

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 800 E. Garfield - Essex Wire Corporation
Communication Division

Legal description -

Section or Plat 187/51

Section 2-16-2

Beg. on W side of I.C.R.R. row 30' N of S line Sec 2-16-2
th N 1153' th W 16.8 th S 41' then W 452' th S 1122' th
E 483' to pob (exc st) SE 1/4 SW 1/4 12.43 acres

Date of original construction: Circa 1919

Note: The 1919 city directory was the first one to list a structure at this address - the 800 block E. Garfield, adjoining the Illinois Central Railroad tracks on the east. The 1917-1919 city directories listed Comet Automobile offices at 156-160 S. Water. News items list the move of Comet from Rockford to Decatur in 1916. It is possible that construction was underway considerably before 1919 and also that there might have been a lag in the city directory listing.

Name of original owner: Comet Automobile Co.

History:

1. From news items and city directories, occupants of the property in the 800 block E. Garfield - all of it, or part of it - have been as follows:

1916 - "Comet Automobile Company moved to this location from Rockford, Illinois."

1923 - "Comet passed into the hands of receivers, and its entire property, including the plant in the 800 block E. Garfield, was sold for \$60,000. Its total property at the time was valued at \$400,000."

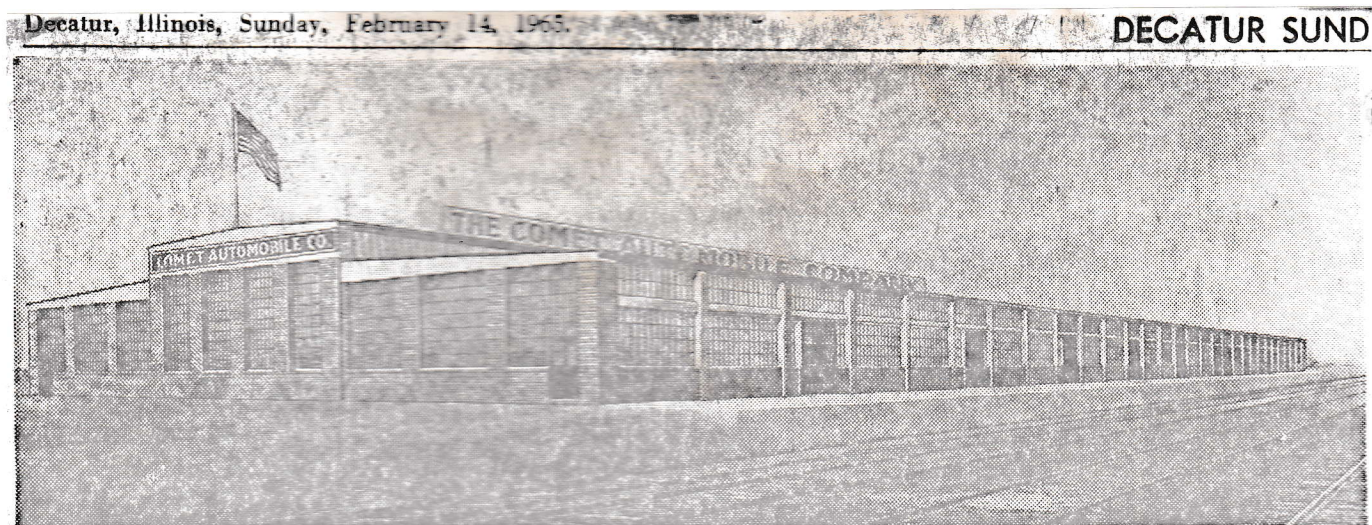
Decatur Diary, Decatur Review, 2/14/65.

1926 - L. P. Halladay Co. (820 E. Garfield and I.C.R.R.)

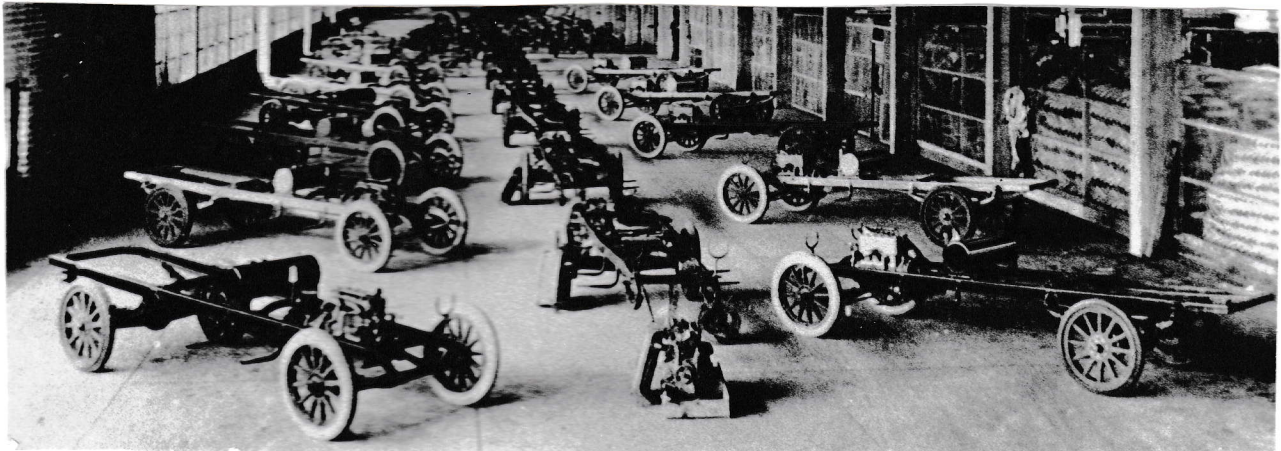
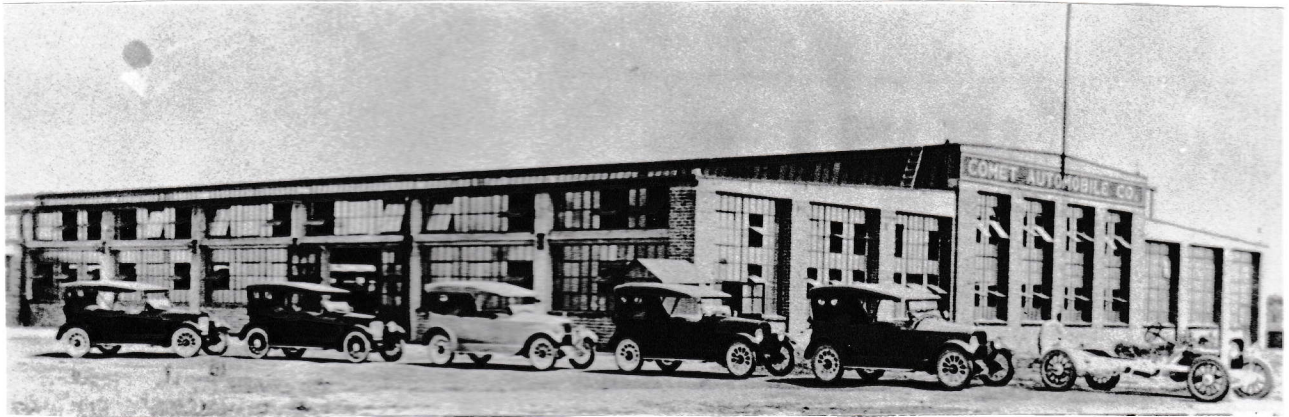
Name of the Present owner: Essex Wire Corporation, Communications
Division - Cable Mfg.

History Continued:

1. 1939-1935 - Biflex Products Co. (850 E. Garfield and I.C.R.R.)
 - 1936-1957 - Houdaille-Hershey Corp.
Cakes Products Division
(Auto parts mfg., when it first began at this location)
 - 1957-1958 - Western Electric Co.
 - 1959-1965 - Vacant.
 - 1965 - present - Essex Wire Corp., Communications Division
Cable Mfg.
2. See attachments.



This is the Comet plant, most recently occupied by Western Electric Co., as it looked when first opened.



800 E. Garfield
Essex Wire Corporation
Communications Division
1974
Comet Automobile Company
1917



facturing buildings. In Chamber of Commerce Addition. *Herald - Dec. 30, 1917*

Big Addition to Decatur Industries.



The New Factory for the Great Automobile Co.

400 East Main, Decatur, Ga. The cost of the building, work done and other expenses are estimated at \$1,000,000.

1917 WAS AN AUTOMOBILE YEAR IN DECATUR

The automobile industry in Decatur has had a very successful year. The Chamber of Commerce addition to the Chamber of Commerce building, the new factory for the Great Automobile Co., and the new garage for the public constitute a big addition to the city's industrial resources. The Chamber of Commerce addition is a three-story building, the new factory is a large, modern building, and the new garage is a two-story building. The Chamber of Commerce addition is a three-story building, the new factory is a large, modern building, and the new garage is a two-story building. The Chamber of Commerce addition is a three-story building, the new factory is a large, modern building, and the new garage is a two-story building.

Examples of these are the building recently completed by Walker & Winder in the 20 block North Main street, the Collier Realty building on the corner of East Main and East Park, and the building recently completed by First and Union Company on East Main and Franklin. A number of smaller buildings and shops which were built in the city this year.

