

A. Ridgway & Son Shoe Factory

Delanco, NJ

Manufacturer of Infants' and Children's Shoes

1881 – 1928



Ridgway's original 1885 frame shoe factory building after its 1921 expansion. It was augmented in 1912 by a second, three-story brick building that stood on the Rancocas Creek at the foot of Ash Street, at the corner of Rancocas Avenue for over a century.

In its day, Ridgway was the major industrial employer in Delanco.

A. Ridgway & Son Shoe Factory

The firm manufactured children's and infants' shoes and became very important to the economy of Delanco, New Jersey. Andrew J. Ridgway started a shoe factory in 1881 in his residence at 800 Ash Street at the corner of Rancocas Avenue. At first there were three employees other than himself. In 1883, his son, Andrew C. Ridgway, became a partner. Son-in-law, Harry Cook joined the firm in 1894.



The business prospered, and Ridgway erected a two-story frame building in 1885 and later added a three-story addition.

In 1907, the *Burlington County Press* noted, "Their plant is perhaps the best appointed in the county." Most of the shoes were shipped to New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and other large cities in America, and even to Cuba. The company's splendidly equipped plant produced 360,000 pairs of shoes a year and employed 90 skilled laborers with an annual payroll of about \$65,000. At one time, Ridgway employed as many as 145 workers.

In 1912, the firm augmented the original wooden structure with a three-story brick building.

On May 10, 1922, the factory workers gave Andress Ridgway a special celebration for his 90th birthday. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, they shut down the machinery and all the workers assembled on the first floor. There they presented Ridgway with a fine bathrobe, a 5-pound box of chocolates, and several other articles, including a walking stick with an electric light in the handle.

On May 12, 1922 the original structure burned. It was restored and used as a warehouse for several years, before being demolished.



Group photo of the Ridgway employees in 1912.

The firm continued operations in its newer brick building until the business closed and the building sold in 1928. In 1929, the Atlantic Paper Tube Company moved into the premises. Several enterprises followed. In the 1960s, Charles Kalmes bought the building for back taxes and repaired it, using it for storage of boats and for outboard marine work under the name Riverside Marine Services. It was next owned by Albert Gault, who used it for the same purposes.

The building sold to Harold Fisher & Son Canvas/Delanco Tarp, which manufactured custom covers for pools, decks, boats and other vehicles. The company moved to Cinnaminson in 2018.

An article appears in **The Delanco Story - Its Past and Present**, The Delanco Bicentennial Book Committee, Delanco, New Jersey, The Kingswood Group, (1977), pages 27 - 29.

In 2020, Delanco Township purchased the building for the purpose of establishing a public park with access to the Rancocas Creek.



An infant shoe and last from the Ridgway Shoe Factory shown with a cobbler's stand and two buttonhooks from the period. The shoe is displayed courtesy of Vincent Colonna of Delanco.

Some photos from the J. Lester Daniels Collection in the Delanco Township Photo Archive.

Andress Ridgway

Founder of A. Ridgway & Son



SHOE factory owner Andress Ridgway, born May 10, 1832, was nearly 92 when, on March 16, 1924, he held his great-grandson, Andress Owen Ridgway.

The History of My Life

- Andress Ridgway

"I was born in Chester, Pa., May 10th, 1832. My father, Andress Ridgway was a seafaring man, born in Gloucester Co., NJ. My mother was of Irish parentage. My grandfather's name was also Andress Ridgway and a member of the Society of Friends at Mickleton, NJ.

When about three years of age, my father, who traded south in the winter, was lost outside of the Capes of the Delaware. My mother having died six months before, I was adopted by a family living in Chester by the name of McLarne with whom I followed the water on the Delaware. I left Chester, September 1st, 1852, moved to Bridgeboro, where I learned the shoe making trade, with my brother Thomas.

I was married Nov. 5th, 1855, to Meriam Wilmerton, daughter of Abraham and Mary Wilmerton of Willingboro Township. Our first year of married life was spent at Beverly, NJ, moving to Delanco in the spring of 1857, have resided here ever since, and have been a daily reader of the Public Ledger.

I have three living children: Miss Laura V. Ridgway, Andress C. and Mrs. Harry Cook. Was a charter member of the Methodist Episcopal Church organized in 1857, was Superintendent of this Sunday school for 37 years and still active in the Church work at present writing (1917).

In politics was a Republican for some years, for the last thirty years I have been a Prohibitionist. Thirty-six years ago, I started to manufacture children's turn shoes with my son A. C. Ridgway as a partner, still taking an active interest in the business.

Signed my eighty-fifth birthday, Thursday, May 10, 1917
Delanco, NJ"

From the Dobbins Memorial United Methodist Church, Union Avenue, Delanco, NJ. Church Historian Alice M. Smith – 2009.

From the History of The Address Ridgway Family in the U.S.A.

Transcribed by Rev. F. Elwood Perkins

Address Ridgway learned shoe making from his half brother Thomas Ridgway of Bridgeboro. Both moved to Delanco to set up shop. Address worked in factories in Burlington, NJ until in 1879-1880, when the Stokley Company went on strike. He then started to do custom shoe work from Philadelphia.

In 1880, he started to make shoes himself. During the first three months he was a partner with a Mr. Martin Beekler. At the end of 3 months, he bought out Mr. Beekler. He continued the business with assistance of his two daughters Laura and Anna. A few years later he took his son, Address Crittenden into the business. Harry Cook, husband of Anna entered the business in 1894.

The business began to decline about 1921 to a place where it seemed unprofitable and finally closed in 1929.



Photo showing both the frame and the brick shoe factory structures at the foot of Ash Street on the Rancocas Creek.



Group photo of the shoemakers at their benches.

At peak production period, A. Ridgway & Son Company employed about 90 to 100 people. The custom shoe work referred to above included many for children between the years 1900 and 1929 as well as for adults.

This booklet is a production of the
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