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GROWTH OF NEBRASKA HOMEGROWN INDUSTRIES

Nebraska is still in need of some impetus to change its sluggish performance in the field of employment and to offset or absorb the continued exodus in agriculture, as was pointed out in an article on the state employment situation in the October issue of Business in Nebraska.

In many Nebraska communities precisely this impetus has been given by the ingenuity and business acumen of men and women who have developed homegrown industries. The story of some of these industries was told in the February, 1966, issue and elicited much interest not only within the state but beyond it and was extensively reprinted in Economic Development, monthly publication of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

General recognition of the importance of new industries to the development of the state has led to the article which appears below and which tells of other Nebraska enterprises which have been initiated by inventive and creative individuals.

Because industries often develop to meet the needs of an important segment of the economy or to make use of the products and natural resources of a region, it is not surprising that some of the most successful Nebraska industries are in this category.

VALLEY MANUFACTURING COMPANY

A Nebraska firm which has been manufacturing farm machinery at a profit each year since the plant opened in 1946 is the Valley Manufacturing Company located in the town from which the firm takes its name. Much of the success of the industry is attributable to the fact that product changes have kept pace with changes in agricultural technology and new product lines have been added to serve new needs.

A tillage machine commonly called the "clodbuster" was once a popular item, for example, but is no longer manufactured. Interestingly enough, the company's now sizeable export business, all of which has been initiated by prospective customers abroad, had its origin when an order came from Chile for six "clodbusters." Until then the company had not considered entering export trade but it subsequently arranged with an export agent to handle South American business, and this has been of considerable importance from that time to this.

The principal line of farm machinery now manufactured is automatic irrigation equipment, which has also begun to figure importantly in the company's export business. Other major product lines are steel pipe, supplied mainly to oil and natural gas companies, and steel tubing used chiefly for industrial application: tapered steel poles for highway and street lighting; and precision steel forms for the prestressed concrete industry.

All product lines are made primarily from steel which is procured from domestic steel producers in the western half of the country. Presently the company is negotiating with a large steel company on a manufacturing technique developed at the Valley plant whereby a light pole can be welded in 40 seconds instead of the customary 10 minutes.

About two years ago a man from France wrote saying that he would like to come to Valley to purchase some automatic irrigation equipment. Upon arrival he ordered several of the sprinkler systems for use in France and Spain and arranged to have the company send a technician along to install them. The firm has since exported many of the machines and is now working on an arrangement to have the systems built in France under a joint manufacturing venture.

Robert B. Daugherty, president of Valley Manufacturing Company, reports that sales have grown from approximately $350,000 in the first year of business to well over 12 million dollars in 20 years time. Most rapid growth has taken place in the past five years, in which the volume has gone from approximately 3 1/2 million dollars to the present figure.

On one occasion a good customer from Kansas brought an English industrialist to visit the Valley plant. The Englishman was in the market for steel tubing and as a result of his visit the Valley Manufacturing Company now ships him several carloads of tubing annually. A portion of the company's export business is indirect through industrial purchasers such as a large oil company, which uses several carloads of steel pipe in foreign countries each year, and an electric company, which has distributed hundreds of the Nebraska-made light poles throughout the world.

Valley Manufacturing Company contributes appreciably to the economy of the community through the employment of 325 people. Although employment is somewhat seasonal it is expected that the present level will continue or possibly grow in the next few months. A large majority of the present workers have been trained on the job because the labor supply is quite restricted at present, and even in periods of modest economic activity on a national basis the firm has had some difficulty in finding competent help.

DALE ELECTRONICS, INCORPORATED

Among highly successful Nebraska industries which are totally unrelated to agriculture except that they make some use of the surplus farm labor force, the electronics industry is outstanding.

Phenomenal growth of Dale Electronics, Inc. of Columbus is a story which has been told many times, but the company's recent intensive penetration of the foreign (Continued on page 4)
In August, the dollar volume of business in Nebraska increased 13.9% over August 1965. Physical volume of business increased 8.8% from a year ago. Comparable U.S. indexes were +9.1% and +5.6% respectively. Examination of 1966 monthly changes indicates that, with the exception of January, Nebraska's monthly levels rose between 4 and 5 percentage points more than the U.S. Construction activity remained considerably higher than last year for Nebraska. Of the ten indicators used for both the U.S. and Nebraska all showed increases in Nebraska and construction activity was the only U.S. indicator decreasing from August 1965.

