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Kalamazoo Industry, 1890-1900

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During the 1890's the United States was in what the economists call a long range depression. Many companies all over the country were forced to close because of financial loss. Probably the largest single group in the country, the farmers, were having trouble finding a market for their crops, and there was no price support from the government. It became a vicious circle with the manufacturers selling their products to the farmers who could not pay because they could not sell their crops. It is a tribute to any company which could come through the first seven years of the 1890's and still show a good profit.

Kalamazoo industries were no exception. Although in 1890 A. J. Shakespeare, the editor of the Kalamazoo Gazette said that 1889 was the best year for business so far in Kalamazoo,¹ he had to admit ten years later that Kalamazoo had never boomed.² Many Kalamazoo firms outlasted the depression and continued to grow down to today, yet others were not quite so lucky and they closed for financial and other reasons. Yet Kalamazoo industry was more fortunate than others because of the natural water power and its access to the midwest markets.

A. J. Shakespeare tried throughout this decade to bring new industry to Kalamazoo and to keep the ones that were already here. He received very little help from the inhabitants until 1898. In this year a group of local men formed the National Park-Improvement Company. This group bought land for factories and endeavored to improve Kalamazoo, so that they might be able to persuade some manufacturers to move their business here. They met with very little success

¹
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 3, 1890

²
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 17, 1899

in the last two years of the decade.³

Even with the depression Kalamazoo seemed to have very little labor trouble. The Gazette only mentions one strike during the whole decade. This strike in 1893 was in the Printing Department of the Ihling Bros. Everard Company. The strike was over some minor dispute over seniority. The only result was the firing of the men who started the dispute.⁴

Throughout January and February of 1894 the Gazette ran an advertisement trying to get employers to advertise when they had openings in their factories because of a large number of unemployed. Either because it received no response to its advertisement or because the unemployment was solved, the Gazette dropped the advertisement after two months.

A close study of each industry shows the instability of them. Although a great number of them survived the depression, none were without some financial trouble. The paper industry was the only one that did not lose a company for one reason or another.

The Kalamazoo Paper Company was the first in Kalamazoo and it had been running for some twenty-three years in 1890 and five years before the second paper mill was founded in this area: namely the B. F. Lyon Paper Company of Plainwell. In 1890 the Kalamazoo Paper Company had a capital stock of \$80,000. and was one of the few companies in Kalamazoo to have \$80,000 more credits than debts. At this time J. T. Woodbury was the President, Edward Woodbury was the Secretary-Treasurer, and Jonathon Parsons was the Chairman of the Board. In 1892 Samuel Gibson became the President of the company and it was mainly through his efforts that the company continued to grow. He led the company until 1899 when at his death, he was succeeded by his son-in-law Frederick M. Hodge. The principle

³
Kalamazoo Gazette, Aug. 30, 1900

⁴
Interview with Otto Ihling, President of Ihling Bros.

product at this time was print paper. It seemed that they could not produce enough, for the demand throughout the Middle West was great, yet instead of adding new machines they attempted to increase their output by increasing their efficiency. In 1893 a simple laborer, Henry Willard, struck on an idea of moving the raw materials closer to the paper machine. This brainstorm increased the production by about $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1%, although a foreman later said that the only reason for Willard's touch of genius was because the moving of the pulp would save him about three hundred steps per trip, and that he was so lazy he would do anything to save a step. As a result, a new building for the storage of the pulp was built on the opposite side of the mill.

The company had its share of hardships too. In 1891 its mill pond overflowed due to the spring thaw and the floor of the mill was covered with water for about six days.

By 1895 the Kalamazoo Paper Company had almost stopped making print paper because the market had become flooded with it; therefore, it turned to the making of a high grade book paper. By 1896 it was producing over 24,000 pounds of high grade book paper and specialties. But in 1897 it shifted back to the making of print paper when a willing market was found in both Detroit and Chicago. It continued to make print paper throughout the rest of the decade.⁵

Some of the other paper companies in this district during the 1890's were the B. F. Lyon Company at Plainwell, the Bardeen Paper Company at Otsego, the Michigan Paper Company at Plainwell, the Eddy Paper Company at Three Rivers, the Watervliet Paper Company at Watervliet, and the Bryant Paper Company in Kalamazoo.⁶ Most of these companies had been founded by men who had learned the paper business at the Kalamazoo Paper Company, and the Bryant Paper Company was no exception. In 1895 Noah Bryant, who had started his paper career in London, England, and continued it with the Kalamazoo and Bardeen Paper Companies,

5

Interview with James Johnson, Gen'l. Mgr. of Kalamazoo Paper Co.