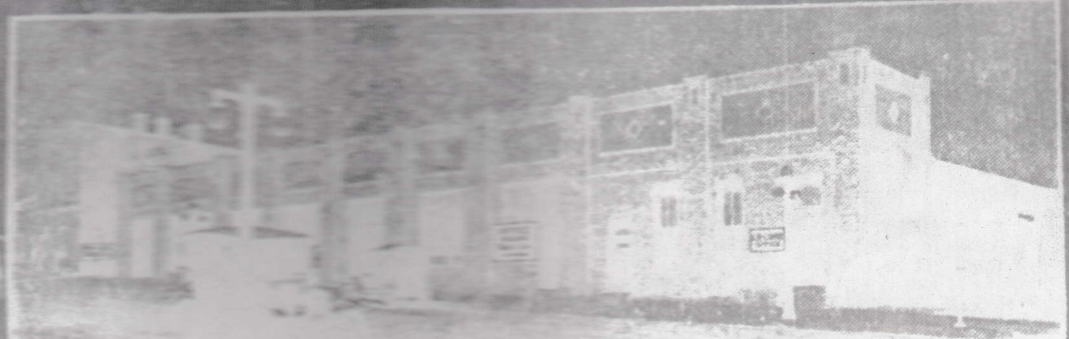
SALESPERONS
The expansion of automobile business in Decatur is perhaps the average of the city. There are several of these salesmen in Decatur that would fit handily into the scheme of things on upper Broadway, New York. Instead of a bare floor upon which a car or two could be set out so that prospective purchasers could walk around them, some of

new automobiles have been made. Display rooms which feature an automobile selling that exhibits the beauty of the car. Nothing else can be done to attract the attention of the automobile buyer who is looking for a new car. The plan of automobile salesmen for the year 1917.
The purchase by the Southern Railway of the George B. Stone building at the corner of North Main and East Main streets makes the establishment of a truck new automobile business in the city. Some alterations had to be made to the building to adapt it to its new use. Floors had to be lowered, the front changed some what and a doorway for automobiles cut. The building occupies a prominent and valuable site.
SOME OF THE CHANGES
Early in the year Charles A. Starr bought the building at the southeast corner of Franklin and East Main.

The building was completed, a new front and new floor put in, a steam plant, other changes made, sales headquarters for Ford cars.
W. H. Suffers by taking plate glass window in the of the white fire proof building he owns at the corner of North street and Prairie avenue, the first floor of that building an automobile show room 150 feet. The cars are driven into the room from Prairie and without alterations building was made into a motor sales room. An elevator enough to carry an automobile basement is planned. There in the basement for 100 machines as fine an auto display may be found in the state.
The old Weman's club building at the corner of North Franklin and North Park street was recently purchased by James E. Hatten to be used by the Rattan Tire company. The floor has been lowered six feet to the sidewalk level, side for automobile made on street and other alterations.

FACTORIES.
It is an interesting fact that it may be truthfully said of the automobile in the city of Decatur that it has brought us from what was once a few different Decatur automobile experts with a view to their cars had never been seen here until now. Decatur was of building what is factory.
The two new factories, it was from the above mentioned to the automobile factory of the city for the year at which is the buildings only.
The buildings of the Great Automobile Company now under construction will cost \$1,000,000. This one factory will 150 feet wide feet long, the power plant, to be located just north building, and the office which is to be at the south the present building. The factory will be to be erected spring.
The Pan American Motors Co. have made within the last building outlay of \$110,000 represents the cost of the new building erected in the Chamber of Commerce addition and the old building purchased from the Decatur Fountain Company with necessary alterations. The factory building cost \$40,000. The expansion of the automobile business in Decatur there should include the investment in furniture which amounts to \$100,000. This does not include another item of patterns, tools, fixtures and designs.

GARAGES OF THE YEAR 1917



GARAGES.
New garages built for the public constitute a big addition to the city's industrial resources. The buildings present a

July 23, 1929

Biflex To Build \$50,000 Addition

Work To Start Monday On Structure To House \$100,000 Worth of New Forge Equipment.

Contracts were signed Saturday morning for a new \$50,000 building to house the forge department of the Biflex Products corporation.

According to A. J. Grimm, vice-president of the company, the actual construction of the new building, which is to be 150 by 160 feet, will be started Monday. It is to be finished in two months. The Mississippi Valley Structural Steel company has the general contract. George Moeller has the contract for foundations, floors and the like.

The building will be erected to the north of and connecting with the present building. When completed the Biflex plant, in the 800 block East Garfield, will be 760 by 150 feet overall, having approximately 114,000 square feet of floor space.

ALL STEEL.

The building, for which the Mississippi Valley Structural Steel company has the general contract, will be of all steel construction with three sides made up entirely of lift-steel doors. The roof will be covered with asbestos material.

Use of lift-doors, together with the installation of the most modern of ceilings for the new building (30 feet at the eaves as against 22 feet at the peak of the present building) will make it one of the best equipped and best arranged, from the ventilation standpoint, of all forge plants in the country.

NEW EQUIPMENT.

One hundred thousand dollars worth of new equipment is to be installed, Mr. Grimm estimates. This will include a new automatic furnace, ether automatic forging equipment and an oil-cooling system.

The main plant is being completely rearranged.

The chromium plating department has been moved, and new machinery, including a new exhaust system, and specially designed plating tanks are being installed.

New exhaust systems are also being installed in the buffing and polishing departments.

All of these changes are being made in the interests of more efficient production.

With the gradual transfer of all bumper business from the Waukegan plant to Decatur, local production is increasing steadily. Due to the use of modern equipment, however, there will be no great increase in the number of men employed.

TWO FAMILIES COMING.

Within the near future, or as soon as the Waukegan plant is closed to the bumper business, two new families will move to Decatur.

R. E. Peterson, formerly plant manager of the Waukegan plant, with Mrs. Peterson and their three children will arrive permanently here. The Petersons have previously been employed by H. D. Williams at the Waukegan plant.

Andrew J. Cook Dies at Age 75

Fails To Recover From Shock Of Fall.

Andrew J. Cook, for twenty-three years a resident of Decatur, died Saturday morning, 8:45 o'clock in the Decatur and Macon County hospital, after an illness of two weeks. Death was caused by an accidental fall from a stepladder while picking cherries at his home, and came as a shock to friends and relatives.

Mr. Cook was born in Snow Shoe, Center County, Pennsylvania, Jan. 22, 1854, and was married Jan. 1, 1878, at Macon, Ill., to Laura L. Oxer. She preceded him in death.

FOUR CHILDREN LIVING.

To this union were born five children, four of whom survive as follows: Mrs. J. C. High, Decatur, Bert E. Cook, Evanston, Mrs. Christina Ward, Springfield, Mrs. R. L. Newman, Chicago. There are also six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He was married Jan. 28, 1911, to Katherine Marstella, Decatur, who survives him, and also a sister, Mrs. Mary Meek, Decatur.

He was a member of the First Methodist church. He came to Decatur from Macon twenty-three years ago. He was by occupation a contracting carpenter and retired three years ago.

The body was removed to the Monson funeral home to be prepared for burial.

Gilliland Bond Declared Forfeit

Several Decatur People Were Signers.

The \$8,000 bond for Joseph Gilliland, some of the signers of which are Decatur people, was declared forfeit by Judge Briggie in the circuit court in Springfield Friday. Gilliland, formerly of Decatur and vicinity, was sentenced along with Otho Boring and Phil Smith, other Decatur men to Chester penitentiary for a roadhouse robbery near Springfield.

Sentence was pronounced in 1927 but Gilliland appealed to the supreme court and since then has been at liberty under bond pending a decision of that court. The charge of robbery with a gun was upheld by the highest court and Gilliland failed to appear following the decision in order to serve his term.

Cash Joins Outdoor Amusement Lake

Will Serve as Engineering Recommendation Seek to Perpetuate

A. W. Cash will serve as engineering adviser to the Fisher Governor company at Marshalltown, O., it was announced Saturday morning.

Mr. Cash and six employees of the former Apex Regulator company, 334 Wabash avenue, expect to leave Saturday for the Ohio city. The trip will be made by automobile.

Two carloads of fixtures and equipment of the Apex plant, sold recently by Mr. Cash, have been shipped to Marshalltown where a new building has been erected.

Although under control of the Fisher company, the former Decatur plant will be operated as a separate unit.

Families of the six Decatur men will move to Marshalltown at the end of the present summer.

Whooping Cough, Popular In City

Leads Week's Total In Communicable Diseases.

Nineteen cases of whooping cough led the week's total in communicable diseases in Decatur, records at the city health department indicated Saturday, although the majority of new cases was reported during the early part of the week.

A single case of German measles reported Saturday brought the week's record to five, although the German variety was the only one of this class on the records.

Diphtheria with two new cases Saturday, stood at five for the week. Chicken pox claimed six victims, one added on Saturday, for the remainder of the list.

Decatur Men To Take Bar Exam

Edwin Jokisch, Perley Lupton U. of I. Graduates.

Edwin Jokisch and Perley Lupton, both of Decatur, are among sixty-two graduates of the University of Illinois law school who are preparing to take the state bar examination at Chicago July 16, 17, and 18.

Most of the young men have been spending time since graduation in poring over books in the university law library. More than 350 law students are expected to take the examination.

Among the Illinois graduates who will be present are: Basel H. Brune, Champaign; Andrew J. Casner, Bloomington; August C. Caylor, Urbana; George E. Drach, Springfield; Paul H. Ferguson, Willow Hill; Karl Hoagland, Shelbyville; Robert Kewley, Champaign; William Sonneman, Vandalia; and John Thornburn, Urbana.

