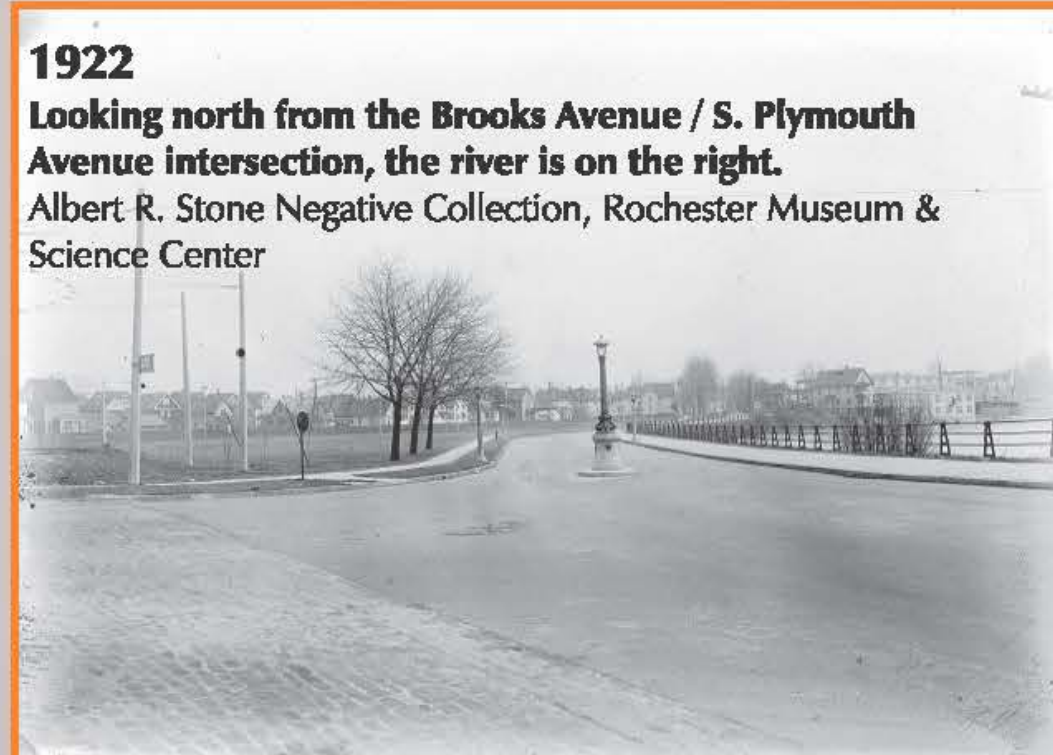


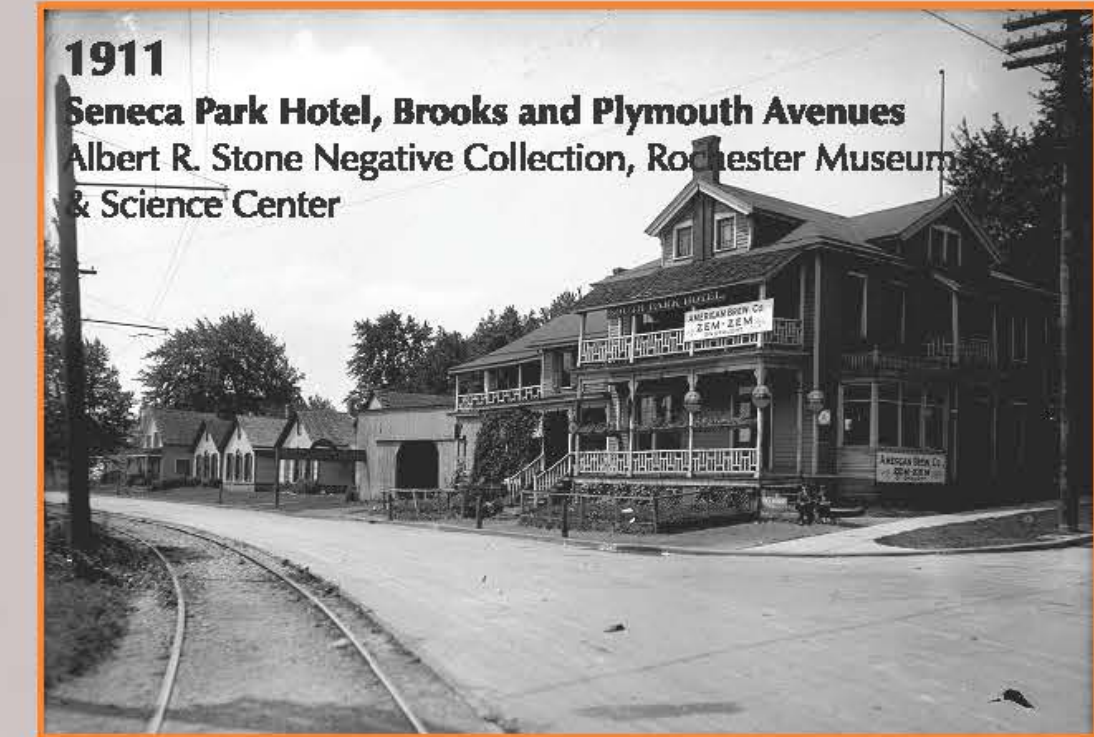
1922
Looking south from the Brooks Avenue / S. Plymouth Avenue intersection, the river is on the left.
Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center



1922
Looking north from the Brooks Avenue / S. Plymouth Avenue intersection, the river is on the right.
Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center



1900
Looking east along Brooks Avenue toward the river.
Rochester Public Library, Local History Division



1911
Seneca Park Hotel, Brooks and Plymouth Avenues
Albert R. Stone Negative Collection, Rochester Museum & Science Center



Settlement at Castletown

The first settlement in the Genesee country

Prior to European settlement the area of the present city was a Seneca Indian hunting ground with no permanent settlements. The presence of a relatively shallow rapids at the present Brooks Avenue area made this an attractive point for fording the river. Several Native American trails converged in this area: Brooks Avenue, Scottsville Road, Genesee Street, and Plymouth Avenue all roughly follow the route of former trails.

In the 1790s James and William Wadsworth purchased 6,000 acres of land from Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham, including lands along the Genesee River that included the rapids. This settlement was known as Castletown after Isaac Castle, hired by James Wadsworth to run a tavern and store at the Rapids in 1800.

In its first decade Castletown boasted a tavern, a church, a school and a handful of houses.

Durham boats, heavily loaded with goods from the rich agricultural lands of the Upper Genesee Valley poled their goods to the rapids where they were unloaded, hauled to the Lower Falls and loaded on schooners for shipment to foreign markets.

With the construction of the Erie Canal and a feeder canal (1922) opposite Castletown, boats no longer had to unload at the rapids and could instead enter the feeder canal and Erie Canal. Castletown lost its identity, went into decline and over time came to be referred to as the Rapids. Today the only visible remnant of the hamlet is a pioneer cemetery on Congress Avenue.

In 1888, with the opening of the Elmwood Avenue bridge and Genesee Valley Park, the Rapids became a desirable residential neighborhood and was annexed by the City in 1902.