“The Tyrants of Syracuse”: The Rise and Fall of the Onondaga Salt Company; 1860-1900.

Introduction

Humans have been producing salt for thousands of years and it has shaped the development of humanity for at least as long. In the early American republic, it was the primary method to preserve all food[1]—to the extent that in the late 19th century, a writer described the mineral as a “prime necessity of life, almost as much so as air and water.”

During the American Civil War and the years immediately following it, salt produced in Syracuse, New York, provided a significant portion of salt that the nation consumed, and production of that salt was controlled by the monopolistic Onondaga Salt Company. Motivated by a ruthless desire to maintain its power, the company undersold its competitors, lobbied extensively to keep tariffs on foreign salt high and duties on their salt low. Yet no matter how hard the company tried, it couldn’t halt the death of a dying industry, and by the mid-1870s Syracuse’s reign as “the salt city” was essentially over.

Origins

In Central New York, Onondaga Lake is sacred to the native tribe, the Onondaga.[2] On the shores of the freshwater lake, five tribes—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca—came together to form the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois Confederacy, perhaps the world’s first democracy.[3] On the same shores where democracy was born were brine springs, which carried salt from underground deposits to the surface.[4] When French explorers reached the region in 1654, one of the first things they noted were the salt springs. Father Simon LeMoyne, a

[1] Lavers, “Rock.”
[2] Kirst, “Onondaga.”
[3] “History”, Onondaga Nation.
[4] Effler, “Ionic.”

Jesuit priest, may have been the first white man to report the salt, but he was certainly not the last.[5] Numerous Jesuits had soon visited the region, and an English 'scout' was sent to the region in the early 1700s.[6] The brine was shortly being boiled to produce salt in small quantities,[7] by both the Onondaga and the colonists. The Onondaga, realizing the value of their product, began using salt as a trading product.[8]

Despite some investigation, the potential of the springs remained largely untapped through the Revolutionary War. By 1784, however, salt mines and springs had formerly been set aside by the New York State Legislature, and could not be granted to any individual.[9] Four years later, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix was signed between the Iroquois and New York. It provided that:

> The Salt Lake and the lands for one mile round the same, shall forever remain for the common benefit of the people of the State of New York and the Onondagoes and their posterity for the purpose of making salt [. . .][10]

That same year salt boiling on a major scale began as Americans sought to capitalize upon the potential of their "white gold". In 1789, early entrepreneurs produced 500-600 bushels of salt. The first 'Salt Springs Law', which created a system for leasing the land to manufacturers, was passed by the state legislature in 1797 to regulate a burgeoning industry— by 1798 50,000 bushels were being produced, an increase of one-hundred-fold in less than ten years (see Fig. 1).[11] The springs soon proved to be the strongest then known in the nation, and Syracuse salt rose to national prominence— hand-in-hand with the building of the Erie Canal. Syracuse salt was

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[5] Faust and Roberts, "Salt", 20; Connors et al., *Crossroads In Time*, 17; Murphy, "The Salt", 304
[6] Murphy, "The Salt", 304.
[7] Faust and Roberts. "The Salt."
[8] Connors et al., *Crossroads in Time*, 17.
[9] Murphy, "The Salt", 305
[10] Connors et al. *Crossroads in Time*, 17; Murphy, "The Salt", 306: This right would prove short-lived, as the Onondaga gave up any title to the land in a 1795 treaty.
[11] Murphy, "The Salt", 306; Connors et al., *Crossroads in Time*, 17: This was still an insignificant amount, providing 1/70 of the young nation's salt consumption.

sent around the country on shining new rail lines and freshly dug canals. Chicago was a particularly important importer of the new city's salt.[12]

The Onondaga Salt Company

In the late 1850s there was a depression in salt prices as competition increased from new manufacturers around the nation, as well as imported salt. Within Syracuse the industry reeked of untapped potential. The state could not provide sufficient quantities of brine to supply all prospective manufacturers.[13] The problem was so great that the amount of salt produced by all 316 salt blocks—essentially small houses with kettles to boil salt—in 1859 could have been made by just ⅓ of the blocks. In response, the Onondaga Salt Company was organized in late 1859[14] and formally incorporated in March 1860, for the stated purpose of "uniting the interests of the different manufacturers of Onondaga Salt" to lower the costs of manufacturing and allow uniform salt to be sent around the continent.[15] The combine began with a capital stock of $160,000 raised from salt manufactures, who were encouraged to pay five percent of the assessed value of their properties used in manufacturing salt. 9/10 of the company's stockholders were salt owners themselves.[16]

The company's board included prominent members of the New York State Assembly and had ties to the United States House of Representatives.[17] They soon had leased all salt blocks and

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[12] Murphy, "The Salt", 306-309
[13] Weed, Parsons, "Report", 2612; *The New York Tribune*, December 11, 1861.
[14] Constitutional Convention, p3
[15] *The Salt Company of Onondaga*, 5.
[16] Constitutional Convention, p3
[17] Golay, *Civil War*, 101: The power held by those on the board is an interesting question. Golay states that the company had a speaker of the New York House of Representatives and a member of the house ways and means committee, a claim that seemingly dates to Brinkerhoff's 1871 speech. This claim has been repeated in several other secondary sources The speaker of the house was presumably Thomas G. "Old Salt" Alvord, but it is unclear who the congressman was; none of the congressmen from Onondaga's district 24 from 1860 to 1873 served on the committee or had any discernible connection to the Onondaga Salt Company.

virtually all land used to produce coarse salt in the region for ten years, making contracts with those that did not lease their land to gain a monopoly on all Syracuse salt manufacturing.[18] From the initial $160,000 investment,[19] the Onondaga Salt Co. reaped $6,000,000 in profit.[20] And they soon became known for aggressively working to maintain their lucrative monopoly.

