

ALFRED PLATT

"Ambitious, shrewd, technically adept, and a hard bargainer, yet also pious, tolerant, equalitarian, and disdainful of financial chicanery, Platt was motivated by more than profit alone, and the business he founded reflected the man."

— Platt Brothers and Company

Alfred Platt was born in Newtown, Connecticut on April 2, 1789. He was ten years old when his father, Nathan, purchased a farm with a grist mill, saw mill, and nail factory in an area of Waterbury now known as Platt's Mills.

Platt learned to run a water wheel and repair machinery through the practical education received from his father. He trained to be a teacher but never pursued a career in that profession.

Instead, he began the manufacture of buttons in 1822 in a small nail factory at Platt's Mills. He partnered with Aaron Benedict, a successful brass manufacturer, to make buttons and learned the mechanics of the brass and button industries. Platt took the rolled metal from Benedict and produced finished buttons at his shop. He became a pioneer in the production of rolled brass and the manufacturing of brass and copper wire.

By 1838, when Platt ended this association, he had purchased all of the Platt family property, the mills and a house next to his father's for his wife and six children.

In 1847, Platt and his sons, William and Clark, formed the partnership of A. Platt & Co. to operate a button making and metal forming operation. This emphasis on family ownership and management would be a trait of Platt companies for five generations.

Platt saw his niche in the Brass City, not as a competitor of the big brass companies, but as a manufacturer of products made from zinc, a less costly material. The company made weather stripping, buttons, zinc pipe and was one of the first to roll zinc. During the Civil War, the firm's buttons were widely used for closing Army tents because of their non-corrosive quality and for uniforms.

Platt believed in acquiring land and being diversified so the milling and farming part of the business continued until his death. His Baptist upbringing resulted in an unusually fair treatment of Irish Catholics for the era and many worked in his establishments.

When he died on December 29, 1872, he left a legacy of industrial ingenuity, innovation and integrity. In 1997, Platt Brothers and Company will celebrate two hundred years of operation, having assimilated the qualities of its independent patriarch.

