



A. B. C. Comstock
Pioneer Hardware Dealer

The motor car building has never long remained vacant. Within months after the car company closed, the building was rented and then sold to Saginaw Wood Products. This company ran for about seven years making toys, tables, baseball bats and a variety of other wooden goods. They provided employment for about fifty workers. Shortly after the doors were locked for lack of quality hardwood, they were unlocked by the McLouth Gear Factory. McLouth ran a very prosperous business making auto gears. Providing employment at a fairly large scale, the firm looked forward to a long future in Otsego County. However, as unionized shops became popular in urban areas, McLouth employees became heavily in favor of it. Management strongly opposed unions and warned workers of drastic action if they unionized. Despite these warnings, the union was voted in and the McLouth Gear Factory promptly ceased operation.

The County's advancement of major industry came to a halt for a few years after the McLouth and Dayton Last Factories closed down. However, in the late 1930's it was learned that among Otsego County's natural

resources was a natural gas that was essential in the manufacture of a synthetic rubber used for auto weather stripping. Thus began our Standard Products Corporation. Once the factory was constructed and into operation, a new method of manufacturing this synthetic rubber was devised and the natural gas was no longer needed. Fortunately, the plant was operating smoothly and efficiently so a shut down was not considered. Today Standard Products employs about two hundred and fifty persons and is diversifying their operations to a variety of other materials.

In 1941 M. C. B. Higgins opened a small shop in Vanderbilt manufacturing overflow tubes for radiators and rotating bands for machine guns used in World War II. At war's end, the shop converted to a redraw mill for copper and brass. Finding business profitable the mill expanded in 1952. Today Higgins Industries provides employment for eighty persons.

In 1958 a group of businessmen, seeing the need to promote the growth of Otsego County and Gaylord, formed the Gaylord Industrial Development Corporation. The aim was to create an encouraging climate for new industries and their efforts have paid off well over the years. United States Plywood Division of Champion International established a particleboard manufacturing plant in Gaylord in 1965. In 1971 this company employed 235 people and that number has grown as the plant has expanded.

Other industries have moved here including Borden's, Nu-Way Plumbing and Wickes Corporation, and in 1971 Air Industrial Park was created, over 170 acres of well located and controlled land devoted to the growth of new industries in the Gaylord area. Oil is one of the newest industries in the County and is likely to have a formidable impact on our future.

Tourism has been a growing industry in this area since the 1920's but Otsego County took a leap forward when skiing became a major winter sport in Michigan. Alpenfest, started in 1965, was an ingenious outgrowth of our industrial as well as our recreational rejuvenation. Otsego County now appears well balanced with industry, agriculture and tourism.