

Research Reports/Rapports de recherche

Inventory of Secondary Manufacturing Companies in Alberta, 1880-1914

Phase I

The "Inventory of Secondary Manufacturing" began as a summer project in 1982 through the Social History Program of the Provincial Museum of Alberta. The time period chosen was set between 1880 and 1914, as that was the first period of substantial European settlement in Alberta. Within this era, beginning with a complete lack of manufacturing activity, may be traced the origins and evolution of numerous industries in and throughout the various regions of Alberta, the boom and bust periods of the 1910s, and the domestic and economic factors that influenced such industries prior to the onset of World War I.

Definition of the categories of manufacturing industries was determined by the use of the "1970 Standard Industrial Classification" used by Leonard Wilson in his thesis, "Some Factors Relating to the Attraction of Manufacturing Industries to the Province of Alberta."¹ Beyond this, however, lay decisions concerning the inclusion or exclusion of cottage industries or individual craftsmen. It was decided that this should be based on the impact of the product on the market-place. On this basis, then, individual dressmakers, milliners, and tailors were excluded, but these same "industries" were included when they functioned on a larger scale. For this reason, neighbourhood operations such as a "local bakery" were excluded while a larger business producing hundreds or thousands of loaves of bread daily would be included in the survey. A tailor who registered his company or joined in a partnership was included. This had the effect of almost totally eliminating milliners and dressmakers. At the same time, individual flour millers, lumber sawyers, and planers were included because it was decided that they could produce more of their commodity.

Certain occupations were listed in directories and government documents in such a manner as to leave one wondering about their actual function. This was the problem with coal miners, grain elevator operators, and confectioners, for example. Many coal mines produced coke and involved the production of lumber and machined parts, even railroad spurs. Many grain elevator proprietors were also millers. Some confectioners made candies while

others had retail outlets only. Often these questions of function could be answered by checking local histories, various directory listings, or newspapers.

Owing to the need to check the information continually, and in the interest of future reclassification (i.e., into regional industries), it was decided to use a card system. These cards were filed according to the name of the firm or individual and placed in two categories: one for registered companies and one for partnerships and proprietorships. The total number of cards produced was 4,308. Significant dates such as that of incorporation or registration within the province, if a company, and any other dates bearing on the status of the enterprise such as amalgamation, striking off, dissolution, and assignment for the benefit of creditors were also recorded. A brief description of the activity, object-related information such as brand names produced, were recorded. Names of the principals in an organization were included when available. Often it was possible to follow a company through several name changes, changes in management, and production. Footnotes on the cards indicate sources of information and most important the years that the listing appeared in directories.

Resource materials ranged from lists of companies in government documents and city directories to chatty reminiscences concerning family enterprises. The provincial secretary's reports of the Northwest Territories and Alberta from 1881 to 1912 contained the names of all registered companies and their objectives. By 1913 the list of new companies ran to thirty-six pages of listed names; and at this stage, objectives were not included. The objectives of Alberta companies for 1913 and 1914 and those of foreign-registered companies were checked in the Corporate Registry. Business directories and gazeteers confirmed whether companies actually operated in the province and often whether or not they produced products as they planned. They also provided data on strikings off, changes in name, assignments for the benefit of creditors, dissolutions of partnerships, and related changes of status for companies, partnerships, and proprietorships. Directories and local histories were the main sources of the names of partnerships and proprietorships. The provincial secretary's reports mentioned these only when changes

were made or when they were struck off.² Local histories provided some new listings and checks on existing cards. A study of businessmen carried out by the Historic Sites Branch of Alberta Culture, using Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Wetaskiwin newspapers from the turn of the century, filled several gaps in this study and confirmed that further investigation of pertinent newspapers would be fruitful. All these sources served an important service in that they provided the means of localizing the activities of many manufacturing concerns by listing the addresses of the enterprise's offices, plants, agencies, and often the names of the people involved. Much information regarding the products, such as brand names or productive capacity, also came from these sources. Also useful were biographies and town promotional materials known as "booster" literature, although both of these sources must be used with caution.

Phase II

A questionnaire was developed and sent to business establishments and individuals which could readily be traced from enterprises operating before 1914 (the termination date for the collection of data in the original project). The second undertaking involved colour-coding the cards for location and industrial category, and looking for trends in the figures that emerged.³

The more than 4,000 cards were checked against current telephone directories and Henderson's Directories in a search for businesses that were in existence before 1914. One hundred and ten questionnaires were mailed out, as this was the total of pre-1914 manufacturing companies still in existence. Over two-thirds have replied, as a result of some follow-up telephone calls. The following is a sampling of some of the results. Most companies have undergone minor name changes on several occasions, most often because of company reorganization. Where major name changes have occurred, a small company was usually merged with a larger one. For example, Carling O'Keefe Breweries of Canada Limited purchased the Cross family's Calgary Brewing and Malting Co. Ltd. and the latter name ceased to exist.

Changes in location were largely precipitated by company growth and occasionally by land-use changes. The *Calgary Herald*, for example, moved from the city centre to the outskirts when it needed to expand its printing facilities. Not only was land not available near the original site, but distribution of newspapers from the city core had become increasingly difficult. (When paperboys picked up their bundles from the newspaper offices, a location in the centre of the city was a necessity.)

Surprisingly, products have not changed a great deal over the years. Companies producing meat products have

expanded their lines, but remain in the same enterprise. Sign manufacturers, brewers, tinsmiths, millers, and publishers are all examples of companies producing products very similar to those they were making in 1914 or before. Changes, then, have been in scale. For example, a small machinist now makes truck equipment. Occasionally the change has been total. A Calgary manufacturing furrier has become an investment company, without changing its name.

