

Winds of Change

The Winds of Change Sweep into Delta

*"O beautiful, for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain..."*

by Sam Allen

If this story were a movie documentary, it likely would open to the strains of "America the Beautiful," since it's about a small community in the heartland where people hold fast to traditional values, and two companies representing much of what American industry at its best can be.

Standing in the midst of a large field of grain in the heart of the expanse that is the great American Midwest, you can see for miles and miles and miles. The farmland around Delta, Ohio, is surely as flat as anywhere on Earth.

Some 7,500 men, women and children live in the village and surrounding townships. Family life is the most important value in the community.

Ask anyone on the street in Delta what kind of folks their neighbors are and they quickly tick off a list: "Friendly... honest... hardworking... generous... conservative... down-to-earth." Within the village borders, where the population is about 2,800, there are 14 churches.

Since the first settler arrived in 1834, this has been a farm community. Delta is in rural Fulton County, which over the years has consistently ranked number one in farm income among all of Ohio's 88 counties.

Delta's most conspicuous architectural feature, until now, has been the massive grain elevators of the Delta Farmer's Exchange. Corn is the main crop, but there is plenty of variety; soybeans, wheat, tomatoes, pickles and bedding plants, as well as hogs, poultry and dairy products.

There is no movie house, boarded up or otherwise, and, incredibly, no "golden arches" or neon light boxes dotting the skyline. The three-day Delta Chicken Festival, originally a homecoming event, is held each summer.

There is a midway, rides and, of course, fried chicken. It's big. Strong in popularity are the Green Thumb, a sidewalk plant sale each spring, and a self-descriptive Apple Dumpling event in fall.

Crime news is not a staple in the *Delta Atlas*, the weekly paper whose predecessor publication dates back to 1851. Tom Mack, editor and publisher, whose family bought the *Atlas* in 1948 not long after he was born, can remember only one murder in the past five decades. Crime reports mostly involve teenage vandalism or other mischief.

Aside from more traffic on Main Street, Tom says things haven't changed much in Delta during his lifetime. Jack Abbey, President of the Delta Chamber, observes that population has remained fairly steady, with what growth there has been coming

from new residents who mostly commute to work in Toledo, some 25 miles to the east.

Shares in an active Delta Industrial Development Association, which for most of its existence has had modest success, are held by community residents. According to Paul Tedrow, a Delta farmer, realtor and township trustee, the effort has been aimed at easing the tax burden for the support of village and township services and the school system, including the Pike-Delta-York High School. Delta straddles Pike and York townships.

In 1995, the winds of change swept full force into Delta.

Manette Seady, unabashed Delta cheerleader and Public Relations Director of the Chamber, put it this way: "We bought a ticket in the (industrial development) lottery. And we WON."

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Main Street in Delta, Ohio: "Friendly... honest... hardworking... generous... conservative... down-to-earth."

On February 23 last year, North Star Steel BHP announced the selection of a 515-acre site just a mile-and-a-half west of the center of Delta as the location of a new \$400 million flat-rolled steel recycling mill to employ 425 persons.

North Star Steel, a subsidiary of Cargill, Inc., is the second largest minimill producer in the country. Joining North Star in the announcement as a partner in the venture was Broken Hill Proprietary Co. (BHP), Australia's largest publicly-held company and one of the world's leading steel producers.

Although many Delta area residents were thrilled, it was not precisely love at first sight. Robert Bay, a retired veterinarian and civic leader, remembers the first contact with the company this way: "We were sort of like teenagers at their first dance. We thought we should be looking over all the girls."

For its part, North Star BHP had done all the looking it needed, having put 40 potential sites across 12 states under a microscope.

Delta was it. The attributes: Delta is close to major sources of scrap steel, which will provide 100 percent of the mill's raw materials, and sits on rail transportation and

an excellent highway system with reasonable access to a metropolitan airport.

Delta also offers a competitive rate for electricity, has the availability of abundant water, access to excellent universities and technical schools, and, last but not least, the work ethic of Delta-area residents.

Everyone came to the announcement event virtually arm-in-arm. But a lot of vital interaction to allay concerns had preceded it. Making a precise list of all the individual groups, organizations, and government bodies involved would be foolhardy because of the potential for oversight.

