

Our Times

Winter 2002

The People, History, and Culture of Logan County, Illinois

volume 7 issue 4



Factories to Remember

Lehn & Fink

Lehn and Fink's Lincoln plant opened in 1947, and Donna Griffin began working as secretary to plant manager Van Smith on November 17th of that year. The new factory was located on Limit Street, which was so muddy that Donna had to walk across boards to get to the parking lot. Women had to go to the courthouse in Lincoln to use the bathrooms.

By the time Donna retired in 1989, she had worked for every plant manager: Van Smith, Teddy Meyer, Don Higginbotham, John Bernardi, Chuck Luke, Bob Tubbs, and Jim Bodnar. Her strictest boss was Teddy Meyer, manager from 1948 until the 1960s. He wanted his fountain pen refilled every morning, and if it wasn't filled, "you were in big trouble," says Donna.



Entrance to plant after name change to L&F Products. The Lincoln plant bid for contracts in competition with its sister plant in Belle Meade, New Jersey. Precision Products bought the property in 1997. The Link, December, 1990.

Jo Sahorsky Klockenga says Mr. Meyer used to walk through the plant in the evenings to check on workers, bringing his little poodles with him. The dogs always ran ahead of him—when people saw them coming down the aisle, "if you were not doing what you were supposed to be, you got to doing it," says Jo.

Mr. Meyer was "a stickler for cleanliness," says Donna Griffin. In fact, Lehn and Fink was always a pleasant place to work, partly because the factory was so clean. "If an inspector from the FDA came in the door, you'd better be able to fry bacon on the concrete," says Doug Sheley.

The company underwent several changes of ownership. In 1966, Lehn and Fink Products Corporation was acquired by Sterling Drug, which was bought by Eastman Kodak in 1988. Kodak's Lehn and Fink Products Group was renamed L&F Products in 1990. British firm Reckitt and Colman bought it in December of 1994 and closed the Lincoln plant in 1996.

At one time, 600 employees worked at the Lincoln plant, which grew to cover 562,000 square feet. Among the products produced there over the years were Tussy deodorant; Ogilvie permanents; Budding Beauty children's products; Dorothy Gray cosmetics; Lysol; Mop & Glo; Perk; Wet Ones; Lysol Basin Tub and Tile

(Continued on page 2)

Our Times

The People, History, and Culture of
Logan County, Illinois

Prairie Years Press
121 N. Kickapoo Street
Lincoln, IL 62656
217-732-9216

PUBLISHED AND EDITED BY

Sam Redding

RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY

Nancy Lawrence Gehlbach

ADVERTISING/CIRCULATION

Pam Sheley

MASTHEAD DESIGN

Scott Fulk

The mission of *Our Times* is to publish well-researched, interesting articles about the people, history, and culture of Logan County, Illinois.

Our Times is published quarterly and is distributed free-of-charge to anyone who requests it.

Copies of *Our Times* may be obtained at Prairie Years Bookstore at 121 N. Kickapoo Street in Lincoln or at any of the publication's advertisers. Or call to be placed on the mailing list.

On a Personal Note

by Pam Sheley

They are called "blue collar" workers. Those that punch the clock at our nation's factories. They carry their lunches in hard metal boxes. They wear uniforms. Some are required to wear steel-toed boots and hard hats. They work odd hours – some go to work at 6:30 a.m., just as others are leaving. We called it "unskilled labor" because it typically didn't require specialized degrees.

We formed a picture of the factory worker based on images left over from the early days of unions and sweatshops. We make distinctions between them and the "white collar" worker – the one that goes to work in a white shirt and tie. White collars meet at small cafes with colleagues for lunch. They wear wingtips. Their names are followed by letters, and their offices have views of the city.

Have you been in a factory lately? Computerized robots take pallets from one line to another. Vats of chemicals are carefully

weighed and measured – tested for pH balance and acidity. Long lines of cars are assembled by robotic arms, and men and women calibrate tolerances to fractions of an angstrom. Are these the unskilled laborers we had in mind? Robots. Computers. Precision craftsmanship.

Think of the products you use every day. The hairspray you put on your hair. The processed food you feed your children. The car you drive to work or on vacation. Do we really want to think that the hands and minds of the people who produced these goods are "unskilled"?

The factories of today require careful attention, advanced training, knowledge of chemistry and engineering. Factory jobs are highly skilled. They require a dedication to working odd hours under all types of conditions. The people who work in the factories take great pride in the things they manufacture – they drive the cars that they helped bring down the line. They buy the hairspray. They feed their kids the food they packaged. They hope their neighbors will do the same.

Whole communities were once built around a single factory. It provided jobs for the people. It provided a tax base for its schools. It provided revenue for the stores and gas stations. It provided the community a common bond. When those factories are closed down, communities die. We might judge the worth of a factory by the profit it earns. But the calculation of worth must also include the human and community capital. How much do we value the man or woman heading off to work in the middle of the night, wearing steel-toed boots and a sense of pride? The next time you pick up a product off the shelf, check to see which community you are supporting. It may be your own. Tomorrow, it may be someone else's. PS

(Continued from page 1)

Cleaner; Medi-Quik; and Stri-Dex.

At first, the plant manufactured many perfumes and hand lotions. Among Donna Griffin's souvenirs are Wedgwood cologne in a blue Wedgwood bottle, a Dorothy Gray green-and-gold metal compact with matching lipstick, and a compact of Secret of the Sea pressed powder.

After Lehn and Fink merged with Sterling Drug, many of the cosmet-

ics were phased out, until disinfectants like Lysol became predominant.

Working on the Line

Jo Klockenga worked at the factory from 1959 until 1996, primarily as a hand packaging operator. The job required manual dexterity, since quickness and accuracy were needed.

"We changed jobs a lot—every couple of hours, so you didn't do the same tedious job all the time," says Jo.

The conveyer belts moved fast. Don Kline filled in occasionally when times were slow and says, "That container just came flying down through there!" Mostly women worked on the lines. "A woman doesn't have as many thumbs as a man has," Don claims.

