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Re-discovering ILLINOIS

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ILLINOIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Picturesque and impressive sights do not all lie out on the open road. It is easy to find another grandeur quite different from hills and mountains, canyons and gorges. There are inspiring sights among the industries of Illinois.

The other day in Ottawa, with a guide who knew the trails and by-paths, I went through a mighty collection of buildings devoted to the manufacture of plate glass. Here work 1,300 men. Out of the plant comes a stream of glass, twenty-four carloads a week, twenty-five tons to the car. Eighty-five per cent of it all goes to one customer and is used for one purpose—windows for closed motor cars.

Inspiring Sight

I said the sight is inspiring. It is. Imagine a row of busy machines down a long aisle, all in one vast room, a single room 1,092 feet long and 170 feet wide; 4.6 acres under a single roof. Imagine another room flanking it 172x572 feet, devoted to storage of finished goods. Imagine these as mere units of a great group of buildings with more than twenty-five acres of floor space!

Such is the plant of the National Plate Glass company, in Ottawa. It is a subsidiary of the Fisher Body company. The plant, brand new, cost to build just a little less than \$8,000,000. Yes, we have some sizeable industries in some of our Illinois cities!

Huge Payroll

The payroll! I asked. Well, nearly \$200,000 a month. It is a plant "built upon sands." Building upon sands, in this instance, has marked permanency. It is built upon the special sands which about Ottawa

—glass sands. Nine carloads of raw materials come into the plant for every carload of finished glass shipped out. The storage capacity of the plant is 65,000 tons or 160 carloads of material—approximately one month's supply.

We start our journey in a great room 840 feet long. From its roof tower thirteen giant smokestacks which stand above rows of roaring fires. These fires cook enormous pots of white hot liquid glass which boil and foam for hours. When the boiling is done huge ladles, carried by cranes, scoop up the flowing white-hot mass and pour them upon metal beds. This bed, or table, then runs under the rolls. Even the ladies glow.

From here the sheet of glass, about 16x28 feet and a half-inch thick is moved into the "lehr." Each sheet is moved slowly through the lehr, about 350 feet long, to cool slowly for hours under regulated heat.

As it emerges, in the rough, into the grinding room each sheet of glass is inspected for flaws. These are cut out and the parts of the sheet that are perfect go to the grinders.

Motive Power

The motive power in this great plant is inspiring. We find here 336 electric motors varying from one-half horsepower to 700 horsepower. Rubber vacuum cups, in rows, seize hold of the sheets of glass. They are swung here and there, with cranes, and laid on the grinding tables.

Gangs of men lay the pieces of glass in plaster of paris. Each side of the glass is ground for an hour and forty minutes, then polished for the same length of time.

The power plant, on the very edge of the Illinois river, sucks in more than 8,000,000 gallons of water every day. This is used for steam, for cooling, for wetting the sand and rouge used in grinding and polishing, and for other purposes. Then it is discharged back into the river. The plant has eight 600-horsepower boilers built for 250 pound pressure.

The storage room can hold 1,000,000 square feet of finished product. Freight cars come into the building for loading. That's how the windows in your closed motor car are made. This is one of Illinois' jobs in making the world's motor cars.

"Built Upon Sands"

There are other industries in Ottawa "built upon sands" but with a permanence which belies the story of the legendary house. I saw marbles made. Marbles of all colors, out of the molten pots. No matter what color they all look alike, white hot, as they first take on their globular form.

The Peltier Glass Co. is the home of marbles. The marbles roll down heated, grooved drums and gradually cool. This plant makes colorful glass, for lamps and church windows. The coloring is said to be a secret process, handed down by the family, known only to the eldest son.

Around Ottawa is where the most of the best glass sand of the nation is mined. That is because the St. Peter's sandstone outcrops here. Under Chicago it is 1,600 feet down.

There are in Ottawa seven companies whose business is recovering or dealing in silica sands. These sands have been the direct or indirect cause of the building of not less than 200 homes in Ottawa within a year.

Geologists say that LaSalle county is, from their viewpoint, one of the most interesting districts in the whole United States. They say that the recoverable wealth, from mineral deposits, is greater in LaSalle county than in any other county in Illinois.

These deposits include sands for many purposes other than glass; also

shells and clays, used in making brick, various clay products and Portland cement.

Prehistoric Upheaval

For some strange reason, perhaps a prehistoric upheaval, rocks ordinarily buried very deep come to the surface here. This valley is a deep trough down through the state. The mouth of the Chicago river is about 150 feet higher than the Illinois river at Ottawa. The Mississippi river, at Rock Island, almost directly west, is 100 feet higher. There is a drop of 139 feet in the 62-mile stretch between Lockport and Ottawa. The Hennepin canal, connecting the Illinois river with the Rock and Mississippi rivers, is a stairway of lifts. This waterway rises 200 feet in twenty-one miles as it goes "over the hill" west of LaSalle. The water to fill it comes from the Rock river.

Five dams will stop the water down the Chicago-to-Gulf water way between Lockport and Starved Rock. Workmen are now being assembled at Ottawa to build the Starved Rock dam. That is a \$2,000,000 project. The payroll for the job will run about \$200,000. Otherwise the investment will be mostly materials. Illinois will furnish practically all of them. This dam alone is expected to have a potential capacity of about 16,000 horsepower. The above cost estimates do not include the hydro-electric power equipment.

Radium Studio

There is in Ottawa a factory that is not called a factory. It is known as a studio. It employs ninety-five girls and young women. It is in an old high school building. They work in "classes." The girls are "graduated" from one class to another as they become proficient.