Eve of the Civil War

On the eve of the Civil War in 1861, Syracuse salt was thriving. Hundreds of salt "manufactories" had been built,[21] and they pumped out a record 5,593,447 bushels of salt in 1860,[22] making up around ⅙ of the nation's salt consumption.[23] ⅚ of the salt was sent out of state,[24] serving as one of the only bulky return products on canal boats as they returned to cities such as Chicago.[25] As the Onondaga Salt Company pushed further into markets like New York City, Massachusetts, and Vermont, they were confident that Syracuse had the potential to supply at least ½ of the nation's salt needs.[26] Salt from Onondaga was also commonly promoted as the best of the best. In January 1860 a writer for *The Genessee Farmer* demanded bacon be cured with "good Syracuse salt (the best I know of)".[27]

When salt manufacturers looked to the future, it was bright. They saw vast manufacturing and remunerative returns. Talk of new manufacturing in places such as Saginaw, Michigan would end in failure for those who tried it because there simply wouldn't be enough brine for making

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[18] Weed, Parsons, "Report", 2613 ; *The New York Tribune,* December 11, 1861
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] Golay, *Civil War*, 101.
[21] Connors et al, *Crossroads in Time*, 18.
[22] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* January 22, 1861.
[23] *The Syracuse Standard,* July 24, 1860.
[24] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* February 18, 1861.
[25] *The New York Tribune,* January 19, 1861.
[26] *The Syracuse Standard* July 24, 1860.
[27] *The Genesseee Farmer,* January 1860.

salt. Saltmakers were confident that there was no other "'Salt Point' like ours".[28] New technology was invested in an attempt to get higher concentrations of brine at greater depths.[29] The manufacturers saw Onondaga salt as playing a central role in the nation's development— for "no article [...] enters more largely into the preparation and preservation of the food of man than salt".[30] As Robert Dennison, the comptroller of New York, reported in early 1861, salt furnished "the basis for a very large and growing commerce within the northwestern states, extending beyond the Mississippi river".[31]

Like any successful business, the salt industry had its detractors. Robert Dennison's 1861 report also cautioned that the state legislature would need "vigilance" to ensure the springs remained profitable.[32] Notably, the salt interests had to fight off efforts to increase the duty on salt bushels from one cent to two.[33] "Salt springs *do* pay"! thundered a letter to the editor of the *Democrat and American* in January 1860. They were a "a paying, self sustaining institution" that was free of corruption. The anonymous writer concluded that "The State may realize more revenue, but it will make less salt".[34] "We can't have our cake and eat it too" wrote a concerned reader to *The New York Tribune*, "we can't increase the duty, and preserve our market." They continued to argue that if the duty is increased, "[the state] represses its own industry [...] it favors foreign production at the expense of its own. It slaughters the goose that lays the golden eggs".[35] In fact, rather than hindering local salt— which should be a source of state pride[36]— a

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[28] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* April 5, 1860.
[29] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, February 19, 1861; *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* August 17, 1861: In August 1861, wells hit 300 feet deep.
[30] *The Syracuse Journal,* August 17, 1861.
[31] *The Syracuse Journal*, January 1, 1861.
[32] *The Syracuse Journal*, January 1, 1861.
[33] Murphy, "The Salt", 309: The duty had been reduced to one cent per bushel in 1846. It was not increased until 1908.
[34] *The Democrat and American*, January 19, 1860.
[35] *The New York Tribune,* January 19, 1861.
[36] *Ibid.*

protective tariff should be raised. The salt interests asked readers of *The Syracuse Standard* "Who does not know and believe that we, as a town and county, would be immensely benefited by imposing a duty of five or ten cents a barrel on salt, produced by foreign capital and cheap labor, brought to our shores"?[37] The vocal pseudonymous writer to *The New York Tribune* concluded with a rousing question, asking: "Why, then, should we not nourish and stimulate [the salt industry] by every means in our power?"[38]

So when the salt season began with the pumping of brine and letting water into the canals,[39] the owners of the plants must have smiled. They knew what the future held, and knew Syracuse salt would play a major role in it.

During the War

When the American Civil War broke out, it soon became clear that the conflict would be a study in contrasts. Agrarian versus city-dwelling, North versus South, and—perhaps most importantly—industrial versus rural. For instance, the Southern states of Virginia, Kentucky, Florida, and Texas had only produced 2,365,000 bushels of salt in 1850— less than half of the amount produced in Onondaga county alone. And they produced a majority of the South's salt. New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania dwarfed the South's production, making 12,000,000 bushels, or almost six times Southern production.[40]

Salt was a crucial tool in any army's arsenal. It played a role in medicine, was used to preserve food, and was included in the rations of soldiers and their horses alike. The Union army, for instance, required that beef and pork be preserved with salt.[41] A solid Union blockade of

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[37] *The Syracuse Standard,* July 24, 1860.
[38] *The New York Tribune,* January 19, 1861.
[39] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, May 5, 1860.
[40] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 257.
[41] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, September 3, 1861.

Southern ports ensured that the Confederacy could not receive adequate supplies— including salt.[42] As the price of the commodity quickly skyrocketed in the South, Union strategists such as William Tecumseh Sherman quickly grasped the value of depriving Southern states of salt. Sherman wrote in August 1862 that "[s]alt is eminently contraband, because of its use in curing meats, without which armies cannot be subsisted."[43] The Union soon adopted a strategy of targeting saltworks, first in Kanawha, in a July 1861 campaign. After the works were retaken, the Union began destroying saltworks around the Confederacy, including on the Florida coast, in Virginia, and in Texas.[44]

While the situation down South became increasingly desperate— in 1862 John G. Shorter, the Governor of Alabama, warned that "the danger of a salt famine is now almost certain"[45]— the Onondaga works had never looked better.

The salt concerns grew stronger with every month. In March 1861 the duty on foreign salt was increased to 4 cents per bushel, in August to 12 cents, and in July 1862 to 18 cents per 100 pounds.[46] This increase in tariffs effectively allowed the Syracuse salt industry to operate free from foreign competition.[47] *The Syracuse Daily Journal* asked readers in response to a renewed call to increasing the duty on Onondaga salt:

> How are you going to force a revenue of half a million of dollars from the Syracuse Salt manufactures, unless you enhance the price of salt to the poor man. Poor and laboring people consume as much salt as the rich,-- if not more, as they doubtless eat more salted meats. Would it not be an indescribably mean and oppressive measure to raise the price of an article of such universal use and necessity as Salt? Of all God's bounties, it does seem as though salt should be the most free and sacred from the impositions of finance mongering and State craft![48]

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[42] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 258-259.
[43] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 260.
[44] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 261.
[45] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 266.
[46] Special Commissioner of the Revenue, 40
[47] Brinkelhoff
[48] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* December 26, 1861.