Mona Oltmanns Cosby occasionally had to fill in on the lines if a machine broke down in the department where she worked. Sometimes she worked on the Wet Ones line. As the empty canister moved down the line, a machine squirted liquid into it. When the canister arrived in front of Mona, she placed a pack of towelettes inside.

Another operator snapped a plastic cap on top of the canister. The cap had two parts—a top that snapped down, and a bottom section with prongs for the towelettes to protrude through. The operator stuck her finger through the prongs and pulled the end of the towelette out to get it started.

"If you're only thrown out there once in a while, you're not that fast," says Mona. So if she had that job, she sometimes got her finger stuck in the canister with all the prongs going the other way—while the line moved on relentlessly. In later years, the line had an automatic capper, and the consumer had to pull the towelette out herself.

Jo Klockenga saw the lines go from a lot of handwork to a more fully automated operation, with machines doing a lot of the packaging. In fact, says Doug Sheley, when the Mop & Glo line was put in, only four people were required to run the entire line. The older line next to it, with a similar product, might need 10 to 12 people.

Chemical Processing Operator

All products were manufactured on the second floor of the plant. Raw materials were piped directly into a tank from the tank farm on the Lehn and Fink grounds or dumped in by hand after another operator had weighed them.

Hank Post worked at Lehn and Fink for 42 years. He made face powders but specialized in creams: face cream, dry-skin cleansing cream, and “tons and tons” of Tussy Cream Deodorant. Once, when there was a big promotion on Tussy, Hank made one 5,800-pound batch every day for three months.

Working with a big stainless steel kettle with a stirrer in the bottom and a side scraper, Hank dumped in the 500-pound barrels of cream, heated the mixture to 100 degrees centigrade, and added mineral oil, a color base, and other products.

Occasionally, an operator would make a mistake. The kettle would overflow, and he would have to make a new batch. But Hank was careful about following the formula precisely. A mistake could cost the company a lot of money—and get an operator laid off or even fired.

Operator Doug Sheley had that point brought home to him when his daughter, Emily, developed leukemia and he went to talk with Mark Lyons in the human resources department.

Mark told Doug to take off whatever time he needed. “You don’t realize the amount of money you’re working with every day,” Mark said, “and we don’t want you making a mistake.”

Doug decided to stay on the job except when necessary. He got support from his coworkers, and Emily got well.

Quality Auditor

Bill Post spent most of his nearly 39 years at Lehn and Fink as a quality auditor. “We had to save samples from every production every day,” he

says—and test the product at five days, 30 days, 60 days, six months, and two years. He enjoyed the clerical work, but all that sampling of the same product meant “you felt like you were duplicating your job.”

If a complaint came in on a product from a certain shift on a certain day, he had to go back, check that sample, and see the time it was pulled.

Blow Molding and Decorating

In 1980, Lehn and Fink began making its own plastic bottles in the molding department. Resin pellets were heated in a molding machine. As they melted, they ended up as “a big gob of plastic,” says Don Kline, who worked there.

The molding machine used air pressure to blow the sides of the bottles against the edge of the molds—hence the term “blow molding.”

The bottles were cooled with chilled water and then sent through an open flame to burn the outside coating off them so labels would adhere. Blow molding machines made bottles; injection molders made aerosol caps.

Earlier, Don had worked in the

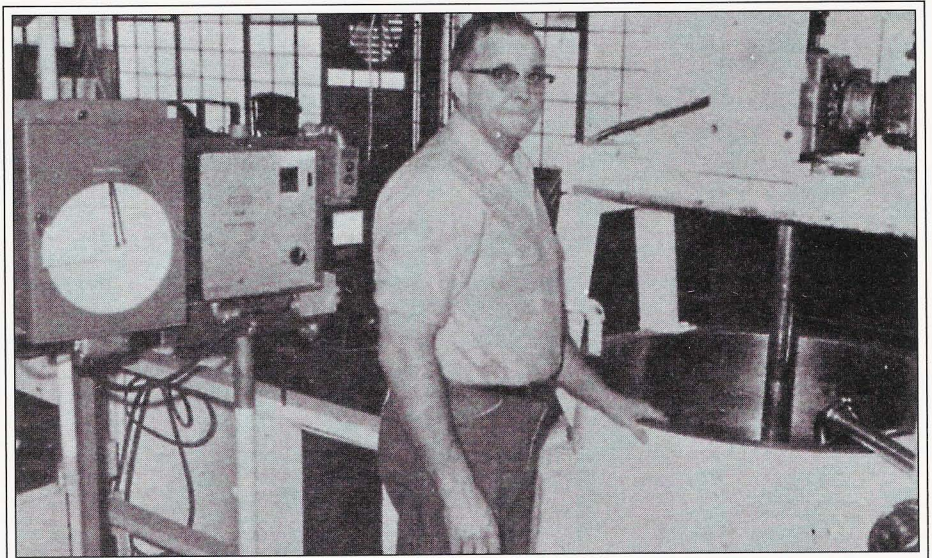
decorating department, where Ernie Purlee made the silk screens used to decorate bottles and jars. Don was an alternate screener and made some screens himself over the years.

To make a screen, he stretched silk over a wood or metal frame, then coated the silk with a light-sensitive solution. He put the silk in a dark cabinet to dry, placed a negative on top of the screen, and exposed it to light for several minutes to engrave the design on it. He washed off the unexposed lettering, let the screen dry, and coated the unexposed part with a sealer to make it stronger.

Mona Cosby used a silk screen to decorate plastic bottles. She sat in front of a machine with a wooden box built into it. The bottom surface of the box was a silk screen.

Mona poured paint into the box, then picked up a plastic bottle and placed it in a holder (called a jig) located underneath the silk screen. When she depressed a foot pedal, the jig raised the bottle to the underside of the screen, and a squeegee swiped across the screen to transfer paint to the bottle. After the jig went back down, Mona took the bottle off and put it on a conveyer belt to travel through a

(Continued on page 9)



Hank Post prepares cleansing cream with wheat germ oil, melting beeswax, stearic acid, a white petroleum, and other ingredients. Big batches weren't unusual. In 1978, Lysol Disinfectant Cleaner (LDC) was made in 20,000-lb. batches—up to seven batches a day. The Link, February, 1972.