6

Kalamazoo Gazette, Centennial Edition, Jan. 24, 1937

organized the Bryant Paper Company along with John F. King and Frank H. Milham. John King had left the Kalamazoo Paper Company with Bryant to go to the Bardeen Paper Company, and he was to open a company of his own in 1901. Frank Milham had been at the Bardeen Company with Bryant and King.⁷ They started producing a high grade book paper very similar to that being produced by the Kalamazoo Paper Company, but of a little higher quality. By the end of the century this paper was much in demand by the big book publishers, especially in the East, and by the year 1899, they had almost doubled their production. But during 1895 and '96 they had considerable financial trouble and were almost forced to close. It was not until November of 1896, after Frank Milham had made a trip to the East and sold the publishers on the fine quality of the Bryant Company's paper, that business began to pick up and the company finally got out of debt.⁸

Although 1890-1910 were the years of growth of the paper companies in the Kalamazoo River valley, the two paper companies in the city of Kalamazoo did not make much headway in the 1890's. Even the Kalamazoo Paper Company, the oldest in the valley, ran into financial difficulty in the early years of the decade because the market for print paper, the only paper that it made, had become flooded and because of the depression that the country was in, many newspapers' circulation had dropped considerably.⁹ The Bryant Paper Company was a small company with a limited market.

One industry in Kalamazoo that used the paper made by the paper companies in the area was the Kalamazoo Paper Box Company. This company was formed in 1897. By 1889 it was employing thirty men - a number that increased steadily.¹⁰

7
Ibid.

8
Kalamazoo Gazette, Dec. 3, 1896

9
Encyclopedia of American History, Richard B. Morris, ed., New York, 1953, p. 253

10
Kalamazoo Gazette, March 12, 1895

They occupied the two upper floors of the Hall Chemical Company on North Church Street. When the Hall Company exploded, the Paper Box Company lost \$5,000 in stock plus all their machinery, but in March of the same year they started again in a leased building on North Edwards Street.¹¹

Another company in Kalamazoo using the paper made by the paper companies of the area was Ihling Bros. Everard Company. Its chief business was printing and bookbinding. During the 1890's it was doing most of the printing for the city, county, and business concerns of this area. The company was located in a four-story brick building on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Harrison Street. Besides printing and bookbinding it made duplicate whist trays which were sent all over the United States and the world. It exhibited these trays in the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. During this decade the U. S. Playing Card Company of Cincinnati and a man in Milwaukee were also making duplicate whist trays. The three companies became entangled in a patent rights dispute. The U. S. Playing Card Company hired big city lawyers at a great expense, but Ihling Bros. hired Frederick Chappell, a new, young lawyer from Kalamazoo. Mr. Chappell won the suit, his first case in patent law. Later in the decade the three companies decided that it was not very smart to fight each other; therefore, they formed a new company to make the duplicate whist trays with Ihling Bros. Everard & Co. and the U.S. Playing Card Company each taking forty per cent of the stock, and the man in Milwaukee taking the other twenty per cent.¹²

During the 1890's the largest industry in Kalamazoo was the wagon and carriage industry plus the related industries, such as: spring, axle, wheel and wood working. Over one half of the laborers of the city were engaged in this industry.¹³ While some companies were forced to close down for various reasons,

¹¹

Ibid.

¹²

Interview with Otto Ihling

¹³

"Do You Remember" section of the Scrapbook of the Kalamazoo Gazette in the Kalamazoo Public Library.

some of the companies prospered during this period and because of the abundance of orders they were forced to work extra hours, expand their factory area, and improve their machinery. During this time the manufacturing of carriages was so lucrative that Cornell & Company, the oldest manufacturer of carriages in the city, was offered by another city not only land but a large bonus if the company would move there.¹⁴ Although no attempt was made on the part of Kalamazoo to match the bonus, Cornell & Company turned down the offer.