Many raw materials originated outside Alberta in the early period. One might anticipate that early industry was resource-based; however, it appears to have been based as well on the use of pre-manufactured components from eastern Canada. For example, reinforced glass was used by Niven Brothers of Lethbridge to manufacture pressure gauges for steam machinery. More obvious is the example of the Cockshutt Farm Machinery Company of Brantford, Ontario, which shipped farm equipment for assembly in Alberta.

The railroad was used by every company that purchased raw materials or shipped its products outside its immediate area. It appears that access to the railroad was of utmost importance to these industries. If they dealt within their own small region, horse-drawn transport was most popular until the arrival of the automobile. Walking, bicycles, and streetcars were the most popular means of transport for employees.

Among our findings was the fact that the majority of personnel involved in the early enterprises were born in Ontario. Most were of British origin, with French, German, and Italian immigrants among those who established manufacturing in Alberta. In the southern part of the province, several American immigrants set up manufacturing businesses, such as the Knight Sugar Co. A number of early entrepreneurs had previous business experience, not always in the field they entered when they arrived on the Canadian prairies. W.J. Tregillus, a miller in England, became a rancher, grain elevator owner, and brick manufacturer when he settled in Calgary. He was later instrumental in setting up the United Grain Growers' cooperative. Several follow-up interviews and oral histories have been conducted with former employees and family members.

Retention of artifacts was rather meager. Only two of the entire group who answered the survey said that they had articles that the museum might like to see. None had retained samples of early products, although some had already been donated to museum collections. Some companies, such as B.C. Sugar and Calgary Power, have their own museums. Several companies do have old ledgers, payroll records, and correspondence which will be evaluated by the Provincial Archives of Alberta as a result of this research.

When undertaking a major project such as "Secondary Manufacturing in Alberta, Pre-1915," it is important, both as a curator of the related department and as the project co-ordinator, always to keep in mind the ways in which such work can be made useful to the mandate of the museum itself as well as to museum staff both within the museum and without. For the Social History Program's technician, this inventory is proving to be very useful in more accurately dating artifacts in the collection if they are known to have been manufactured by Alberta companies. The inventory also provides company name changes and address changes, facilitating the dating of various Alberta-made objects. Researchers from other institutions as well as historians without institutional affiliation are coming to the museum to use the inventory. For example, students from the Home Economics Department of the University of Alberta used the inventory for information on manufacturers of bathing costumes for an exhibition at the Universiade '83 Games. Researchers from the Reynolds-Alberta Museum have also consulted our files for information on early carriagemakers for studies on the history of transportation, or on agricultural equipment for treatises on early agriculture.

For the curator, there are several benefits of such a project. First, in planning exhibitions or simply in conducting material history research on topics ranging from textile manufacturing to early domestic appliances, the inventory is a logical place to begin to track down potential sources of information, documents, and artifacts. It has also proven to be of great assistance in answering public inquiries as well as in authenticating the historical validity of potential acquisitions to our collection. It can also be used to trace descendants of the original employees

of the various companies to gain further insights. It can be successfully used to link the artifact to its manufacturer, and in conjunction with oral histories, to the history of its use and consumption as well.

Research is now under way on the secondary manufacturing inventory in the 1915-20 period. Researchers interested in consulting the inventory are most welcome, by appointment. For further information, please contact Sandra Morton at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, 12845-102 Ave., Edmonton, Alberta, T5N 0M6 (403)427-1743.

NOTES

1. Leonard Wilson, "Some Factors Relating to the Attraction of Manufacturing Industries to the Province of Alberta," M.A. thesis (University of Alberta, 1971), pp. 47-49. Basic classifications are: food and beverage, textiles, clothing, wood industries, furniture and fixtures, paper, printing and publishing, rubber and plastics, primary metal industries, metal fabricating, machinery, electrical products, non-metallic products, petroleum and coal, chemical and chemical products, and miscellaneous (including jewellery, scientific instruments, clocks and watches, dental laboratories, sporting goods, toys, signs, brooms and mops, flooring, stencils, and furs).
2. Northwest Territories Consolidated Ordinances 1898, chap. 45, and 1901, chap. 20.
3. Thirteen categories from the Canadian Industrial Index were used: food and beverage, textiles and clothing, wood industries, furniture and signs, paper and boxes, printing and publishing, metal industries, machinery manufacturing, non-metallic mineral products, petroleum and coal, chemicals and chemical products, electrical and gas-fired products, and miscellaneous. The latter included photographers, jewellers, saddlers, and so on. Each was coded with a different colour in the upper left-hand corner of the file card. Five locations were also colour-coded with a mark in the upper right-hand corner of the cards.

Sandra Morton

Waterloo Region Gardens in the Germanic Tradition

Waterloo Region in southern Ontario contains a variety of ethnic groups which may be designated "Germanic." Descendants of nineteenth-century settlers whose places of ancestry included Switzerland, Alsace, and parts of what are now West and East Germany, whose religious denominations included Mennonite, Amish, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic, form parts of this category.

The making of gardens for personal and communal use, and for ornamental and symbolic reasons, is deeply fixed in Germanic culture, and commentators from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have remarked upon the "German settler's garden" as a characteristic and distinctive feature of their North American settlements. The

gardens of people of Germanic background, in both rural and urban settings, are a notable feature of Waterloo Region today.

The central paradigm of the Germanic garden is the *Paradiesgärtlein*, an enclosed space or *hortus conclusus*. Perhaps the fundamental pattern for this garden is formed by two crossing paths which separate four hand-worked raised or bordered beds, the "Four-Square Garden." This composition symbolizes Eden watered by the four rivers of Paradise, and the Islamic gardens which introduced this form to Europe were divided by four actual watercourses pouring from a central fountain (fig. 1). This extremely old symbolic complex has remained constant in Germanic