful dirge-like service of early days. He was an ardent admirer of literature, and his extensive reading gave him polish and culture, which others more fortunately situated acquired in early life.²¹⁰

Orrin P. Ramsdell was a son of Isaiah Ramsdell, a native of Lynn, Mass., and of Clarissa Collins, his wife, a native of Mansfield, Conn., and was born at the latter place July 19, 1811. He obtained a common school education. spent some time as a dry goods clerk, and finally opened a retail boot and shoe store in New London, Conn., which he conducted until 1835.

In 1837 he came to Buffalo and established a retail boot and shoe trade, which soon developed into one of the leading wholesale industries of the city. He was regarded as the pioneer shoe dealer of Buffalo. He built the Erie Basin elevator in 1861, was an original stockholder in the Manufacturers' and Traders' Bank, and a director of the Buffalo and Southwestern Railroad, and was actively interested in other banking and railway enterprises.

In 1851 he married Anna Catherine, daughter of Thomas W. and Deborah C. (Smith) Titus. of Brooklyn, N. Y., and their children were Albert N., born in 1853, died in 1878; Thomas T., born March 15, 1854; Orrin P., jr., born in 1856, died in 1860; Belle C. (Mrs. E. A. Bell), born in 1857; Bessie H., born in 1858, died in infancy; Alfred C., born in 1860, died in infancy; Anna K., born in 1862; Clarissa* C., born in 1865, and Evelyn, born in 1868.

OUR COUNTY AND ITS PEOPLE, TRUMAN WHITE, 1898



Macnab

813 BROADWAY, N. Y.

ORRIN PALMER RAMSDELL 1811-1998

ORRIN PALMER RAMSDELL (1811-1889)

Buffalo Evening Times
August 28, 1909, 4-4,5

BUFFALO OF THE OLDEN TIME

By Grace Carew Sheldon

Resembling most of the business men of his day, the late Orrin P. Ramsdell appeared ever the leisurely man of affairs. He wore the long-tailed frock coat of his generation, was always rather jauntily dressed, with a shiny beaver hat, and being naturally a handsome man made a marked appearance wherever he went.

Like so many other men of whom we have written, he came to Buffalo in 1837, just as the city was recovering from the recent panic and doubtless it was this influx of new blood, capital and energy that built up the city.

O. P. Ramsdell was born in Mansfield, Conn., on July 19, 1811, his immediate ancestors being of Scotch descent, his father, Josiah [sic] Ramsdell, being a native of Lynn, Mass. His mother, Clarissa Collins, was also born in Mansfield, Conn., where the boyhood of Mr. Ramsdell was spent. His father desired him to be educated, so he took advantage of the common school opportunities in the town. At the age of 16, Mr. Ramsdell felt that he was ready for the plunge into the world of business. Going to New York City he entered a prominent mercantile house as a clerk, whose methods he acquired. Returning to New London, Conn., he opened a boot & shoe shop, on a borrowed capital of \$1,000. It was the first venture of the kind in the town and a failure was predicted by the general storekeepers, but his success was phenomenal, from the start. Instead they had to give up handling boots and shoes so that Mr. Ramsdell was master of the