Nebraska's retail sales for September increased 6.3% over last year and decreased 3.3% (seasonally adjusted) from August 1966. Of the twenty-two reporting cities all but three (Chadron, Fremont, Broken Bow) had increases over 1965 ranging from +0.2% (Omaha) to +20.8% (Alliance). General merchandise, home equipment, apparel and variety stores were the individual types decreasing from September 1965. Farm equipment stores had the greatest increase (+22.6%).

Indexes of city business indicators rose in all 22 reporting cities over last year. The state index was 9.6% above September 1965.

All figures on this page are adjusted for seasonal changes, which means that the month-to-month ratios are relative to the normal or expected changes. Figures in Chart I of the first line are adjusted where appropriate for price changes. Gasoline sales for Nebraska are for road use only; for the United States they are production in the previous month.
### VI. CITY BUSINESS INDICATORS

#### Per Cent of Same Month a Year Ago

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Continued from first page) market is a development in its continuing expansion program that is not so well known. Martin Park, advertising and export manager of the corporation, relates that prior to January of this year the company had been handling its foreign business through an export agency.

After a comprehensive survey of overseas markets, it was decided that to be effective in export trade the company should find a qualified agent in each of the countries to which it exports. Careul screening of prospective agents narrowed the field from 150 to 10. Last February at the electronics show in Paris, Mr. Park and an engineer from the company interviewed the 10 representatives and decided upon 10. The agents chosen have proved to be highly satisfactory, and the export business with them is being operated on open account.

Thus far in 1966 the company’s export business has been increased by 300 percent over last year. About one-twentieth of the firm’s total production is presently being sold to foreign markets, and it is anticipated that this proportion will double within five years. In accounting for the rapid increase in exports, Mr. Park explains that Dale Electronics already had a “name” abroad and a number of good customers there, but the particular export agency which had been representing the company had not been doing a very good job.

The Columbus firm has found that due to the technical nature of its products it is necessary that its salesmen abroad have an engineering background. Its agents are assisted by company advertising and sales promotion in the trade journals of the various countries and by promotional packets containing ad layouts, artwork, and copy which can be translated into the language of the country. By making up the advertising format here, the company is assured uniformity and continuity in its overall advertising program.

Mr. Park emphasizes that it is essential to retain control over prices which are quoted in each country and to set limitations on reduced quantities a foreign agent may quote without consulting the factory, which maintains the final word on large contract negotiations. In dealing with an increasingly sophisticated European market it has been found necessary to keep accurate records of sales by product type to the various countries in order to define market trends and sales trends more precisely.

Because a considerable amount of special information must be referenced on foreign orders and it is usually necessary to refer to the respective contracts quite frequently, the Columbus firm keeps foreign orders separate from domestic orders. Orders from overseas are always carefully monitored to make certain that shipments are made when promised.

TUF-GLAS BUILDING PRODUCTS, INC.

New industries develop from inceptions as diverse as their products. One of Nebraska’s new manufacturing plants, Tuf-Glas Building Products, Inc. of Blair, stems from an idea which came to Mr. Frost Saunders, president of his company, when he observed a Florida houseboat contained an insert of fiberglass paneling. Since he had had previous experience in the manufacture of fiberglass wings in Omaha, Mr. Smith began to weigh the possibility of manufacturing architectural specialties from fiberglass. As a result, a corporation was formed in April, 1964, to manufacture doors and panels of fiberglass reinforced plastic, called Tuf-Glas.

In December of the same year the firm was forced to discontinue operations temporarily when fire swept through the factory and destroyed much of the machinery. While the damaged building was being repaired and the machinery rebuilt, product formulas were revised and previous operational difficulties ironed out, according to Mr. Smith, from a setback came an improved product.

Originally the product was manufactured in six standard designs and colors, but because now many more orders are being for personalized products than for standard items, the initial concept of an assembly-line operation has been changed to hand production to meet the individual customer’s specifications.

In addition to structural uses, the product lends itself to optical glass effects and embedding of designs and symbols; hence a considerable proportion of specialty items produced this year were church orders. A recent example of interesting specialties for home use was a large panel featuring marine life, which was placed in a recessed light. It was placed in a recessed light, which served as a three-dimensional effect.

The owners of Tuf-Glas Building Products, Inc. are looking forward to plant expansion and improvement because buyers are discovering the versatility of their product. They are confident that another year of effective salesmanship, extensive promotion, and hard work will return their original investment, require increased production, and necessitate employment of more workers.

SAUNDERS ARCHERY COMPANY

From a hobby or recreational activity to a business enterprise is not an uncommon success story in Nebraska industry, as Saunders Archery Company of Columbus is an outstanding example of a family-owned industry which developed in precisely this way.

