



Richard Emerson Ela started out from Lebanon, NH and after a variety of jobs and places, he landed in Rochester. In the spring of 1839, he built a 1-1/2 story house on the east side of the Fox River. He began making fanning mills in his basement and soon had a factory across the river. His house was eventually enlarged to twelve first and second floor rooms, four basement rooms and three attics. This space was needed for ten children, hired help, and visitors. Many were businessmen who bought his machines or were involved in his branch shops. Ela did much to help make this area an agricultural center.

The large factory Ela built on the west side of the river, beside the fanning mills, produced plows, milk safes, carriages and wagons. By 1842 he was making 100 mills a

year plus all the other implements. Due to Ela, Rochester became the agricultural heart of the farm implement industry in Wisconsin. He was awarded silver and bronze medals by the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in 1852 and 1853 for the best exhibit of agricultural implements manufactured in Wisconsin.

He closed his business in 1871. A cheese factory and a button factory used the site at one time. Eventually the area became Pioneer Park, a memorial to Ela by his descendants and given to the Village of Rochester.

The park is used for Memorial Day celebrations and most recently for the Sesquicentennial Water Carnival.

*Edwin Ela*