Three recommendations for perpetuation of the spirit engendered by the centennial observance that were submitted by Judge J. B. Baldwin, president of the Decatur and Macon County Centennial Association, to the executive committee at its final meeting Saturday in the Decatur club. They were:

1. Erection of a substantial amphitheater on the borders of the lake in which may be presented outdoor spectacles of like nature as the pageant so successfully staged last week.

2. Publication of a bound volume of Macon county history, such as has appeared in the columns of THE DECATUR, to be placed in every school and public library of the county.

3. A more sincere and hearty cooperation between citizens of the city and the country towns, nearer and more substantial than in the past.

AMPHITHEATER PROPOSED

Settlement for an outdoor amphitheater was born during the centennial celebration when 55,000 of persons were drawn to the park on the three nights of the centennial pageant, witnessing an important religious service on the first night and the historical pageant on the second and third nights.

So successful were the pageants and so great was the interest of all who witnessed them that a demand for an amphitheater which would make possible future pageants of the kind has grown.

STAMPED OUT

Approximately 25,000 persons present during the three night centennial observance, Mr. Gorman estimates.

He estimates at from 12,000 to 15,000 the crowd attending the centennial pageant which opened Saturday night.

Tuesday night's performance, the pageant drew a crowd estimated at 25,000, while 20,000 witnessed the concluding presentation on Wednesday night. In addition, there were 2,000 persons, most of them pageantants, in the pageant, behind scenes on the two nights of the pageant.

The remarkable fact that, in all those thousands, and with probably 12,000 cars in the park on the three nights, there was not an accident.

EXTEND THANKS.

Mr. Gorman also seized the opportunity to extend his appreciation of the cooperation which has been extended him by everyone connected with the centennial observance.

Nor was the thanks at all unreciprocated. Even before Mr. Gorman's remarks, the executive committee ordered the drafting of a resolution commending the pageant for the masterly manner in which it was prepared, directed and staged.

The pageant, principal feature of the centennial celebration, and for the untiring efforts he put into its production, Mr. Gorman presented a copy of that resolution to the pageantants.

It is the John B. Gorman, Jr., president of the Decatur and Macon County Centennial Association, who presented the resolution to the pageantants.

Sub Bids On

Sunday Book Review

Hersey Book Shows

By Eliot Fremont-Smith
of the New York Times
THE ALGHERS MOTEL
INCIDENT. By John Hersey.
Boston: 287 pages; Knopf;
\$5.95. Paperback: 284 pages;
Dutton; \$3.95.

Last July 25, at the height of the Detroit riot, three Negro youths were shot dead at close range in the center of a steady, unrelenting stream at the Algiers Hotel, about a mile and a half from the riot center.

The killings occurred after city policemen, state troopers and National Guardsmen had converged on the motel in response to an erroneous telephone report of sniping. Soon after Negro youths and two white prostitutes were eventually allowed to leave the building, the girls had been stripped by the police and all had been beaten.

The Negro survivors reported being tied up against a wall in the hall and forced to play a game which Hersey calls "black game" during which several of them were ordered to put up a limb from the floor as they could be shot "in addition." At least one was taken to a separate room where shots were fired into the apartment to warn the others.

The policemen allegedly continued the use of the car-bomb was destroyed in part as a preliminary investigation against the Negroes. The policemen had not been widely known at the time before continuing the riot. Hersey, who details the incident, is writing for the people. There are, plus a first policeman and a Negro youth, and the reader is asked to imagine the scene.

John Hersey, the novelist and journalist, has equally intended to write a book on the order of "Hiroshima" and "The Wall" about the whole Detroit riot, but "The Incident at the Algiers Hotel" has become a separate, and eventually I determined to focus on it. The result is an account — a

documentary told verbatim in the interviewed policemen families and friends, and others in incident, and official transcripts — plausible and deep sense.

All "Mythic Theme" "This episode," "contained all the themes of racial United States: The law taking the law hands; interracial subtle poison of race by 'decent' men who they are racists; limbo into which slavery, so many, must have been of country, ambiguous the courts; and the in both black and lines that follows it violence as surely and indiscriminate

Of the many people, the two most of one of the most and one of the police seems to have of black youth, on making the decision black youth — whether the injustice of white, because a police "straight", or to some extent

The policeman is again enthusiastic to give a good job. I was he who policemen, best they in the motel and the "black game." Hersey is convincing the painted street and in without profit to



Frank Post used this car in 1910 when Cassell's invention could roll all the road.

Decatur Diary

Cassell Made Cars Comfortable

Regardless of all the services were not available, vintage climbed by parallel. In that with the position in town's of the "service" or when June 21, Cassell, the "rings," it took the ingenuity of Frank H. Cassell in a Decatur man to begin the long road toward making "material" available.

At one time in the past Decatur was an ivory tower. Becoming an "automobile center" for the first, a vehicle available was brought to Decatur in 1910 by Elmer Cassell, founder of the Cassell Motor Co.

Walter had become a founder of the new machine when he saw where demonstrated at a World War

There was a crash in his car that Walter drove it in Springfield for the State Fair in a remarkable five hours. The speed was a maximum 18 miles per hour, considered slow.

However, if the owner of one of these motor vehicles wished to travel long distances, the problems were many. Not only were the roads and highways in poor condition but in those days motels, restaurants and other

facilities of the car about its first, four wheels. Cassell could be dragged down on all sides, making a machine could make for the very trouble.

Although such a method could be used, Cassell's invention could not be used. He had a plan to do so, and he was a problem as he designed a machine which to be used in any way.

When the other appeared in the automobile, the title was to be a satisfactory and easy condition.

The auto took up little space in the car. All the legs could be moved under the table, which was folding.

What Cassell's invention had to do was to do it in a way that Cassell was not in the business of manufacturing automobile accessories and had never intended to enter into the field.

Instead he was occupied only by the management of Elmer's other interests. He was president of the Decatur Oil Co. which manufactured gasoline, a well near Cassell.

His invention was to be sold together with gasoline engine and pump.

Perhaps the greatest attempt to make the machine more comfortable was made by the Cassell Motor Co. and the Decatur Automobile Corp. They had been working on the machine for some time, but it was not until 1910 that they had the machine ready for sale.

The Cassell Co. moved to Decatur from Rockford in 1915 and since produced more than

Public Library

Sewing Instruction Described

Today, making your own basic book which tells what clothes is the fashionable thing to do. There are many books of sewing instructions at the Decatur Public Library, its branches and bookmobiles to help the beginning and the more experienced seamstress who

New York Times Best Seller List

The New York Times

An analysis based on reports from more than 125 bookstores in 16 U.S. communities.

FICTION

- 1. COUPLES — Updike
- 2. AIRPORT — Hailey
- 3. MYRA BRECKINRIDGE — Vidal

hand

ELECTRIC

We Almost Became an Automobile Center

By Rex Spires

Of the Herald and Review Staff

Decatur, in 1917, seemed as though it had a good start toward becoming a center for the automotive industry.

The Comet Automobile Co. and the Pan American Motors Corp. had begun active manufacture of autos here. Although production was a far cry from what it is today, the two companies believed they were off to better things.

However, by the end of 1923, both had folded and vanished from the scene because of financial difficulties.

An indication of the optimism for Decatur's future in the automotive industry was an article in the Herald in 1917, which said, "Decatur will probably never be a Detroit, but it might come about within a reasonable time that it will be giving some of the other automobile centers a rub."

By January 1919, the confidence of Edward Danner, president of Pan American, and George W. Jagers, president of Comet, prompted a news story which said, "Decatur an automobile center! This now appears a probability. The Pan American and Comet factories are looking forward to a great year."

Danner predicted that five times as many cars as the 800 produced in 1918 would be built in 1919. He announced the new models for the year would consist of a two-passenger roadster and a five-passenger touring car, known as "The American Beauty Cars."

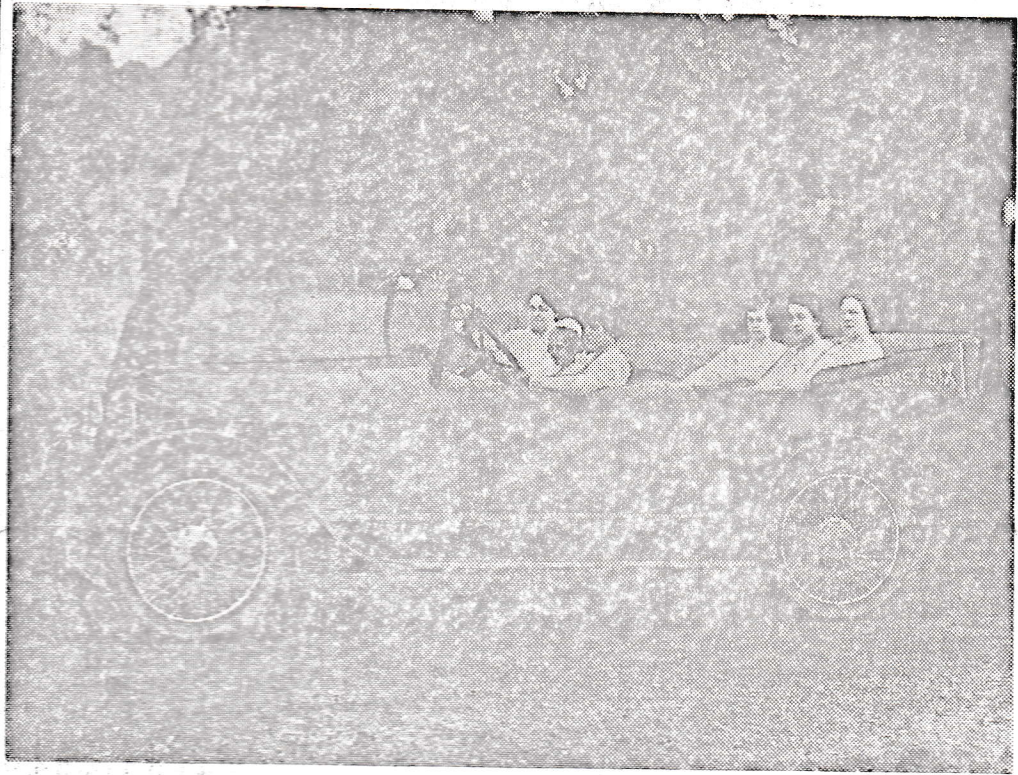
Among other comments, Jagers said, "The signing of the armistice has flooded us with inquiries from various foreign countries. By the close of 1919, we expect world-wide representation of Comet products."

