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The Kimball Tobacco Company and the Anti-Tobacco Movement

by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck





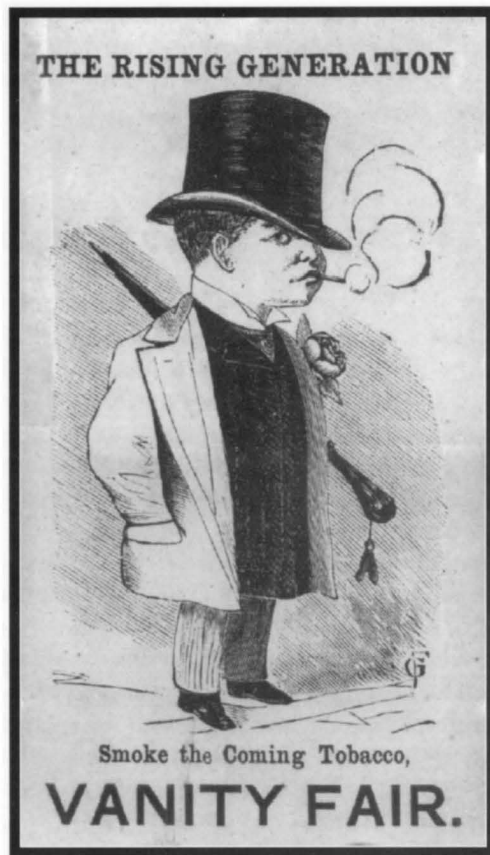
William S. Kimball

Cover: One of a series of Kimball Tobacco Company advertisements using frogs. Note the skull on the toad stool. Kimball was known for creative advertising and marketing.

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One of Kimball's popular brands–Vanity Fair.

The Anti-Smoking Crusade

For several months in the 1980s before Monroe County enacted the strictest anti-smoking prohibition in its history, smokers (smoking events), tobacco emporiums and specialty cigars were growing in popularity even into the 1990s as activists celebrated the death of “Joe Camel.” The anti-smoking movement had been launched mainly against the cigarette industry; attacking the cigarettes’ ill affects on the health of the smoker as well as the second-hand smoker and the industry’s targeting of women, blacks and particularly young people.

Smoking tobacco was unknown to Europeans before the discovery of America; then pipes and cigars were adopted by Europeans and spread throughout Europe and America. A much

stronger tobacco was popularized by Europeans who were introduced to it by Turks and native north Africans during the Crimean War between 1854 and 1856. In the 19th century blends were made from tobaccos grown in New York, Mexico, Cuba, Turkey, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky.

The Kimball Tobacco Company

Kimball's Tobacco Company was the largest tobacco company in Rochester, established in 1846 with James C. Hart. Kimball bought a large five-story brick building along the Erie Canal at south St. Paul and Court Streets and reoutfitted it for manufacturing tobacco. A powerful steam engine on the ground floor drove the machinery, cutters and hoists that allowed a single man to lift great weights. Steam powered the elevator that swiftly carried employees between the five floors.

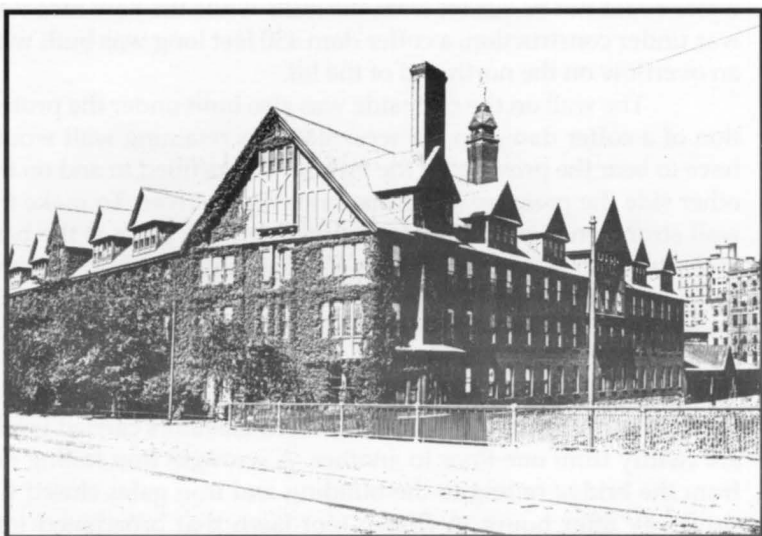
Only experienced cutters were hired to gauge the cuts of tobacco to ensure uniformity. The *Union & Advertiser* observed, "These machines are carefully adjusted under the care of experienced men, who see to it that the cut tobacco is uniform in its fibres, adapted to the tongue of the dainty chewer who rolls his quid as a solace and quickly detects an error in the manufacture. From these machines the cut tobacco is sent upward, to be subjected to drying, packing, etc." ¹ Earlier tobacco cutters were invented by William Sharp, a Mill Street mechanic. ²

Kimball advanced money and helped to patent a cigarette making machine invented by Oscar Allison that could produce 1800 feet of cigarettes per minute. Kimball owned a major share of the machine-making company. The cutters had to be improved and adjusted to keep up with production.³

The *Union & Advertiser* reported that Kimball used the best stock to build and maintain his representation. Hogsheads (measured bundles) that took prizes at fairs in Louisville and Cincinnati were blended with the best Richmond tobacco.

