

Focus...

Besser Company



An idea is a plan or design. Creative and innovative. Most of us can only dream of an idea that would build us a successful lifestyle. It was more than 80 years ago that Herman and Jesse Besser developed their idea for block machinery into a world-famous industry.

A Brief History

Herman Besser began in the lumber industry in the late 1800s. As this industry declined, he and his son, Jesse, took an interest in the business of cement making. Gradually, Besser and his son saw the potential for a machine that could use cement in the manufacture of concrete block.

In 1904, Jesse helped his father to design and manufacture the first concrete block machine. Jesse made additional improvements to this first machine; his plans were the inspiration that set the company in motion.

During WWII, the production of block machinery was halted due to the use of steel in the war. Besser Co. became an essential to the war effort. After the war, the company leased and sold their machinery; some of the funds gained from leasing began the present Besser Foundation.

Quality Equipment

Cement and aggregate had to be tamped by hand in the beginning of the industry. Today, Besser Co. builds completely

automated block plants. Their equipment is located world-wide, in over 80 countries.

The process of making concrete block involves mixing, coloring, cubing, curing, and loading and transport of the block. Many different types of equipment are used, but there are four basic machines that are essential to this process.

The Vibrapac is the fundamental piece of equipment in the plant; it is the machine that makes the concrete block. The batch mixer mixes the cement, aggregate, and water to form the concrete for the block. Besser-Matic then loads the block onto racks for processing and unloads them for cubing. The Automatic Cuber assembles the block into interlocked cubes for easy storage and handling.

Home to World Headquarters

Besser World Headquarters was dedicated in August 1986. A North Carolina architect was hired to build a new headquarters building for the company. He blended several design concepts with the local surroundings to produce a completely new, energy-efficient facility.

Visitors to the company are welcomed through a dramatic atrium. Designed to conserve energy, the atrium radiates sunlight into the surrounding offices. It also contains an oriental garden and routes to the various offices.

The new facility is truly a display for the different types of concrete masonry used in the industry. The masonry is shown in the skywalk, the walks throughout the building, and the ballast-covered roof.

Renovations

After the new facility was built, renovations began on the old building. Renovations began in November 1986 and employees were moved into their new offices in March 1987.

One of the biggest changes that accompanied the renovation included the moving of the engineers from the US-23 North facility to the "new" offices.

Other highlights included the installation of a new heating/cooling system, a new CAD/CAM room, and more shop space. The existing offices were redesigned to match the appearance of the offices in the world headquarters building as well.

International Ties

Besser Co. has a world-wide span of offices.

Alpena is fortunate to host the World Headquarters facility. A manufacturing office comparable to the local company is located in Lauffen, West Germany.

District offices are located in a network across the United States and Canada. Australia is the home to the company's equipment sales office.

Many other countries, such as Portugal, Spain, England, Sweden, and Italy compile a long list of export representatives to the Besser Co. as well.

"Besser means Better"

The appearance of the company has changed, but the pride stays the same. Hardwork and dedication by the employees back up their motto. Employees investiage and design all phases of curing, making, and handling of block.

A quality control system is used to continually inspect machines as they are constructed. Every element has to meet certain standards. With this control, customers are

assured quality production.

Community Involvement

Besser Co. participates in the various courses offered at ACC in concrete technology for material suppliers, blockmakers, and block users.

Courses such as Concrete Masonry Technology, Vibrapac, and Product Handling are offered.

Besser Co. participates in many workshop and coursework opportunities to help personnel to further their education and gain new knowledge in their field.

Besser Co. leads the industry with pride in its motto and its name, ever-growing and expanding to meet the needs of the customers and the industry.

New methods of construction have developed through the the ideals of Besser machines. This has helped to create business opportunities, economic housing, and industrial building worldwide.

by Staci Radke

Business Expo '89 A Success

Alpena's 2nd. Annual Northeast Business Expo was an overall success.

The Alpena Civic and Convention Center housed the event which included 53 exhibitors from as far as Grand Rapids and Saginaw, Mi. and Sault Saint Marie, Ontario.

According to Executive Vice President, Karen Pettalia, last year's show sold out two days in advance and this year's two weeks in advance. As a result, two shows have been scheduled for next year.

Local communication representatives and office suppliers included Lampel's ComputerHouse, Commercial Equipment Company, Michigan Communication Technologies and Garant's Quality Press. Among the visitors were Dunn's Office Supply and Machine of Gaylord and Ameritech Mobile Communications of Saginaw.

Educational opportunities were offered by ACC, Junior Achievement, Northeast Michigan Consortium and the Michigan Air National Guard.

Some Financial institutions present were NBD Alpena Bank, First Bank of America, Presque Isle Bank and Merrill Lynch, a brokerage firm.

Northern Rustic Log Homes, Northland Interiors and Vita Craft of Michigan lent a "homey" touch while I.G.A., Ludlow Sales and Bonnie's Homestyle Catering tempted the taste buds with delicious food.

Business conveniences appeared in the forms of Ramada Inn and Great Lakes Airlines while practical means were brought to light by Presque Isle Electric Cooperative, Michigan Consolidated Gas and Kamp Oil, Inc.

Besser Company and the LaFarge Corporation contributed to the industrial displays.

Kerwin Kitzman broadcasted live from the WHSB booth. Other advertising exhibitors who showed were WBKB T.V., Model Printing and Advance Advertising Service.

Juntunen of Indian River Bronze said they picked up two accounts from the

Alpena Area since last year's show and have two possible prospects from this year. They have every intention of attending any future Expos.

Bill Hastings of Alpena Screen Arts and Embroidery described the exposure as "Super beneficial". He has gotten business from Grayling, Gaylord, Rogers City and Cheboygen since the Expo began last year.

Donna Waltz-Jaskolski was the Special Projects Coordinator for this Expo '89. According to Bill Hastings, exhibitor at both shows, Donna "took what was good and made it even better." He called Alpena's Expo "the best organized trade show I've ever seen for a community this size."

Karen Pettalia, Exec. Vice-Pres., is predicting a small business expo on May 11th. of this year and an industrial expo is set for the 4th. and 5th. of Oct. of 1990. She said the Booth Costs will increase 50-75% due to the grant reductions from the Chamber of Commerce.

by Yvonne Swager