Pittsburgh Plate Glass

In 1952, Pittsburgh Corning bought a building from Stetson China Company on North Kickapoo Street in Lincoln and began manufacturing Twindow windows (later Twindow Glass Edge).

Eventually, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company (PPG) bought Corning's interest and expanded the plant. At its height, the factory ran 11 production lines and employed over 400 people.

Twindow Glass Edge was a doubled-glazed insulating window, that is, a window that consists of two pieces of glass sealed together, with an air space between them that acts as insulation. At the time the plant opened, insulated windows were being produced, but they were sealed with an organic seal—a metal spacer between the two pieces of glass—as is done today. The new windows were sealed by welding the edges of the glass together electrically. The main customer for Twindow Glass Edge was Andersen window company.

PPG later built a plant at Marshall, Minnesota, to produce the same product. The company also built a factory in Mt. Zion, Illinois, to provide the necessary sheet glass. That factory is still in operation, but Twindow Glass Edge units are a thing of the past.

Making a Twindow

At the "hot" end of the factory, raw glass entered the assembly line. Several modifications were made to the glass, after which two pieces of glass (called lites) were placed together to make one unit that would become the Twindow. After preheating, the unit arrived at the main furnace for welding.

A welder operator like Robert C. "R. C." Anderson sat in a pit outside of the furnace, looking in through heavy glass doors. Earlier, a stripe of carbon graphite (called dag) had been placed around the perimeter of the top piece of glass. To start the weld, R. C. turned a knob to feed electricity to the dag

stripe. As current traveled from one corner of the glass to the next, it burned off the dag stripe and heated the glass in its path.

Electricity follows heat, so after a couple of cycles around the stripe, the electricity continued in the same path. Eventually, the two pieces melted together to form a weld.

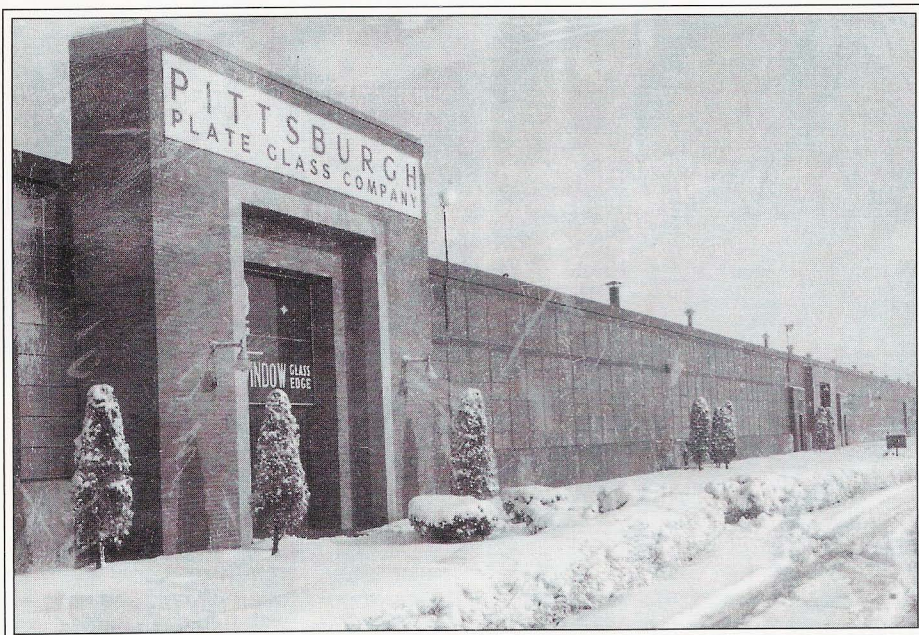
The top piece of glass had been cut slightly larger than the bottom piece. As the heat began to bend its edges down, R. C. pulled a lever to separate the pieces of glass, leaving about 3/16 of an inch of air space between them for insulation. If the thickness was not perfect, the unit would be thrown out.

The job could be frustrating. The line might be running well until a broken unit arrived from the preheat. R. C. would clean it up, make sure there was no glass left in the unit, and restart the process. "You may break six units before you get it smooth and can restart again," he says.

After the unit cooled somewhat, it was transferred to the Lehr, an annealing furnace for controlled cooling of the glass so it wouldn't shatter. Hanging from tongs, the units went into the Lehr at more than 1,000 degrees; when they came out, a person could hold them in his hand.

The units then went to the "cold," or finishing end of the factory, where they were put in a seal tank on racks—186 units in each tank. Each bottom piece of glass had a metal eyelet that had been placed in it earlier and had bonded into the glass while it was in the furnace.

A sealer like Paul Donath sat in the tank on a little stool on wheels—with a drill in his hand. Scooting from one unit to the next, he cleaned out each eyelet with the drill, until he had done them all. Then he started all over again—this time with a soldering iron.



A cold day in Lincoln means the heat in the PPG plant is not quite so unbearable. March 10, 1959. Lincoln, Illinois: A Pictorial History.

After preheating the units for five minutes with a battery of spotlights (to keep the solder from checking the glass), he put a drop of solder on each eyelet, a process called tinning. Now the eyelets were ready to be soldered shut when the time came.

Finally, Paul put a rubber tube (called a spaghetti) in each eyelet. The spaghettis were attached to a manifold that pumped dry air into them to take the moisture out of the air space between the two pieces of glass—a process called purging.

Paul had a chart with information on how to correctly purge the units, based on the temperature and barometric pressure in the tank. He also spot tested the windows in each section in the sealing tank for moisture by putting a small piece of dry ice atop several units.

After five minutes, he brushed it off, then squirted acetone on the units. If there was moisture left, the units would fog up, and Paul would know to purge that section longer.

In later years, after the windows were purged, a refrigerant gas was pumped into the air spaces to act as an insulator. That changed some procedures.