In the upper stories of the building, the tobacco was packaged. Six sewing machines ran continuously to make cloth tobacco bags. The tobacco was pressed into uniform shapes in a machine invented by Kimball himself. Eleven people were needed to feed the tobacco into the machine and to remove the finished packages.

Kimball's sales office was in the Clinton House across the river from his factory at 24 Exchange Street. As a wholesaler, Kimball displayed cigars, pipes and an assortment of smoking ar-



*The Kimball Tobacco Company Factory Court Street.
(note Mercury atop of the smokestack).*

ticles. Some brands had attained great reputations, like Peerless and Fancy Plain chewing tobacco and Rigatta and Fireside smoking tobacco. Other labels produced by Kimball were Star, Honey Dew, Idaho, Hero, Mahogany, Golden Ray, Nigger Head, Bull's Eye, Post Boy, Little Jockey, Excelsior, and Grand Duke. Cut Cavendish was manufactured for common working people. Hermit brand cigarettes were made with a medicated brown paper to soothe the smoker

In 1880 Kimball built a new factory across the river between Court Street and the Erie Canal aqueduct alongside the Genesee River and the Rochester, Fitzhugh and Carroll Race. The new site had been a dumping ground for years. Piles of rubbish several feet deep had to first be cleared away. The building was built with 218 feet of frontage on Court Street and nearly 500 feet between Court Street and the aqueduct. With the rubbish cleared away to rock level the building could be built on solid rock 24 feet below Court Street grade level.

The race was 16 feet above the river level, but the retain-

ing wall between the river and the race was so deteriorated that a rise in the river flooded about 200 feet of the lot. Because the race water could not be cut off from the mills while the new race wall was under construction, a coffer dam 450 feet long was built with an overflow on the north end of the lot.

The wall on the river side was also built under the protection of a coffer dam. On the west side this retaining wall would have to bear the pressure of the lot after it was filled in and on the other side the pressure of a sometimes raging river. To make the wall strong enough, it was constructed ten feet thick at the base and slanted to 3 ¹/₂ feet at the top. The building rested on the river and race walls and piers and arches made of cement. The walls underneath the building were backfilled to create the lot on which the factory stood. ⁴

The four-story factory was built of brick with steep slate roofs, timbered gables and dormers. Two elevators carried workers swiftly from one floor to another. A wrought iron railing ran from the bridge railing to the building and iron gates closed the driveway after hours. A fifteen-foot lawn that broadened into shrubs and gardens ran the length of the Court Street side of the building. The driveway led under an arch into a courtyard where there was a shipping dock, boiler and engine rooms. The foghorn was taken from the old building and placed on the top of the detached, twelve-foot square, 150 foot smokestack. ⁵

Kimball was quite aware of the skyline image his new factory would create in Rochester. He hired J. Guernsey Mitchell to design a statue of the Roman god of commerce, Mercury, as a symbol of a healthy economy. The statue towered over the skyline from atop of the Kimball Tobacco Company smokestack until the mid-twentieth century when it was removed to demolish the building. Popular sentiment demanded that it be reset on the skyline. Today it stands on top of Lawyers' Cooperative Publishing Company across the street from its original perch.

Kimball invented some of the machines himself or made improvements upon others' inventions. Kimball had invented a press for baling tobacco and pressing it into uniform sizes. The machine could be adjusted to package four different sizes at the same time. It was a great labor saving invention, on the market just in time for the new federal regulation requiring that all smoking tobacco be packaged and labeled before it could be sold. Each day over fifteen thousand pounds of tobacco per day could be packaged, labeled and stamped with its tax-paid number by only 25 girls. The *Union & Advertiser* reported that one adult and two children could pack ten gross in two ounce packages, 550 bush-

els in four ounce packages, 1,100 pounds in eight ounce packages and 2,000 pounds in one pound packages. The machine's capacity depended upon how many hands were feeding it tobacco.⁶

The Kidd Machine Works at Browns Race produced the machines for public sale. A toggle joint allowed the machine to operate with very little strength provided by steam or hand.

Desiderata in Smoking.

According to Dr. Berthand, in the *Tribune Medicate*, whatever be the mode of smoking, direct contact of the tobacco with the "mucous buccalis"—mucous lining of the cheeks—and the teeth must be avoided; cigars should be smoked in an amber, ivory, or enameled porcelain mouthpiece; to smoke, by relighting them, portions of cigars that have been extinguished, together with the system of blackened and juicy pipes, must be avoided, as it is the surest way of being affected by nicotine; every smoker would do well, if practicable, to rinse his mouth after smoking, and it would be well to subject pipes and bowls in which tobacco has been burned to frequent washings either with ether or with water mixed with alcohol or with vinegar. The cigarette is preferable, by reason of its slight quantitative importance, and the paper which interferes with the contact of its contents with the buccal mucous membrane; but to realise all the desiderata in this case it would be necessary to have the "papelito" made of flax thread, and to abstain from the practice—which has become so universal—of retaining the aspiration at the back as the mouth, so as to pour it out of the nostrils afterward.