"Just say there was a united effort," advised Chamber President Abbey. "There was solid cooperation among village, township, county and regional development groups, including the electric company and development agency in Toledo, as well as political involvement up to the Governor's office."

An incentive package which included some tax abatement, provisions to finance public improvements needed for the project, a state grant and a low interest loan was worked out. Speedy approval for a new interchange just north of Delta on the Ohio Turnpike was a vital step. So

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was negotiation of the electricity rate, since mill usage is projected to be 1 billion kilowatt hours of electricity a year.

One obstacle, a change in zoning of the site from agricultural to industrial, loomed large. For a time it appeared that an effort might be mounted to reject the change in a vote of township residents or delay it long enough to scuttle the project.

Richard Kleck, a full-time farmer as well as a millwright contractor and civic leader, remembers it as a communications problem. The answer, he says, was to make sure that everyone concerned got to look under the tent and have all their questions answered.

There were a dozen or more town meetings and four large get-togethers at the Pike-Delta-York High School, where the gymnasium can hold every man, woman and child living in the village.

It turned out that North Star executives talk the language of the farmers around Delta, coming as they do from the Cargill organization, which has earned worldwide renown as America's largest privately-owned company and one whose grain business roots grow deep in the soil.

Farmer/Millwright Kleck said, "Ed Fox (North Star President) can talk just as much farming as he can steel. He goes to his farm up in Michigan every chance he gets."

North Star won their spurs with townspeople by mak-

Minimill Company offers cutting edge site

Training Center busy seven days a week

Leveling the employment playing field for Northwest Ohio residents and matching skills to the future job market are the twin objectives of the new Delta Industrial Learning Center. "Our specific goal is to identify and hire locally most of the people for our mill, but the center is for all citizens of the region to use," explained Rich Menzel, North Star Steel BHP Personnel Manager. Conceived by North Star BHP and supported by the Delta Chamber of Commerce, Fulton County Economic Development Office and area educational groups, the Learning Center opened in Delta in October.

The computer-equipped Center is staffed by instructors 24 hours a day, six days a week, and 16 hours Sunday. North Star BHP leased the site and purchased the computers and software with an investment of about \$200,000.

Mill employees will be selected from among persons using the center. A computer learning center will be set up at the mill after operations begin to keep employees on the cutting edge of steel industry technology, Menzel said.

Shawn Ferguson, Executive Director of the Fulton County Economic Development Office, which helped North Star BHP identify partners for an advisory group to oversee and direct the Center's formation and activi-



Delta Industrial Learning Center

ties, calls it "A state-of-the-art educational site."

Jack Abbey, President of the Delta Chamber, said the Center, "will help raise general skill levels of people using the Center, who apply for jobs with any area business."

The Center is at 6500 U.S. Hwy. 20A, Delta. <>

-Sam Allen

ing senior officials readily available and by demonstrating an eagerness to become part of community affairs. They often talked with folks over pizza and soft drinks. They sponsored a tent at the county fair and went along to the high school basketball tournament. And they set out to help Delta area residents qualify for new jobs, and not just at North Star. They also pledged to see that a new "wetlands" preserve be built on its 515-acre tract with access for local high school environmental classes.

Less than three months after the North Star announcement, Delta came up with a second winning ticket in the industrial development lottery. In May, Worthington Steel Company followed in North Star's tracks with the announcement of a \$65 million steel processing mill on 125 acres near the recycling mill.

Start up, the company said, would coincide with that of the North Star BHP mill in the fall of 1996. The mill will employ 180 persons and at 300,000-square-foot will be the company's largest. Operations will include pickling, slitting, and hot-dipped galvanizing, using about one-third of the output from the North Star mill supplemented by other sources.

Like North Star and Broken Hill, Worthington Steel carries blue ribbon credentials. Its parent company, Worthington Industries, was started in 1955 by John H. McConnell in the basement of his Columbus, Ohio, home. Today, Worthington has more than 8,000 employees and 35 facilities in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and France. Sales top \$1.5 billion annually.

In the American business press, the McConnell and Worthington names are legendary.

Not surprisingly, Mr. McConnell, who is still active as board chairman, won the Horatio Alger Award of exemplary business success and the Worthington story is required reading at Harvard University Business School.

In original and revised editions of the best-selling business book, *The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America*, Worthington ranks high on the list.