Several days later, the *Journal* again condemned "unjust and injurious" claims against the salt industry that were "either entirely untrue, or so entirely distorted as to serve the purposes of falsehood".[49] *The New York Tribune* countered in February 1862 that the salt fields, which it estimated were worth 10 million dollars, were "the most valuable salines on this continent, if not in the world" and that New York must not "weakly or wickedly squander [the benefits] on a corporation which will most certainly use them oppressively [...] on a corporation which is demoralizing, restricting, even crushing her trade"[50] The following month it was reported that 1861 had been another record year, with 7,200,391 bushels of salt produced.[51] In April an effort in the New York Legislature to raise the duty failed.[52] An article in the *Journal* was quick to remind its readers of the benefits of salt. It invited detractors of the industry to come to Syracuse, "take a salt bath and stop fooling". Touring the works, the author was sure, would bring the critic to their senses as they saw the good inherent in the industry.[53]

Despite some rumblings, 1862 was a banner year for the salt industry around Syracuse. All brine that could be used was used as soon as production began in early April.[54] 3,000 workers manned 6,000 acres of salt vats,[55] supplied by 75 miles of pipes.[56] By June, 300,000 bushels of salt were being produced a week.[57] Salt workers were exempted from service in the United States military, a reflection of their importance to the war effort.[58] As the United States Navy began to blockade the Mississippi River in 1862, states west of Syracuse were cut off from foreign salt.[59]

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[49] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* December 31, 1861.
[50] *The New York Tribune,* February 17, 1862.
[51] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* March 24, 1862.
[52] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* April 10, 1862; *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* April 12, 1862.
[53] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* April 24, 1862.
[54] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* June 13, 1862.
[55] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 257.
[56] *Syracuse and Its Environs*, 66
[57] *The Syracuse Daily Journal,* June 13, 1862.
[58] Hardin, 164
[59] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, November 11, 1862.

This, along with the destruction of the Virginia Salt Works,[60] led to a dramatic increase in price and demand for Syracuse-made salt.[61] On November 6, 1862, in response to the demand, the Onondaga Salt Company announced that it was increasing production to "the full extent of the supply of the brine".[62] Production that year totaled 9,053,874 bushels from 13 salt wells, the highest levels that Syracuse ever reached. By the end of 1862, Onondaga had produced 146,991,422 bushels of salt in its history.[63] Production in Onondaga that year made up over half of the United States' entire production of salt.[64]

To insulate their saltworks from fluctuations in coal prices, the Onondaga Salt Company purchased a coal mine in Pennsylvania later that year.[65] Using coal and investing in scientific development allowed Onondaga salt to remain competitive with others.[66] The coal mine was sold in late 1865 for $510,000, at which point the company signed a contract to purchase as much salt as it needed in the next 17 years at 50 cents above its net cost.[67]

The 1862 Investigation

On March 20, 1863, an investigation of the saltworks was completed by a commission of several State Senators. They were tasked with determining whether an increased duty or a change in the process of manufacturing salt would be beneficial to the industry. The investigators had begun in Syracuse on October 9, 1862 and subsequently visited Saginaw, Michigan.[68]

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[60] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, March 2, 1863.
[61] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, November 11, 1862.
[62] *Ibid*.
[63] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, March 16, 1863; *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, June 23, 1917: Seven wells were in Syracuse, four in Salina and two in Liverpool.
[64] Committee on the Manufacture of Salt, "Report.": The nation consumed around 30 and a half million bushes of salt in 1859. Half was imported.
[65] *Report of the proceedings and debates of the Convention for the revision of the constitution of the State of New York, 1867 - 68*. 2615: Weed, Parsons, 1868.
[66] Constitutional Convention, 5
[67] Constitutional Convention, 6
[68] Committee on the Manufacture of Salt, "Report", 543-544.

They also considered complaints that the Onondaga Salt Company behaved in a monopolistic manner by taking control over all salt production in the region, noting that the price of salt increased dramatically as numerous salt wells sat empty and unused. Those who called for an investigation alleged that the company's behavior had fostered the rise of the salt industry in Saginaw which threatened to destroy the Syracuse salt industry completely.[69] The investigation, however, found that salt production increased dramatically after 1860, that the wells were only empty because there wasn't enough brine to supply them, and rejected the other accusations.[70] Their report to the state legislature concluded that "If the state needs money, it is better to levy a tax upon the property of the people of the state rather than to levy a tax upon the consumption of one of the necessities of life."[71]

Beginning of the End

Yet even as Syracuse salt hit levels never before seen, arguably the death knell had already been sounded. In late 1862, when the yearly effort began to increase the duty, it was defeated—but this time the salt interests maintained it because Syracuse couldn't compete with the salt made in Saginaw if it was forced to increase its price.[72] With abundant lumber, George Geddes reported to the New York Assembly in March 1863 that "I have no doubt if there is a sufficient market for Saginaw salt, they can manufacture one hundred million bushels per year; there is no limit to the amount [...] Syracuse Salt could not successfully compete with it".

[69] *Ibid*, 549.
[70] *Ibid*, 551-552.
[71] *Ibid*, 560.
[72] *The Syracuse Daily Journal*, October 22, 1862.

Sensing the end of the industry's viability, investors soon became reluctant to invest in Syracuse works.[73]

By 1863, the Saginaw works could already produce around four million bushels.[74] This explosive growth was in part fueled by the same war boom that so benefitted Syracuse production. Ironically, many of the workers whose expertise allowed Saginaw to develop came from Onondaga County.[75] Indeed, the first successful salt well in Saginaw was only constructed after an investigation of the works at Syracuse.[76] Because Onondaga had already done it, Saginaw was able to do in five years what it took Syracuse forty-two years to achieve.[77] The Michigan works had a further competitive edge in their vast virgin forests, providing near-limitless amounts of cheap fuel.[78] The rise of Saginaw coupled with a decreased tariff on foreign salt, discovery of salt in other regions around the nation,[79] and the rise of rock salt mining[80] spelled the end of Syracuse's reign as the "salt city"-- but Onondaga wasn't ready to give up yet.[81]

1867-1868 Constitutional Convention

In the 1866 elections, the state of New York voted to hold a constitutional convention, which would revise their constitution. Deliberations began in 1867.[82]

At the end of January "the annual attack in the legislature" on the salt industry began, this year in the form of a petition written by pork-packers in Buffalo. They had little choice but to

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[73] New York State Assembly, *Documents*, 32-33.
[74] *The Syracuse Journal*, March 2, 1863.
[75] Murphy, "The Salt", 310-312.
[76] Mills, *History of Saginaw County*, 165.
[77] Thomas and Galatian, *Indian and Pioneer History*, 46.
[78] Constitutional convention, 5
[79] Murphy, "The Salt", 310-312.
[80] *Syracuse and Its Environs*, 66
[81] Murphy, "The Salt", 310-312
[82] Osborne, "The 1867".