Turn of the century notice. Unidentified source.

The great Strike

On May 16, 1883 the fog horn atop the chimney of Kimball's Tobacco Company broke the morning silence announcing that the company was back in business. Over the past several weeks William Kimball had rejected demands by the female workers (known as "cigarette girls") three times.

A committee representing the women demanded a 20% increase which Kimball flatly rejected, claiming a 25% increase in store prices prohibited such an increase in wages. A few days later,

My Lady Nicotine

From *The Rochester Song Book, 1910.*

From the Musical comedy "*Rushed*" A Rochester Smoking Song.

Words by Joseph L. O'Connor

Music by Norman Nairn

My lady Nicotine, I've looked the whole world through,
Yet ne'er a maid in all the land there can compare with you;
Rise from the nut-brown bowl of my meerschaum old, O Queen,
Soothe me to rest and peace___ my dream, My Lady Nicotine.

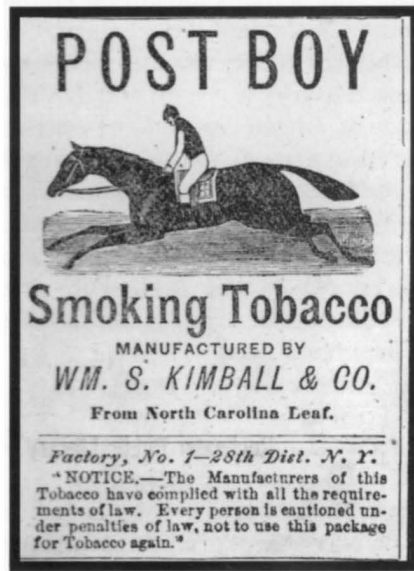
As Venus in days of old, arose from the ocean foam,
I bid you rise from the meerschaum too, Prometheus made your home;
When he stole fire from the gods he gave me you, O Queen,
I claim the gift he gave me My Lady Nicotine.

Chorus

I'm off for the land of bliss,----- On the clouds of smoke that rise--- and
waft me away to the land of dreams, to the land--- of Paradise,----- I
want no fond caress--- No kiss my dainty Queen,----- Save yours in the
smoke as it leaves my lips, My Lady Nicotine.

the Knights of Labor also visited asking if the increase was being considered. Kimball refused them also. So at the end of the work week, workers began to refuse new tobacco. The work stoppage put Kimball in a difficult position. He could not have tobacco processed by the nonstriking men because the heat would dry it out before the striking girls would return to work. It would end up as shorts or waste. So when the men arrived to process the tobacco he had to turn them away.

Fearing a strike, Kimball locked out 500 female employees, 400 of whom were members of Knights of Labor Assembly 1776. The smokestack atop the Kimball Tobacco Company idled. The master workman of the Knights of Labor said Kimball had refused a ten cent per thousand raise for the girls who were receiving 45, 50, 55 and 60 cents per thousand. The master workman said that this would raise the girls' pay to meet pay of other tobacco companies even before the tax cut. The Knights of Labor said there was no threat of a strike when Kimball locked the women out. The workers had promised not to strike without adequate notice so that there would be no loss of stock to the company. The union claimed that the one dollar per thousand saved the company in a tax reduction was supposed to be shared with employee wage increases. The actual tax reduction was \$1.25 per thousand—



what the union felt was more than adequate to meet the requested pay raise.

The steadfast, but struggling “cigarette girls” held a meeting on the morning of May 12 and planned to meet again a week later. For at least a week they planned to keep Kimball’s company idle. In the meantime, a leader of the Knights of Labor met with members in his Front Street offices planning to call out all Knights of Labor members in full strike.⁷

A month after they struck, the women came out “in full force” to host an evening fundraising fair to support the strikers. A sign declaring “United We Stand” was displayed among flags that draped the room. The Hyland’s orchestra played music as people danced late into the night. For a week the girls hosted the fair and dance hoping to raise significant money for their support. Companies sympathetic to the strikers donated goods to be auctioned: George D. Smith donated a music box; Burke, Fitzsimmons & Co. donated dress patterns; Edward Nier, a picture; Ritzel & Co., a cake; Webber Brothers, ice cream; M. Greentree, candies; and various other companies donated pipes, tobacco, bags, lemons, oranges, soap and flags. More donations were expected throughout the week.

Hiring about 200 new, but experienced “cigarette girls,” Kimball resumed production only a week after the strike, effectively locking out the striking girls from reemployment.⁸

Kimball was perhaps the largest employer of women in the Rochester area in the late 19th century. Contrary to popular perception women commonly worked outside the home. Their pay was usually low, the work was hard and they did not control their own wages. One seventeen year old girl who sewed tobacco bags for Kimball lived in a small apartment over a Front Street business. She left work daily and returned home to care for her mother who was terminally ill in bed with consumption. One newspaper complained the the competing daily had embarrassed the woman by peering into her personal life to show the poverty in which she and other Front Street poor lived ⁹ Kimball, though, had a reputation for being a fair employer.

