

Comments on 11 Years

In May of 1956, the Society published the first in what was hoped would be a series of reports devoted to Iowa industry. That report covered 54 companies with 500 or more employees. With this issue of *The Palimpsest* the project is revived. A few comments may shed some light on what has transpired in the 11-year period between the 1956 and 1967 reports.

Twenty-nine of the companies covered in the 1956 report are present in this issue. There were 30 companies with 1,000 workers at that time. There are 38 companies listed in this issue. Dropping from this select group since 1956 were Solar Aircraft, Des Moines, with 2,500 workers; Farley and Loetscher, Dubuque, 1,100 employees; and the Curtis Companies of Clinton, with 707 employees. A drop in employment brought the omission of Keokuk Electro-Metals of Keokuk (now Vanadium Corporation of America), Cherry-Burrell, Cedar Rapids, and Carr, Adams and Collier of Dubuque (now Caradco).

Three of the firms listed above, Farley and Loetscher, Curtis, and Caradco, were connected with the woodworking industry. The disappearance of the huge lumber rafts from the Mississippi

and the drying up of nearby sources of lumber heralded problems for those plants unable to adapt to new conditions. Along with Caradco, other Iowa woodworking firms have continued in operation through the manufacture of new items and the use of new raw materials.

Two new companies added to the 1967 list came from the electronics field, Bourns, Inc., Ames, and Standard Kollsman, Inc., Ottumwa. The other newcomer was Sheller-Globe, with plants in Keokuk and Iowa City. Fruehauf Trailer, on the 1956 list, has a new facility under construction in Fort Madison.

While meat packing and allied industries continue to dominate the state's economy, most of the larger packers showed a decrease in the number of employees. This had come about because of the closing of obsolete or uneconomical plants, the trend to small, more compact units, and the growth of automated operations. The loss in employment has been partially offset by the emergence of smaller regional packers.

The growth of companies participating in the field of farm machinery and heavy construction equipment has been a major factor in the Iowa industrial picture. The largest employer of Iowans, Deere & Company, has in excess of 18,000 workers in its four plants, an increase of 8,500 in the 11-year period. J. I. Case, with plants in Burlington and Bettendorf, and Oliver, in Charles City,

also in the farm machinery category, are in the first 11 of Iowa's largest employers.

For many years Iowa has been considered a rural state with its economy resting on an agricultural foundation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Iowa is in a transition period — from rural-urban to urban-rural. It is a period which has brought a decline in farming employment, a slowing of population growth, but the erection of new or the expansion of older manufacturing complexes. Although the mechanized farming industry continues to play its part in Iowa's economy, the value of the state's industrial production in 1966 exceeded \$10 billion, more than a billion above 1965, and \$4.7 billion in 1960. The value of farm production was about a third of that for industrial production. However, 1966's \$3.3 billion total for agricultural product was \$331 million above the previous year and \$850 million more than in 1960.

Feed and grain mills dot the landscape in every direction, making their contribution to better livestock, better products, and better use of the land. But the number of persons working in these mills is very small. Take Monsanto Company of St. Louis for instance: with 17 agricultural centers in Iowa, less than 200 people are employed. The answer, of course, is automation. The mills of the state require a minimum of people for a multitude of operations. Everything is done by push button

from mixing a product with an exacting list of ingredients to bagging and stockpiling. Now even the processing and packaging of frankfurters is handled on an automatic line.

Iowa agriculture and farm-oriented industries continue to have an impact on the state's economy. Some of the more glamorous industries have now appeared on the scene. The electronics industry found Iowa a fertile field and in a 10-year period doubled the number of people employed in its factories and more than doubled the value of its production. Collins Radio is a good example. Its 11,500 employees in Cedar Rapids is the largest group employed in any single city in the state.

Employment figures for Iowa's 38 largest industrial units are as follows:

Deere	18,000	DuPont	1,600
Collins	11,500	Amana	1,500
Rath	4,088	Standard Brands	1,500
Wilson & Co.	3,600	Sylvania	1,500
Mason & Hanger	3,515	Quaker Oats	1,400
Alcoa	3,500	Armstrong	1,385
Morrell	3,500	Sheaffer	1,350
Maytag	3,405	Bendix	1,300
Dubuque Packing	3,000	Lennox	1,250
Case	2,800	Ford	1,200
Oliver	2,500	Armour	1,133
Firestone	2,400	Des Moines Register	1,100
Swift	2,400	Penick & Ford	1,075
Fisher	2,157	AMF Western	1,000
Oscar Mayer	2,082	Bourn	1,000
Meredith	2,080	Grain Processing	1,000
Sheller-Globe	2,058	Hormel	1,000
Chamberlain	1,735	Standard Kollsman	1,000
Iowa Manufacturing	1,700	Zenith	1,000

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