purchase Syracuse salt and while they granted that the quality was equal to others, they complained that the Ondondaga monopoly forced them to pay an unfairly high price. They urged "a fair investigation into the operations of the Company, and of other similar one that preceded it". The packers were convinced that the Onondaga Salt Company relied on support from the state to thrive and only by raising the duty could the monopoly be broken and with a reasonable solution reached.[83]

Later that year, the New York *Evening Post* added to the clamor for reform, claiming that "The Salines, while they remain the property of the State, are pleasant nests for lazy politicians" and "the offices about the salines only help to increase and perpetuate the corruption of our state politics". Their proposed solution was to recommend that constitutional convention change the law to allow the state to sell the saltworks, "thus reliev[ing] the State Government of a business for which it is not fitted, and the people of the support of a lot of useless officeholders" The *Journal* angrily shot back, asking: If "lazy politicians" were gotten rid of, "how many would be left in the state?" They also couldn't see "clearly" how any sale of the salt lands could be reasonably conducted.[84]

After extensive discussion and at least two reports, the seven members of the Standing Committee Raised on the Salt Springs of the State reached conflicting conclusions about how to best reform the saltworks. George F. Comstock—also the president of the Salt Company—claimed that "a majority of the committee to whom this subject was referred, was in favor of removing the constitutional provision prohibiting the sale of the salt springs. [...] a majority were opposed to placing in the constitution an increased duty on salt."[85] A report by a Mr. McDonald

[83] *The Syracuse Journal,* January 28, 1867.
[84] *The Syracuse Journal,* August 6, 1867.
[85] *The Syracuse Journal,* December 16, 1867.

recommended not selling the Salt Springs and instituting a two cent duty.[86] James A. Bell (the committee's chair) recommended "the abandonment of the present 'quasi-co-partnership' existing between the State and manufacturers of salt", removing the constitutional prohibition on the sale of the salt springs, and increasing the duty by two cents. Only one other member of the committee signed Bell's report.[87]

A report on the industry to the 1868 New York Constitutional Convention opined that "supplies of salt water of the best quality may be obtained on this salt reservation in exhaustless quantities" The report, however, still felt it was "quite probable [...] that this difference on account of the cost of fuel [...] will become less and less"[88] Further, Onondaga retained control of markets in New York City, east and southeast New York and parts of Pennsylvania, and was competitive in Saginaw's home counties around the Great Lakes due to the benefits of salt as a ballast product. The Erie Canal maintained higher tolls on foreign salt than from Syracuse.[89] Any potential reform from the Convention was halted as deliberations of the convention were rejected by voters.[90]

Death Throes

While the salt industry may have escaped the constitutional convention unscathed, threats to Onondaga were only growing. Saginaw and other national interests still posed a threat and even as more wells were built and more money invested in research— such as using petroleum to power the salt boilers[91]—Professor Charles A. Goessman warned that recent discoveries in

[86] *The New York Tribune*, December 19, 1867.
[87] *The Syracuse Journal,* December 10, 1867; *The Syracuse Journal*, December 24, 1867.
[88] Constitutional Convention, 5
[89] Constitutional Convention, 6
[90] Osborne, "The 1867".
[91] *The Syracuse Journal,* August 15, 1867.

Goderich, Canada posed a major threat, reporting: “It is difficult to see how our manufacturers will be able to compete successfully, even in view of the present tariff.”[92]

The Onondaga salt industry wasn't about to give up without a fight. After the end of the Civil War, the Michigan and Syracuse salt interests worked together to limit the production of salt in the Ohio River Valley. Saginaw producers leased and shut down salt springs in Virginia.[93] The Onondaga Salt Company then extended its policy of pricing its salt based upon the competition to Saginaw,[94] dropping prices in ports around Lake Ontario, for the express “purpose of damaging the interests of the Saginaw manufacturers”, alleged Duncan Stewart, a salt manufacturer in Michigan, in 1867. He continued that the company went so far as to sell salt “much below the price of product at Syracuse”. Stewart advised the Special Commissioner of the Revenue that the high rate of duty on foreign salt was not necessary and served the sole purpose of giving Syracuse control of the eastern seaboard’s salt market and allowing them to work towards ruining Saginaw’s interests.[95] An interesting side effect of this was that the Onondaga Salt Company sold salt at $1.00 a barrel in Saginaw County when it was asking $2.25 in Syracuse. In its effort to crush the dangerous competition of Saginaw, the corporation ensured cheap salt in Michigan.[96] In 1870, it seemed that the Onondaga Salt Company's strategy had worked. Stewart reported that he had been forced to close his works, which had once been the most productive in the state.[97] He remained confident that “Saginaw can and will control the price of salt in more than one-half of the United States”.[98]

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[92] *The Syracuse Journal,* March 13, 1868.
[93] Tarbell, “The Tariff”, 478.
[94] *Report of the Special Commissioner of the Revenue*, 43.
[95] *Ibid*, 44.
[96] Leeson and Clarke, *History of Saginaw County*, 295.
[97] *Index of Reports*, 98.
[98] *Ibid*, 99

In 1869, the so-called “vultures of Onondaga” turned their sights to Goderich and the nascent salt industry of Ontario, which held the potential to destroy Syracuse’s supremacy. They adopted the tried and true tactic of flooding the region with cheap salt in an effort to “crush out” the industry. Business leaders later accused the company of deliberately sending cheap salt shortly before winter, forcing the 400 salt workers in Goderich to be “thrown out of work” and pushed to the “verge of starvation.”[99]

In 1870, General Roeliff Brinkerhoff, an American reformer who had been invited to tour New York,[100] gave a speech in Syracuse on September 31 denouncing the Salt Trust as “The Tyrants of Syracuse”. *The New York Post* hailed his speech as “brilliant” and republished it in full on October 3. In the speech, he meticulously laid out the affairs of the Onondaga Salt Company. While he conceded that it has “brought a large amount of money into your city”, Brinkerhoff condemned the monopolists as robbing the government and charging double the product’s value. The state only got “a paltry pittance” from the monopoly, which controlled a “prime necessity of life, almost as much so as air and water”. He chronicled the rise of the monopoly, when “Satan entered into the heart of somebody” and “a scheme was invented to thwart the wise and benevolent policy of the state”. New York did not take action, he argued, because it had been overpowered by the state.[101] In 1871, *The New York World* published a series of articles similarly condemning the “Salt Swindlers of Syracuse”.[102]

The last fight

[99] Brett Code,”The Salt Men” , 539; *The Chicago Tribune*, January 20, 1871.
[100] Brinkerhoff, *Recollections*, 1900.
[101] *The Evening Post* “The Tyrants of Syracuse.”
[102] Environs, 70

And so the stage was set for the last battle over the Syracuse salt industry. This time, it would be played out in the hallowed halls of Congress and through the presses around the world. At stake: The salt tariff and the supremacy of Onondaga Salt.