Large Export

In 1920 Comet did ship 40 locally-built autos to Belgium. At the time, it was believed to be the largest single export order of American-made cars in the industry's history.

The rise and fall of the Comet and Pan American companies closely paralleled one another. They both had reasonably good years until 1920. From then on they began to hit the skids.

The Comet Co. moved to Decatur from Rockford in 1916.



The "Comet Six" sold for \$1,185 and boasted 50 horsepower.

It announced its output of cars would reach 4,000 a year by 1920, but production never got above six cars a day.

Beset by legal difficulties and unable to turn over a profit, the company passed into the hands of receivers in 1923 and its entire property, including the plant in the 800 Block E. Garfield Ave., was sold for \$60,000. Its total property at the time was valued at \$400,000.

Jagers exhibited the first Decatur-made automobile, his Comet, in 1917. Perhaps the most famous model was the "Comet Six", which sold for \$1,185 and boasted 50 horsepower.

Pan American was reorganized here in 1917-1918 after Danners gained control of the firm and moved all its offices from Chicago.

After acquiring the Decatur Fountain Co. building and erecting two others, the company had a total frontage of 600 feet near the Illinois Central Railroad tracks in what was called the Chamber of Commerce addition.

Auto Depression

Pan American's first apparent difficulties came in October, 1920, when a large lay-off was announced, Company

officials blamed a depression in the auto industry. Financial problems caused the corporation to dissolve in 1921.

Complicated legal entanglements resulted and the company's assets were finally placed up for auction sale. The sale brought only 40 cents on the dollar investment.

Decatur nearly had an automobile manufacturer many years earlier. Hieronymus Mueller, who brought the first car, a Benz motor wagon, to Decatur in 1895, seriously thought of producing cars here.

He carried out extensive and successful experimenting along this line until his death in 1900. He completely tore down the Benz and rebuilt it, making numerous improvements. The car became known as the Mueller-Benz.

The first regularly established automobile agency here was the Johnson & Landis Rambler agency, which began operations in 1903.

Oldest Agencies

The oldest existing agencies in Decatur are Kilborn Motors Inc. and J. L. Tallman Inc., both of which are celebrating their 40th anniversaries in the automobile business in Decatur.

John A. Kilborn, president of Kilborn Motors Inc., said the agency, when it was located in the 300 Block E. Main St., was a part of what was called "Automobile Row" about 1930.

It was so called because of the heavy concentration of automobile agencies in that block and along a good portion of Franklin Street.

Tallman's, after being located at 540 N. Franklin St. since 1930, recently built and moved into a new building at 2020 N. Oakland Ave.

FOUNDATIONS MAKE FOR CONFIDENCE

FINE NEW FACTORY FOR COMET NOW WELL UNDER WAY

Sun., Dec. 30, 1917



First unit of three for which foundations have been laid, in the Comet track tract. The total cost of the factory is to be \$351,000. The Hoffman Construction Co. of Terre Haute and Evansville has the contract, and the first unit was to be completed March 2, but probably will be delayed somewhat because of the early severe weather this year. —Photo by Wagon Studio.

MUST BELIEVE IN ITS OWN ABILITY

Pessimism Has No Place in the 1918 Program When Growth May Be in Spirit if Not Dollars.

More than ever before, Decatur will appreciate its substantial business foundation during 1918.

Having experienced no booms, there are none to collapse. Having sought only healthy well balanced industries, it can depend on its diversified manufacturing interests to weather the storm.

Its railroads will be better for the Government ownership, and many of the problems which have been wont to stir up discord in community life will be wiped out. For instance, we will have a regulated coal business and at the same time be using home coal instead of shipping our own product to outsiders, and bringing in outside coal.

The city will be better for its new Social Service bureau, and has a big faith in the results of its recent co-operation in the farm advisor movement for the county as a whole.

No one questions Decatur's response to the calls that the war will bring, after looking over the results of the campaigns it has handled so well in the last year.

Decatur is winning a bigger share in the activities of prosecuting the war and these will mean much to its industries.

It will continue to contribute willingly of its young men to the armies, of its older men to the conduct of the war, and of its time to Liberty loans, Red Cross, Y. M. C. A. work, Knights of Columbus, Y. W. C. A. and the other reasonable demands that will come up.

Decatur will find itself forced to a prosperous condition in real estate and building by the demand of a steadily growing population for houses.

It will be required this year to take care of the interests of those who have gone to war, and it may reasonably expect a greater work for humanity in the caring for those who may come back from the war with their means of making a livelihood in old occupations gone because of crippled condition.

Decatur must be patriotic, and wholehearted, refusing to let pessimism creep in and with a firm belief in its own prosperity, whether that prosperity is measured by financial gains, or a

Accomplishments of 1917

Decatur Has:

Enlisted in country's service, including Marion county, nearly 1,200 men.	
Subscribed in two Liberty loans	\$3,816,700.00
Subscribed in other campaigns in the interest of war and community effort	137,558.48
Invested in factories and all other buildings except homes	984,178.00
Invested in new and remodeled homes	356,805.00
Invested in all building for year	1,340,983.00
Expended in city real estate transactions	1,426,895.00
Founded a Social Service bureau helping all charities under one head, financed at	13,309.46
Fostered the county farm advisor movement successfully with membership of 324.	
Red Cross articles shipped out	47,934
Red Cross chapter membership at	10,824

Some 1917 Statistics

Number of fires	257
Amount of fire losses	\$149,412.26
Number of deaths	407
Number of births registered	802
Marriage licenses issued	782
Contagious diseases reported	575
Arrests by police	1139
Coroner's inquests	90
Bank clearings	\$43,674,227.50
Divorce decrees granted	108

Increased Building Surprise of Year

Figures Show That 1917 Led Previous Twelve Months by Margin of \$73,527 According to Records of City Department.



Sports in REVIEW

BY FORREST R. KYLE

That Pan American Race Car Was in Downtown Decatur—Once

Touching a few bases. . . .

Run a picture of an old race car and, likely or not, you'll hear from Loren Hodge with a story about it.

A picture of a Pan American racer in Wednesday Herald and Review Auto Show supplement stirred Hodge to recall an amusing story about the car and driver Tom Alley in downtown Decatur.

Hodge, who had completed his career as a riding mechanic in race cars when the Pan American was raced, recalled that Alley drove the car through downtown Decatur one day on the way to the garage.

"At that time there was a little house at the intersection of South Water and East Main. A policeman stayed there and worked a sign directing traffic," Hodge said.

Along came Alley in the race car which, naturally, didn't have a muffler. He stopped, waited for the "go" sign from the policeman, then stepped on the gas pedal.

The b-r-r-r-up vibrated a few nearby eardrums and the policeman tooted his whistle, motioning Alley to pull his racer to the curb.

"The policeman came over to the car and Tom acted as though he couldn't hear," Hodge recalled. "So the policeman walked around behind the car to go to the other side.

"Just as he was behind the car Alley stepped on the gas pedal. Now he was burning straight castor oil and it shot out the back and just about drowned the cop in oil."

Hodge didn't remember what happened to Alley as a result but it is unlikely the Pan American racer was allowed in downtown Decatur again.

"Alley raced the car for a couple of years along in 1917-18," Hodge recalled, "and won several races with it. The company used it for publicity purposes all over the U.S."

"The motor was a four cylinder job made by Harry Miller. It was Miller's motor which later became the Offenhauser."

Any Decaturites who were at the Indy time trials last Saturday likely saw the two old race cars driven around the track in the opening ceremonies. One was a Marquette-Buick.

Hodge's first experiences as a riding mechanic were with the Marquette-Buick team. He was there, in 1909 when the first races were held at the Indianapolis Speedway, but didn't ride in the Buick which was exhibited last Saturday.

This particular car was driven by Louie Chevrolet and won a 10-mile race in 1909. The next day Hodge rode with Lewis Strang in another Buick and won the 100-mile race, setting speed records for various distances up to the 100-mile mark.

Manufacture of Cars Was Short-Lived

Variety of Automobile Products Made Major Economic

Even though Decatur's early hopes of becoming an automotive manufacturing center never materialized, the city finds major economic contributions from firms related to the automotive industry.

The early hopes of the city hinged on the success of the Pan American Motors Corp. and the Comet Automobile Co.

Comet moved to Decatur in 1916 from Rockford, while the Pan American firm began manufacturing cars in temporary facilities in 1917.

Those hopes were bright. The automobile industry was a young one, and the possibilities seemed endless.

Rosy Future Darkened

By 1919 the owners of the companies were proudly proclaiming a rosy future. Both looked forward to a "great year."

But 1919 was more promise than profits for Pan American. War priorities, high costs and an unrealistic profit margin were beginning to take their toll.