A carriage manufacturer, like the Cornell & Company, did not make just one type of carriage. It would not only make carriages for small, middle-sized, and large families, but also fancy carriages and plain carriages. This is very similar to the automobile industry of today as with General Motors, which makes a Chevrolet for the low income brackets, a Pontiac for the middle income class, and a Cadillac for the higher income plus a two-door for the small family, and the four-door for the large family. Also the carriage style would differ according to the geography and climate for which it was made.¹⁵ During the first half of this decade, Cornell & Company was the only manufacturer selling its carriages locally, so the greater bulk of the carriages went elsewhere.¹⁶ The other manufacturer which sold carriages locally was the City Carriage Company founded in 1894. This company moved into a new brick building on Water Street to make to order any kind of vehicle from light carriages to heavy wagons for local use.¹⁷

One of these companies which sold its product elsewhere was the American Carriage Company. This company was founded in the late 1880's with a capital stock of only \$20,000. By 1890 this company was doing so well that on one day it received mail orders for over 1,000 carriages,¹⁸ but its annual report that

¹⁴
Kalamazoo Gazette, July 17, 1891

¹⁵
Kalamazoo Gazette, June 19, 1895

¹⁶
Kalamazoo Gazette, March 17, 1893

¹⁷
Kalamazoo Gazette, Sept. 30, 1894

¹⁸
Kalamazoo Gazette, Feb. 14, 1890

year showed that its debts were nearly \$9,000 while its credits were only \$5000.¹⁹
And in three years its debts tripled while its credits remained almost constant.²⁰
By 1896 its new President, L. M. Doyle, managed to pull the company out of debt
while expanding the business so much that it had to lease a new factory. In 1896
The American Carriage Company leased the large plant of the defunct Newton Carriage
Company on Walbridge Street at the Michigan Central Railroad crossing. The follow-
ing year it bought the factory outright for \$15,000.²¹ Again this company was hit
by financial trouble, and in February of 1898, sold its factories to Hall & Company
and went out of business.

One company which did not run into the same financial trouble that blighted
the American Carriage Company was the Kalamazoo Wagon Company. In 1890 its busi-
ness was large enough to warrant a large brick addition to its old factory.²²
This, however, was the last addition to the factory until 1898, when a new two
hundred forty-eight foot smoke stack was added. Although the physical plant was
large enough to manufacture enough wagons to fill its orders, it had to open a
branch office in Rockford, Illinois, to handle the incoming orders. In 1893 its
orders fell off, and, as a result, the wagon works cut down on its labor force.
Finally it was forced to cut out operations entirely for a month during the latter
part of 1893. By January 20, 1894 it had received a sufficient number of orders
to that it could again begin operations with a full labor force.²³ One example
of the world wide recognition of Kalamazoo Carriages and Wagons is the large
shipment of wagons sent to South Africa by the Kalamazoo Wagon Company in 1898.²⁴

¹⁹
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 23, 1890

²⁰
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 26, 1893

²¹
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 10, 1897

²²
Kalamazoo Gazette, Sept. 19, 1890

²³
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 20, 1894

²⁴
Kalamazoo Gazette, Feb. 5, 1898

Kalamazoo industry ran into other troubles in the 1890's besides financial loss and lack of orders, as is shown by the Winans, Pratt & Company. This company was located on East Edwards Street by the Michigan Central Railroad, and it was engaged in the manufacturing of wagons and carts. On the night of February 13, 1890, the factory caught on fire. Because there was not enough water pressure the Fire Department was of little help, and a total loss ensued. On April 4, 1890, the Gazette carried a note that the factory which was being rebuilt was almost completed. By May 23, the company was back in full swing and doing so well that it got a side track. Disaster struck again when on October 17, 1890, the new factory was swept with flames. Although part of the building was saved, all the inventory was burned up and most of the machinery was ruined. Therefore, the company was forced too far into debt to be able to reopen.²⁵

One of the few carriage companies that was able to run throughout the whole decade was the Peninsular Carriage Company. In January of 1890, the company had to run nights to keep up with its orders. In May of the following year it was still behind in its orders. Again in 1893 the company was forced to run nights to meet the demand. By 1896 its business had nearly doubled, and the Gazette considered it the best equipped company in town. In 1897 the Peninsular Carriage Company's business was so great that it bought all the lumber belonging to the Coldwater Cart Company when that company went out of business. The lumber consisted of over 125,000 feet of ash, hickory, and rock elm.²⁶ At the same time, it was having 1,000,000 feet of hickory cut by its lumber mill in Wisconsin.²⁷ In 1899 the company was still doing a large volume of business, and in that year it shut down for two days to install a new 125 horsepower engine and other machinery. This shut down was accompanied by a flurry of orders, and it was again

