

# First Sod Turned for New American Optical Plant

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with Norman Edwards, Robt. Pringle, chairman Industrial Commission, J. Fred Wilson, M.L.A., Hastings West; Don Allen, manager American Optical Company Prescription Shop, Belleville; H. R. Willmott, manager Northern Electric, Organ Division, Belleville, and members of the city council.

## Big Asset to City

In his opening address, Mayor Follwell chairman for the ceremonies told the large crowd present that the city was indeed fortunate in having many industries locate here. "But we are particularly proud to have the American Optical Company, Canada, Ltd., here because for the past 25 years it has not only given gainful employment to many of our citizens, but has contributed in a great measure to Belleville's advancement and progress."

The company employees, Mayor Follwell said, are of the highest calibre and have made the best citizens. Manager Gilbert Scott has been very active in the interests of this community.

"We are proud of the Northern Electric Company, and today we are justly proud of the company and people who have been in Belleville for the past 25 years and who have such confidence in Belleville that they have invested two million dollars in a new site and a larger industry."

"We are proud and happy to welcome the representatives of the American Optical Company, Canada, Limited, their associates and members of the architectural and construction firms. Today, they turned the sod that once more adds to the history in Belleville. On behalf of the citizens of Belleville I say 'Thank You' for this splendid new plant and the contribution you have made to the advancement of this city," Mayor Follwell said amid cheers.

## First Sod Turned

At this point one of the golden spades was formally presented to President Lett, who officially turned the first sod while a huge bulldozer roared its approval. Photographers' bulbs flashed and the large crowd cheered as Mayor Follwell and Manager Gilbert Scott formed an escort to the company president as he plunged the spade into the earth.

In his address, President Lett said "I deem it a privilege and honor to turn the first sod of this history of the American Optical Company, Canada, Limited,

here in the city of Belleville.

"The increased manufacturing capacity made possible by this new plant, when completed, will enable American Optical Co. Canada, Ltd., to keep pace with the growth of Canada, and the rapid accelerating demand for our products both home and abroad.

"We hope the citizens of Belleville will be as proud of this building of 87,000 square feet as the officials of the company were when the plans were finally completed.

"For 25 years the company has been manufacturing lenses in this city, and may I express the hope that this ceremony today will be another milestone in the history of our Company's pleasant and congenial relationships with the citizens of Belleville.

"It is the Company's plan to make the surroundings of all the employees in the plant as pleasant and congenial as possible, in keeping with the high standard of work for which they already have a national reputation.

Mathers and Haldenby are the architects while the general construction contractors are Anglin Norcross.

"We expect to ship our products all over the world," President Lett went on. "The new plant means increased production and our lens will find their way to Egypt, India, Africa, South America and "he added with a smile," a few might go to Ireland."

"We of the company sincerely hope that the congenial spirit that has always characterized relations between us and the city of Belleville will always be maintained and will continue until long after I am laid under the sod I have just turned."

## Grateful For Co-operation

Mr. Gilbert B. Scott, Belleville manager of the American Optical Company, Canada, Ltd., in brief address stated that "I would like to first state that I am speaking on behalf of my fellow-workers in the Lens Manufacturing Division of the American Optical Company, Canada, Limited, and I wish to say for them and myself that we greatly appreciate the assistance given by the City of Belleville, the Industrial Commission, the Belleville Utilities, and other public bodies of whom we have asked assistance, and from whom we have received the most efficient co-operation.

"After many years of effort and study, we are now gathered together and have turned the first sod in an enterprise which will culminate in a very few months, and Belleville will have without

doubt the finest ophthalmic lens manufacturing plant in the British Empire, and the largest lens manufacturing plant in the Dominion of Canada.

"This plant will have the most modern machinery, designed after years of research carried out in Canada, the United States, and England.

"No effort is being spared to make this plant not only the most up-to-date and efficient in the world from a manufacturing point of view, but also we, the employees in this plant, will be working under the most healthful, comfortable, and pleasant conditions possible. Few will be able to take as much pride in their surroundings as we, the employees of the American Optical Company, Canada Limited in Belleville.

"This is, indeed, a gala event, particularly for my fellow-workers and myself, who are being asked to operate the most efficient lens plant in the world under ideal working conditions. It is now up to us, in return for this plant, to produce the finest ophthalmic goods that can be produced, thereby making the City of Belleville and the Dominion of Canada, famous the world over, for its efforts in providing better vision to humanity.

"In the future, may the words "Belleville" and "Better Vision" be synonymous," concluded the speaker.

## Tribute To Employees

Mr. W. G. Buckley, director of the parent company of Southbridge Mass., paid one of the finest tributes ever accorded employees of an industry when he told the large number present that "it was the fine type of people in your city that swung the decision of my company to erect the new plant here. Today" he said, "merely the continuation of years of effort. We looked pretty much over Canada and had many attractive offers made by other communities to locate with them. We saw many lovely sites but the thing that brought us back to Belleville was the fine people who have worked for us for years. The Mayor and Industrial Commission did a lot for us, but you people had the final say."

"We have been here for the past 25 years," Mr. Buckley said "and have built a fine reputation on square dealing with the people of this city."

He predicted that when the new plant was finished, it would be the finest most up-to-date building of its kind in the world. "It will be a plant which the people here will be proud to work in, and it will be one of which Belleville will be proud. "Every arrangement has been made for employees' comfort. He paid tribute to Mayor Follwell, the city council and the Industrial Commission, also to representatives