

Our Museum in Action

Grant News

Landmark Status for 436 Amherst Street

Erie County Bicentennial

Fenian Invasion Commemoration

308 Crowley Street

Museum Grand Opening

Annual Fundraiser

New Acquisitions

Justin Family Records

Calling All History Detectives!

1491 Niagara Street

ARTICLES

A.A. Justin Wagon Works

On April 28, Candy and Peter Rypczyk traveled from in Hamilton County, NY to return to Black Rock and the home of Candy's great-great-great grandfather, Asahel Adams Justin. In 1837, Asahel traveled from Canterbury, Connecticut and settled in Black Rock with his father Reuben, his mother Anna, his grandmother, and his eight siblings. In 1843, Reuben proceeded to build Black Rock's (and Buffalo's) first iron forge at the old Black Rock Dam (located along the Black Rock Channel between present-day Amherst and Hamilton Streets). In later years, Reuben became Justice of the Peace of the Black Rock Court for Erie County.

In 1843, Asahel set up a blacksmith shop and wagon works (A. A. Justin Wagon Works) at the forge where he made iron rims and carriage wheels, steam engines, machinery, iron roofing and bridge work, and heavy platform spring and grain wagons. In 1844, he married Mary Ainslie Farmer; today's Farmer Street is named for Mary's father, William. The shop was destroyed by fire in 1845 and subsequently moved to 1894 Niagara Street.

In 1863, Asahel enrolled for the draft at the age of 43. The same year, his eldest son - 16-year old William - enlisted for three years in Company H, New York Mounted Rifles, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Cavalry Regiment. Sadly, Corporal Justin was killed in action at the Battle of Petersburg (VA) on March 31, 1865, just days before the end of the Civil War.

After Asahel's death in 1873, his sons Henry and David continued the operation of the family business for more than half a century. In 1886, the Niagara Street blacksmith and machine shops were once again destroyed by fire and the business was relocated to 1902 Niagara Street (also notable as the former home of the Black Rock Historical Society). David was the directing head of the Wagon Works until his retirement in 1918. His shop supplied Western New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio with several types of wagons including water wagons, produce wagons, ambulances, sleighs, and sprinklers for city parks. The shop was also famous for building the 47-foot long steam yacht *GRACE TRUSCOTT* as well as winning an award for the design and construction of an "Ice Plow." At the Second International Industrial Exhibition held in Buffalo in 1871, A. A. Justin presented a four-wheeled hose carriage that they patented that same year.

David was a member of the Jubilee Water Works Commission and along with Francis X. Argus helped establish the Jubilee Library at 1932 Niagara Street. An article from the International Gazette notes that David had "a boyhood memory of the Fenian Raid in 1866 and recalls riding in a yacht around the scows that held Irishmen who had failed in their attempt to take Canada" (March 31, 1931).

During her visit to Black Rock, Ms. Rypczyk visited family home sites at 163 Dearborn Street and 1815 Niagara Street, the site of the former A. A. Justin Wagon Works at 1894-96 Niagara Street, as well as family gravesites in Forest Lawn Cemetery. Candy generously donated several newspaper articles and excerpts from a family journal written by Asahel's granddaughter, Kate Ashton Harper. The documents will be added to the archives of the Black Rock Historical Society and conserved for future research.

Founding 500

We welcome Suzanne Pilon as the newest member of our Founding 500!

Please consider joining our team of special donors by contributing to the Founding 500 fund. In recognition of your donation of \$100, you will receive a commemorative Founding 500 ceramic plaque along with our gratitude and knowledge that you are fostering historic preservation and education in our community. We thank the following Founding 500 businesses, organizations, and individuals for their generous support:

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