

Farms and Shoe Polish – A Kreag Road Story (Part 1)

Many roads in Perinton are named for the landowners who settled here long ago. Pannell, Moseley, Furman, Watson, Mason, Loud and Hogan are several examples. Kreag Road connects Route 96 in Bushnell's Basin with Ayrault Road. Less than two miles long, it is named for the family who settled there in 1867. John Adam Kreag and his wife Mary, with their eight sons and daughters purchased the one hundred acre farm of A.D. Butler, a potato farmer.

Agricultural records from 1880 indicate the Kreag farm included a handful of cows and pigs, and produced corn, oats, potatoes and apples. Perhaps the most important crop on the Kreag farm was the children, most notably John Adam Kreag Junior. Both father and son dispensed with their given name, and in the case of Junior, he was usually referred to as J. Adam, or simply Adam Kreag. By whatever name, he was a very successful man.



Rochester's Shinola was once one of America's most recognizable brands

Born in 1858, Adam Kreag Jr. was destined to be a salesman. His career began as a traveling agent for Fairport's veterinary supply company of Doctor Weare. A few years later he and friend, W.R. Conover, went on the road for the American Mining and Chemical Company. As reported in the Fairport Herald in 1887, "They are lively and successful traveling men, and as they are Perinton boys, of course all our people are proud of their success." Kreag and Conover traveled for several months at a time, often in the Midwest. According to another Fairport

newspaper, The Monroe County Mail, Kreag was not impressed with the locals in southern Illinois: “He says the people there are a very shiftless set, who continually complain of hard times.”

Adam Kreag Jr. and Minnie Sullivan were wed in June of 1896. By 1902 the Kreag’s fortunes had benefited from the consolidation of the American Mining and Chemical Company with the Shinola Shoe Polish Company, a business in which Adam had significant investments. The Shinola factory was located at the corner of Jay and State Streets in Rochester. Shinola became an important brand in American business, and as Treasurer of the company, Adam’s personal success grew to new heights.

A trade publication of 1909, the Boot and Shoe Recorder, trumpeted the accomplishments of Perinton’s own Shinola superstar: “The development in a few years of a languishing, almost dying little concern into one that now manufactures and markets daily 50,000 boxes of shoe polish, has been due to the ability of John Adam Kreag... he is a phenomenon in salesmanship, and has a mighty breezy way of conveying to others his opinions and convictions along this line.”

Next: Shinola comes to Kreag Road

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

Fairport-ER Post, 10/15/2015