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Kalamazoo Gazette, Oct. 18, 1890

26

Kalamazoo Gazette, Sept. 5, 1897

27

Kalamazoo Gazette, Sept. 12, 1899

forced to work nights.²⁸ A. J. Shakespeare, the editor of the Gazette said in 1898 that he wished that all the companies in Kalamazoo could be as successful as the Peninsular Carriage Company.²⁹

In 1890 a new carriage company was formed by four Kalamazoo men, H. B. Golman, L. H. St. John, L. F. Boomer, and J. A. Gilkey, with a capital stock of \$150,000. This company, the Cone Coupling Carriage Company, had control of the patent for the St. John cone coupler. By October, 1890, the company had begun operations in its new four story brick building. One year later this company was selling its carts throughout Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio, and the Northern and Western parts of Illinois. In October, 1891, it sent two carloads of carts to Kansas. By 1895 the Cone Coupling Carriage Company business had expanded until its carts were being shipped as far as Georgia. But because of financial difficulties, which the Gazette fails to mention, the Cone Coupling Company closed up its business and disposed of its assets and plant to the Michigan Pure Foods Company in 1898.³⁰

The Michigan Buggy Company was another company that was founded in 1890 by Henry Lane, who had formerly been in partnership with Frederick Meyers of the Kalamazoo Wagon Company. These two men had split up their partnership and had built rival factories in the same block.³¹ For a company that was only founded in January it is surprising to find that by April it already had a payroll of \$12,000 which the Gazette calls only one of its largest.³² A shipment of carriages especially designed for traveling in the mountains which the Michigan

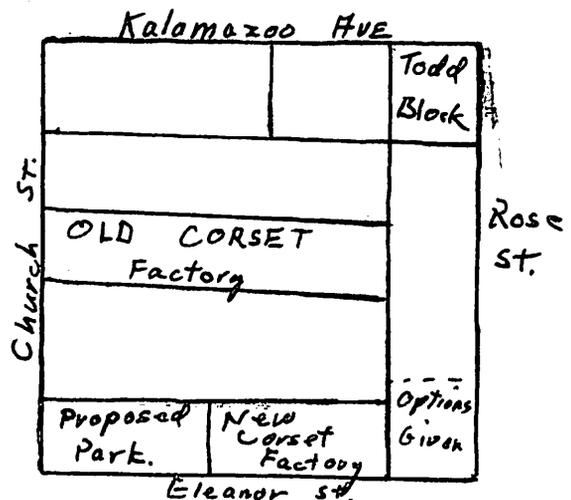
28
Kalamazoo Gazette, Nov. 23, 1898

29
Kalamazoo Gazette, Feb. 9, 1898

30
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 11, 1890

31
Kalamazoo Gazette, April 18, 1890

32
Kalamazoo Gazette, March 18, 1894



Buggy Company sent to Moscow, Russia in 1891 is another good example of the world wide recognition of the Kalamazoo carriages. In 1894 the Michigan Buggy Company was still doing a very good business and had to work a 10-hour day to keep up with its order.³³ After that year the company drops out of sight, or at least out of the Gazette.

With all of these carriage companies going out of business for one reason or another, it was only natural that new businesses would move in to take their place. One of these new businesses was the Ford Buggy Company. In January 1898 the Gazette announced that the Ford Company was ready to move into its new factory, which consisted of a two-story storehouse thirty-six feet by seventy feet and a two-story factory, fully equipped with modern machinery which was sixty-one feet by one hundred three feet. The Ford Buggy Company was a little different from the rest of the carriage and wagon companies because it specialized in making just the wooden buggy bodies and cutters. This company also had a general lumber business. Two of the largest manufacturing firms of carriages in the city had already given to the Ford Company orders which they had formerly sent out of town.³⁴

Before the Ford Buggy Company set up business in Kalamazoo two other companies were doing some wood work for the carriage companies. One of these, owned by D. den Blyker and Edward Mc Coffrey was founded in 1894. It leased an old factory of the American Carriage Company in which to do its work. Another company which did wood work for the carriage companies was the Van Bochove & Sons Manufacturing Company which was set up as a wood working company on 3rd Street in 1894 with capital stock of \$20,000. It was soon out of business due to destruction by fire of its planing mill in 1896.