When Charles Saunders, president of the firm, made his bow and took up the sport of archery on his father’s farm in Nebraska, he had no idea that he would some day head a manufacturing concern which is the official producer of every official target face of the Professional Archers Association, the National Field Archery Association, and the National Archery Association. Neither would he have envisioned becoming the largest distributor and manufacturer of target faces in the world nor achieving any of the other fantastic feats which his company has accomplished.

After Mr. Saunders left the farm and became an electrician and then sales manager, he continued to make bows and arrows for his own use and for his wife, but he soon discovered that bales of straw for target practice were not readily available in the city. As was the case with twist grass, binding and tying it into rope-like strands and shaping it to the desired target matt size from a center core set to work to devise a machine to do the job.

Eventually, in the basement of the family’s Chicago flat, a machine which Mr. Saunders admits bore considerable resemblance to a Rube Goldberg invention, the world’s first machine-produced target arrow was produced. With a few parts replaced the original target machine may still be seen in operation in the Columbus plant.

When his invention worked so satisfactorily, Mr. Saunders ferred his new industry to his grandfather’s farm to be closer to the point of supply of native grass. He then began an intensive testing program to find the most suitable grass and finally decided upon Spartana, or Indian cord grass as it is sometimes called, because it offered the greatest resilience and rot resistance of all the various species of grass is still used by the firm.

Located at Columbus since 1951, the Saunders Company shown constant creativity in development of products, the recent being a complex Electromatt System. Through the scientific knowledge and inventive genius of son Eugene, who designed electronics in the Army, the age-old sport of archery has en
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Robert, to manufacture Cheddar and Colby cheese, which they ket through one of the large packing companies.

It happens that the Marty brothers are natives of Iowa v
they received their introduction to the science of cheese making
a small plant near their father's farm, but when they decided
into business for themselves they chose the Nebraska locatio
cause a suitable building was available and the area around O
was one which could provide the necessary quantities of

An outlet for the milk production of more than 175 farm pa
is provided by the Oxford plant, which consumes 80,000 pour
milk daily. Production in 1965 was over 2 million pounds of ch
The owners and their wives constituted the initial work force
the men still put in long hours in the factory, but their wiv
longer work in the plant. There are nine full-time emplo
most of whom have been trained on the job as there has been
difficulty in getting competent help.

The advice of the Marty brothers to others who may be i
ested in opening a new plant is advice in which industrial ex
concur: “Do a lot of careful research first.”

BLUE RIVER TIMBER COMPANY
Forest product industries contribute to the economy of the
not only through the production of lumber but also through
products such as household and commercial fixtures. The
Census of Nebraska manufacturing shows that there were 46 p
engaged in the manufacture of lumber and wood products and
furniture and fixtures. There are, in addition, over 150 saw
in the state.

The Blue River Timber Company of Wilber, owned by par
Charles Burger and Leonard Wasserman, is representing small Nebraska lumber mills which provide good incomes for owners, give employment to other workers, and successfully the needs of home-state buyers. The company, which origi
in Beatrice, was moved to its present location in 1959 when it sold by Lester Vicars, the founder, to Melvin Wasserman of Wilber.

When the present owners bought the company in 1962 they working closely with University Extension foresters in an eff
upgrade their products and improve their operational techni
By the end of 1965 the volume of sales totaled almost twi
much as in any earlier year, and indications are that a new
will be recorded in 1966.

Timber, mainly cottonwood, elm, oak, and some maple, is h
from a radius of 50 miles. Principal product lines are crate
pallets for commercial use, but some finished lumber is proc
for farmers in the area. Cushman Motor Works and the Good
Tire and Rubber Company of Lincoln take a large part of the f
output, and other Nebraska businesses account for the remain

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Continued from page 5)

Raw product needs of the firm cannot be supplied in Nebraska since only northern grown oak is used in the manufacture of furniture and fixtures for churches and banks, and birch is used in the custom-built kitchen cabinets. Products are marketed throughout the Midwest but most extensively in Nebraska, Iowa, and Kansas. Twenty-one full-time workers are employed. Recruitment of personnel is sometimes difficult inasmuch as skilled cabinetmakers are hard to find and all workers require some knowledge of construction and woodworking. The fact that employment is not seasonal and that the company has never had any layoffs, however, not only eases the employment situation, but also adds stability to the contribution which the firm makes to the economy of the community.

DUNN'S GOLDEN TURKEY COMPANY

Although the ‘pa and ma’ grocery store is rapidly disappearing from the scene, there are in this state some significant examples of other kinds of family enterprises which have achieved conspicuous success and have ultimately expanded to provide either seasonal or part-time employment for others. Some of these enterprises, such as Dunn's Golden Turkey Company of near Lisco, have been developed by Nebraskans with farm backgrounds who enjoy rural life and have found ways to retain its advantages through a family-operated agri-business in a period when agriculture is declining.