The Comet Co. had similar fortunes. In 1923, Comet was in receivership, a course Pan American had taken just a year before.

Comet, however, was followed in the building at 800 E. Garfield Ave. by the Holiday Bumper Co., Biler Products Co., Gakes Products Co., a subsidiary of the Bristalle Hershey Corp., all automotive-related.

During World War II Holiday made shells for the Navy. After the war, auto parts production resumed under a new name, Holiday Industries, which ceased operations in 1954.

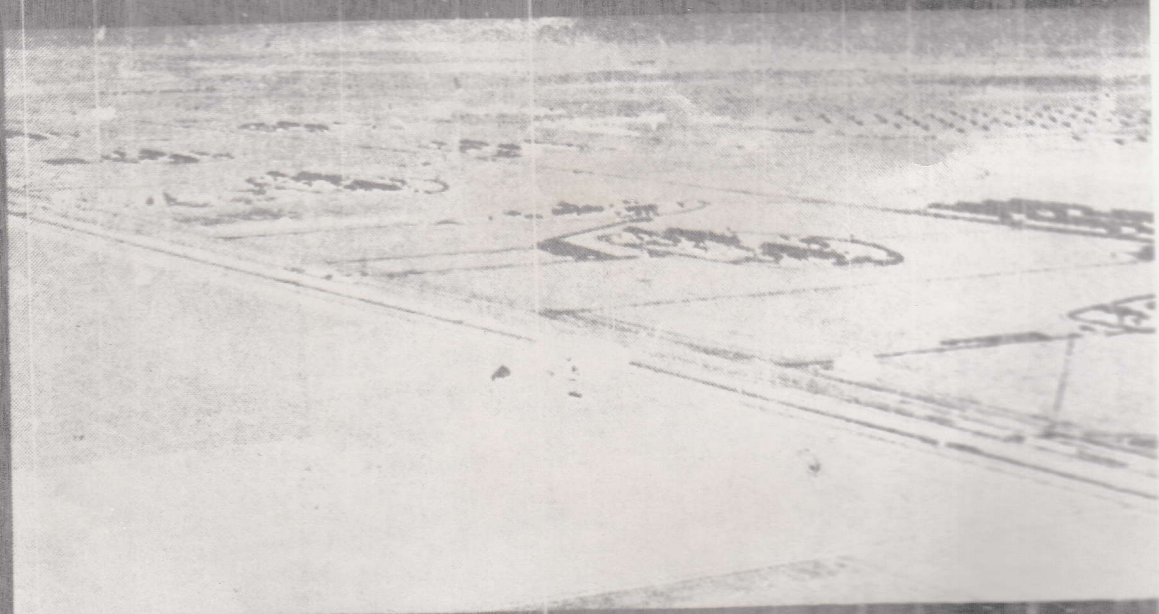
Recent Company

The plant was owned for a short time by Western Electric Co. and is now owned by Electro Wire Co., which purchased the property in 1965, adding to previous diversification of Decatur industry.

The first automobile-related industry to locate in Decatur after World War II was the Marvel Schbler Products Division of Borg-Warner Corp.

In 1948 the firm leased a plant from the Mueller Co. which had previously been used for the manufacture of toilets and drinking fountains and in 1950 moved its carburetor plant from Flint, Mich. to Decatur.

The building which is currently used by the York Division of Borg-Warner was constructed for the manufacture of Ford-O-Matic transmissions in 1956. The venture proved to be short-lived, because the Ford Co. began



The low, flat buildings of the Sangamon Ordnance plant were spread over the flat Central Illinois landscape.

Four Major Plants Made War Materials

Decatur was no munitions center during World War II, but a substantial amount of war production was scattered among many of the city's existing industries, and there were four major war plants.

These were the Victory Ordnance Plant, the Sangamon Ordnance plant, and the Central Division of Bristalle Hershey Corp.

There was no secret about the production of some of them, but they were not announced until the end of the war.

That it was announced that the plants were producing war materials was not surprising.

The Sangamon Ordnance plant and the Victory Ordnance Plant were located in the north end of U.S. 52 just west of Illinois. Their primary product was landing shells.

The plant was merged with the Sangamon plant about midway during the war. Herington Road was the location of Sangamon, while Woodland Ordnance Foundation operated Oak.

The buildings occupied were

19,000 acres and peak employment was 15,000.

The Caterpillar Tractor Co., later to become a permanent postwar industry, built tank and tractor engines at Victory Ordnance Plant. Peak employment was 4,955.

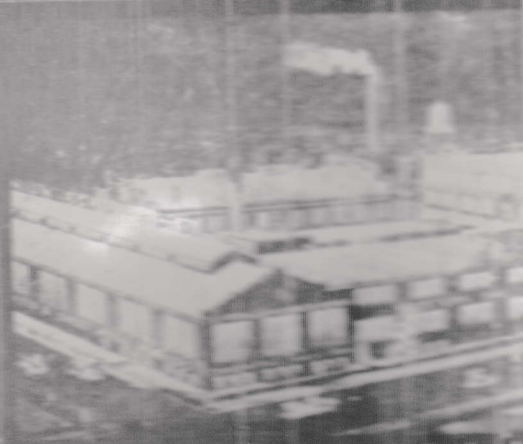
The plants were closed shortly after the war and declared surplus.

Victory Ordnance Plant buildings were acquired by the government for the Decatur Signal Depot and by General Electric Co., first for glass production and now for auto parts.

The Signal Depot contained equipment for the Signal Corps in various areas and had an employment of about 100.

The depot was closed in 1946 and was used for a period of time as a surplus storage yard. It was later sold to the Army.

The Army operated the Central Division at Woodland Road for a period of time. It was declared surplus in 1946 and in 1948 it was acquired by the W.E.T. Corp. In 1950 the company for which it had been



Metalworking Indus

By James B. The Union Iron Works plant in Decatur has changed and today its products have changed. In 1914 the plant was an iron works. The company was founded by James B. The Union Iron Works plant in Decatur has changed and today its products have changed. In 1914 the plant was an iron works. The company was founded by James B. The Union Iron Works plant in Decatur has changed and today its products have changed. In 1914 the plant was an iron works. The company was founded by James B.

Newest Occupant

The plant was occupied for a short time by Western Electric Co. and is now owned by Essex Wire Co., which purchased the property in 1965, adding to postwar diversification of Decatur industry.

The first automobile-related industry to locate in Decatur after World War II was the Marvel Schebler Products Division of Borg-Warner Corp.

In 1948 the firm leased a plant from the Mueller Co. which had previously been used for the manufacture of toilets and drinking fountains and in 1950 moved its carburetor plant from Flint, Mich. to Decatur.

The building which is currently used by the York Division of Borg-Warner was constructed for the manufacture of Ford-O-Matic transmissions in 1956. The venture proved to be short-lived, because the Ford Co. began production of transmissions in its own facilities.

Factory Converted

The factory was converted to the production of air conditioners and refrigeration equipment in 1958, with the original Marvel-Schebler unit continuing to produce carburetors.

Manufacture of room air conditioners ended and the plant became exclusive builders of automotive air conditioners and compressors in 1958.

Caterpillar Tractor Co. first held Decatur in 1953 that it would build a plant here if certain approvals were granted. Twenty-nine days later the city made it possible for Caterpillar to definitely announce construction of a new facility.

Caterpillar returned after opening a military engine company here in 1954.

Construction work in 1955 was reported to cost \$1.5 million. Actual production at plant began Jan. 1, 1957.

Today, the firm employs nearly 400 people and produces major grades, truck engines and heavy-duty, off-the-road construction tractors.

Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. entered the winning bid for the Decatur Signal Depot building property in 1957, and in the following year the firm opened a tire factory in Decatur.

Approximately six million tires are produced annually at the Decatur facility, making it Firestone's fourth largest plant. It produces automobile and truck tires for both new and replacement service.

The coming of the automotive-related industries and the Audio Products Division of General Electric Co. in 1960 marked a change in the character of Decatur industry.

Traditional dependence of the metals and grain industries was abandoned Decatur as it entered

Houdaille-Hershey Corp.

There was no secret about the products of three of them, but mystery surrounded production at Garfield Division until nearly the end of the war.

Then it was announced that the plant made a porous barrier used in production of the atomic bomb. The product was identified shortly after the first A-bomb was exploded.

The Sangamon Ordnance Plant and the Oak Ordnance Plant were located to the north and south of U.S. 36 just west of Illiopolis. Their primary mission was loading shells.

The Oak unit was merged with the Sangamon plant about midway during the war. Remington-Rand was the operator of Sangamon, while Midland Ordnance Foundation operated Oak.

The buildings occupied some

buildings were acquired by the government for the Decatur Signal Depot and by General Electric Co. first for plastics production and now for audio products.

The Signal Depot maintained equipment for the Signal Corps in various areas and had employment of about 1,300.

The depot was closed in an economy drive in 1961 and a community uproar subsided when it was sold to the Firestone Tire & Rubber Co., whose employment of 4,000 in tire production far exceeds the loss of the Signal Depot.

The Navy operated the Garfield Division as Macon Arms for a period after the war for shell production. After several years of idleness, the plant was declared surplus in 1958 and in 1964 it was acquired by the W.E.T. Corp. To date no occupant for the plant has been found.

Metalworking Industry

By John S. Day

Of the Herald and Review

Its name has changed, its owners have changed and many of its products have changed, but it remains as the oldest continuous manufacturing business in Decatur.

