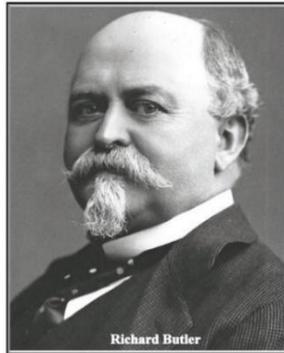


Richard Butler

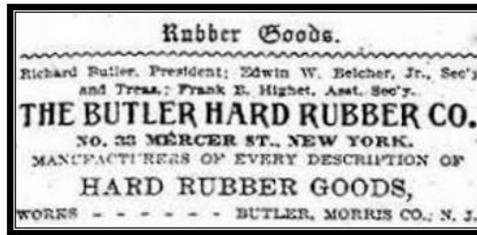
Namesake of Butler, NJ



Richard Butler, though essentially a self-made man, came from a respected family. He was a descendant of Richard Butler, one of the first settlers of Hartford, Connecticut. His father, Cyrus Butler, first moved to Utica, New York. In 1820, he moved his family to Norwalk, Ohio. His son, Richard, was born in Birmingham, Ohio on August 9, 1831 and resided there until shortly after the death of his father in 1844. At the age of fourteen, without an extensive education, wealth, or any great advantages, he moved to New York City and started his business career.

He eventually found employment with the importing house of A.W. Spies & Company. He rose quickly through the company, and five years later, at the age of twenty-one, he became a partner in the firm of Wm. H. Cary & Company, the largest firm in the notion trade in the United States. He continued with the company until it was destroyed by a fire in 1879. Mr. Butler then turned his attention to the hard rubber business. Cary & Company had been the selling agent for the Rubber Comb and Jewelry Company. Butler bought an interest in the company and became its president and general manager. In 1883, he reorganized it as the Butler Hard Rubber Company. The factory was located in West Bloomingdale, NJ, (later, Butler) but the headquarters and warehouse were located at 33 Mercer Street in New York City.





In 1898, the Butler Hard Rubber Company, the India Rubber Comb Company, and the Goodyear Hard Rubber Company were merged into a new corporation called the American Hard Rubber Company. First chosen as vice president, Mr. Butler later assumed the office of president.

When the French were considering giving the United States a monument to celebrate “a century of independence,” Richard Butler was asked to visit various French artists and select one to design the monument. Mr. Butler was chosen because of his interest and knowledge of art. He was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and reportedly had one of the finest collections of American paintings in the world. The first meeting between Richard Butler and the French artist, Frederic Bartholdi, which most likely took place when Mr. Butler visited Bartholdi’s studio in Paris. Bartholdi was eventually selected to design the monument. He and Butler developed a lifelong friendship; Mr. Butler became the secretary of the committee organized to raise money for the construction of the base of the monument that became known as the Statue of Liberty. For more on Richard Butler’s role in the construction of the Statue of Liberty, see the article in “Stories About Butler.”

Richard Butler purchased the Falconer farm, south of his factory, and through the Real Estate Development Company, turned the farm into a residential neighborhood. In 1886, he hired surveyor William Roome to lay out Bartholdi Avenue (which he named after his friend), Hasbrouck and Belleview Avenues, Mabey Lane and Pearl Place. It was from this tract that Mr. Butler donated the property where the Butler school and two churches would be built.

Mr. Butler married twice, first to Laura Flavilla Clough in 1853, with whom he had six children, and second, in 1896, to Mary Brown Hascall, widow of Col. Herbert Hascall. Carey Avenue and Pearl Place were named after two of Richard Butler’s daughters.

On May 21, 1888, a meeting of the building committee of the Butler School Board met at the Park Hotel. The topic of discussion was an offer by Mr. Richard Butler to donate land for the construction of a new school. The tract of land he offered was approximately 2,000 ft. square and was selected from the section of his property referred to as the apple orchard. Some members of the committee suggested a wooden frame structure for the school because it was economical. Mr. Butler however insisted on a stone structure which would cost more than the allotted \$5,000. When William Keil, later Butler’s first mayor, agreed to personally pay the difference between the cost of a wooden building and a stone one, the school was approved. It was later agreed that the school should include a tower at a cost of \$100 and a clock at a cost of \$400.



Mr. Butler also gave land to two of Butler's religious organizations. In 1893, when Saint Anthony's Catholic Church was moved from Arch Street to Bartholdi Avenue, Mr. Butler donated the land for the construction of a new church, school, and monastery. His property on the corner of Carey Avenue and Bartholdi Avenue was also donated for the construction of the Methodist Tabernacle and rectory in 1896.



Richard Butler was stricken by a fatal illness a little more than a year before his death. On advice of his physician, he spent the winter of 1901 in Pasadena and Coronado Beach, California. His paralysis grew worse and nothing could stop the progress of the disease. He died on November 12, 1902 at the Renaissance Hotel in New York City. Shortly before his illness, Mr. Butler had given permission for his name to be used for the new borough named in his honor.

Sources: *Memorial Tribute to Richard*, 1903, *Suburban Trends*, Sept. 4, 1977, *Suburban Trends*, March 23, 1986, *Suburban Trends*, June 22, 1986, *Suburban Trends*, April 20, 1988, *Butler in Story and Pictures*, 1951