Another industry related to the carriage industry was the Kalamazoo Wheel Company. In 1890, when there were many carriage companies doing a very good business, the wheel works was running twelve hours a day to keep up with orders. Since

³³
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 22, 1895

³⁴
Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 15, 1890

this was the only wheel manufacturing company in the city it worked long hours when the carriage companies had big orders to fill, and would sometimes close for a week or two when the carriage companies were in a slack period.

Besides the wood working and wheel manufacturers, the carriage companies also helped to support a spring and axle manufacturer. The only such manufacturer in the city was the Kalamazoo Spring & Axle Company. As was the wheel works, the Kalamazoo Spring & Axle Company was working to full capacity in 1890 and every time the carriage companies had large orders. This company seemed plagued with small accidents, such as someone slipping and cracking his skull on a machine or someone crushing his fingers beneath an axle.

By the end of 1890 there were seven carriage manufacturers in Kalamazoo. They were Cornell & Company, the Cone Coupling Carriage Company, the Peninsular Carriage Company, the American Carriage Company, the Michigan Buggy Company, the Winans, Pratt & Company, and the Kalamazoo Wagon Company. By 1900 only three (excluding the Michigan Buggy Company on which there is no information after 1894) of the original seven were left. They were Cornell & Company, the Peninsular Carriage Company, and the Kalamazoo Wagon Company. But two new companies, the City Carriage Company and the Ford Buggy Company, had opened since 1894 bringing the total to five in 1900. The Kalamazoo carriage industry had fared quite well during these years considering the fact that the whole country was in a depression. It also helped to support the wheel, wood working, spring, and axle companies. Because of the fact that the Ford Buggy started in 1898 to do wood work for two of the largest manufacturers of carriages, it may be assumed that the carriage industry had successfully endured the depression.

One industry more closely connected to the carriage and wagon industry than anything else was the Kalamazoo Velocipede Company. A velocipede is what is now commonly known as a hand car. One model made by the Kalamazoo Railroad Velocipede Company was a steam driven, canopy-top hand car. During the early years of the decade the Velocipede Company did an excellent business, shipping its hand cars all over the United States and abroad as is shown by the records of shipments in

1890 and 1891. During the first week in March, 1890, the Velocipede Company shipped a carload of hand and push cars to the largest railroads in the East. This was the third such shipment in a month. Later that year, the Company shipped a carload of hand cars to the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company. In June of 1891, it sent a carload of hand cars to Salt Lake City, Utah, and also to Athens, Greece. This was the fourth order of the year sent to Greece. Because of financial difficulties in 1893 and 1894 the Company was forced to close until 1896, when it was reorganized with \$45,000 capital stock. During the next four years of the 1890's, the company did a very mediocre business, showing little or no profit at the end of each year.

The farm implement industry was another large industry in Kalamazoo during the 1890's. The largest company making plows was the St. John Plow Company. This firm started off the decade by declaring a large dividend on its stock at the annual meeting in January 1890.³⁵ All through the first half of the decade, the annual reports showed large credits and small debts. But early in 1896, these debts began to look very large because the company had been unable to collect on its accounts, due to the fact that the farmers were very hard hit by the depression.³⁶ Therefore, eleven years after its founding, the St. John Plow Company was forced to go into trust. The company gave a mortgage to H. B. Coleman covering its Real Estate and personal estate, Coleman could sell in ten days if the \$60,000 debt was not paid.³⁷ In this way it hoped to continue in business. And continue it did, because in March of the same year it was again employing a full labor force.³⁸ In this industry, as in any other, accidents will happen. One day Conrad Koopman, a Hollander, was sharpening a plow on a grinding wheel when the grinding wheel broke into three pieces, the largest of which struck him and knocked off the top of his head.³⁹

35 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 15, 1890

36 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 31, 1891

37 - Ibid.