After the units were purged, Paul closed the doors at each end of the tank and—still working inside the tank—raised the pressure of the air inside of it. After the proper pressure was reached, Paul went from one unit to the next, first pulling out each spaghetti, then soldering the eyelet shut.

With a different amount of pressure and less air in the tank than his body was used to, “we got the job done as quickly as possible,” says Paul.

A monitor kept track of the oxygen level in the tank. If it fell too low, a horn would blow that could be heard throughout the plant. When a refrigerant gas was used, a valve would open to empty the tank of the gas. In fewer than five seconds, the tank would be down to atmospheric pressure, and the doors could be opened.

It was a “user-friendly system with fail-safe mechanisms,” says former

PPG engineer Wayne Mara. There were never any fatalities at the plant.

After Paul brought the tank back to atmospheric pressure, the space between the two pieces of glass would be at 32 inches of barometric pressure. So instead of the two pieces of glass being parallel, they bulged slightly because of the positive pressure inside. Plant manager Harry “Hop” Phalin loved to show visitors how he could lay the finished glass on two-by-fours and stand on it.

After the units were unloaded from the seal tank, they were again tested for moisture and then taken to the finishing line, where the corners were ground so they would fit the window sashes properly. Andersen windows were guaranteed for 20 years, so the date of manufacture was sandblasted into the glass along with the Andersen logo.

Union Jobs

Every job on the line had its duties and pay scale. Robert L. “Andy” Anderson worked at PPG from 1965 until 1989 and points out that jobs were awarded according to seniority. So, “when things were running good, I would have the top job—being an operator.” When work was slow, he would be bumped back down to a job that paid less.

Gail Leesman McShane worked in the personnel office. It was her job to determine whom to lay off and whom to recall—all according to seniority. “We were always up and down in employment,” she remembers, depending on the season and the economy—whether or not people were building homes.

But PPG paid well. In addition, when an employee’s years of service plus his age added up to 85, he could retire with full medical coverage, paid prescription drugs, and a pension—as Andy Anderson did. Not that the benefits came easily. Paul Donath was secretary of the American Flint Glass Workers Union during his 26 years at PPG, and he says that “all the negotiations were rough.” Contracts were for three years. The hourly rate might go up a nickel the first year, a dime the second, and a nickel the third.

One year, as the company made their final offer, their representative said, “You’ve got all the apples and all the oranges, and that’s all there is.” The union had an international representative present, who replied, “We want all the bananas, too.” “We ended up with a penny more,” remembers Paul. Still, PPG at Lincoln never had a strike.

Swing Shifts—and Heat

Because it took so long for the furnaces to heat up, the plant eventually operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Workers on the line worked a swing shift—the worst part of the job, says Andy Anderson. Andy would work from 4 p.m. to 12 p.m. for seven days, take two days off, then work the day shift (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.) for seven days. He took two days off, worked the midnight shift (12 p.m. until 8 a.m.) for seven days, and then took off three days (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday). Then he was back to working from 4 to 12.

Not only did this schedule take its toll on a person’s body, it caused some confusion in town. A worker who had just come off the midnight shift would sometimes stop for a beer on his way home. People who saw him go into a tavern at 8 in the morning thought he “must be an alcoholic,” says Andy, not realizing that for someone working from 12 to 8, it wasn’t morning.

Families had to plan their lives around the swing shift, but if a worker had worked enough years, he could sometimes ask for a day off if needed.

While Dick Becker was plant manager, the union negotiated straight shifts of

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

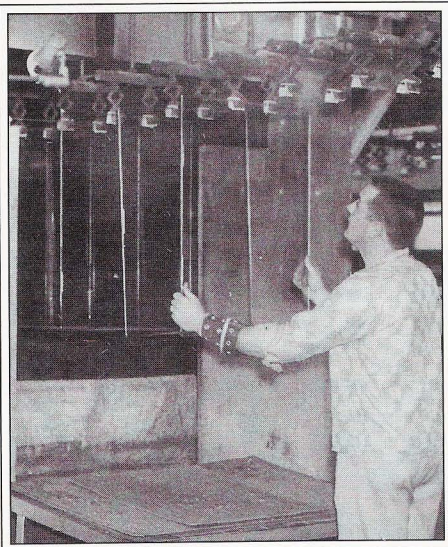
the same hours, with assignments based on seniority. So Paul Donath worked days on the same seven-day rotation. But the plant soon returned to swing shifts. Some people liked the midnight shift, but nobody wanted the 4-12 shift in the summertime: it was too hot.

One summer, when Andy Anderson was working that shift, it began to rain while he was at home during the day. Andy took his lawn chair out to the front yard and had settled down to enjoy the cool rain, when a man driving by in a pickup truck yelled at him. "Hey, you dummy," he said, "it's raining outside!" But after working in the intense heat, "that rain felt good," says Andy.

The heat was "tremendous at times," says Paul Donath. "About the only time it was halfway decent was when you had zero degree weather outside and could probably get by with 80 or 90 degrees in the [seal] tanks."

To give the operators relief, Wayne Mara worked with a group to design a man-cooling system. Fans drew in outside air, which was piped to each work station through a flexible line that the operator could move so as to direct air where he wanted it.

Don Ramlow worked in maintenance



Unloading the lehr. Lincoln, Illinois: A Pictorial History.

and repair and recalls that many people who came to work at PPG didn't stay because they didn't like the swing shifts and the heat. But there were "a lot of good people that stuck it out," he says.

A company nurse like Cindy Dowdel or Jean Neece [Destefano] cared for workers who were overcome by heat or cut by glass—the greatest hazard. She also administered the safety program and kept records required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Plant Engineer

Wayne Mara went to work at PPG in 1967 as a project engineer, working with plant engineer Robert Wheeler on both engineering and maintenance. (In later years, the plant had five or six engineers.)

His job was to improve the way things were done. Some projects he worked on were the deionized water system, the compressed air system, and the fire protection system.

The most interesting part of Wayne's job was finding the ingenuity to make repairs while a line was running, or at least without turning the heat off. (It took 8 to 10 hours to bring the furnace back to the correct temperature.)