Have you ever tasted breakfast bacon made from turkey thighs or been served hickory smoked, cured, boneless breast of turkey? If so you may have eaten one of the specialties developed by W. E. Dunn, owner and manager of Dunn's Golden Turkey Company.

While he was in naval air training Mr. Dunn was stationed at Atumawa, Iowa, which is only forty miles from the turkey empire of Arthur Gingerrich of Wellman. Having become interested in aising and processing turkeys, when Mr. Dunn was mustered out of the navy in November, 1945 he made two visits to the Gingerrich turkey enterprise and one to a turkey experiment station. He and his wife decided to go into the turkey business and purchased a quarter section of land in the Platte Valley near Lisco early in 1946.

After ten years in business the Dunns came to the conclusion that their marketing procedures should be improved. They decided to sell dressed turkeys and that first year dressed 2,000 birds, one of which was shipped to Chicago outlets. Since then the business has expanded rapidly. They started 25,000 turkeys, dressed 3,000 birds, and further processed about 1,400 last year. They now have a federally inspected processing plant located in the yard of their home and state that they have the only federally inspected plant in their part of the country.

The Dunns have developed a number of turkey specialties and list also prepare turkey products on order. One of their new products, a boneless turkey roll, was originated to meet public demand for winter usage tests continue to be satisfactory, the invention soon go into regular production. Another new invention is a meter testing case to calibrate a barometer automatically, over the altitude and locality.

Since success of their enterprise has been somewhat dependent upon their inventions, the Burtons are pleased to have won at the recent Nebraska Inventors' Congress a total of six ribbons to add to their large collection of awards won at shows in this and adjoining states. Their manufacturing plan has been primarily a family operation, but it has yielded them a living and now has expansion prospects which will require additional personnel.

ARKFELD MANUFACTURING & DISTRIBUTING COMP.

It is necessary to be somewhat arbitrary in selection of Nebraska industries included in this article, but an attempt is made to consider diversity of location, size, kind, and age of industry. Arkfeld Manufacturing & Distributing Company of Norfolk is one of the older firms, as it had its beginning in 1917 when John Arkfeld signed and began building scientific livestock waterers on his farm near Battle Creek. By 1921 the business had grown so large a plant was established in Norfolk; in 1927 the founder's son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Harsh, became members of the firm; and in 1934 G. E. McFarland, now president and co-owner, joined the company.

Both Mr. Arkfeld and Mr. Harsh have died, but Mrs. Hawkes has remained active in management of the firm and in 1956 her nephew, Gerald Arkfeld, a grandson of the founder, became general manager of the company. Mr. Arkfeld has made important contributions to development of product lines which include special livestock scales, prefabricated insulated steel pump houses, and 26 models of waterers.

Products are shipped throughout the United States and provinces of Canada. As many as 155 waterers have been shipped on a single order to a commercial feedlot in the famed old town of Dodge City, Kansas, and large direct orders of this constitute much of the firm's business.

Arkfeld provides employment for workers with diverse skills, including electricians, welders, painters, and sheet metal fabricators, and its payroll is important to Norfolk.

CONCLUSION

Although the Nebraska industries mentioned in this article were diverse in many respects, they have a common characteristic: each was developed through effective individual initiative, ingenuity and business acumen. The need for accelerated use of Nebraska resources - human, natural, and capital - is imperative. Firms cited provide specific examples of precisely the kind of enterprise needed to offset the decline in the agricultural sector of the state's economy.

DOROTHY SWIT

S & A SPECIALTIES - MR. AND MRS. AUBREY BURTON

Another successful family business is that of S & A Specialties of Alliance. Because the firm has developed two new major products in the past year it appears appropriate to include in this article a progress report on this small manufacturing company. The invention of Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey W. Burton, on which success of their enterprise is founded, has in the past been applied principally to items produced for sale to banks, elevators, feed companies, equipment dealers to give away for advertising and promotional purposes. Mr. Burton's new inventions require quite different marketing techniques.

At the urging of a Swiss surgeon who complained that it was cumbersome to have to leave tongs on a clamp while it was convenient for patients to be able to use their chest during heart surgery. Mr. Burton devised a clamp with removable tongs which is being tested extensively in Switzerland. If usage tests continue to be satisfactory, the inventor will go into regular production. Another new invention is a meter testing case to calibrate a barometer automatically, over the altitude and locality.