38 - Kalamazoo Gazette, March 13, 1896

39 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Sept. 12, 1890

Another farm implement company was the Harrow Spring Company. This company had the same trouble collecting its money as did the St. John's Plow Company, but because its debts were less, it did not run into serious financial difficulty.⁴⁰ Difficulties arose later, however, for in 1891 its factory was completely destroyed by fire, yet it was able to save some of the machinery and completed harrows.⁴¹ At this time, they were employing thirty men. By 1894, they were making harrows on a larger scale than they had done before the fire three years earlier.⁴²

A third farm implement company was D.C. & H.C. Reed & Company. They did not appear to have any of the trouble collecting that the other two farm implement companies had had. In 1894, they built a new warehouse in the rear of their factory. In the same year, they put on the market an implement combining five items into one-cultivator, seeder, wheel harrow, bean puller, and potato digger. Each of these could be ready for operation in a few minutes. This combination was unique for its time.⁴³

The Kalamazoo Spring & Axle Company was a fourth farm implement company. Although this company made seven hundred different kinds of springs for carriages, wagons, carts, bicycles, and railroads, it still produced a wide variety of springs and spring harrow teeth. Later, a department for the manufacture of radiators for steam and hot water heating was added.⁴⁴

40 - Kalamazoo Gazette - Oct. 26, 1894

41 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Jan. 16, 1891

42 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Oct. 9, 1894

43 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Feb. 28, 1896

44 - Kalamazoo Gazette, June 19, 1929

An industry tied in closely with the farm implement industry was the iron and steel industry. Although no iron and steel were made in the city, there were five foundries and milling companies which supplied many of the other industries, especially the farm implement companies, with iron and steel. The five were: The Merrill Milling Company, William E. Hill & Company, the Kalamazoo Radiator Company, the David Burrell Company, and the Kalamazoo Foundry & Machine Company. All of these companies lasted throughout the 1890's. They were mostly engaged in the making of radiators, steam niggers, and boilers.

In the 1890's there were two clothing manufacturers in Kalamazoo. One was the Featherbone Corset Company, which was founded in 1892 with a capital stock of \$75,000. In 1894, it built a three-story brick and stone building forty-nine feet by one hundred forty feet. This building had a fine, dry basement, a boiler for steam heat, electric lights throughout, two fire escapes, and an asphalt roof.⁴⁵ Before the building was completed, the company contracted for a large supply of paper boxes for the packaging of the corsets. By 1899 it had changed its name to the Kalamazoo Corset Company. Since it was unable to keep up with its orders, it bought eight lots from the Rose Street Implement Company for \$15,000. Six of these lots were on Eleanor Street, and the other two were on Church Street. On this property they built a four-story brick building forty-eight feet by ninety-six feet.⁴⁶ See the diagram below.⁴⁷

45 - Ibid., April 5, 1894

46 - Ibid., Jan. 15, 1894

47 - Ibid., Jan. 15, 1899

The other clothing industry in Kalamazoo during this decade was the Kalamazoo Pant Company. In 1890 it added a new addition forty-seven feet by seventy-seven feet. This new addition gave 200 new jobs at 125 sewing machines.⁴⁸ In 1891 it moved to its present location on East Michigan Avenue. The company was being run by the three sons of Samuel Rosenbaum, the founder. These three were Lewis, Goddie, and Edwin. During this decade, they were engaged in the manufacturing of work clothes, especially overalls. They shipped their overalls as far as the West Coast. The Kalamazoo Pant Company also made petticoats under the name of the Henrietta Skirt Company.⁴⁹

At one time, Kalamazoo had been called the "windmill city", but by 1890 there were only two big manufacturers of windmills left in the city. The Phelps & Bigelow Company, one of the two, was still shipping its windmills to various parts of the world. In 1894, it made a shipment to Puerto Rico and in 1896, one to England. In the latter year, the company, which was located at 218 North Burdick Street, ran an advertisement in the Gazette inviting all the farmers in Kalamazoo County to see their new twelve-foot windmill in operation running a feed grinder, a corn sheller, etc. all at the same time.⁵⁰

The other large manufacturer of windmills was the Williams Manufacturing Company. This company's world trade was as extensive as that of the Phelps & Bigelow Company. In 1890, it sent a shipment of its windmills to England and to Australia.⁵¹ In 1894 it made a large shipment of windmills to England and to South Africa. At this time, the President, Mr. Maxwell, said that the company would be very rich if it were not for the high tariff on raw materials.⁵² In this same year it built a three-story brick addition to its factory on Harrison Street.

48 - Ibid., Oct. 14, 1890

49 - Interview with Lester Rosenbaum, President of the Kalamazoo Pant Co.