Once maintenance man Dick Harbert welded several welding rods together to make one six-foot-long rod. He removed an access panel to the furnace and used the rod to weld a broken part from outside.

Wayne was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If he was awakened from a deep sleep, he wasn't thinking clearly when he arrived at the plant and sometimes felt overwhelmed by the problem at hand. Still, working with the shift maintenance man, "we always figured something out," he says.

The best part of Wayne's job was interviewing prospective engineers and seeing the ones he recom-

mended go on to become successful.

Purchasing Agent

Ray Leesman was hired when the plant opened in 1952. As storekeeper and receiving clerk, he set up the storeroom with the help of maintenance man Dick Harbert. Other early local employees were Lloyd Caldwell and Merle Veech.

At first, materials were purchased by the Pittsburgh office. When the plant expanded, Ray became purchasing agent and bought all supplies, except for raw glass from the Mt. Zion plant.

Lumber was a "big headache," says Ray. The plant used a lot of cheap lumber for crating, and workers built crates ahead of production. After making several thousand of one size of units, the production line might quit two thirds of the way through. Extra crates would be torn apart and taken to the dump. It cost too much to salvage them, Ray was told.

Ray couldn't stock more than three or four truckloads of lumber at once, because it would dry out, curl up, and split. Then, if supplies ran short, he'd get a phone call at 2 a.m. from the foreman saying, "Hey, we're about out." "There's more on the way," Ray would tell him, or he'd make a long distance call to one of his sources. "That made an old man out of me fast," he says.

Another challenging job was putting all the storeroom supplies and purchasing on the computer—when computers were new to most users.

When Ray retired in 1982, Wayne Mara took over the purchasing.

Plant managers were John Fisher, Harry Phalin, Dick Becker, Merle Veech, Rick Rueter, and Jim Fenwick.

PPG closed the plant in 1989. Attempts to make an economically feasible welded glass using the popular tinted glass had been unsuccessful. The company had run a coating line at lower wages for a couple of years. It took that line out and installed it at Mt. Zion. ■

Lincoln Coca-Cola Bottling

One of the best parts of being the daughter of a Coca-Cola bottler, says Susan Vaughn Lessen, was that “the kids in my class always wanted to come to our house after school.”

Growing up in the 1940s and ‘50s, Susan lived with her parents and sisters, Sara “Sash” [Gabbard] and Beth [Manning] in a big white house at 204 Lincoln Avenue. “We always had a Coke machine in the kitchen, and [my classmates] could get a free Coke,” she says.

Susan’s grandfather Howard Vaughn had operated Vaughn Bottling Works, at 307-311 N. Chicago Street in Lincoln. In the 1914 city directory, the firm advertised Vaughn’s Ginger Ale and Soda Water with the slogan, “They are pure—that is sure.” The firm also sold Reisch’s Gold Top Beer.

Over the years, the Vaughn family ran the concession stand at the Chautauqua; mixed other flavored carbonated drinks; had the Budweiser distributorship (though it didn’t bottle the beer); and sold Wrigley gum, Hershey bars, and Snickers from its delivery trucks. But Coca-Cola was its main business.

In 1910, Howard Vaughn had bought a Coca-Cola bottling franchise. Eventually, the company became Lincoln Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

The plant was located at 221-23 S. Kickapoo Street in Lincoln (next door to the present location of Hazel Alberts Real Estate). Susan’s father, James “Jimmy,” joined the family business.

Pete Andrews ran the Gem restaurant nearby and remembers that “Jim always had a bottle of Coke in his hand at 7:00 and 8:00 in the morning, and he always offered everybody one.”

At home or a party, Jimmy never added ice cubes to his Coke, follow-

ing his father’s practice. Her grandfather “didn’t want the product watered down,” says Susan, who still doesn’t use ice.

Carol Poole Schmidt’s father, Mason Poole, worked for Jimmy Vaughn. “I was kind of raised on Coca-Cola,” she says. Her father “would bring it home by the case,” she says.

Her mother didn’t drink Coke, and she made her three youngest daughters—Carol, Linda [Diers], and Mildred “Mickey” [Gehlbach]—split a 6 1/2-ounce bottle among themselves. “When she was not home, we would have a whole bottle to ourselves,” says Carol.

Carol’s dad started out driving a Coca-Cola truck and eventually repaired all the Coca-Cola vending machines. He became an expert on refrigeration and operated a side business out of the plant, servicing refrigeration equipment and air conditioners.

When Carol attended Central School, she sometimes walked over to the plant to “beg a Coke off him.” If she needed 50 cents for Marcucci’s soda fountain and her dad wasn’t there, she might borrow it from Vera Amberg, who ran the office.

Other employees over the years included repairman Orville “O.B.” Boyd, drivers Fred Kavelman and Tom Quisenberry, and supervisor Don Musick. High school students worked half days through the distributive education program, and students from Lincoln Christian College helped out in the summer.

Then, too, Jimmy made a place for former drivers at the plant. “It took a pretty sturdy fellow,” says Susan Lessen, to “sling those cases around,” and they couldn’t do it indefinitely. One former driver in-

spected bottles; when he was no longer able to do that, Jimmy sent him around one or two days a month to collect bills.

Inside the Plant

As empty bottles were returned to the plant, they were hand-sorted by type: Coke, B-1 (a lemon-lime drink), Vaughn flavors in a 7-ounce clear bottle with the name Vaughn in white paint, and Orange and Grape Crush. The bottles were then stacked on pallets to await washing and filling.

Don Musick was head bottler. The B-1 and Vaughn flavors—orange-pineapple, orange, cream soda, strawberry, and grape—arrived at the plant as concentrates. He mixed them with water and sugar in big tanks on the second floor. Also on the second floor, water was run through a carbonator to make carbonated water. Downstairs, a weak bottle occasionally blew up from the pressure of the carbonated water.

Orange Crush and Coca-Cola syrups came in 55-gallon drums that were hooked up to a machine that dropped syrup into each bottle as it came down the conveyer belt from the washer.

After a 6 1/2-ounce bottle, for example, received one ounce of syrup, it next moved down the conveyer belt to a machine that filled it with water. Next came the capper, then a machine that turned the bottle over and shook it two or three times.

