

Holland Land Office Museum

Quick Facts

Famous Batavians

EDWIN NEWELL ROWELL

a Position he held for 19 years. In 1875, he married Jennie Abigail Luce of Washington DC. They had two daughters, Mary Edna and Clara Louis. In 1879, EN was hired to keep books for Dr. AS Palmer. Aside from being a physician; Dr. Palmer also made his own pill-boxes. When Dr. Palmer died his son, William, took over the pill box business. William understood how to make the boxes but he needed someone to market them and keep the records. In February of 1880, he formed a partnership with EN Rowell.

In October of 1881, The Palmer & Rowell Company announced its decision to relocate to Batavia, NY. It was in operation before the close of the year. In January of 1883 he bought a lot at 123 Bank Street and started construction on a house. That summer the family moved in to their new house. In October 1883, Mr. Rowell was arrested and charged with the first-degree murder of Johnson L. Lynch. Mr. Lynch, a paramour, of Mrs. Rowell was caught in the Rowell home. Rowell's trial started on January 21, 1884. The children stayed with Edward Rowell throughout the trial. Edwin was not charged with murder but with manslaughter. He was found not guilty by reason of self-defense. In April of 1884, Mr. Rowell filed for divorce. His wife, Jennie moved to Denver in November of that year. EN Rowell also opened his own business in 1884 making pillboxes and though he was in competition with his former partner, they remained friends. It was not until 1888 that the divorce was final and Edwin retained custody of the children.

Edwin Newell Rowell was born in 1847, in Utica. His father Edward Rowell had remarried when his mother died and he had two half siblings, George and Julia. He was described as a clumsy but clever youth. His first full-time job was bookkeeper for Charles N Newell,

The EN Rowell Company was very successful, in part due to Edwin's ability to sell boxes, create new boxes and invent the machines needed to make them. By 1895, Rowell moved his company to a new factory on Ellicott Street. Originally, he occupied half of the building and eventually he took over the entire building. In 1912, he needed more space, so he added a fourth floor to his factory. His business was flourishing and in the early 1900s a worker named Martha May Emke caught his attention. He respected her knowledge and when she found a problem with one of the boxes he was impressed. In 1915, they married and moved into the newly finished mansion that Rowell had built on the corner of Richmond Avenue and Ellicott Avenue. Business continued to be good. In 1927, Mr. Rowell became ill and two years later he died, at the age of 82. Martha May Rowell continued to run the business. She amassed her own fortune and was known as the wealthiest woman in Batavia. After her death in 1971, the company went to their three grandchildren. They sold the stock to a company from Buffalo and shortly thereafter, the EN Rowell Company closed forever.

