

A CENTURY OF  
**Vernon, Connecticut**  
1808—1908

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SUMMARY OF VERNON'S HISTORY,  
EARLY AND MODERN. LITER-  
ARY EXERCISES AT HISTORIC  
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
AT VERNON CENTER.

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INCEPTION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE  
MOVEMENT. REPORT OF THE PROCEED-  
INGS AND PROGRAM FOR THE WEEK'S  
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

June 28 to July 4, Inclusive, 1908

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ROCKVILLE, CONN.  
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Department Commander Henry H. Saunders. The camp is known as James W. Milne Camp, in honor of Sergeant James W. Milne, who lost his life as the result of contracting typhoid fever in that war. It started with twenty-four charter members and its present membership is thirty-four. The adjutant's report at last division encampment showed that the camp had made the largest gain in membership of any of the camps. Martin Laubscher was the first commander, and Arthur W. Gyngell is the present commander.

Back in the early forties there was a military company in Rockville. It was commanded by Captain Chauncey Hibbard and was part of the old state militia. Captain Hibbard being a natural drillmaster, the company furnished many officers during the Civil War and many men who enlisted in that memorable conflict received their first training in this company, and it proved valuable training. The company, which was known as Company C, subsequent to the war finally disbanded. On February 25, 1890, a company was organized in Rockville and was accepted as a part of the state militia, taking the name of Company C. The late Sheriff Amasa P. Dickinson was captain, Frederick H. Linker, first lieutenant and Martin Laubscher second lieutenant. For several years the company led the regiment in figures of merit. The present officers of the company are: Captain, James H. Lutton; first lieutenant, Michael J. O'Connell; second lieutenant, Albert E. Scharf.

The Hammond Drum Corps, organized by J. C. Hammond, Jr., brought fame to Rockville back in the early seventies. It participated in a great many memorable parades in various parts of the country. It continued in existence for several years, finally reorganizing. It has held several notable reunions.

Rockville has had several good bands in its history, but is without a local band at the present time.

#### VERNON AND HER INDUSTRIES.

Snipsic Lake, as a water power, has contributed very largely to the prosperity of the town of Vernon. Through its outlet

the winding, sinuous Hockanum, it pours down a grade of two hundred and fifty-six feet to the mile and a half into the valley below, furnishing one of the finest and most easily available water powers to be found in America. The water possesses a superior quality, which gives it a special value. The supply is practically inexhaustible, and the descent is so rapid and steady that the power may be used over and over again, at surprisingly short intervals. To the genius of "Snip," as it is affectionately known, Rockville is indebted for its growth and development during the past century. The beautiful Hockanum is the magic wand which has transformed an unfertile, unpromising, and what appeared at one time to be a worthless tract of land, into a thriving city of substantial mills, modern streets and beautiful residences. By its invisible arm, gravitation, Snipsic daily sets in motion nearly a score of water wheels, and for the space of more than a mile the Hockanum is literally studded with shops and factories. "Snip" is the ruling, the motive power, men and machinery being but the agents to do its bidding.

Aside from its importance as a motive power to run machinery, Snipsic Lake is a very interesting and attractive spot. Indeed, situated as it is, in the Tolland hills, it is one of Connecticut's most beautiful glimpses of forest and water. In its setting and adornment Nature has been most prodigal of her charms. Few New England lakes surpass it in beauty, although in size it is not large, covering five hundred and twenty-five acres. The original lake was half that. It is five hundred and fifteen feet above the sea level. Prior to 1847 Snipsic dam was five feet and ten inches high; in 1847 ten feet were added; in 1864, seven feet, in 1872, three feet and eight inches, making the present dam twenty-six feet and six inches from bottom to coping. From top of the dam to and including Windermere privilege, the Hockanum River, fed by Snipsic Lake, has a fall of three hundred and nine feet.

The company's first main in 1847 was an 8-inch cement pipe, and the first line of pipe came down to what was then a reservoir basin in Central Park. This reservoir basin,

which was piped, supplied the lower part of the village. In 1866 a 12-inch cast iron main was laid in place of the 8-inch main. In 1893 and 1894 a 20-inch cast iron main was laid, which extends as far as the corner of West Main Street and Vernon Avenue. On Union, Prospect and Brooklyn Streets 10-inch mains have been laid and on all the other city streets 6-inch mains are in use.

Snipsic furnishes Rockville with its domestic water supply, which is of great abundance, superior quality, with good gravity and high pressure service. The business is conducted by the Rockville Water and Aqueduct Company, which at the present time is largely composed of the mill owners of the city. Originally a stock affair, it was organized in October, 1847, with a capital of \$7,000. The first meeting was held at the Leeds office on November 11, 1847. George Kellogg was the first president and Phineas Talcott first secretary and treasurer. In 1866 the needs of the village demanded better service than the old company with its limited capital and capacity could give. Having secured a charter from the legislature at the May session in the above named year, the company was reorganized with J. J. Robinson as president and J. C. Hammond, Jr., as secretary and treasurer. A. Park Hammond is the president of the company at the present time and J. C. Hammond, Jr., the present secretary and treasurer, has served the company in this capacity for forty-four consecutive years — a remarkable record. The company has kept pace with the growth of the town and at the present time has one hundred and fourteen city hydrants, about fifty private hydrants, and about twenty miles of pipe. Prior to 1894 the high service was supplied by wells and cisterns. In 1904 the present pumping station and standpipe were erected.

The office was located in the New England Mill until 1877, when it was moved to a room in the rear of the Citizens' Block, where the post office was then located. Since June, 1890, it has been located on the second floor in the Rockville National Bank Building.

Snipsic Lake is conceded to be the best illustration of an artificial reservoir to be found in Connecticut, if not in the country.

The most important event in the history of the local water company was the consolidation that took place between the old Rockville Water Power Company and the Rockville Aqueduct Company. On March 1, 1893, a special enactment drawn by the late A. P. Hyde was obtained from the General Assembly, merging and consolidating the two companies. A meeting was held in the Rock Mill office, at which a charter was adopted. All the mill owners and manufacturers were present, and they became interested in the new company. Previous to the consolidation, the Rockville Water Power Company had to do largely with water for power purposes, while the Rockville Aqueduct Company was interested principally in water for domestic purposes.

Vernon's era of industrial pursuits arrived in the early twenties. Their development during the germinating period, however, was not exempt from adverse influences. "Industries," as understood in our modern classification were not any too prominent during the early period of the town's history, the period from the date of the incorporation of the town in 1808 down to 1845. As these have been referred to in the preceding pages under the head, "Early History," it isn't necessary to again call attention to them. There is a vast difference between early and modern industrial life. With the growth of the years a change swept over the community—a change likely to sweep over any community with a similar environment, surroundings and conditions.

The first notable expansion in the industrial life of Vernon took place in the forties, and it can be truthfully said that the years 1847, 1848 and 1849, marked a distinct epoch—an epoch of industrial progress. The mills built during these years greatly added to the volume of business and enhanced the material prosperity of the town. The panic of 1857, which was national, paralyzing industries all over the country, hit Vernon hard and there was an extended period of business depression.