After it was inspected, the bottle moved to a turntable, where it was taken off and put in cases by hand.

“Whoever ran that table was pretty busy, because he had to keep up with the machines,” says Dale White, who worked at the plant from 1969 until 1974. Bigger plants had a machine to do that job.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Bottled pop was kept in a storage area in the building, and in the driveway, as well. Heaters kept the outdoor pop from freezing in the winter.

Coke originally came in 6 1/2-ounce bottles. Later, the plant bottled it in 12- and 16-ounce bottles (what the drivers called the "hernia pack"). When 32-ounce bottles came on the scene, they had to be shipped in.

In the early 1960s, Coca-Cola became available in cans. Drivers liked them: they were lighter than the bottles, and more would go on a hand truck. They were first trucked in from Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Later, when Dale White worked at the plant, he drove to Peoria every Saturday to get a truckload full. When a truckload no longer lasted a week, cans were shipped in by semi.

Driving a Truck

Elmer Snyder worked as a driver/salesman from 1958 until 1966. On a typical day, he arrived at work around 7:15 and went to the office to "pop open a Coke," he says. The vending machine in the office (a V83, which held 83 bottles) was a nickel machine—with a cup of nickels on top of it.

If Elmer hadn't gotten in early enough the night before to have help unloading his truck, he unloaded the empties from yesterday's run and loaded up today's full bottles. At first, he drove an old rack truck with shelves, and the cases had to be loaded and unloaded by hand. Later, he drove a pallet truck, which made the job go more easily and faster.

After downing another bottle of Coke, Elmer was off to service his route, dressed in a khaki shirt and khaki pants with a green stripe. In the summer, Jimmy Vaughn had white t-shirts with Coca-Cola in red letters on the front made for the drivers.

Elmer began by taking over the out-of-town route from Don Musick. The territory included Waynesville and Hallsville in DeWitt County; Williamsville; and all of Logan County except New Holland, Middletown, and Chestnut. When Elmer took over the city route, Danny White took his route.

"I was 30 when I got off the pop truck," says Elmer. "It's a job for a young man, and 30 is old when you're on a pop truck. By the time you take the hand truck full of pop up the stairs, your legs have turned to rubber."

The bottles of pop on a hand truck weighed 240 pounds, and the hand truck about 25 to 30. He remembers taking the hand truck down the outside stairs at Olin-Sang Hall at Lincoln College in the winter with ice on the stairs. "That was no fun," he says.

Charcoal burners in the trucks usually kept the Coke from freezing in the wintertime, but when Elmer opened the truck door, the smoke would get all over his clothes. "You'd walk into the little grocery store in Elkhart, and they'd say, 'Something's on fire,'" he laughs. "They think the building's burning down."

Summer was the busiest time. During State Fair week, Elmer would take 30 to 40 cases to the gas station at Williamsville on Route 66 on Monday and go back on Thursday with another 30 to 40 cases.

Jimmy Vaughn wanted his drivers to make friends with clients. He gave Elmer 70 cents a day to buy plate lunches at the restaurants and reimbursed him for tickets to spaghetti suppers. If customers were present when he arrived at a gas station, Elmer gave each of them a free Coke.

Elmer was paid a base salary and by the case, so he carried the keys to the vending machines at the factories. If a bottle broke and jammed a machine at

PPG at night, he drove out and fixed it. "If they weren't drinking it, I didn't make any money," he says.

If a little restaurant in Williamsville was sold, he'd ask the new owner if he wanted to carry Coke, too.

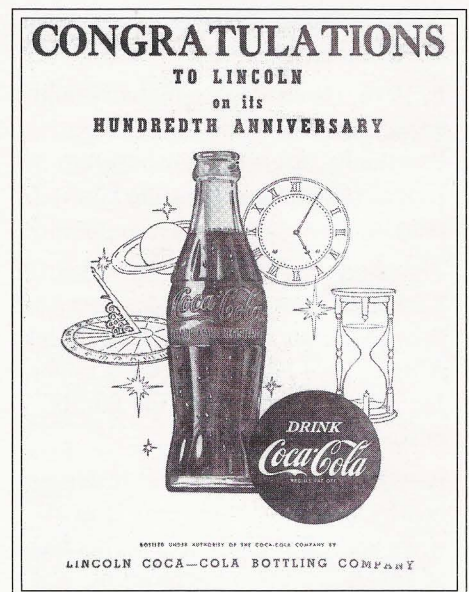
The End of a Family Business

Whether it meant icing down pop in a horse tank for Homecoming, running a stand at the Logan County Fair, or dropping everything to take more pop to a family picnic on a Sunday afternoon, the Vaughns and their employees were a big part of the community.

In 1975, Jimmy Vaughn decided to retire. He sold the Coca-Cola plant to Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Southern Illinois, Inc. in 1976.

The building was listed as vacant in the 1977 Lincoln city directory. By 1978, it was the location of Baker Masonry-Leisure World and the Leisure World showroom. More recently, it was the home of Glenn and Marilyn Buelter.

And Susan Vaughn Lessen? To this day, when a waiter asks her if Pepsi is okay, she politely orders iced tea instead. It's a question of loyalty. ■



Lincoln Evening Courier, Aug. 26, 1953. Coke also advertised by giving out rulers to schoolchildren.

(Continued from page 3)

heated light tunnel to set the paint. Mona could also set the jig to move automatically. Mona and coworker Martha "Sam" Kirk also operated "the monster," a machine that automatically printed patterns on the bottles fed into it.

In another part of the decorating department, patterns were printed on glass bottles and fired in a fire oven. Don Kline says Bertha Baldwin had perfected just the right rhythm to take bottles off the conveyer belt and load the fire oven—never missing a one.

Tussy deodorant, shampoo, conditioners, and Midnight cologne were all packed in containers that were decorated right at the plant.