The Union Iron Works set the stage for the development of the metals and foundry industry in Decatur, an industry which continues to make significant contribution to the economy of the city.

The business was formed during the closing years of the Civil War a partnership between James Millikin and Caleb C. Burroughs. The early success of the firm was fostered by the invention of the corn sheller in 1875.

By 1882 the firm had been

reorganized and manufacturing iron castings also produced steam engine small saw mills and printing machines.

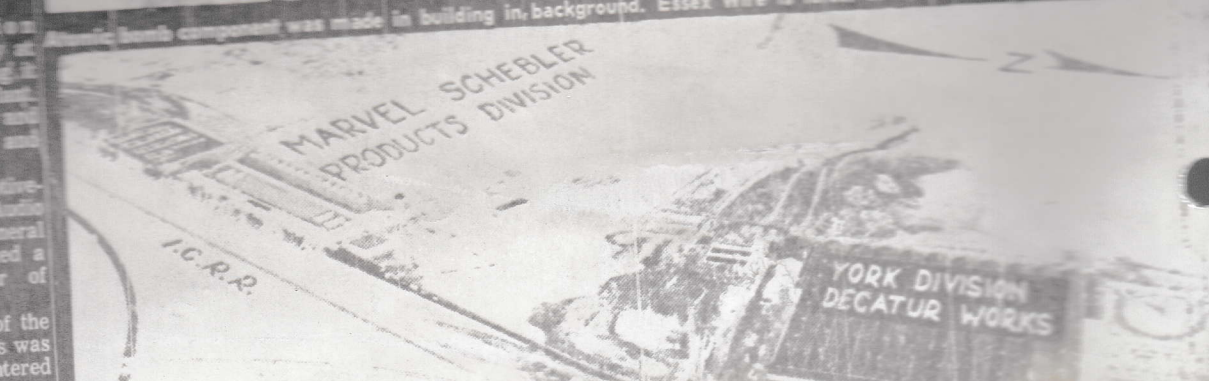
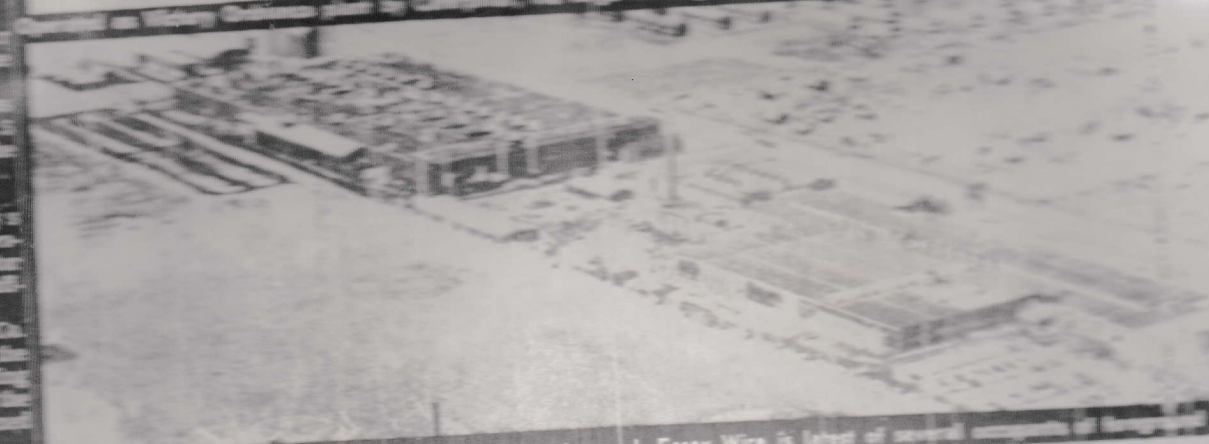
In 1912 the plant was Decatur's principal industry and was considered the "show place."

Innovations Installed

It was one of the first plants to install modern lighting, ventilation and heating. It is listed the first Decatur industry to use electricity as a motive power and to buy that power from public utility.

The firm was sold to Key Railway Equipment Co. of Chicago in 1967.

The Mueller Co. at its peak was a gunsmith operation in 1871, however, the seeds for eventual growth of the com-





This furnace, more than 200 feet long, was one of many used in construction of porous barrier at Decatur.

Decatur Diary

Plant Contributed to A-Bomb

It was more than a year after they were looking at the development of the bomb from a...
...the plant began production...
...for the public knew what the...
...Carroll... of the... They reportedly saw the bomb...
...Houdaille-Hershey Corp. was man-... though it had just been un-
...factured.

The plant's production was...
...regretted...
...rejoiced...
...was revealed that the plant had...
...been making a porous barrier...
...used in production of the...
...rather than those of the...
...bomb.

News that Decatur had a...
...part in the production of the...
...been...
...was...
...through which gaseous uranium...
...was pumped to ex-

tract...
...explosive U-

235 from non-fissionable U-238.

To extract U-235, the gas was pumped in a gigantic U-shaped building along 11 miles of pipe through the barriers.

The porous barriers were each perforated by billions of holes smaller than two millionths of an inch. A 1949 account reported that "acres" of the barriers were mass-produced by Houdaille-Hershey.

Only the porous barrier material was manufactured in Decatur. The filtering was done at other plants in the Manhattan project. The atom bomb was put together at still another plant.

Comet Automobile - Essex Wire
800 E. Garfield
Circa 1917

The building at 800 E. Garfield adjoining the Illinois Central tracks on the east, and presently occupied by the Essex Wire Corporation, Communication Division, Cable Manufacturing, was built by the Comet Automobile Company that moved to Decatur from Rockford in 1916. Comet's most popular model, the Comet Six, an open touring car, selling for \$1185, with a fifty horsepower engine, was produced at the rate of six a day in 1918. George W. Jagers, president of Comet, was reported as saying that the signing of the armistice flooded the company with inquiries from various foreign countries. It was predicted that the Comet and Pan American Companies together, the latter also located in Decatur, might offer serious competition to Detroit car manufacturers. Comet did sell forty cars to Belgium, a very large single export shipment in those days; however, they never reached the four thousand a year output that they had predicted, nor did they do other exporting. In fact, they became increasingly troubled with financial problems which led them into the hands of receivers in 1923. At that time all of Comet's property including this building then valued at \$400,000, were sold for \$60,000.

Other occupants of this building have included the L. P. Halladay Co., Biflex Products, Houdaille-Hershey Corporation, Western Electric and presently, Essex Wire, all *automotive related.*
(expand)

COMES TO CLOSE

"Made in Decatur" Display at New Comet Factory is Success From Every Standpoint—Autos By Thousands.

Twenty-five thousand people saw Decatur's Industrial and Automobile show which was held in the new Comet automobile factory building the past week and which ended Saturday night.

From every possible standpoint the affair was a success. Exhibitors, without exception, told the members of the executive committee that they were more than pleased. The citizens of Decatur and vicinity who visited the show and learned something about the great industries of the city in which they live or trade, were astonished at the extent of the line of Decatur made products.

VISITORS AMAZED.

Visitors from cities as far away as New York, Chicago and St. Louis frankly stated their amazement that a city the size of Decatur could put on such a show.

"This is my town stuff," said James Perkins, brother of the famous general, as he walked through the building Saturday afternoon before he made his talk.

In spite of the big expense account which was run with fear and trembling earlier in the week, the excellent organization of the show brought the people in such numbers

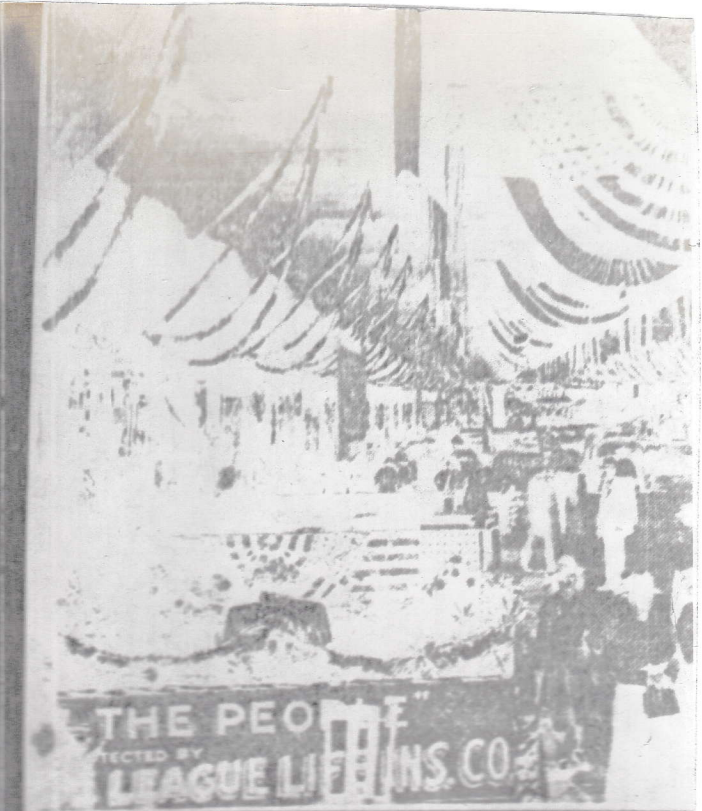
that the books will stand all clear when they are closed, and Decatur will have on the balance side of the ledger a wealth of the best advertising the city could get as a live, clean manufacturing city.

Everything worked to make the show a success, not the least factor in that success being the ideal weather conditions which prevailed during the whole week.

