

THE PALIMPSEST

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Tall Oaks From Little Acorns Grow

Longer week-ends—shorter work weeks—longer vacations—leisure time—farming—economy—industry—management and worker expertise.

Can these things be tied together?

Yes, very simply in a look at Forest City and Winnebago Industries. That city was hurting, its young people drifting away because of farm mechanization and the resulting loss of jobs. The number of paychecks was down; the economy was down. Local businessmen formed the Forest City Development Commission in 1958. It contacted a California company which agreed to start a travel trailer business. After about a year the California firm failed and a local furniture dealer took over. In a year's time he had built a business that was to give Forest City's economy a boost and provide employment for hundreds. Serving a recreational need, Winnebago's growth is one of the Cinderella stories of Iowa industry.

Palimpsest editors, through the years, have recognized the importance of industry in Iowa's econ-

omy. Realizing also that the state's economy was moving from an agricultural to an industrial base, its writers recorded the shift.

In May, 1956, March, 1967, and January, 1968, the state's larger companies were covered in capsule form, by pictures and words. Other issues were devoted to quarrying, major railroads, state newspapers. Individual issues honored the W. A. Sheaffer Pen Co. of Fort Madison and John Morrell & Co. of Ottumwa.

After watching Iowa industry for seven years from a desk in the State Historical Society, the writer became interested in some of the success stories recorded. Seven companies were selected to illustrate these stories. No criteria for selection were set except that the firm had been established or its greatest success had come within the last decade. Product duplication was avoided and a state-wide interest sought.

In the final selection, one company was born in the corner of a teenager's bedroom; another began in the basement of a hardware store; another resulted from the purchase of North American rights to a "cold" tire retreading process; another developed when an out-of-state firm failed; several rode to success as manufacturers of products serving recreational or leisure time activities.

They all show that in Iowa *tall oaks from little acorns grow*.

L. O. CHEEVER