Kimball, The Master Marketer

Inventions were only part of what assured the success of Kimball's company. Ingenious marketing was another. Kimball was noted for packaging; sharing the philosophy that " a thing well put up is half sold." He inserted collectible playing cards printed with beautiful showgirls into packages of tobacco. Buyers were encouraged to collect all of the photographs. They were very popular and considered novel at the time.

Kimball wanted to develop a nationwide market. To determine where his sales were strongest, he offered merchandise in trade for proofs of purchase. Coupons were placed in Regatta and Fireside brand tobaccos offering customers a free meerschaum pipe. The redemptions that came from nearly every state and Canada tracked the growing market of Kimball tobacco helping the company to target desired growth areas. The meerschaum pipe in the 1870s and 1880s was a recommended, desirable pipe.

In 1888 Kimball ran a successful nationwide contest offering 430 prizes. Smokers returned cigar boxes for prizes from five dollars to \$22,500. One winner returned 61,650 cigar boxes as proofs of purchase; another returned 44,917. Not only were the prize winners happy, but Kimball's good reputation spread and the company learned where the sales were good, in what product and where the company should target advertisements. ¹⁰

The Anti-Smoking Crusade Heats Up

Though Americans smoked and chewed various forms of tobacco for hundreds of years, soldiers returning home from the Crimean War popularized cigarette smoking in the United States.



This was frustrating to the anti-smoking crusaders who stepped up their campaign to protect the health of Americans. Newspaper and magazine editors were sometimes, but not always sympathetic to the crusaders. Much depended upon whether the writer himself was a tobacco user or how he felt about the age and sex of the user or the affects on the health. Kimball, himself was president of the Rochester *Post Express* for many years.

In 1864 a writer for the *Union & Advertiser* noted the increased popularity of tobacco, "Notwithstanding all that has been said and written of the folly of smoking, its injurious effects upon body and mind—the practice is growing upon the American people, and it has ceased to be regarded as a vulgar habit."¹¹

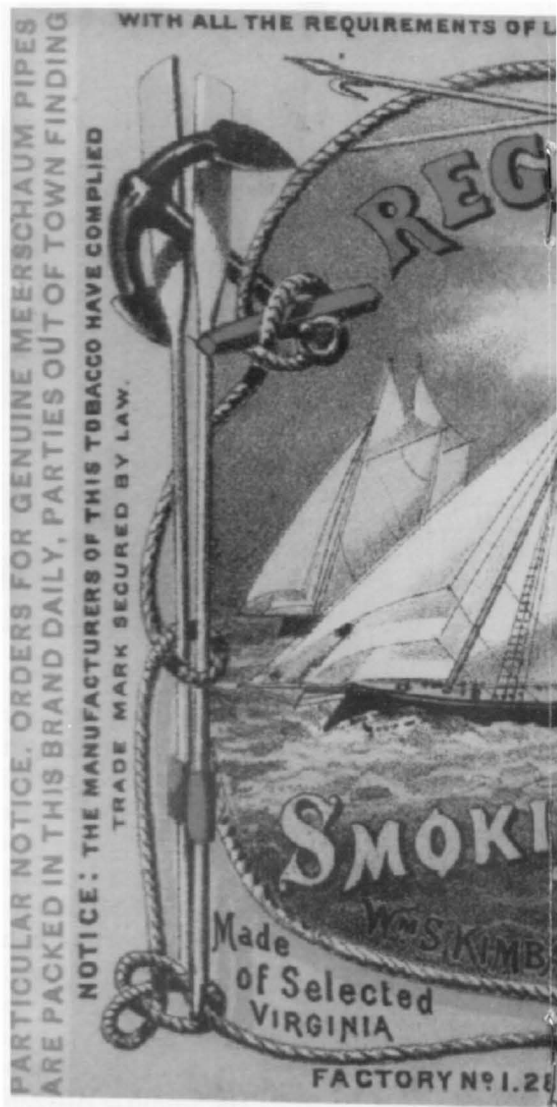
The *Union & Advertiser* offered little hope to the anti-tobacco crusaders because tobacco smoking was becoming more accepted in society. The paper said that though they speak against its affect on the health, morals and polite conduct, doctors, ministers and chesterfields (well-mannered gentlemen) use tobacco widely The chesterfields claimed that gentlemen could smoke in the presence of a lady with her permission.

The Society Against the Abuse of Tobacco worked through teachers and schools to stem the rise among youthful smokers in the 1880s. Talks were given, pamphlets were distributed and articles were placed in the newspapers. Teachers and principals acknowledged the rise in youth smoking; but said they could do nothing but warn or suspend a student caught smoking on school grounds and could do nothing in public places but inform the parents.