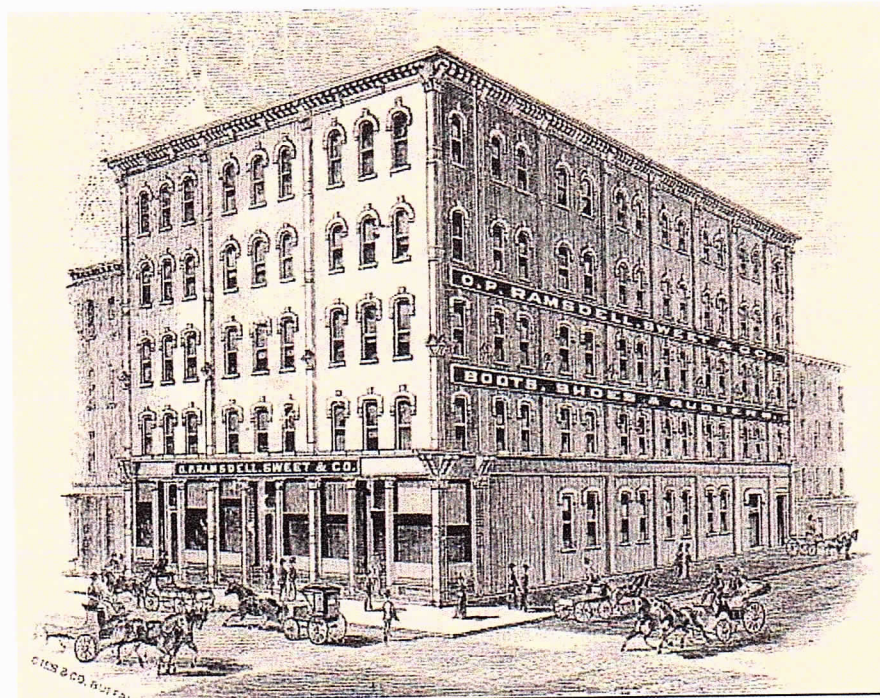
situation. This business he continued until 1835, when he sold it out to advantage and came to Buffalo where he opened a retail boot and shoe store in 1837, to which, eventually, was added a wholesale department, which ultimately developed into one of the largest wholesale establishments in the country, being located on the east side of Washington Street, near Carroll Street.

For years Mr. Ramsdell was one of a group of bachelors who added much to the social life of Buffalo. When he came here he was fortunate enough to be made one of the family of Mrs. James Sheldon, who had a big house on Washington Street, just above Exchange Street. She treated him as one of her sons and he became an intimate and lifelong friend of the writer's father, although he [who?] was much older.

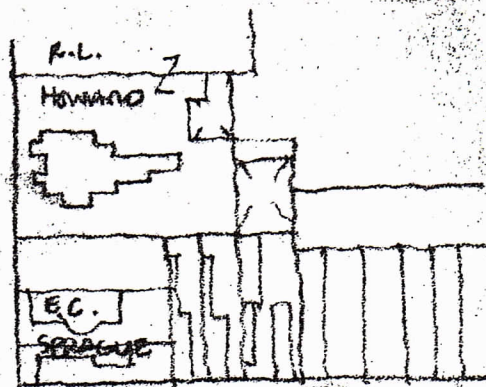
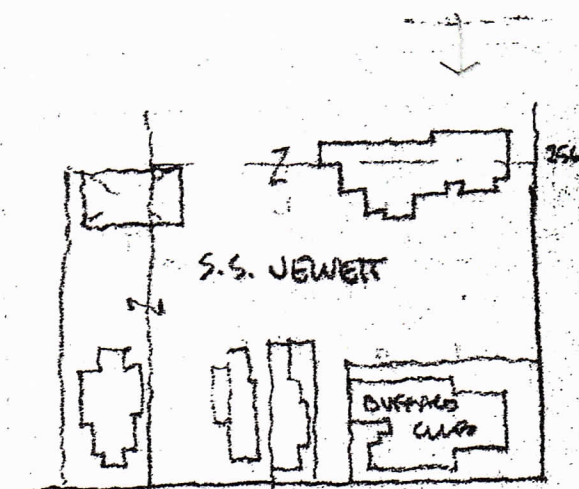
In 1857 [1851], Mr. Ramsdell married Anna C., a daughter of Thomas W. Titus, of Brooklyn, N. Y., her mother being Deborah Smith of Flushing, L. I., and built for her the fine mansion on the west side of Delaware Avenue, just north of Cary Street, No. 220, where their large family of nine children were born and married and where they lived until the autumn after Mrs. Ramsdell had died. Their children were Albert N., born in 1853, died in 1878; Thomas T., born in 1854; Orrin P., Jr., born in 1856, died in 1860; Belle C., born in 1857; Bessie H., born in 1858, and Alfred C., born in 1860, both died in infancy; Anna K., born in 1862; Clarissa C., born in 1865, and Evelyn, born in 1868. Belle C. married E. A. Bell; Thomas T. married Louise Miller of Sterling, Ill.; Anna married William S. Allen; Clara married Lawrence O. Allen, and Evelyn married Charles L. Gurney.