50 - Kalamazoo Gazette, May 6, 1896

51 - Ibid., May 23, 1890

52 - Ibid., April 7, 1894

The only other windmill manufacturer in this city during the 1890's was the Smith & Pomeroy Company. This company went out of business in 1890 shortly after making a shipment of windmills to France in September.⁵³

Although the windmill business in Kalamazoo had once been its greatest industry, only two windmill companies survived the 1980's. Yet these two companies were still doing an excellent business, sending their windmills all over the world.

There were many smaller industries which began in the 1890's. One of these was the American Playing Card Company. This company erected a four-story brick building fifty-six feet by one hundred twenty feet at the corner of South and Taylor Streets which was supposedly the only structure ever built expressly for the manufacture of playing cards.⁵⁴ When first opened the company employed fifty people, ninety per cent of whom were women. At first, they manufactured thirty-five gross of playing cards of all grades per day.⁵⁵ Their styles ran from the common steam boat variety to the best gilt or enameled linen cards. Although this company drops out of the Gazette soon after its founding, it continued throughout the 1890's and into the 20th Century until it finally merged with the U. S. Playing Card Company.

Another industry developed in 1890 was the Bush Cattle Guard Company. This company was formed by Frederick Bush, William Howard, Frank Balch, and E. S. Rose with a capital stock of \$46,000. They set up their operations in the Velocipede factory on Kalamazoo Avenue near Pitcher Street. The Balch Cattle Guard consisted of a "T" iron running parallel to the rails and sliding through slots in oval shaped bases of boiler iron. The ends of the "T" iron were bent down at each end, holding them fast and making a surface over which

53 - Ibid., Oct. 19, 1890

54 - Ibid., June 16, 1929

55 - Ibid., May 21, 1890

any obstacle could easily be raised up and passed. This was thought to be the best "surface" guard yet invented.⁵⁶

The Fuller Brothers Washboard Company was still another industry in this decade. In 1890, this company made a shipment of washboards to Chicago, St. Louis, etc. which placed end on end would have stretched five miles long.⁵⁷ Later that year, it installed a new 250 horsepower engine, a very large engine for that time, to help it meet its orders. But less than a year later there came an explosion and fire which caused it the loss of \$5,000 - \$10,000 and a three months shut-down.

One of the larger industries in the 1890's was the chemical and drug industry. One of the chemical companies was the Hall Chemical Company. This company was incorporated by the State on February 21, 1898, with a capital stock of \$50,000. Six days later, the factory exploded killing eleven men and wiping out all the assets of the young company.⁵⁸

One of the drug companies was the Krebbiel Capsule Company founded in 1890. Later the same year the company was reorganized and became the Kalamazoo Capsule Company. Soon after changing hands, a thirty by thirty foot brick addition was added, electric lights were installed, and the machinery was improved.⁵⁹ In May of the next year, the company merged with a larger one in Indianapolis and moved all of its equipment down there.⁶⁰

Another drug industry was the A. M. Todd Company. A. M. Todd moved his business from Nottowa, Michigan to Kalamazoo. He rented quarters in the old Shakespeare building at the corner of Rose & Water Streets. Here he set up his distillery and began to distill the mints that were being grown on his farms in Nottowa and Mentha, Michigan. In 1892 he built a building of his own on the corner of Rose and Kalamazoo (see diagram on Page 14). It was not long before Todd's mints began to win world acclaim. In fact by 1890 he had walked

56 - Ibid., August 15, 1890

59 - Ibid., Oct. 24, 1890

57 - Ibid., April 18, 1890

60 - Ibid., May 8, 1891

58 - Ibid., Feb. 28, 1898

away with the first prize at two fairs, and in the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, Todd won first prize for the finest essential oils; distilling apparatus; essential oil plants; fine chemicals; chemical library; etc. These finest essential oils went under the trade name of "Crystal White"; also they were double distilled and refined. Mr. Todd took great pride in the quality and purity of his essential oils. His essential oils were not limited merely to the peppermint and spearmint which were being raised on his many farms in Southern Michigan and Northern Indiana, but his price list also contained tansy, erigeron, sassafras, camphor, wormwood, pipmenthol crystals in glass-stoppered "ounces" and pipmenthol crystal inhalants. In 1896, Mr. Todd added 4,200 acres to his already large farms by the purchase of the Campania Farm in the fruit belt on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. Mr. Todd's farm at Nottowa produced 100 tons per day with 100 laborers. In 1897, when A. M. Todd was elected to the house of representatives, he sent out a letter to his stockholders and business associates announcing that his sons would run the business for the two years that we would spend in Washington. About the same time that Mr. Todd was elected to Congress, his company grew and distilled about 50 to 60% of all the peppermint oil distilled in the United States. It is interesting to note here that a new region had been opened up for the growing of mint, namely on the west coast. A. M. Todd's brother Oliver Todd was one of the first to introduce it.⁶¹