There were as many medical experts touting the benefits of tobacco as there were experts warning of tobacco's hazards. Opinions differed on the affects on the mind as well. But agreement was general that use of tobacco was increasing and that tobacco's active ingredient, nicotine, was addictive. The *Union & Advertiser* reported that "multitudes among all nations depend upon it daily, suffering extremely if deprived of it for a time."¹²

The Society and doctors reported that the affect on the new user was giddiness, faintness, nausea and vomiting, with great debility.¹³

Addiction to a socially disgusting habit was not the major complaint of the anti-smokers. There were serious physical diseases and conditions that resulted from smoking and chewing. The Academie des Sciences published a study by M. Decalsne in 1866 on which the *Union & Advertiser* commented, the conclusion exhibits another clause in the heavy bill of indictment against the use of tobacco. Decalsne studied 83 smokers between the ages of 27 and 42 and found that 21 of them had irregular heartbeats not attributable to



any other cause. Nine of the 21 were restored to a regular heart-beat when they stopped smoking. Decalsne termed this condition "narcotism."¹⁴



When cigarette manufacturers used additives to promote their tobacco or sold other substances to smoke, it made it difficult for the anti-smoking crusaders to spread the word about the unhealthy affects. One 1878 advertisement for Kimball's cigarettes stated, "Catarrh cigarettes for the cure and relief of catarrh, asthma, cold in the head, hay fever, and bronchial infections. Purely vegetable, No tobacco."¹⁵

The *Popular Science Monthly* agreed that the Society Against the Abuse of Tobacco was rightfully aggressive in protecting public health, but it had "tried to gain its end by exaggerations that can only compromise it." The *Monthly* agreed that while tobacco had a mischievous affect on the health and could cause serious diseases, its use was harmless to the mind, "We should not advise any one to use it, and should try to keep women and children from doing so."¹⁶

The *Popular Science Monthly*, however, promoted tobacco's affect on the mind stating, "It causes an agreeable torpor,

during which thought continues lucid, and the capacity for work is not diminished. Such is the attraction it exercises, and which causes it to be sought for by so many thinkers and students. Tobacco is to them a help in mental labor. When fatigue begins and the need of a moment's rest is felt, when the thought fails to present

itself with the usual exactness, and the mind hesitates over the shape to give it, the student, writer, or investigator stops, lights his pipe, and soon, by favor of this pleasant narcotic, the thought appears clear and limpid through the bluish cloud in which the smoker has enveloped himself.”¹⁷

The author of a pro-tobacco article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in August of 1860 claimed tobacco use was universal and growing and was becoming more acceptable among refined people. He claimed that the nicotia, nicotiamin and empyreumatic oil in tobacco were all poisonous, but not more injurious to the human body than any other foods that contained poisons such as the prussic acid from the peach or chlorine in table salt, carbonic acid gas in soda or champagne. He claimed that the 1860 annual consumption of tobacco in the United States was three pounds, eight ounces per head.... “it is the sole recognized narcotic of civilization.”¹⁸

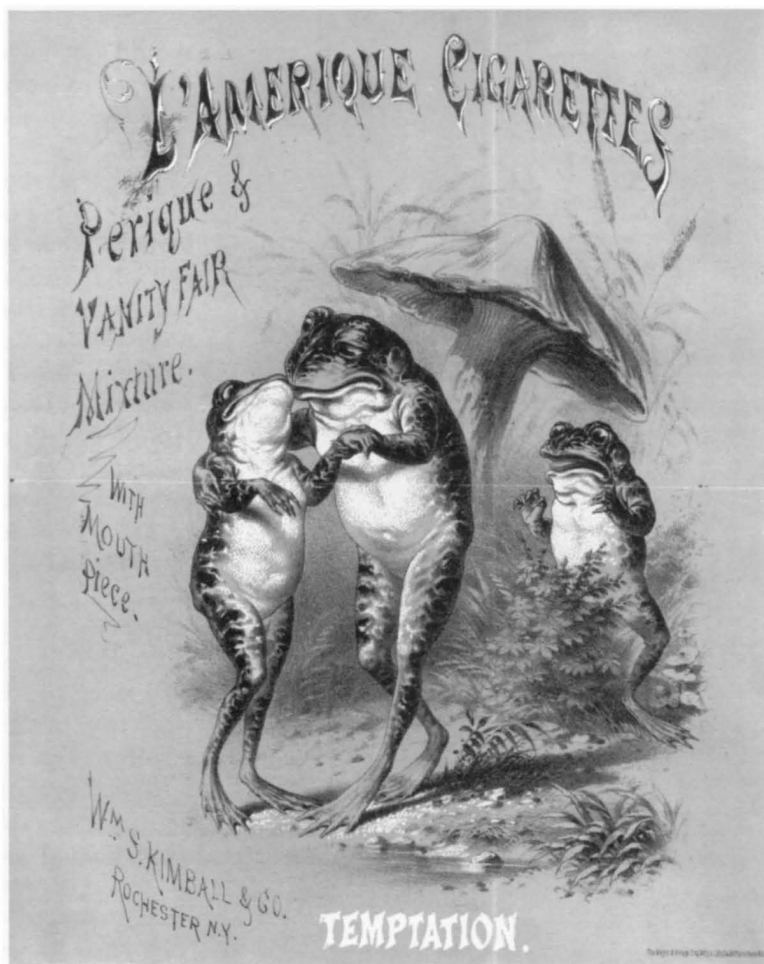
The *Union & Advertiser* charged that the author of the *Atlantic Monthly* article was such an able combatant that “His defence (sic) of the weed ought to entitle him to a nomination to the presidency and an election at the hands of the tobacco using electors of these United States who are sufficiently numerous to exercise the control at the ballot box.”