During the reign of the Onondaga Salt Company, the tariff on foriegn salt had been increased from 1.5 cents per barrel in 1860 to 16 five years later.[103] By the late 1860s, some politicians felt it was time to roll back the war-era tariffs. Highly conscious of the threat foreign salt posed to their interests, Syracuse and other American companies united to lobby for the tariff.

The opening shots in the battle were fired by David A. Wells in 1869, a low tariff advocate and special commissioner of the revenue for the federal government, who published a report advocating for lowering the salt tariff. His report was condemned by Assemblyman Thomas G. "Old Salt" Alvord[104] as having "highly colored and grossly mistaken" statements.[105] The salt interests flocked to support their cause. An anonymous "veteran observer" who claimed to have "no interest whatever in the manufactures or commerce" wrote to the *Journal* that "salt is not a monopoly— price is not advanced in proportion— Mr. Wells' mistake— industry is the source of wealth and should be protected".[106] A pseudonymous salt proponent in *The New York Tribune* derided Wells's report as "untrue and unsound and fallacious in its conclusions— at least so far as the article of salt is concerned".[107] The *Utica Herald* proclaimed that there was no monopoly because salt was manufactured around the nation.[108] Although there is no link between these concerned advocates and the Onondaga Salt Company, it's hardly a stretch to say that they were affiliated with the company— no matter how loudly they proclaimed otherwise. Painfully

[103] Kieta, "A Comparison", 16.
[104] "Thomas G. Alvord"
[105] *The Syracuse Journal*, January 26, 1869.
[106] *The Syracuse Journal*, January 27, 1869.
[107] *The New York Tribune*, February 27, 1869.
[108] *The Syracuse Journal*, February 5, 1869.

conscious that time was working against it, that same year the company began to lobby in Washington for a three cent increase in the duty on salt.[109] An 1870 report of an investigation launched by the New York Assembly concluded that "the management of the salt springs has been as efficient and vigorous as the monies have permitted".[110]

It was not until 1871, after Brinkelhoff's speech and *The New York World*'s series of articles, that the fight over the tariff really broke out. In January, George Geddes warned in *The New York Tribune* that "Free Trade would drive domestic salt out of your market entirely, and the importer would then exact higher prices, for he would have no domestic made salt to contend for the market with him".[111] Later that month, the *Tribune* blasted the *New York World* and its advocacy of free trade:

> "*The World,* in its *role* of defamer-general of everything American and eulogist of everything foreign, returns to the charge against American Salt, especially that made in our State, as incapable of preserving Meats[...] It is precisely because we have journals like *The World* which systematically disparage everything American and eulogize everything foreign that our products are depreciated in our own markets below those of our foreign rivals, and the necessity for Protective Duties thereby intensified."[112]

Tensions continued to rise throughout the year. Geddes reminded the readership of the *Journal* that "until the high tariff was laid, our salt could not be sold at a profit in the seaboard cities, for there it met foriegn produced salt"[113] In March, the *Journal* condemned "monstrous misrepresentations of the Democratic and affiliated journals" and stated that cutting the tariff would destroy the salt interests.[114] The Onondaga Salt Company responded to *The World*'s articles, "We are greatly perplexed with a doubt whether we have sinned most in charging high or in charging low prices for our salt" and vowed that they would defend themselves with "all

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[109] Brett Code,"The Salt Men" , 535.
[110] *The Syracuse Journal,* April 14, 1870.
[111] *The Syracuse Journal,* January 12, 1871.
[112] *The New York Tribune,* January 13, 1871.
[113] *The Syracuse Journal,* January 19, 1871.
[114] *The Syracuse Journal,* March 17, 1871.

the weapons which God and nature have put in our hands."[115] As a sign of how desperate the company was, in December, they united with the Saginaw and Bay Salt Company and the Ohio River Salt Company to write a letter to Congress, in response to a circular penned by a salt importer which criticized the tariff. They decried the circular's allegations as "outlandish" and surpassing "anything in the Tales of the Genii or the Arabian Nights Entertainment".[116]

The year's end came and went without any sign of the battle lessening. The Onondaga Salt Company sent their Comstock, their president, to Washington to lobby on behalf of their interests.[117] The *Journal* wrote of an "ignoramus" on the *New York World* with "more Free Trade malevolence than information" and railed against the *Syracuse Courier*, which was "willfully trying to strike down one of the most important material interests of Central New York— the Salt Interest" [118] Later in February, the *Syracuse Standard* came out against reduction of the tariff. "We have patiently borne the many unfair attacks which have been made upon the salt interest of our city, and the honorable gentlemen connected therewith," they wrote, continuing to criticize other newspapers as biased against the salt interets. They reprinted George Comstock's point's against tariff reduction: 1. Syracuse salt is high quality and equal to any in the world 2. Only a 'demagogue' can support duty free salt. 3. The United States shouldn't be dependent on any other nation for salt 4. Thousands of jobs are directly connected to industry 5. The tariff raises money. The essay concluded: "All that salt asks is fair play— a decent chance with the other productions of the country, a chance to live."[119]

Yet no matter how much or how loudly they advocated, the efforts of the salt industry were in vain, as the tariff was reduced by 50% in 1870. Shortly before the bill was passed, the

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[115] *The Syracuse Journal,* April 24, 1871.
[116] *The Syracuse Journal,* December 19, 1871.
[117] *The Syracuse Journal,* February 6, 1872.
[118] *The Syracuse Journal*, February 9, 1872.
[119] *The Syracuse Standard*, February 29, 1872.

Journal struck a sombre tone, bemoaning that "the blow thus struck by Congress against American Salt seems without sufficient motive, either as a measure of economy or revenue" and wondering how long it would be before the saltworks rotted. However, they ended on somewhat of an upbeat note: "The battle is not ended because we have unexpectedly met with a repulse. It must and will be fought over again, and fought out until the banner of home industry shall stream high in the heavens, the token and surety that a final and lasting triumph has been won."[120]

Yet two months previously, the once great Onondaga Salt Company had entered into receivership--and barely anyone noticed. "It is now quite cetrain [sic] that the business of salt manufacturing will be conducted without the aid of any organization" wrote the *Journal* and "strong competition will spring up among those who continue the business". They felt it fair to presume that at least 1⁄3 of the 5,000 men employed were going to lose their jobs.[121] Although a new, similar company was founded two years later,[122] the death of the powerful salt company signaled the death of an industry and the end of an era.

