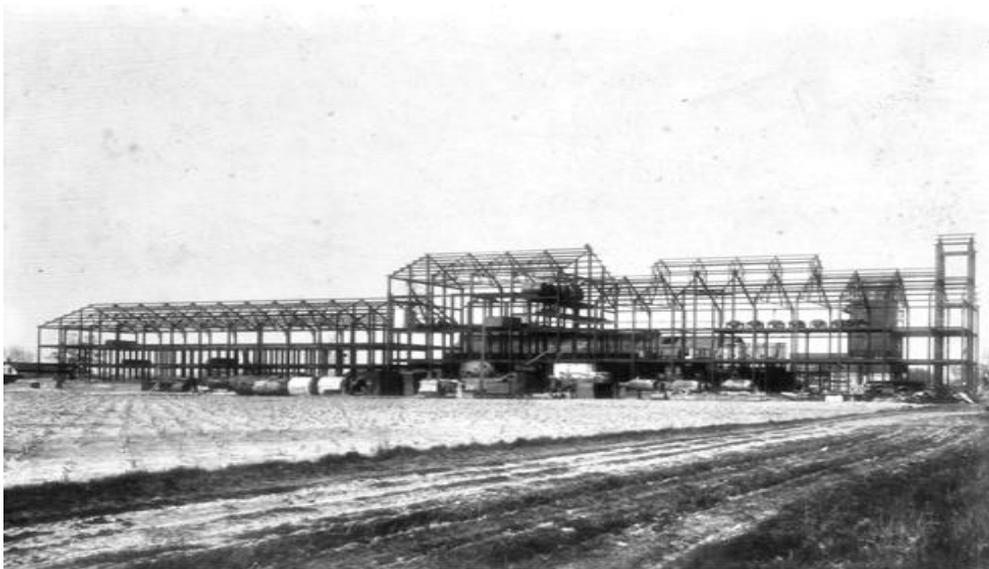


THE OTTAWA SUGAR BEET INDUSTRY

(Origin of this article is unknown, looks like an area newspaper)

The largest factory in Putnam County is the sugar beet factory in Ottawa, a plant which cost more than a quarter of a million dollars and was operated for only two seasons. The inception of the factory elates back to 1911, when some men came to the county for the purpose of seeking a location for such a factory. So enthusiastic were they over the possibilities of making a sugar beet factory a profitable undertaking in the county that they were soon able to convince the people of Ottawa and the county that they should assist in making the establishment of a factory an assured thing.

Before the close of 1911 the citizens of Ottawa had entered into an agreement with the Ottawa Sugar Beet Company, in which they agreed to raise for the company eight thousand dollars and guarantee the planting of one thousand acres of beets the first year. The money was expended for land south of the Blanchard River, located in the Cover-Matthews-Rice addition. Thirty-four acres were secured and turned over to the company. In turn, the company agreed to erect and equip a plant and operate it for a period of five years. In case they did not live up to their part of the agreement the property was to revert to the citizens_ who had voluntarily subscribed the eight thousand dollars. Although the plant was operated only two years. the company did not turn the plant over, and just who really does own it at the present time is for the court to decide. In the spring of 1915 the plant was advertised for sale to cover delinquent taxes, but no one had the courage to assume the responsibility of taking it on their hands.



A mammoth building was erected in 1911-12 and was ready to handle the 1912

crop of beets are of the belief that it will soon be in operation. Time solves all mysteries - even beet sugar industries. General Manager Martine was placed in charge of the plant and during the first season manufactured a million and a half pounds of sugar. This amount - was increased by a third the second year and there did not appear any good reason why the plant was not a success in every way. However. strange things will happen.

At the close of the second season the plant was closed and the huge building has remained deserted ever since. When it will be opened for business again no one seems to know, nor is there any certainty that it will ever be operated again. In addition to the manufacture of sugar, a man from Ironton. Ohio, put in a hundred-thousand-dollar equipment for taking care of the by-products. He made a kind of stock food, which found a ready sale in the market

and he was apparently making a success of his business at the time the factory closed. He had to be content with getting out of the business with the experience he gained, since his investment was a complete loss on his hands when the factory ceased operation.

During the two years the factory was in operation, Ottawa enjoyed a reign of prosperity which it had never before known. Many men found employment in the factory and many more secured work in raising the beets. Scores of Belgians came into the county and found ready employment with farmers. Most of them were unmarried men and traveled from farm to farm in wagons which they had fitted up in such a manner that they could live in them. They contracted with many farmers to take entire charge of their crop, from planting to harvesting, for which they received eighteen dollars an acre. One man could not tend much more than five acres alone and hence it was necessary to secure additional help if the farmer was going to raise anything else except tomatoes. The profit to the farmer varied from fifty to a hundred dollars an acre and probably averaged seventy-five dollars an acre.

Only an unrefined brown sugar was manufactured and, strange to say, the company refused to sell a pound of the sugar to anyone in the county. Most of the sugar was shipped to Cincinnati and distributed from that city. The amount of sugar derived from a ton of beets varied considerably, ranging from one hundred to two hundred pounds. Each load of beets was tested for its sugar value and the farmer was paid accordingly to the amount of sugar which it was supposed his beets would yield. The farmer received on an average of five dollars a ton for his beets.

At the same time that the local factory was in operation many farmers shipped their beets out of the county. Most of them went to factories in Toledo and Findlay, the Toledo company having a buying station at Continental. Many reasons have been advanced in explanation of the shutting clown of the factory, but no two persons can agree as to what the real facts in the case are. Some have said that the machinery which was installed was second-hand and was not capable of making the company a reasonable profit. Others say that the tariff was to blame and that the Democratic party must shoulder the responsibility: still others maintain that the tariff has nothing to do with the matter-that the men in it simply fleeced the people out of their money and left for greener pastures. The facts as they stand now are very evident: the factory still stands and is ready to operate at any time, but no one knows whose factory it is. Within the next year the courts will establish the status of the factory and the people of Ottawa and Putnam County are of the belief that it will soon be in operation. Time solves all mysteries - even beet sugar industries.