Noting tobacco’s addictive qualities, the paper pointed out, “Is there not danger that those who abandon the gentler stimulant, tobacco, may turn to the fiercer one, alcohol?”¹⁹ The *Union & Advertiser* did not argue in favor of tobacco use, but did “accept the situation”— that its use was increasing as the population increased.

The paper advised, “The pipe is often the chief solace of the working man, and many an industrious matron finds delight in her snuff, or perchance in sharing the pipe with her companion. The pipe is the synonym of contentment and domestic peace in many, very many households. It had better remain there than be displaced by something worse.”²⁰

There are those who sit quietly at home at the close of the labors of the day and inhale gentle fumes of the pipe, who might but for that resort to the nearest pot (marijuana) house and find less profitable company.”²¹

In fact, a display advertisement for hasheesh (marijuana) candy beckoned users from the pages of the *Union & Advertiser* promoting the hasheesh candy as “the oriental nervine compound... a most delightful joy and beauty in the world is for the first time introduced into this country in a modical and agreeable form. A most delightful exhilarant confectionized, produces



the most perfect mental cheeriness. It is a thousand fold better than quinine for chills and fever. It imparts a vigor and strength to the mind and body truly marvelous. Gladden the heart. A blessing to the nervous... of all classes and will rejoice the hearts of thousands in the world." ²²

There seemed to be a resignation about the inevitable vices of mankind—"if people will smoke," the *Union & Advertiser* commented, "it is best that they should indulge in the manner least detrimental to health and least expensive." ²³

While the editor gave his personal advice on the "fumigaton of tobacco", he also wrote, "There are those who know nothing of the effect of tobacco when smoked, who will say there is no pleasure in the practice. They are certainly mistaken, but we



would not have them convinced by adopting the custom.”²⁴

The pipe was becoming as popular as the cigar in the mid 1860s, particularly the meerschaum. Expensive, handsome pipes were being carved in America from imported blocks of meerschaum clay. The recommended pipe was the long stemmed clay pipe after which was the meerschaum bowl with an amber mouthpiece and a clay stem. Pipe manufacturers had unsuccessfully tried to de-

velop a pipe that could condense the oils that gathered in the stems of pipes, that built up harmful substances in the mouths of smokers. The writer for the *Union & Advertiser* cautioned that every smoker should be careful how he smokes, never using a short pipe, using long clay pipes and avoiding wooden pipes or pipes with glass stems.²

Pipes were perceived to be less injurious than cigars. Even cigars were recommended to be thrown away when they were only half smoked. A porous cigar holder was believed to be more healthful. Most men could not be induced to throw away half of an expensive cigar. Working men who had little money for extravagance risked being accused of wastefulness. Admitting that tobacco had a pleasant affect on smokers, the newspaper writer recommended that men of moderate income smoke the less expensive pipe rather than cheap cigars.²⁶

In the late 1890s one *Union & Advertiser* writer observed:

Forty years ago cigar smokers insisted on dark cigars. As dark as your coat. Manufacturers used to dip them in licorice to darken them. Customers demanded old and dry cigars. Dry and black is still popular in England. 'An Englishman puts his cigar to his ear to hear if it is crumbly and crisp.'

The change in American taste was a result of the recent war [Spanish-American]. Now Americans want green not dry. Heavy duties and an IRS tax made cigars expensive. Over those years cigar prices went from five to twenty cents each.



Manufacturers and dealers decided to reeducate the public to encourage fresh green cigars to get rid of old stores and keep it moving since they lost their Havana source. [a result of the war] They told smokers old and dry cigars were harmful.

"remember that circulars were sent out warning smokers that old cigars were dry and husky and consequently ancient Conchas, Cubanas and Flavoritas, of course, it was all rot, for the older a cigar becomes the more it improves like wine. There is that in tobacco which ripens and matures with age. No cigar is so dry that it will not become moist after two or three whiffs.