Production remained at fairly high levels and the rise of solar manufacturing allowed Syracuse to remain competitive in the industry through the 1880s (pictured). But by 1883, Saginaw was producing 16 million bushels of salt.[123] In 1897, the *New York Journal* reported that the "State [was] Robbed By Salt Combine" and that the fields were "a losing investment". An assemblyman proposed that the state begin manufacturing its own salt.[124] In 1908, the state sold their salt-holdings. By then only around 1,500,000 bushels were produced yearly.[125] In early

[120] *The Syracuse Journal*, May 29, 1872.
[121] *The Syracuse Journal*, March 25, 1872.
[122] *The Syracuse Journal*, April 29, 1872.
[123] Murphy, "The Salt", 310-312.
[124] *The New York Journal* "State Robbed."
[125] Murphy, "The Salt", 310-312.

August 1926, the last salt works were ordered closed in Galeville, and the salt industry in Syracuse let out its last breath.[126]

A depiction of solar evaporation of salt in Syracuse. (source: Keystone View Company. *Solar evaporation method of procuring salt from the salt brine, Syracuse, N.Y.* 1916. Photograph. Accessed June 22, 2021. https://www.loc.gov/item/2018651808/.)

Conclusion

From 1860 to 1870 the Onondaga Salt Company controlled all salt production in Syracuse, and as a result controlled much of the nation's salt production for a decade, including during the Civil War—when salt was particularly important. Yet while at the beginning of the 1860s, the salt interests seemingly had everything going for them, by the end of the decade Syracuse's reign as the "Salt City" was over— and it was clear that the boom in salt production was nothing more than a war-era boom, ended as soon as the war did.

The slow but inevitable death of the salt industry offers an intriguing case study in protectionism. Arguments used to advocate the salt industry in 1870 wouldn't sound out of place

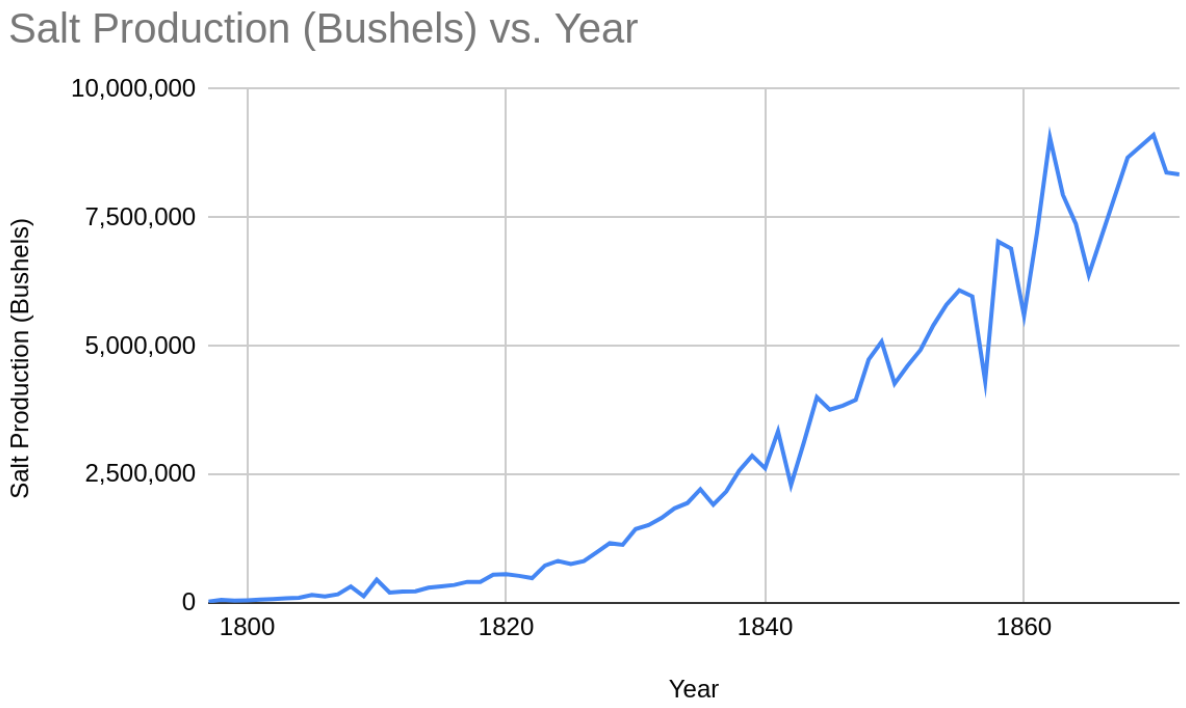
[126] *The Post Standard* August 15, 1926

justifying the Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1930, or the “America first” Trump tariffs in the late 2010s.

Even though the advocates warned of dire consequences if the industry was allowed to fail, Syracuse barely noticed. From the ashes of an old failing industry, a new and diversified manufacturing industry arose. Syracuse began producing candles, beer, steel, furniture, typewriters, glass, china, and more— ensuring its continued prosperity. In fact, from 1860 to 1870 the city saw its wealth increase by over four times.[127][128]

When an industry is dying and it knows it, it often works overtime to keep it in some reflection of its former glory. But sometimes those industries must be abandoned and left to die— so that something better can take its place.

Fig 1:



[127] Hardin and Crispin, *Syracuse Landmarks*, 14.
[128] Jonas and Wilson, *The Urban Growth Machine*, 46.

Bibliography

Primary:

Brinkerhoff, Roeliff. *Recollections of a Lifetime*. Cincinnati, OH: Robert Clarke Company, 1900. https://books.google.com/books?id=lgnCMmxs2O8C.

General Roeliff Brinkerhoff published his memoirs in 1900, including an account of his investigation into the Salt Company of Onondaga around 1870. Brinkerhoff was a noted reformer who advocated for lowering tariffs, such as those that protected the Onondaga salt industry. He also republished his speech from that year in full. I found his account an incredibly valuable primary source with regards to criticism of the company, and utilized it as such.

Committee on the Manufacture of Salt. "Report of the Committee on the Manufacture of Salt, on the Subject of Manufacturing Salt at Syracuse and Montezuma." In *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York. Eighty-Sixth Session.*, by New York State Senate. Vol. V. Albany, NY: Comstock & Cassidy, 1863. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=V6ElAQAAIAAJ.