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CARS

A real feature of the show was the handling of the automobiles of people who came to see the exhibition. Friday night there were just 124 cars parked in the space west of the factory building. At 8 o'clock these cars, rank on rank, were a sight worth the price of a trip to the grounds alone. In the morning they were an impressive sight and the fact that not an accident occurred that day, or any other, speaks eloquently well for the management of the parking system which was devised by Chief Ed White, who was made chairman of that committee.

The parking and handling of the automobiles every day and night was so successful that it can really be called one of the high spots in the very successful management of the



Part of Decatur's Greatest

Looking down the middle aisle of the Industrial and Automobile show from south of the center of the build-

ing. Some idea of the beauty of decorations and the exhibits can be gained from this view. The

whole exhibition. Eleven traffic officers were on duty, a double force, one for night and one for day, and how they were trained into their work and supervised by Capt. Walter Adams, was shown by the week passed without any trouble of any kind on the grounds.

Not an accident, not a quarrel, not a drink, not a case of thievery among the thousands and thousands of people who attended during the week. It is surely a record of which the show committee, the police and the city can well be proud.

DRILL PLEASED

Saturday night company H. I. N. G. gave an exhibition drill on the dancing space, and the boys in khaki were enthusiastically applauded as they gave bayonet drill and other work in the close formation required by the space of 50 by 150 feet in which they drilled.

Dr. Frank Fox made a short talk complimenting the men on the work

they were doing, and appealing the patriotism of the spectator. Later the Marimba band appeared on the platform, and the dancers possessed of the floor for the rest of the evening.

The attendance for Saturday between 6:00 and 7:00, and 7:00 and 8:00, were there from all parts of the block.

JAGURS PLEASED

"It was a great success," George W. Jagurs, president of Comet Automobile company speaking of the show Saturday. "Everything went off just right everybody seemed pleased."

The show was really Mr. Jagurs' own idea as a result of a similar experience which he had with a Racine some years ago, and from suggestion the show developed.

Every member of the Comet company force took hold as if it was their own, and for the 12 days which elapsed from the time the militia first met until the show started, the Comet officers devoted practically their whole time to it.

G. Vernon Beck, the vice president, John A. Schroeder, the general engineer, and E. R. Campbell, the chasing agent, laid aside their duties as members of the firm and took their duties as parts of the show committees. One of the cars, of Mr. Campbell, is said to have been out to the show so often that he knows the way, and can now be found alone.

PUT ON IN 12 DAYS

The whole show was planned and put on in just 12 days and it is believed that that record for a show as large as this affair was.

Harold Wiley and his command men have not had much sleep about three weeks, but in spite of their weariness Saturday night they were happy with the feeling of

Decatur Public Library

DECATUR, ILLINOIS



MURIEL E. PERRY,
Librarian

Ref. Desk Info.

THE COMET AUTOMOBILE COMPANY (1917-1921)
and Pan-American Motors Corporation (1917-22) makers of C. & PA autos.

The Comet Automobile Company was established in May, 1917. The officers of this company are: George W. Jagers, president; G. W. Beck, sales manager and first vice-president; R. H. Campbell, purchasing agent and second president, and Mr. E. B. Madden, factory manager.

The factory is a one-story structure 150 feet by 600 feet, located in the 800 block on Garfield Avenue, with the Illinois Central railroad on the east.

The factory assembles the parts for the Comet automobile and truck. There are two hundred and fifty different parts of the car which have to be put together. These parts come from various parts of the United States. The metal and wood parts come from Moline, Illinois; the motors from Detroit, Michigan; small castings from the Decatur Malleable Iron Works, Decatur Illinois, and the upholstering, putting on top and curtains are done at the factory.

The Comet Six is a car of unusual beauty, having a very long body made in green or maroon or blue. At the present time the car sells for \$2150.00.

As the company is only in its infancy, shipments are mainly made to the United States, altho cars have been shipped to Denmark and Belgium.

Employees receive from forty-five to seventy cents an hour, work nine hours a day and six days a week.

Taken from - CITY OF DECATUR

Written by 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and
9th grade pupils of the Decatur Public
Schools

COMET AUTOMOBILE COMPANY (DEFUNCT)

March 31, 1938

L. P. Halladay, Maker of Car Parts, Is Dead

Operated Plant Here Before Moving to Texas

L. P. Halladay, former Decatur automobile accessories manufacturer, died this morning in Harlingen, Tex., according to word received here by friends. He had been in good health until about 10 days ago, it was reported.

Mr. Halladay was active in business and manufacturing affairs in Decatur from 1920 until leaving for Texas in 1933.

Born in Indiana 70 years ago, he early became engaged in the bicycle business. At one time he was in the automobile manufacturing business and making the Halladay car. Associated with him in this venture were the Fisher brothers, now auto body manufacturers for General Motors.

Mr. Halladay later became interested in the automobile accessories business and operated a plant in Streator, where he lived before coming to Decatur in 1920.

Built \$75,000 Plant Here

He erected a \$75,000 plant here early in 1921 at Eighteenth street and the Baltimore & Ohio tracks, where his firm manufactured automobile bumpers, shock absorbers and other accessories. In 1924 he became affiliated with the Biflex Products Co. of Waukegan and purchased the large plant of the old Comet Automobile Co. at Garfield avenue and the Illinois Central tracks here. Buying the property from the receivers, Mr. Halladay obtained it for \$125,000.

In 1928 the merger of the Halladay and Biflex companies was completed. Management of the Decatur plant was in charge of A. J. Grimm, second-in-law of Mr. Halladay. A few years later the firm was sold to the Houdaille-Hershey Co., also manufacturer of automobile accessories.

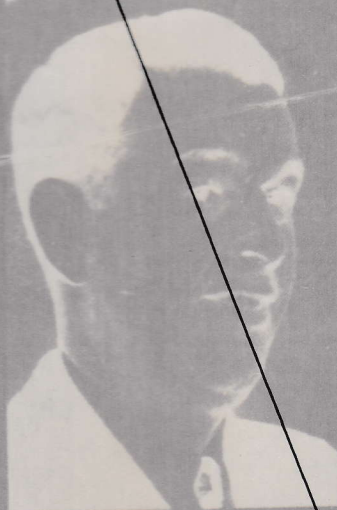
Entered Fruit Business

On coming to Decatur in 1920, Mr. Halladay purchased the C. H. Pierce residence, 1486 West Mason street, and later built two houses on adjoining lots for his sons-in-law, Mr. Grimm and Philip King.

Mr. Grimm and Mr. King went to the Houdaille-Hershey Co., Texas

Name Carl Fox City Engineer; McDonald Quits

Leaves to Enter Private Business; Campbell, Elrod New Aides



E. K. McDONALD



CARL FOX

Carl Fox, assistant city engineer since 1932, was named city engineer today to succeed E. K. McDonald, who resigned to enter private business. Commissioner Beecher Hughey, streets and alleys department head, in announcing the change, said he will name Loren E. Elrod and William Campbell, draftsmen at the department, as assistants.

Members of the city council voted to accept McDonald's resignation and approved appointment of Fox. All members of the council expressed regrets that McDonald is leaving. He announced that he will begin his new job Friday with the J. M. Driscoll contracting company of Decatur.

Considered for Mayor

Mr. McDonald began his service with the city as a draftsman and rodman in 1920. He was named assistant city engineer in 1925 and has headed the staff since June 1, 1932. McDonald was among several men considered for mayor at the time Harry Barber resigned from office.

After joining the city engineering staff in 1924, Mr. Fox was in charge of outside construction work and his promotion to assistant in 1932. Since then he has devoted his time both to the drafting office and supervision of outside construction.

Listed on the city payroll as "public engineer and engineer of the board of local improvements" the job pays \$275 a month. The assistant engineer's pay is \$190 a month.

Lauds Associates

In a statement accompanying his resignation Mr. McDonald said:

"I shall take with me the pleasant memories of many years of serving the city as a public official, and the full-hearted cooperation of all its officials and employes in making that service pleasant and possible."

Mr. McDonald earned a statewide reputation for his work in municipal engineering. He has served as adviser to the council on many street and improvement problems that included construction of subways, the city's car track removal and curb and gutter project, major sewer repair jobs, and numerous street improvements.

Firm Cited by Labor Official

Claim Princess Owner Violated Ruling

Chicago's Peter Bacopulos, owner of the Princess confectionery, 425 South Water street, failed

Water Supply

Project Approval \$152,000

It was reported.

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Mr. Grimm and Mr. King went to the Rio Grande valley in Texas



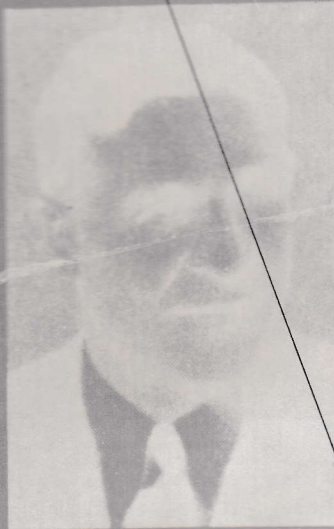
L. P. HALLADAY

with their families in 1933 when they became engaged in the fruit growing business. Mr. and Mrs. Halladay followed them there one year later.

In Decatur, Mr. Halladay was chairman of the board of directors of the Citizens National bank,



E. K. McDONALD



CARL FOX

Firm Cited by Labor Official

Claim Princess Owner Violated Ruling

Charges that Peter Berglund, manager of the Progress confectionery, 439 North Water street, failed to give "Mary Doe," a girl employee, 24 hours consecutive rest during a seven-day week in violation of the women's labor law were made today by Leo Johnson, inspector for the Illinois department of labor, in a warrant presented before Justice E. E. Gray.