In a while people got to buying their cigars before they arrived from Cuba. No cigar was good unless it had water in it and was pliable. The popular preference changed to light colored cigars because smokers imagine they are less strong, which is quite a delusion".²⁷

The writer said that cigars labeled as Havanna continued to show up in the marketplace despite the ban on trade for them. There were suspicions that Pennsylvania was sending its tobacco to Cuba to be imported as Cuban tobacco. The writer dismissed this story on the grounds that "it is almost a capital offense to import any kind of tobacco save snuff and plug into Cuba." He thought Mexican tobacco was a close second in comparison to Cuban tobacco but people would not believe it.²⁸

The media had a strong influence on shaping as well as reflecting public opinion. In 1847 the *Rochester Daily Democrat* writer announced to the public, "James H. Kelly yesterday presented us with a fine bundle of cigars made from tobacco raised in this city by Mathew G. Warner. The cigars look well, and as soon as they are dry enough to smoke, we will take the opinion of some connoisseurs on their flavor." ²⁹

Inundated by the tobacco industry and the anti-tobacco crusaders the *Union & Advertiser* jokingly declared, "Who knows how much longer men would live if they did not use tobacco?... it is evident that the early Dutch settlers of this country all used tobacco freely, and few of them were ever known to die. They disappeared from the stage of human action—probably dried up and whirled away from this mundane sphere in a cloud of smoke." ³⁰

The Growth of An Industry

Immense fortunes were being made in tobacco manufacturing. The supply could not meet the growing demand in the 1860s. Prices were expected to rise because of the short supply. The *Union & Advertiser* observed, "Many who chew the weed would pay one dollar per pound for it rather than be deprived of the article."

Manufacturers competed for the growing market by creative promotion and advertising. Kimball's Tobacco Company, as an example, included collectible cards in packages of cigarettes. The playing cards promoted beautiful show girls. The pictures were considered racy at the time. Just as advertisers seek sports heroes today to represent their product, Kimball Tobacco also sought the endorsement of influential sportsmen like Seth Green, father of Fish Culture who was recognized internationally as an expert on fish. When Green was the famous head of New York's Fisheries, he endorsed Kimball's tobacco saying, "I find Vanity Fair to be the best article of tobacco adapted to the wants of the sportsman. Have used your tobacco for many years and know them all to be first class." ³¹

Smoking had so permeated American culture that the type of tobacco smoked helped to define characters in literature and helped readers to form opinions about the characters and authors. In an article in *McClure's Magazine*, Robert Barr wrote, "Conan Doyle's study, workshop and smoking room is a nice place in a downpour, and I can recommend the novelist's brand of cigarettes. Show me the room in which a man works, and I'll show you how to smoke his cigarettes." ³²

KIMBALL'S
New CATARRH
GIGARETTES

A MILD REMEDY FOR
Catarrh, Asthma,
Cold in the Head,
and Hay Fever.

UNLIKE ANY IN MARKET.

AN AGREEABLE SMOKE.

Do not strangle nor sting the throat. Cause a Sweet Breath. Relieve Heart-Burn. Aid Digestion. A Disinfectant to the Sick Room.

Put up in packets convenient for the pocket
and retail at 10 Cents.

Sold by Cigar Dealers and Druggists.

WM. S. KIMBALL & CO., Sole Manufacturers,
ROCHESTER, N.Y.

Kimball's New Catarrh Cigarettes are mild, effective and more agreeable than any before offered. In convenient form for the pocket. Price, 10 cents.

Women and young children were considered off limits in advertising; but the advertising and the changing image of tobacco smokers increased tobacco use among this group anyway. One British ditty declared "Cigarettes will spoil yer life and kill yer baby."

³³ Cigarette holders with filters became symbols of sophistication among women and successful businessmen. The filters gave the sense of diminished dangers from tar and nicotine. The popular image was that political bosses made decisions in smoke-filled rooms where every powerful man smoked an expensive cigar. Thoughtful, intelligent men smoked pipes-working men, tough guys and cowboys smoked cigarettes, fast, loose women smoked cigarettes in holders. Various forms of tobacco were

worked into illustrations to depict character types. In Thomas Nast's famous 1860s painting, a playful, mischievous Santa Claus smoked a pipe while smoke circled his head.

Young people wanting to appear older smoked, adopting the image portrayed by advertising. Sales to youth were vigorously attacked. One woman in the 1880s was arrested for selling cigarettes to a minor and was fined. She protested that she had never sold to a minor before, but witnesses testified that her sales were habitual and not unusual for other store owners.

Civilizing the Tobacco User

The social habits of smokers and chewers disgusted women and endangered the health of the general public. In the 1860s the *Union & Advertiser* complained that tobacco chewers often did not use the spittoons provided by stores and public buildings. The chewers spit on the wainscoting and floors, which the paper complained may not be washed for a month. Chewers made a game of spitting. The paper complained, *tobacco chewers and smokers are in the habit of spitting at or upon a stove, if there is one within their reach, no matter whether the stove is open or closed. If a stove is left standing in summer in a store, office or public place, it soon becomes a monument to commemorate the observance of a filthy practice and drips with the unclean glandular secretions. In cold weather, when stoves are used for heating, then they are often more attractive to the spitters who appear to delight in spurring this juice of the real Virginia upon the heated iron, that they may see the incense rise.*³⁴

The paper reported that the County Clerk's office had a new stove with six to eight cylindrical pipes that returned cold air to the furnace and sent it out heated on top. Chewers who came to the office went at once to the stove and spit in the cool air returns, thinking they would not be discovered; however, they spit, "and quicker than by telegraph, Shadboldt's (inventor of the stove) machine sent a current of air, laden with the perfume of tobacco away over to the distant person in the apartment...."³⁵