This is the 1863 report of the committee that investigated the Syracuse saltworks. They spent months touring the works, interviewing witnesses, and using other resources to reach a comprehensive assessment of the industry. I used it to provide a valuable insight into how various politicians felt about the industry. It also offers a snapshot of the state of the saltworks at their peak.

Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York. Vol. 7. Albany, NY: New York State Assembly, 1863.

This source includes a report given to the New York State Assembly by the engineer George Geddes about the salt industry in Syracuse, and how it could hold up against competition from Saginaw (the conclusion: not well). Geddes was a member of the assembly and prominently involved in the Onondaga Salt Company, so he would obviously want the industry to be successful and was invested in ensuring that it was, by whatever means necessary. I use this to chart the overlap between the New York government and the salt industry as well as how desperate the owners were to survive.

The Evening Post (New York City, NY). "The Tyrants of Syracuse." October 3, 1870. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn83030384/1870-10-03/ed-1/seq-2/.

This article is about Brinkerhoff's speech against the Syracuse salt monopoly. *The Evening Post* deemed the speech "brilliant" and republished it in full. I use it to show Brinkerhoff’s complete denunciation of the industry. In the speech, Brinkerhoff charts the growth and development of the salt industry in Syracuse and outlines the crimes and anti competitive measures he feels the Syracuse salt industry has engaged in and advocates for actions that would destroy the monopolies power.

The Genessee Farmer

I cite one article from this publication which advocates including Syracuse salt when cooking, used to add context about the popularity of the salt and show that it was generally well-respected. Accessed at the Onondaga Historical Society, in their salt industry collection.

Index of Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-First Congress. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870. https://books.google.com/books?id=1m1BAAAAYAAJ.

This index includes a report on the salt industry, notably Duncan Stewart's report that he had been pushed out of business through the efforts of Syracuse. I use it to further establish how hard the salt industry worked— to the point that they were willing to bankrupt others.

Leeson, Michael A., and Damon Clarke. *History of Saginaw County, Michigan*. Chicago, IL: Chas. C. Chapman, 1881. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=aMwEAAAAMAAJ.

This relatively contemporary to the time period history of Saginaw excerpts an 1877 speech by W. L. Webber about the history of Saginaw County Michigan on pp. 290 to 298, including a history of the salt interests there, and how hard Syracuse worked to destroy them. This allowed me to show how desperate Syracuse was to maintain its supremacy and the measures it would take to defeat Saginaw. Because it was published and written by figures who are more invested in the success of Saginaw (over Syracuse), it also provides a valuable counter point of view than many of the newspaper sources I have and helps me present a more balanced account.

Mills, James Cooke. *History of Saginaw County, Michigan: Historical, Commercial, Biographical*. Vol. 2. Saginaw, MI: Seemann & Peters, 1918. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=9SsXAQAAMAAJ.

This relatively primary history of Saginaw County includes some useful information about the development of a salt industry there, and how Syracuse unintentionally contributed to it. Similar to Leeson and Clarke it charts Saginaw's point of view on their salt industry and is therefore integral in presenting a balanced point of view.

The New York Journal (New York City, NY). "State Robbed by Salt Combine." February 23, 1897, 10. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84024350/1897-02-23/ed-1/?sp=10&st=text&r=0.111,-0.17,0.916,1.427,0.

This expose on how an Onondaga salt company has taken advantage of the state for its own profit is a valuable primary source. It shows that as late as 1897 the salt industry was fighting to remain relevant and encountering criticism. It heavily cites a report presented to the New York Assembly. I use it to chart the decline of the salt industry from a position of favor to one of relatively poor standing.

The New York Tribune

The New York Tribune was a heavy advocate against the salt industry and against tariffs (and for free trade). It had a penchant for getting into fights with the other side, notably *The Syracuse Journal*. Used to provide a contrasting point of view to Syracuse publications. Accessed at the Onondaga Historical Society, in their salt industry collection.

Report of the proceedings and debates of the Convention for the revision of the constitution of the State of New York, 1867 - 68. New York City, NY: Weed, Parsons, 1868.

The 1867 to 1868 New York State constitutional convention, which this source charts, falls squarely in the middle of the salt industries peak and the role of the state was obviously a topic of much discussion and debate, with a committee directly focused on it. The efforts to get the state to sell off their salt lands and those in return against it are a valuable window that really encapsulates the whole fight over the tariff and the industry as a whole. This source allows me to completely chart the fight and the decision to do nothing illustrates that the Onondaga Salt Company was still stronger than those working against it.

Report of the Special Commissioner of the Revenue for the Year 1868. Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 1868. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=9LYjX8hBQecC.

This report includes an investigation of the salt industry in Syracuse. I use it to show how many were angry with the actions of the Syracuse salt industry. The special commissioner of the revenue himself was a noted anti-tariff advocate, so this is a valuable source of information in charting those who worked against the Syracuse salt industry.

The Salt Company of Onondaga. Syracuse, NY: Salt Company of Onondaga, 1862. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007312863.

This is a pamphlet published in 1862 by the Salt Company of Onondaga. It offers a look at their organization that year as well as a brief history of the company from its organization in 1860. The pamphlet also holds some information about the types of salt produced, the amount, and potential competition. It is a valuable look at the Onondaga salt interests' opinion on their own situation.

The Syracuse Journal

The Syracuse Journal (at times *The Syracuse Daily Journal*) was a major organ of the salt interests in Onondaga County throughout the 1860s and 1870s. Its articles cover the rise and fall of the company from an extremely biased point of view, providing an excellent window into what the salt interests felt. It also extensively republished speeches, letters, and similar data. I use these articles to add a clear primary element to my paper and excerpt quotes to provide depth, and generally feel the articles add another layer of complexity to my research. Accessed at the Onondaga Historical Society, in their salt industry collection.

The Syracuse Standard

The Syracuse Standard (later *The* (*Syracuse*) *Post Standard)* was a paper very similar to *The Syracuse Journal* (see entry above) if somewhat more moderately inclined. They were notably less prone to aggressive attacks on the detractors of the salt industry but were equally likely to blindly promote salt as the best thing for Syracuse. I use the articles to supplement and corroborate those in *The Syracuse Journal* and offer some further windows into what the salt industry was arguing. Accessed at the Onondaga Historical Society, in their salt industry collection.

Tarbell, Ida M. "The Tariff in Our Times." *The American Magazine*, Winter 1907. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=eMZZAAAAYAAJ.

This article, by prominent reformer Ida M. Tarbell, chronicles the tariff across various industries and places, including the efforts of those such as Roeliff Brinkerhoff and David Wells against the salt tariff. I use it to provide a reformer's view on the actions of the Onondaga interests and show how Syracuse's salt was a precursor to a broader tariff reform movement.