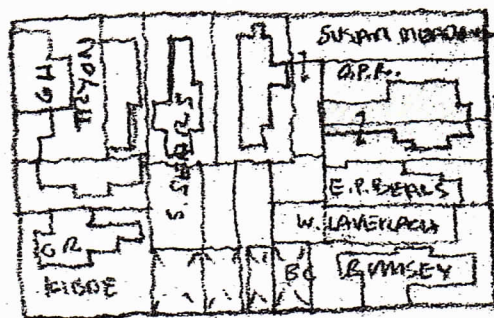
ORRIN PALMER RAMSDELL HOUSE – 220 DELAWARE AVENUE – BUFFALO, NY
BUILT BY O.P. RAMSDELL IN 1851, FOR HIS BRIDE, ANNA CATHERINE TITUS.



O.P. RAMSDELL, SWEET & CO. – WHOLESALE BOOT & SHOE COMPANY
212 MAIN STREET, BUFFALO, NY



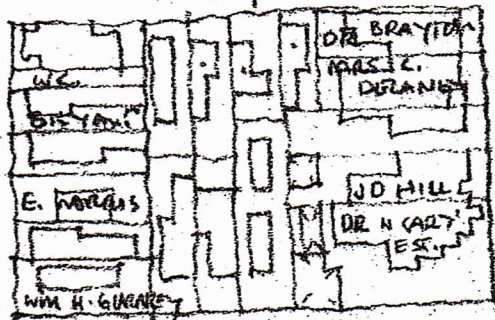
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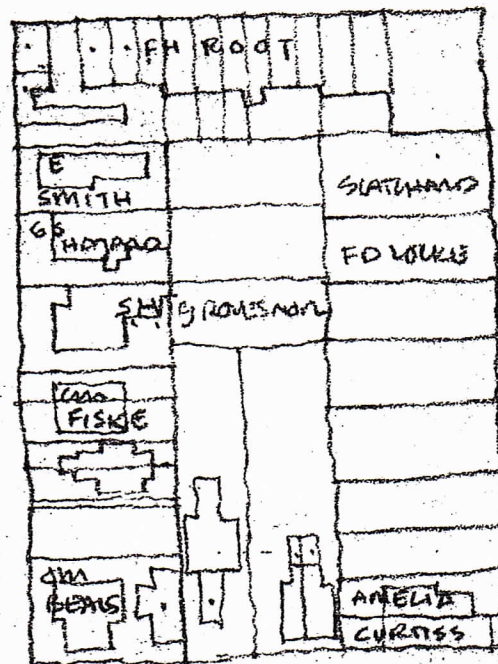
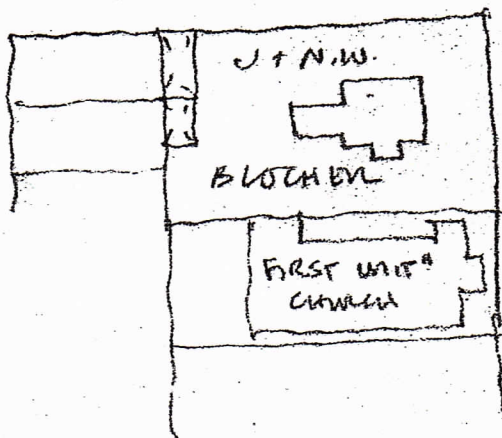
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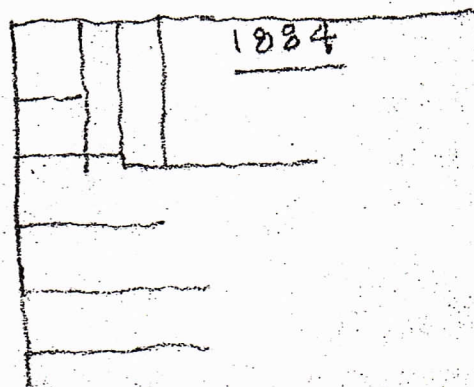
CART



HURON



FRANKLIN



O.P. RAMSDELL HOUSE
220 DELAWARE AV
BUFFALO, NY

0 100 200 300 400

1884

1" = 175'

PLATE 2

□ = WATERS
■ = SPRING