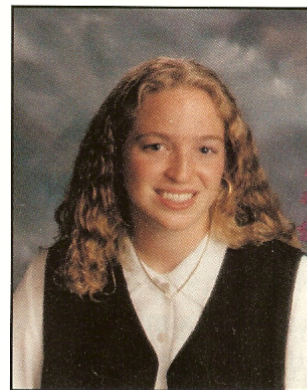
Motivating and communicating with employees has top priority at Worthington. New employees are temporary and become regular employees only by a vote of an employee council. Regular employees take part in a profit sharing plan, distributed every three months. There's also a deferred profit sharing plan for retirement and long-term security.

Other perks include in-plant \$4 haircuts and free coffee, but there's no conventional "coffee break." Employees are expected to know when a job needs to be done and when a break is appropriate.

High School Student Point-Of-View:

Industrial growth in Delta

by *Jamie Tracy*



Jamie Tracy

In the beginning there were problems. Local residents wanted to know about pollution, cost, and the disturbances North Star Steel BHP would cause.

After a number of town meetings, with North Star BHP executives present to answer questions, wheels began turning. Plans for the new steel plant were set in motion, and the little town of Delta was buzzing with excitement.

Now, a year later, as buildings rise west of town, Delta citizens have had their worries eased. Focus is moving from problems to solutions, and the advantages of North Star BHP are surfacing. Perhaps the biggest advantage of Delta's leap into the steel industry is the employment it creates. Not only will North Star BHP bring hundreds of jobs for skilled workers, the spinoff needs of the plant will also bring work for area residents. Many people have already been hired to help with the building of the plant, and many more, especially electricians and plumbers, will be called in.

The athletes of Delta High School also anxiously await the day North Star BHP is up and running. Even before the plant has opened, North Star BHP has supported community events, local fairs and provided bus transportation for the high school athletic program.

As residents of Delta await the start of operations at North Star BHP, hopes of an economically brighter future dance in their heads. Delta will not become the steel capital of the world, and North Star BHP will not make Panther country the vacation destination of everyone's dreams, but what North Star BHP can do is more than any other Delta business has been able to match. Through jobs, and support for the schools, North Star Steel BHP is a terrific addition to the growing family of Delta businesses. <>

Jamie Tracy is a Senior at Pike-Delta-York High School

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Obviously, productivity and quality standards also have top priority in Worthington's facilities, and long-standing success in these areas has helped the company achieve phenomenal growth.

In the announcement of its plans for the Delta processing mill, Worthington made no references to its employment policies, but in response to a question a spokesman said the mill will be operated in a manner similar to other company facilities. Competition for the openings should be lively.

Already, Delta is changing dramatically.

Steel mill superstructure is significantly altering the skyline. There's an active planning group with a draft plan in hand to set up guidelines for orderly, controlled growth, including areas to be designated only for agricultural, commercial, and residential use.

Meanwhile, the PR wheels are churning in Manette Seady's mind, and she's thinking of the first-ever promo-



Left to right, Richard Kleck, Jack Abbey, Paul Tedrow, Robert Bay and Manette Seady.

tional signs for Delta's borders:

"Delta: The Village With Vision."

Here the documentary would fade to music.

...America, America, God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood, From sea to shining sea." <>

Interview with Rick Weddle, President, Toledo Regional Growth Partnership

Business Venture: How did Delta beat out such varied and qualified competition for the project?

Rick Weddle: The key to our success in attracting the North Star BHP Steel minimill to Delta was the true partnership that exists among Northwest Ohio's economic development and government entities. These groups brought to the table a collaborative spirit and a willingness to work through complicated issues, such as air quality and transportation matters, to the company's needs. Clearly, it was our region's ability to work together and resolve these com-

plicated issues that differentiated Northwest Ohio from competitors.

Business Venture: What are the long-term effects?

Rick Weddle: Ultimately, the North Star BHP project will serve as a springboard for future successes. Our regional teamwork, combined with attributes such as location, transportation linkages and ever-progressive labor-management environment, has resulted in the creation of more than 8,000 jobs and \$1.7 billion in capital investment



Rick Weddle

in the region the past two years.

Business Venture: So Delta's success story will become the norm, rather than the exception, for this area?

Rick Weddle: With this mixture of business attributes and comfortable living and working environments, the Partnership and Northwest Ohio are well on our way to leading a dramatic industrial turnaround that I believe will become emblematic of the Midwest. <>