The End of Kimball Tobacco Company

William S. Kimball died on March 25, 1895 while vacationing at Virginia Beach with his wife and a physician friend. When news of his death reached the public, American Tobacco stock dropped two points on the New York Stock Exchange. Five years earlier Kimball had pushed for an absorption of his company into

the American Tobacco Company. He also controlled the Allison Machine Company that manufactured the cigarette cutters that allowed his tobacco company to gain leadership in the production of cigarettes. The Kimball Tobacco Factory closed in 1905 just a decade after the death of its founder and the Cluet-Peabody & Company took over the building to manufacture shirts and collars. Rochester no longer had the leadership in tobacco manufacturing that it had had in the last half of the 19th century.

The End of An Era?



It was common in the 19th century to set aside a smoking room to confine the stale, heavy smells of cigars. Women regularly opened windows to air out the drapes and rugs. There were smoking jackets to protect clothing, smoke stands to hold tobaccos, ashtrays and spittoons and various tools to maintain pipes and cut cigars. In 1882 the Great Western Railway advertised the "new and elegant smoking and day coaches" that ran from Suspension Bridge at Niagara Falls to Detroit and Chicago.³⁶

In the decades over the past century and a half images of tobacco smokers have come and gone; some were created in literature and movies, others in advertising and real life. The acceptance of or protest against smoking has also passed through periods from aggressive anti-smoking societies to women passing out cigarettes to soldiers going off to war. In the past few decades anti-smokers who protested second-hand smoke in restaurants or workplaces were taken lightly or treated as if they were infringing on the rights of smokers. The publicized battles for clean, healthy air continued, finding legitimacy in the words of the Surgeon General who recently declared cigarette smoking a hazard to health. Restaurants were divided into smoking and nonsmoking areas where

friends dining together had to decide whose needs and rights would prevail over lunch. By the 1990s restaurants have shrinking areas devoted to smoking, while some new restaurants have advertised smoking rooms where diners can retire after eating.

At the close of the 1990s tobacco manufacturers are kneeling to restrictive laws and health codes across the country.

Time Magazine reported, "With billion-dollar class actions and tales of perjury by top execs, cigarette makers are feeling the heat. Their nightmare scenario is that smoking will be outlawed.³⁷ While tobacco companies battle government and private people in the courtroom they were discovered to be developing powerfully addictive tobaccos in Brazil. Executives claim Joe Camel was not meant to appeal to children.

In Minnesota tobacco companies used history as a defense in a suit brought by the state and Blue Cross and Blue Shield. When University of Minnesota professor testified that the state and the public knew of the hazards of tobacco and did little to stop its use. One needs to give only a passing look at the history of Rochester to realize that while leading in tobacco manufacture, tobacco use was vigorously opposed here and elsewhere.³⁸

Tobacco use among young people has grown at an alarming rate in spite of the fact that President Clinton has declared war on the tobacco industry. Researchers have been developing new uses for tobacco for more than a century, just as Kimball's Tobacco Company had done. In the 1990s there were several proposed uses for tobacco including Fraction-1, a nutritious protein used to fortify cosmetics, food and soft drinks; an enzyme to replace the expensive human placenta derivative used to treat the rare genetic disorder, Gaucher's disease; anti-biotics and anti-fungicides and biodegradable plastic for disposable diapers and food packages and rust inhibitors. Though tobacco use is in transition, it is not likely to disappear in the near future. The controversy will continue.³⁹

All visuals from the Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library, Kimball Tobacco Company files.

Endnotes

1. Union & Advertiser December 24, 1870, p.2.
2. Rochester Daily Advertiser, October 18, 1847, p.2.
3. Rochester Historical Society Publication Fund Series, Vol. 14, 198-199.
4. Union & Advertiser, March 15, 1880, p.5.
5. IBID
6. IBID , February 20, 1869, p.2.
7. IBID, May 12, 1883, p.2.
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9. *IBID*, February 16, 1869, p.2.
10. *IBID*, July 3, 1888, p.2.
11. *IBID*, December 5, 1864, p.2.
12. *IBID*, November 18, 1886, p.2.
13. IBID.
14. IBID, November 21, 1866, p. 2.
15. Pamphlet file 2, Industries, Kimball, Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.
16. Union & Advertiser, August 27, 1892, p. 2.
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18. IBID, July 24, 1860, p.2.
19. IBID, August 4, 1865, p.2.
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28. IBID.
29. Rochester Daily Democrat , February 9, 1847, p. 2.
30. Union & Advertiser, August 4, 1865, p.2.
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32. Union & Advertiser, November 17, 1894, p.6.
33. *Tobacco notes*, Office of the City Historian.
34. *Union & Advertiser*, December 11, 1860, p.2.
35. *IBID*.
36. *Rochester City Directory*, 1882, p. 555.
37. *Time Magazine*, February 12, 1996.
38. *Democrat & Chronicle*, March 25, 1998, p. 3.
39. *Time Magazine*, *IBID*

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