

THE JACOBSON MACHINE COMPANY



Since the picture of the Jacobson Machine Company appeared in our July issue of Steppin' Out, we have received numerous calls and visits to our office from people who had some information about the company. In our August issue we mentioned a few of the pictured employees who had been identified for us.

Edward Nicholson of East Street in Warren supplied the picture appearing with this story and probably the most complete information about the company that we have obtained. It, of course, is not possible to give a complete history of the company in our magazine due to space limitations, but anyone interested in obtaining further information can do so by stopping at the Warren County Historical Society where they have a large volume in regard to the company.

The picture showing a gathering of the employees of the Jacobson Machine Company

was taken in 1917 for a flag raising ceremony when the United States entered World War I against Germany. This was the reason for the band which is shown in the upper left hand corner of the picture, and some of the band members which can be identified were Louis Hartweg, Lou Ettinger, Charlie Lind and Ed Check.

At that time the officers of the company were Harry Leonhart, C. A. Arnold, Bill Gaughn (shop foreman) and Bill Sweeney. Those who were identifiable in the picture who are still living are Leonard Nicholson, Boyd Cohan, Ernest Kaebnick and Carl Peterson (who worked in the office at that time).

Charlie Jacobson, founder of the company, came to the United States in the early part of 1900 from Varmland, Sweden. He was the inventor of, and held patent rights to, the Jacobson engine and Struthers Wells built his

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first engine. Eventually Mr. Jacobson got financial backing from Sen. Frank Knapp, Homer Preston and W. F. Messner and other Warren capital and at that time started his own shop.

The plant paralleled Irvine Street and had about 400 feet of shop space. Here they built engines for the Warren Street Railway Generating plant that furnished power for streetcars. They also built smaller engines with an approximate four-inch bore that were used in the oil fields.

Around 1912 the company began making differentials and the rear axles for the Saxon car which was the first compact car in the United States. They also built differentials for the Pierce Arrow which at the time was one of the "luxury" cars. And they also supplied parts for the Marmon, Cole and Apperson and other cars of that period.

In 1920, Richard Meyers (father of Stuart), Frank Lanning and Bert Johnson bought the Jacobson engine rights and continued making these, and the company then became known as Warren Gear Company. In the spring of 1923, two employees (Joe Grastic and Samuel Thompson) were opening a drum of gasoline when it exploded. The resulting fire completely destroyed the building and Grastic and Thompson died the following day from their burns.

The partnership moved to Titusville after the fire where they continued making the engines. Warren Gear Company was rebuilt and continued in operation in Warren until 1952 when they went out of business.

One of the interesting things mentioned about the Jacobson Machine Company was that they had the first apprentice program in the area. Men were hired at 75c per day, and those that remained with the program for the three-year period received at the end of that time a bonus of \$100, which at that time represented a sizeable amount of money. They also were advanced in pay to a rate of \$2 per day. This apprentice program resulted in many fine machinists being trained who went on to other jobs with businesses in and out of our area.

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