This "studio" is operated by the Radium Dial Co. The girls paint figures on dials of watches and clocks, with a radium solution. A chemist is always on duty. Radium is costly, you know.

A player piano plant in Ottawa employs about thirty-five men. Very recently the headquarters of the American Magestone Co. was moved to Ottawa. Other plants make farm machinery, barn equipment and mill-work. Men's garters is another product. W. H. Fisher, the manufacturer of men's garters, recently increased the capacity of his plant 250 per cent by the simple expedient of inventing a machine to perform a certain operation formerly done by hand. Cucumbers, raised under glass, are grown in Ottawa in large quantities.

Is Growing

Ottawa's population for 1925, bureau of census, was 11,542. With about 200 homes built in the last twelve months it is growing. With its varieties of mineral wealth, with its manufacturing, with its rich surrounding farm lands, with its green-

house industries and the Lakes-to-Gulf waterway coming—probably just about two years away—Ottawa, though many of its most picturesque industries are "built on sands," is nevertheless a city of solidity and soundness.

Yet Ottawa to a visitor appears to have a weakness. It is, speaking generally, not keyed up to its opportunities. It is placid. Merchants seem not to be disturbed about this thing called "service."

Perhaps it is because Ottawa is old, as old as Chicago, and has grown slowly. Ottawa's placidity means that when developments come they come, mostly, through outside investments. Outsiders, I judge, will reap the greater rewards in the coming growth.

Peaceful Valley

Ottawa seems to be peaceful and rather unambitious. Great industrial developments are knocking at the doors of cities along the waterway.

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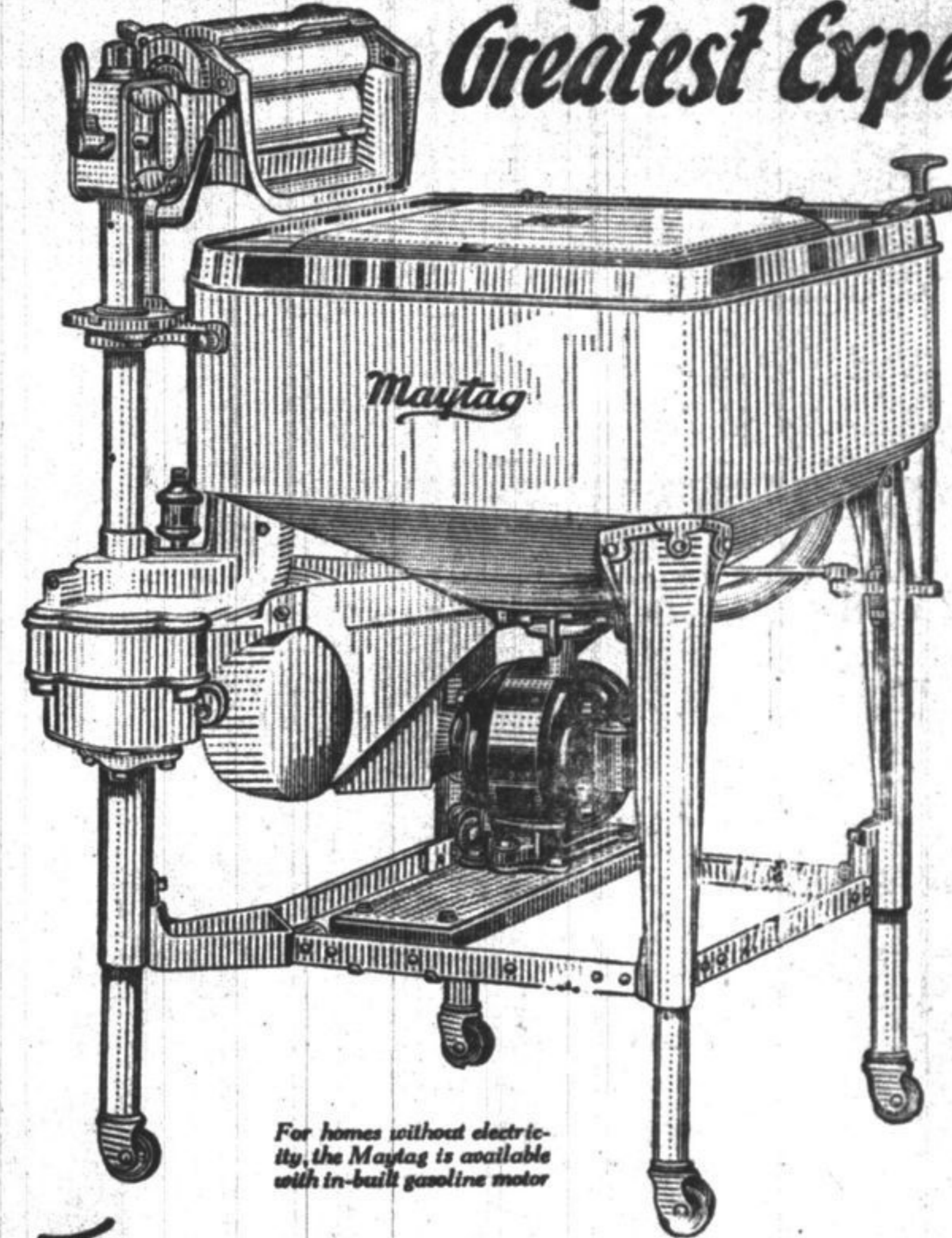
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