Thomas, James M., and A. Galatian, comps. *Indian and Pioneer History of the Saginaw Valley*. Saginaw, MI: Lewis & Lyon, 1866. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=Vns_n76qhgUC.

This book provides some useful contemporary statistics on the salt industry in Saginaw, which I use to substantiate Syracuse's role in comparison to the town.

Secondary:

Brett Code, W. E. "The Salt Men of Goderich in Ontario's Court of Chancery: Ontario Salt Co. v. Merchants Salt Co. and the Judicial Enforcement of Combinations." *McGill Law Journal* 38 (1993): 517-68. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://lawjournal.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/pdf/7218010-Code.pdf.

W. E. Brett Code, a professor at McGill University, has written a lengthy history of the salt industry in Ontario, centering around the town of Goderich. He includes a summary of anticompetitive and monopolistic activities by the Onondaga salt company in the region. I use this article to supplement the articles I have and more effectively show just how ruthless the Syracuse interests were in their efforts to maintain their monopoly.

Connors, Dennis J., Marianne Mackey, Gina Mancini, Bob Canino, John Doran, Cornelius J. Hannon, and Lois Hickey. *Crossroads in Time: An Illustrated History of Syracuse*. Syracuse, NY: Onondaga Historical Association, 2006.

This book, published by the Onondaga Historical Society, provides valuable context about the development of the Syracuse salt industry. I use it for charting the industry and putting this era in the broader context of the city.

Effler, S. W., M. G. Perkins, K. A. Whitehead, and E. A. Romanowicz. "Ionic Inputs to Onondaga Lake: Origins, Character, and Changes." *Lake and Reservoir Management* 12, no. 1 (March 1996): 15-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/07438149609353993.

This is a journal article about the scientific background of Onondaga Lake and its salt springs, which I use in establishing context, to help the reader understand just *why* Syracuse was ideally positioned for a salt industry to rise up.

Faust, Mildred E., and Nancy R. Roberts. "The Salt Plants of Onondaga Lake, Onondaga County, New York." *Bartonia*, no. 49 (1983): 20-26. Accessed June 15, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41609873.

Faust and Roberts, in an article centered around natural history, provide some valuable context on the development of the salt industry in Syracuse. I use this article to better chart the rise of salt and the subsequent rise of the city around it.

Goley, Michael. *The Civil War*. Updated ed. New York City, NY: Facts on File, 2009. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://books.google.com/books?id=vb4wKgRPudoC.

Golay, a respected scholar on the Civil War, has provided a pretty comprehensive overview of the Civil War and includes a brief paragraph about the salt and the Onondaga Salt Company. His scholarship may not be perfect as outlined in footnote 17, but he does a decent job summarizing the points made in General Brinkerhoff's speech. I use this book to better contextualize the role of Syracuse salt in the Civil War. The fact that it was deemed to merit a mention in a major general history by a respected historian goes to show how much salt meant to the war effort.

Hardin, Evamaria, and Jon Crispin. *Syracuse Landmarks: An AIA Guide to Downtown and Historic Neighborhoods*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993.

The American Institute of Architects has, in a guide, included information about how Syracuse physically changed after salt manufacturing declined. I use this book to properly describe Syracuse before and after the salt industry, both about how important the industry was in building the city and how important its eventual death was to letting the city grow.

"History." Onondaga Nation. Last modified September 24, 2020. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://www.onondaganation.org/history/.

I use the Onondaga Nation's official history for providing context in the history of the region, specifically about how Onondaga lake is arguably the birthplace of democracy.

Jonas, Andrew E. G, and David Wilson. *The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives*. New York City, NY: State University of New York, 1999.

This book, by two professors of geography, offers information about the reimagination of Syracuse, New York, after the salt industry. This helps me make my argument that the eventual failure of the salt industry allowed Syracuse to thrive in the end.

Kieta, Hannah Margarethe. "A Comparison of the Development of the Salt Industries in Michigan and Ontario." Master's thesis, Wayne State University, 2018. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1041&context=honorstheses.

This thesis analyzes the salt industries of Michigan and Ontario, with some relevant context about Syracuse's role. I use it to establish just how good a job Syracuse did increasing the tariff on selt to benefit itself.

Kirst, Sean. "Onondaga Lake: For the Six Nations, Sacred Place of Shared Destiny." *The Syracuse Post Standard* (Syracuse, NY), April 19, 2010. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://www.syracuse.com/kirst/2010/04/post_44.html.

This 2010 article by Sean Kirst profiles the background of Onondaga Lake. Sean Kirst is a columnist for *The Post Standard*, a well-established local newspaper in the Central New York Region. I use it to establish background.

Kurlansky, Mark. *Salt: A World History*. New York City, NY: Penguin Books, 2003.

Kurlansky's book is an incredibly engrossing and well-written history that tracks salt around the world and throughout history, noting the history it has. It's actually the book that inspired me to dive into Syracuse salt in the first place, and has some very good context on just how important the role salt played in the Civil War really was. I use the book to show the wider context of the Civil War and help place the puzzle piece of Syracuse in its rightful place.

Lavers, Chris. "Rock of Ages." *The Guardian*, February 15, 2002. Accessed June 14, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/feb/16/historybooks.highereducation.

This is a review of the book *Salt: A World History* by Mark Kurlansky. The reviewer, Chris Lavers, is a prominent professor and scholar and provides a nice overview of Kurlansky's work. I use it for providing background on the importance of salt in the 19th century.

Murphy, Joseph Hawley. "The Salt Industry in Syracuse— A Brief Review." *New York History* 30, no. 3 (1949): 304-15. Accessed June 15, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23149964.

Murphy, a professor at Syracuse University, presents a well-researched history of the Syracuse salt industry, though over-focused on its early years and, as the title suggests, only a brief overview. I found his article an invaluable 'diving board' for my own research, and use it to help establish context and show how important salt was in the development of Syracuse.

Osborne, John. "The 1867 New York State Constitutional Convention opens in Albany, New York." House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College. http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/46598.

Provides a brief summary of the 1867 constitutional convention, used for context. This helped me (and hopefully readers) better understand the goals, aims and eventual failure of the convention.

"Thomas G. Alvord, 'Old Salt.'" New York Heritage Digital Collections. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/livpub01/id/348/.

A bit of context about Alvord and his nickname of "old salt". I used this source to clearly establish Alvord’s connection to the salt industry in Syracuse and show the powerful people that the Onondaga Salt Company had behind it.