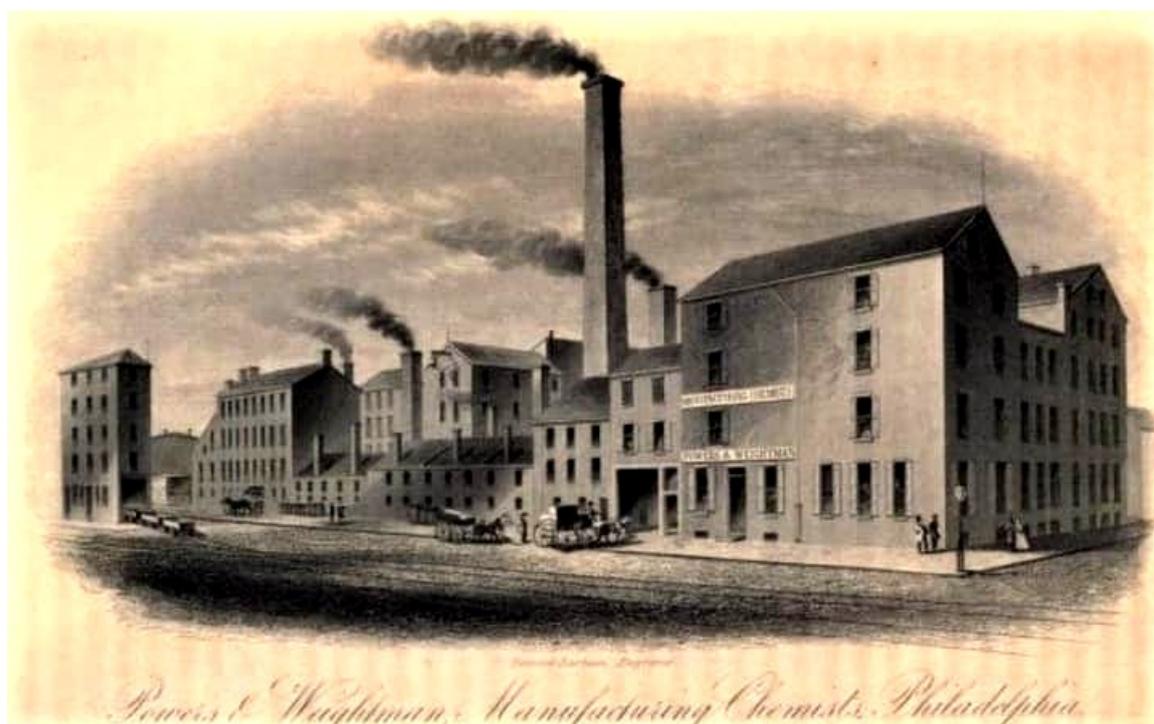


## East Falls Past--East Falls' Pharmaceutical Legacy

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Long-time Fallsers often reminisce about the company Powers-Weightman Rosengarten Co. (PWR), which was known for its quinine production to fight malaria during the Civil War. Also, often mentioned is the former Ravenhill Mansion on Philadelphia University's Ravenhill campus, a beautiful stone building famous for being the home of one of the company's heads and one of Pennsylvania's wealthiest, William Weightman.

PWR's origins date back to predecessors in the early 1800s. Powers and Weightman (P&W) began in 1847, when Thomas Powers and his nephew William Weightman took over after one of the original founders died. Weightman became well known not only for the company, but also known for being one of America's greatest property owners. Upon Weightman's death in 1904, his only surviving child, Anne, inherited his estate and became one of the world's wealthiest women.

In 1905, Powers and Weightman merged with Rosengarten & Sons, which had an operation in south Philadelphia, to form PWR. The merger was logical as both companies had very similar manufacturing lines. Merck bought out the company in 1927, likely moving much of the manufacturing to Rahway, NJ. Remains of the East Falls plant supposedly continued to exist until the site was redeveloped for a housing project in the early 1950s.

The East Falls, or Falls of Schuylkill, plant, which was on the site of the current Falls Ridge and Top of the Hill, was actually one of two Philadelphia plants. The main plant was located at 9<sup>th</sup> and Parrish in North Philadelphia.

There was also a New York office, presumably for sales and warehousing.

According to the P&W catalog presented at the World's Columbian Exposition of Chicago in 1893, "At the Falls of Schuylkill the firm owns about seventy acres, ten or twelve of which are occupied by the laboratory buildings. The measurement of the city laboratory is about 190 by 360 feet...The aggregate of employees is about six hundred, of whom one hundred and twenty-five are females." The company also built housing for its workers, siting some of it on the east side of the factory grounds where it became known as "Labby Hill."

Although it is difficult to determine what was uniquely made in East Falls, there is an abundance of information on what kinds of products the whole company made. PWR/ PW medicine bottles and Rosengarten & Sons invoices show up frequently in on-line auctions and, more rarely, one can find

reference books and catalogs. The 1893 catalog mentioned above lists close 500 chemicals. The most well known, of course, is quinine in the form of pure and in many different combinations with other components. Other pharmaceutical chemicals include tryparsamide (contains arsenic) for fighting African sleeping sickness, chloroform for anesthesia, acetate morphine for reducing pain, mercurous iodide for treating conditions ranging from acne to syphilis (but later banned due to its toxicity), strontium lactate for improving bone strength (still used today), and strychnine for various ailments (at low doses due to its extreme toxicity).