

Rifle Range

The Rifle Range was located on the top of a high bluff of the Genesee River just north of Seneca Park. General Brinker was instrumental in forming the Rifle Range Association in 1875. This association purchased in the same year, some fifty acres of land from the rear of the Colt Farm on Summerville Blvd. This level piece of land, commonly called the "Flats" has a drop of about 50 feet below the boulevards, Winona and Summerville. The high hills and embankment that form the western slopes of these two boulevards acted as a lodging place for the bullets. Mr. Louis List once said that he had found quantities of these bullets in that locality. This shooting range, maintained by the state, was also used for a drilling ground, for target practice and maneuvers by the State Cavalry, Artillery and Infantry and later by the First and Eighth Separate Companies as well as the Naval Reserves.

Before Seneca Park was laid out, the only way to reach the Range was through the lane between the Grant and Colt Farms, thence through an apple orchard and down through a gully. Part of the lane is now Belcoda Drive and a narrow one-lane

road still leads to the property. At one time there was a large sign at the boulevard entrance to the lane which read "New York State National Guards." This shooting range became known all over the state for one of the best, and often large crowds came to view the maneuvers. William Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill" was once one of the attractions here. These target practices and other maneuvers were held in Rifle Range for more than 25 years. As the neighborhood became more thickly settled, objections were raised and the Town Authorities demanded that a stop be put to the shooting practice. The Rifle Range Association went into bankruptcy and the property was sold to General Brinker.

At about the time that the Rifle Range Association acquired their property, in 1877, a man by the name of John Staudenmaier with his wife Mary Serth Staudenmaier bought about 12 acres from the rear of the Colt farm, which joined the Range on the South. They occupied a building on the high river bank, with a long platform attached and steps leading down the high banks to the river. The old steam boat "The City of Rochester" made stops there and the passengers ascended the stairs to have luncheon and refreshments. About seven years later this building was moved about three hundred yards to the east and several other buildings were erected that gave one the impression of a trading post. These buildings consisted of a saloon, pavilion, horse barns and sheds, ice house, smoke house, pig pen and cow barn. The Staudenmaiers established turkey, duck, chicken and geese runs to the creek. They also had a place fenced in, all wired with very heavy wire where they harboured wild game, including a bear and a pair of bald-headed eagles, which were about as much attraction then as the zoo in Seneca Park is today. Seeing an opportunity to cater to the crowds that attended the target practice, the Staudenmaiers served hot chowder and sandwiches of all kinds, as well as cool lager beer. When the Windsor Beach Railroad was completed in 1884 and passenger trains stopped at the Range, the business prospered greatly.

Mr. Staudenmaier, who was a captain in the National Guards, died in 1886 in his 48th year and his widow, Mary, carried on the business until 1908. In 1899, the one daughter of the Staudenmaiers married Michael C. Magin who bought and has carried on the business since 1908. Under the management of Mr. Magin, with his brother-in-law, William Serth, this place also became famous for pit clam bakes. These pit bakes continued until two years before Mr. Magin's death in 1950.