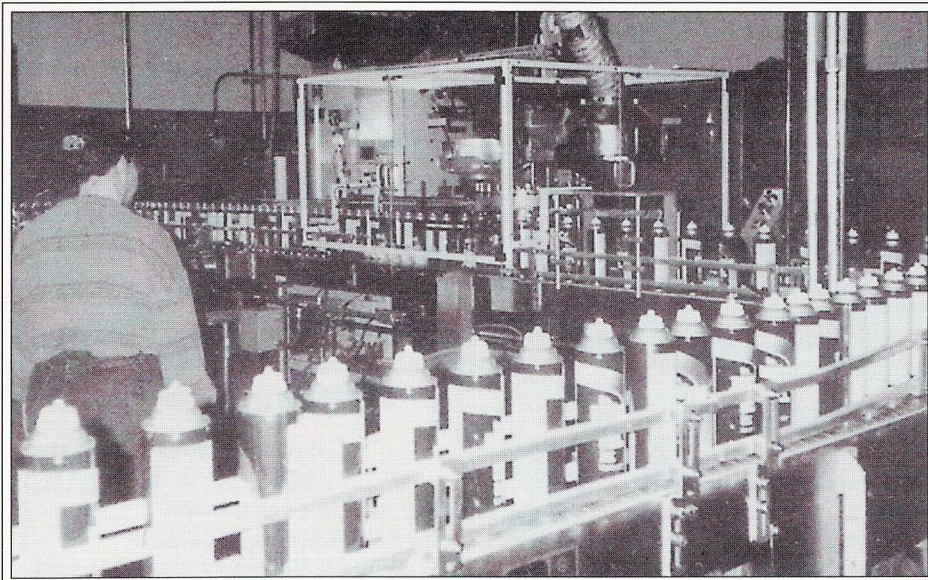
Aerosol Department

The aerosol department was established in 1961, using Freon 12 as a propellant. The can was filled at a cold temperature, and a valve was inserted and crimped. Next, the can went through a hot water bath, where the contents were brought up to 160 degrees to check for leaks. The can's side seams had been soldered, so if a can was weak, it would blow up in the water bath—even blowing off the protective screen. The first aerosol line was for Medi-Quik.

In June of 1966, amid concerns about the environment, a high-speed aerosol line was built that used carbon dioxide (just like soda pop) instead of Freon. In 1983, a new aerosol department was opened when the factory began filling Lysol Basin Tub and Tile Cleaner, a foam that required the use of a hydrocarbon (an explosive gas) as a propellant.

While the department was being planned, an explosion occurred at the Lehn and Fink plant at Belle Meade, New Jersey. It blew off the side of the building, took off part of the roof, and badly burned a couple of people. As a result, many changes were made in the plans for Lincoln. The new gassing room was separated from the main building by a walkway and had safety features like blowout walls, explosion-suppressing equipment, electronic gas detectors, and static-reducing floors.

Ken Aderman was supervisor of the new aerosol department from 1983 until 1996. "We were fortunate; we never had one mishap in all those years," he says. Safeguards and checks paid off.



Lysol spray disinfectant in the aerosol department. The Link, March, 1994.

Quality Circles

In 1988, the plant instigated quality circles to involve workers in changes to improve the facilities. "We had a ball with that," says Ken.

Mechanics had always changed the lines over between products. Now, says Ken, "we gave it to the people."

For example, a lot of Canadian orders were small. Operators might run one product for four hours. It would take eight hours to change the line over; then it would run for another three hours. When operators made the changes, changeover time was reduced to two or three hours—and most of the ideas on how to go about it, people thought up at their meetings.

One technique used was to color code parts—all the blue parts went on certain items, for example.

Other departments at the plant included shipping, returned goods (where unused items from promotions were re-labeled and shipped out at full price), and human resources.

A Good Place to Work

An advantage of working at Lehn and Fink was being able to buy the firm's products for ten cents on the dollar. So the first time Donna Griffin had to buy Lysol spray in a store at \$2.98, she thought, "I don't believe this!"

Another "perk" was the coffee, tea, and homemade soup made by cooks like Darlene Gleason and Jan Sutton. Later, the cooks were replaced by canteen machines. The soup was good but it "wasn't as good as what our employees made," says Jo Klokkenga.

The End of an Era

Mechanization reduced the size of the workforce, but at least 300 people still worked at the factory in 1995 when plant manager Jim Bodnar announced that it would close in 1996.

A multimillion-dollar tank farm had just been completed. It had been started when Kodak owned the plant. Reckitt and Colman let it proceed rather than "spill the beans," says Ken Aderman. ■



Coffee House

A Brilliant Way to Perk Up Your Day

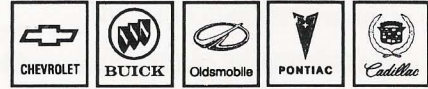
Historic Sangamon Street
201 Sangamon St.
Lincoln, IL 62656

Great Minds Drink Alike

Open 6:30 am Mon. - Sat.
Till 10:00 pm Mon. - Th.
Till 11:00 pm Fri. & Sat.

Our 48th year of quality sales and service.

GRAUE INC.



1905 N. Kickapoo Street
Lincoln, IL 62656
217-735-4444



The Christian Village

1507 Seventh Street
Lincoln, Illinois 62656

217-732-2189



Key Printing

1112 Keokuk Street
Lincoln, IL 62656

217-732-9879

Fax: 217-732-9866

Compliments of

GRAUE PHARMACY

Your JCPenney Catalog Merchant

LINCOLN, ILLINOIS

Free Delivery / Drive-Up Window

Dennis Graue, R.Ph.

Mike Rohrer, R.Ph.

THE COURIER

Serving the Logan County area since 1856

For convenient home delivery:
732-2101

MAPLE RIDGE Care Center Retirement Village

A FIRST HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY

2202 North Kickapoo Street • Lincoln, IL 62656

(217) 735-1538

Care Center

120 Bed Facility • Admissions Tours seven days a week • Medicare, Medicaid, Private Pay, Private Insurance, and VA Contracts • Full Rehabilitation Program, *Physical, *Occupational, *Speech • Skin and Wound Care • Podiatric, Dental, and Optometry Services • Hospice • Respite • Wide Variety of Activities and Special Events

Retirement Village

38 One Bedroom Apartments • Each with own entrance and deck • Low monthly lease includes all utilities • 24-hour call system in bedroom • Complimentary on-site laundry • Housekeeping, Laundry Service, and Meals available.

