

Rochdale Pioneers

Key Vocabulary

Cotton mill	A building where cotton is spun or woven to make cotton textiles
Working class	The class of people who work for wages, usually at manual labour
Adulteration	The making of food or drink weaker or to lower its quality, by adding something else.
Subscription	An amount of money that you pay regularly to receive a product or service.
Democracy	A system of government in which the power is held by those who are freely voted for by the people
Workhouse	A building where very poor people in Britain used to work, in the past, in exchange for food and shelter.
Co-operative	A farm, shop, business or other organisation which is owned and jointly ran by its members, who share the profits or benefits.
Canal	A long, thin stretch of water that is artificially made either for boats to travel along or for taking water from one area to another.
Chimney Sweep	A person whose job is cleaning out the soot from chimneys.

During the Industrial Revolution, Rochdale was a famous cotton processing town, with lots of cotton mills. In the 1840's, the working conditions for the working class were worse than ever. The factories and mills were dangerous places to work, and children often worked. All workers worked 12-14 hours a day on very low pay. Food was scarce and expensive, and most workers could hardly feed themselves. Milk was often mixed with water and mill owners mixed their flour with sawdust.

The Pioneers

Some people in Rochdale were tired of these bad living conditions. The Rochdale Pioneers were 28 people who decided to work together to make a change for the working class. The Pioneers wanted to buy good food at a fair price, and they set up the co-operative store, which opened on the 21st December 1844 on Toad Lane.

The Key People



The Values

Anyone could pay to be a member of the co-operative, costing £1. All of the profits of the co-operative store were split between the members. The co-operative is a democracy; each member had one vote, and they would vote on decisions. All members were treated fairly, equally and supported each other.

The Impact

The Pioneers allowed the working class people of Rochdale to get good food and not to be exploited by the mill and factory owners.

By 1860, the Rochdale co-operative had 3,450 members. By 1900, the British co-operative movement led to 1,439 co-operatives covering virtually every area of the UK. Today, there are 7,000 co-operatives with 17 million members.