It had been previously reported that Berglund was named in the charge as manager of the Confection Shop, 25 North Water street. Otto Cronin is manager of that establishment and also associated with the labor law charge. Mr. Cronin said the law requires that the employer give his employees 24 hours consecutive rest during a seven-day week.

Mr. Johnson, who is with the department, says he is satisfied with the ruling and is confident that he will get some results before long. He added that he has a violation. He added that he has a violation. He added that he has a violation.

who resigned to enter private business. Commissioner Beecher Hughes, streets and alleys department head, in announcing the change said he will name Loren E. Elrod and William Campbell, draftsmen in the department, as assistants.

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In a statement accompanying his resignation Mr. McDonald said: "I shall take with me the pleasant memories of my association of serving the city as a public official and the full-hearted cooperation of all its officials and employees in making that service pleasant and possible."

Mr. McDonald earned a wide-wide reputation for his work as municipal engineering. He has served as adviser to the council on many street and improvement problems that included construction of subways, the city's air taxi removal and curb and gutter project, sewerage repair jobs and numerous street improvements.

Water Supply Co. Disbanded

City Formally Accepts Assets Report

The Decatur Water Supply Co. organized as a non-profit corporation in 1928. The city council, by a vote of 10-2, today formally accepted the report of the city clerk and city engineer on the company's assets and liabilities.

The report of the final report of the water supply company and the release were contained in an ordinance passed by the council at its regular meeting today. The mayor and city clerk were authorized to sign a receipt for the assets.

All but about \$500 of the money paid over to the city was received

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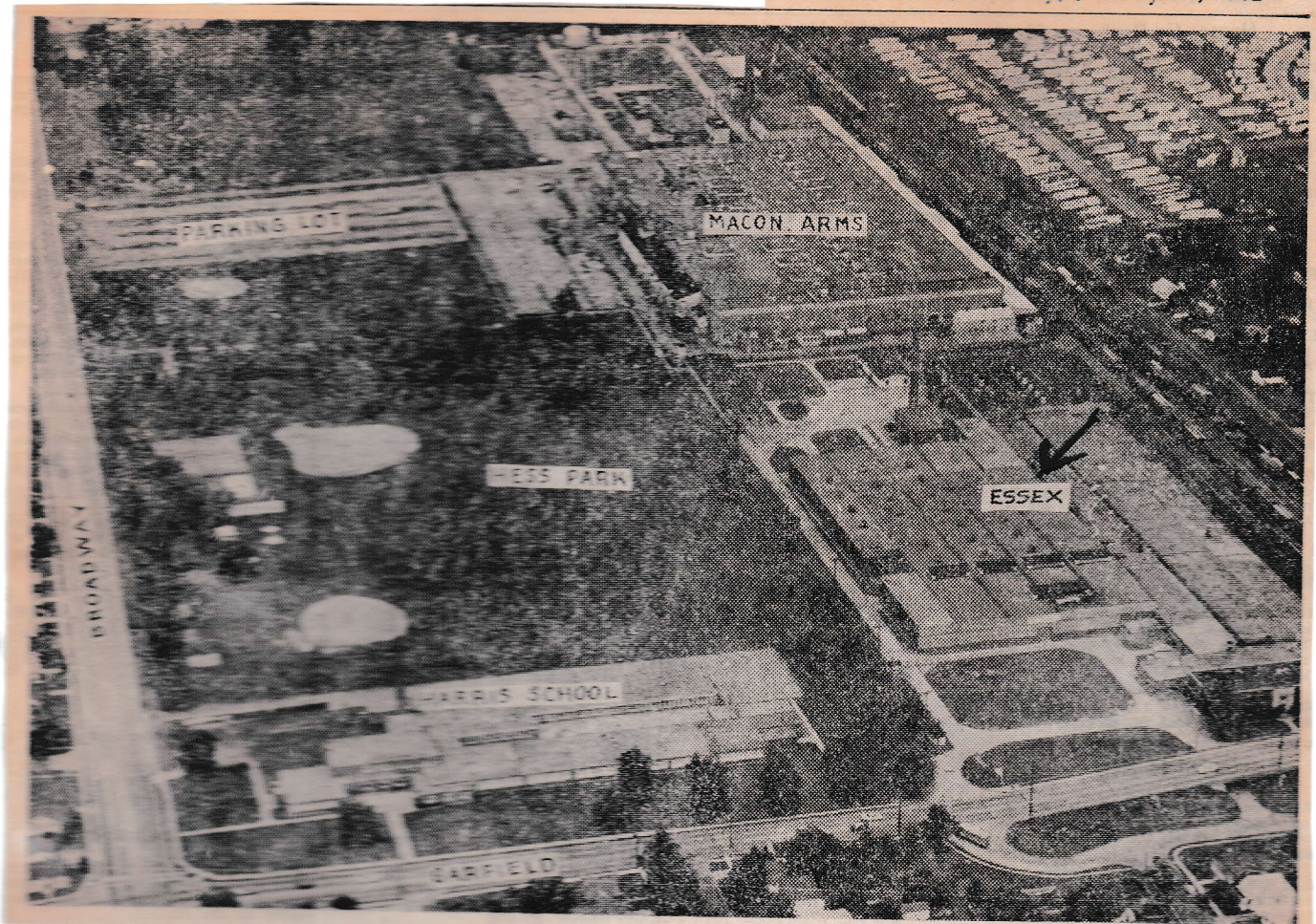
Project Approval

Allot \$192,000; Starts Soon

General improvement of city parks this year is a notice from President Roosevelt allotment of all funds for a WPA project. The work will provide 250 men a year and will be the current \$160,000 in Decatur parks. The park district has \$33,152 for materials for the new project. Improvements of the year the city are underway within a authorization includes grading and surfacing of drainage and light facilities, cement sidewalks, and improvement of existing

and a \$28,000 dance lodge for the Decatur Farnes park, a building at the Garfield and a levee near in Scott features.

Decatur, Illinois, Tuesday, January 19, 1971



The Macon Arms plant has stood idle since 1958.

Staff photo by Bob Strongman

*Location of Corbett - L. G. Halliday - Bigley -
Ludville - Herstey - Oakes Products Division -
Western Electric - Essex Wire*

Firm Buys War Plant

← Neighbor of Essex

By Maryjo Kimmell

Decatur Paper House, Inc., has purchased the former Macon Arms plant at 800 E. Kenwood Ave.

The purchase agreement was announced today by Charles E. McKenzie, vice president and general manager. The price was not disclosed.

The building, which has stood idle for 12 years, will be completely renovated. Decatur Paper House plans to use only the north end of the building for its distribution center. The remaining space, more than 150,000 square feet of warehouse space, will be available for rental.

The plant is on an 18-acre site and has 255,000 square feet of ground floor space in a single unit with 25-foot ceilings and 40-foot bays. An additional 80,000 square feet is offices, basement and balcony space.

McKenzie said the firm intends to use the extra land for additional industrial develop-

ment.

Decatur Paper House now occupies the building at 300-310 E. Cerro Gordo St. This facility now is for sale, according to Robert Colgan, president.

Renovation of the Macon Arms plant, including extensive work on the roof and a new heating system, is hoped to be completed by April.

Decatur Paper House, an affiliate of the Irwin Paper Group, is a wholesaler with four operating divisions.

"We've outgrown our building here," Colgan said. "This should eliminate our parking problems, too."

The firm employs 42 persons. The move will not change personnel requirements, according to McKenzie.

Bob Smith, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce industrial committee, said "We're delighted. Decatur definitely needs this new warehouse space."

The Chamber of Commerce, Millikin Bank and Illinois Power Co. have been working with Decatur Paper House on the negotiations for some time.

"It's been sitting there for so long — this is great," Mayor James Rupp said at the news conference this morning.

Efforts to find a tenant or buyer for the Macon Arms building have been under way for many years. However, many considered the size and renovation costs to be an obstacle.

McKenzie said, "Many people have considered this property but were concerned about the tremendous amount of renovation and modernization that would be required. We intend to invest substantially in remodeling from top to bottom and see it as a terrific potential as an industrial complex as well as a distribution center for our own business."

Construction of the plant was begun in September, 1943, under strict secrecy. It originally was constructed by the Atomic Energy Commission as part of the Manhattan Project.

It was not until the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima that plant workers were told they were working on materials used in the bomb's production.

The building first was the Garfield atomic plant. During

World War II, the facility was used to manufacture a part used in the production of the atomic bomb. Peak employment in the Garfield plant exceeded 5,600 during the war.

In 1951, President Harry S. Truman signed a bill making the plant available for the production of rockets and projectiles. It was transferred from the Atomic Energy Commission to the Navy Department.

It was then that the name was changed to Macon Arms.

The building underwent a \$1 million remodeling job. The plant opened again in 1952 and was operated for the Navy as a separate subsidiary of the Houdaille-Hershey Corp.

In April, 1958, the Navy announced that production at the plant would cease.

It was put on a standby basis and became known as the Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant.

The city made several efforts to have the Navy make the plant available to private industry, and in 1963 this was accomplished.

The building was sold to the WGT Corp. of Philadelphia, Pa., a real estate firm, in December, 1964.

Since then, there have been many reports of prospective lease or purchase plans, but none materialized.

The most recent effort was in 1969, when Decatur tried to have the plant selected as the site for the state Department of Revenue's state income tax center. This also failed.