Call 217-735-1538

for a tour today!

Abraham Lincoln Tourism Bureau of Logan County

Promoting Economic Development
Through Tourism

(217) 732-TOUR (8687)

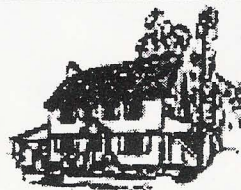
FAX: 732-6293

E-MAIL: tourism@abelink.com



303 S. Kickapoo Street

Lincoln, Illinois 62656



Roger Webster Construction, Inc.

Your full service contractor!

303 North Sangamon Street, Lincoln

Phone: (217) 732-8722

E-mail: rwcinc@ccaonline.com

Web Address: www2.ccaonline.com/rwcinc

Lincolns Only Full Service Store

LINCOLN



HOMETOWN PROUD

713 Pulaski
Lincoln, IL 62656
(217) 735-2221

BILL CAMPBELL
CHARLIE LEE

Pink Shutter Thrift Shop

A resale shop owned and operated by
Abraham Lincoln Memorial
Hospital Auxiliary
Great selections of clothes and
accessories

Tax deductible donations
accepted daily

114 N. McLean

Mon. & Sat. 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Tues. - Fri. 9 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Compliments of
Isaac, Emily,
Hannah, Grace, Cole,
and Halle

The next generation of
Our Times supporters



Bassi Construction
Dale A. Bassi

Restoration • Renovation • New Construction

511 N. Ottawa St. • Lincoln, IL 62656
217-732-1028

Stocks, Bonds,
Mutual Funds,
CDs, IRAs

Bob Neal
Jim Sparrow
*Investment
Representatives*

218 South Kickapoo
Lincoln, IL 62656
1-217-735-2585

Edward Jones
Serving Individual Investors Since 1871

*Thank you, Our Times,
for celebrating Logan County's
rich and unique heritage.*

Clyde & Shari Reynolds



The Maple Club

1458 State Route 121 • Lincoln, Illinois 62656

The perfect place for a perfect wedding!

Call Joyce for reservations at (217) 735-1275

Holland and Barry, Ltd.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

325 PEKIN STREET
LINCOLN, ILLINOIS 62656

EDWARD M. BARRY

(217) 732-4141

Coming to Springfield for all of Central Illinois

Jabez

Grief Support Center

*Helping individuals and families journey
with death or serious illness*

The center will provide opportunities for:

- counseling
- support groups for children, teens and adults • massage therapist
- exercise room • quiet room with inside garden
- art room • child care room

For more information contact:

Dee Stern, Executive Director

217-529-4743

deestern@fgi.net

*The Jabez Grief Support Center has a 501(c) (3) status, a 12 member Board of
Directors, a building design and contributed monies.*

Three Roses Floral

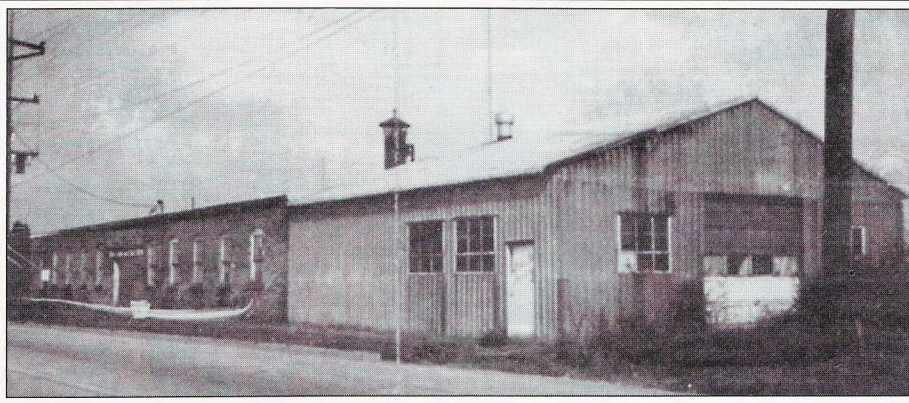
123 S. KICKAPOO
LINCOLN, ILLINOIS 62656

WILLIAM E. BREE

Ph. 732-3116

**If you enjoy *Our Times*, thank its sponsors.
Our Times is their gift to you.**

Lincoln Foundry



Lincoln Foundry, 1972. The brick portion in the rear was the first floor of the two-story Lincoln Automobile Factory, built in 1907. Ralph Weaver bought that building in 1942 for the Lincoln Foundry. Courtesy Ivan Ray.

Richard “Ivan” and Elaine Ray bought the abandoned Lincoln Foundry building at 390 Limit Street in 1972. Owned by Ralph Weaver and managed by Howard Stewart, the factory had cast items like manhole covers, storm drains, and curb drains. The floor was covered with mold sand—sand mixed with oil and used in the casting process. Casting requires wooden patterns; Ralph bought his from a woodworking shop in Pekin and had about 180 different styles and designs. Two overhead cranes held the big metal ladles used to pour the molten metal reclaimed from scrap iron that Ralph had purchased. The Rays remodeled the building and built Modern Brake and Alignment behind it. ■

Material for this issue is from the *Courier*; *History of Logan County Illinois 1911, 1982*; *Lincoln, Illinois: A Pictorial History*; *Lasting Memories Cookbook* by former Lehn & Fink employees; the factory’s publication, *The Link*; and the memories of our friends.

Our Times

Prairie Years Press
121 N. Kickapoo Street
Lincoln, IL 62656

Our Times

The People, History, and Culture of
Logan County, Illinois

Inside This Issue

Lehn & Fink

Pittsburgh Plate Glass

Lincoln Coca-Cola
Bottling

Lincoln Foundry

PRSR.T. STD.

US POSTAGE PAID

LINCOLN IL

PERMIT 337

The People, History, and Culture of Logan County, Illinois