A fourth drug company was the Upjohn Pill & Granule Company. The decade opened with the Upjohn Company doing most of its business in quinine pills, which seemed to be the panacea of the period. Through its large volume of sales of these pills the company continued to prosper, as is shown by the more than \$100,000 in real estate bought in 1890. At this time most of the stock of the company was held by members of the Upjohn family.⁶² In 1891, business had improved to such an extent that it became necessary to build a five-story addition costing

61 - Historical Scrapbook of The Todd Co.

62 - Kalamazoo Gazette, Feb. 27, 1891

\$20,000 to their building on East Lovell Street opposite the school administration building. Fifty skilled workers were employed by the company, which now had an annual output of over \$200,000. In 1895 a third building was added. In 1896 The Pharmaceutical Era said that the building was equipped with every modern improvement, lighted throughout with electricity, and floored with polished maple. It was indeed one of the best equipped industries in Kalamazoo. The Pharmeceutical Era continued to say that a glance through the laboratories impressed the visitor with the absolute cleanliness, perfect order, and exact precision maintained.⁶³

The company was so careful with its poisonous drugs that it had them locked in a vault with two locks and two men men had the key each to one of the locks. The special apparatus for the making of pills was the largest in the world devoted exclusively to the manufacture of pills. It had machines that not only made the pills but machines that counted, sorted, and packaged them. The Pharmaceutical Era said that the machines used for counting the pills were even more accurate than counting by hand. For the most part these machines had been invented by one of the Upjohn Brothers.⁶⁴

The Upjohn pill was quite an amazing thing of the era because before that time all the pills had been so hard that they could be pounded through a board with a hammer without damaging the pill. Dr. W. E. Upjohn's pill was advertised as being reducible to powder under the pressure of the thumb, which in a modified form, continues down to today as the trademark. This pill went under the trade name of the "Friable pill". Of course, the quinine pill was not the only product of the Upjohn Company. There were over eighty-six different kinds of pills made from fifty-six drugs, thirty botanicals, twenty chemicals, five alkaloids, and one glucocide. Two of its other famous pills were the Blaud's iron pill and the Upjohn little specialty pill - anti-constipation.⁶⁵

63 - The Pharmaeutical Era, D.O.Haynes & Co. Detroit, Dec. 31, 1896.

64 - Ibid.

65 - The Story of an American Enterprise, The Upjohn Co. prepared and printed under the direction of Dr. L. N. Upjohn, 1945.

In 1891, Dr. W. E. Upjohn speculated in quinine and bought almost \$50,000 worth, thinking that the market was going up, but he was fooled because the market dropped very rapidly. Soon the "friable pill" stopped being a novelty and competition arose in the form of the new compressed tablet which was easier and cheaper to manufacture than the Upjohn "friable pill". Pills were going out of fashion. Therefore new customers were hard to find and old ones hard to keep. Thus when the Upjohn Pill & Granule Company entered the new century, it was not in a very comfortable financial position.

The drug industry was not one of the most stable in Kalamazoo with one of the companies moving out of town in the early years of the decade, a second company blowing up after being in business only six days, and a third practically without a market at the turn of the century. The Todd Company was the only one which did not run into any difficulties, financial or otherwise.

Of all the industries in Kalamazoo, the Upjohn Company was the only one in financial trouble at the turn of the century. The paper companies had both pulled themselves out of trouble by finding new markets. The carriage manufacturers, now that they had a local firm to make their bodies, continued to make their carriages until long after the automobile had become popular. The clothing manufacturers, which seemed to suffer very little from the depression, expanded in the latter years of the decade to give jobs to more people. What was left of the windmill industries sent their products around the world. Therefore, most of the manufacturers in Kalamazoo were back on a firm footing, and they were looking ahead hopefully for what the new century might bring them.

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