

Yatesboro, Pennsylvania and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, USA

In 1922, Patrick O'Hara (1881 – 1944) left Allanton Rows, Ferniegair, Hamilton for the USA. He sailed to New York and entered America via the Ellis Island clearing house before heading for Yatesboro, where his uncle, Alexander Hill, was already living.

In March 1899, Lucious Waterman Robinson, president of the Commonwealth Coal and Coke Company, a subsidiary of the Rochester and Pittsburgh Coal and Iron Company, purchased 1,000 acres of farmland from millionaire capitalist Adrian Iselan. Robinson's intention was to open a coal mine, erect mine buildings and build a company town for his employees. He named the town Yatesboro after Arthur G. Yates, president of the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad (BR&P)

The rich veins of coal turned out to be very productive, and by 1901, Commonwealth Coal employed 400 men in the Yatesboro mines. By 1913, the number of miners soared to 1,075 men who mined more than 825,000 tons of coal yearly. In the early years of production, nearly all of the coal from the Yatesboro mines was sold to George Eastman (the famous camera magnate) who used it to heat his Eastman Kodak laboratories in Rochester, NY. Eastman and Robinson were quite good friends and neighbors in Rochester.

With the opening of the mines, immigrants from Europe flooded into the area to seek their fortune. Many Italians, Scotch, Swedes and middle-Europeans such as Poles and Czechoslovakians left their homelands to seek the riches promised in America. Not sure what they would find in this new land, many left their families behind in Europe. The coal company especially encouraged married men to work in the mines, as they represented a more stable workforce.

In 1923, Patrick was joined by his wife and family Janet (nee Wighton), Janet, Peter, Thomas and Agnes. Also in 1923 Patrick was joined by his brother James and family, Williamina (nee Traquair), Catherine, Mary, Jemima and Frank

Both were miners so welcomed with open arms to Pennsylvania.

We then jump forward to the US Census of 1930 where Patrick and family are recorded as living in Pittsburgh whilst James was in Armstrong County. Interestingly enough, Patrick and Janet are living together with their son John and his wife Bessie O'Hara (nee Hill) and their son John as well as Alexander and Marion Hill at number 17, South Sixth Street.

At roughly the same time as Patrick and James were making their way to America, their uncle Francis Burnett O'Hara was also undertaking the same journey. As a child, he is recorded as having been receiving poor relief between 1870 and 1872 aged 9 – 11. Francis was an orphan at that time as his mother, Wineridge O'Hara (nee O'Boyle) had died in 1869.

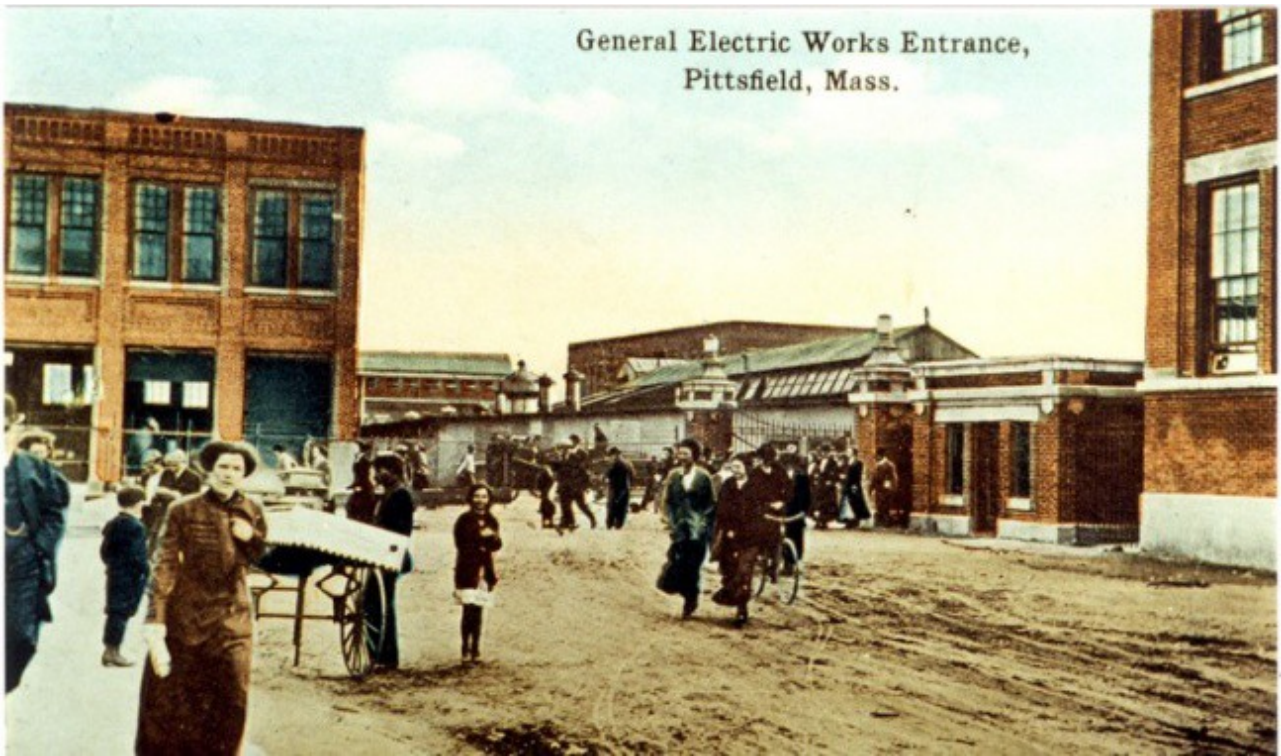
He was sent to live with his brother (probably John who died in 1881 but not confirmed) and then emigrated in 1882 to Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Ironically, Col. Jacob Wendell, the man credited with initiating and guiding the original settlement of Pittsfield, never lived there and may have never even visited. In 1738, the wealthy Bostonian bought 24,000 acres of lands known originally as Pontoosuck, a Mohican Indian word meaning “a field or haven for winter deer,” as a speculative investment, which he planned to subdivide and resell to others who would settle here. He formed a partnership with Philip Livingston, a wealthy kinsman from Albany, and Col. John Stoddard of Northampton, who already had claim to 1,000 acres here.

A group of young men came and began to clear the land in 1743, but threats of Indian raids associated with the conflict of the French and Indian wars soon forced them to leave, and the land remained unoccupied by those of European descent for several more years. Finally in 1752, settlers, many from Westfield, Massachusetts, arrived and a village began to grow, which was incorporated as Pontoosuck Plantation in 1753. By 1761 there were 200 residents and the plantation became the Township of Pittsfield, named in honor of British Prime Minister William Pitt, who later would champion the colonists' cause before the revolution.

By the end of the Revolutionary War, Pittsfield had expanded to nearly 2,000 residents. While primarily an agricultural area, because of the many brooks that flowed into the Housatonic River, the landscape was dotted with mills that produced lumber, grist, paper and textiles. With the introduction of Merino sheep from Spain in 1807, the area became the center of woolen manufacturing in the United States, an industry that would dominate the community's employment opportunities for almost a century.

The town was a bustling metropolis by the late 1800's. In 1891, the City of Pittsfield was incorporated, and William Stanley, who had recently relocated his Electric Manufacturing Company to Pittsfield from Great Barrington, produced the first electric transformer. Stanley's enterprise was the forerunner of the internationally known corporate giant, General Electric.



General Electric



Pittsfield view in 1855