

## Part Four: FINE PAPERS

### Chapter Twenty-Six: Product Will be Right

From its inception in 1887 and up to 1926, Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company specialized in the production of wrapping paper and newsprint. By 1927 this northwoods paper company had attained a reputation of having the largest daily production of meat wrapping paper of any mill in the country. The decision to break ties with the product that had built up a reputation, and in turn, embark into an entirely new sales field, was a difficult decision to make.

"Insane," said competitors. "Ridiculous," echoed old-time paper manufacturers. "Why," inquired the stockholders. Nevertheless, that decision was made in 1925. Nekoosa-Edwards General Manager, John Alexander, in a report to the stockholders, summed up the reasons for the change with these remarks. "We were forced to do only one thing, namely, to change our grades of paper and get into the making of higher grades for which we knew there would be a higher return on our investment."

This was 1927. The warning had come as early as 1921 when Nepco Vice President, Judson Rosebush, wrote to L. M. Alexander, outlining business conditions in the paper industry and concluding with this advice. "We must turn to something else—such as specialty papers."

A year later, General Manager Alexander wrote to his father, "The wrapping paper situation is not much better than the newsprint situation today. There is keen competition and an oversupply of wrapping paper, so that it has become a football and is being kicked from one place to another, with all ranges of cutthroat prices."

So it came to be that as early as 1927, Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company introduced a line of business papers, the most popular item being Nepco Sulfite Bond. Available in white and a rainbow of ten colors, the unwatermarked sheet could be had in four weights, ranging from thirteen pound to twenty-four pound.



Nekoosa-Edwards' first sample swatch book contained ten colors plus white in the new line of Nepco Sulphite Bond. The brochure was die-cut with the samples illustrated under the cutting.

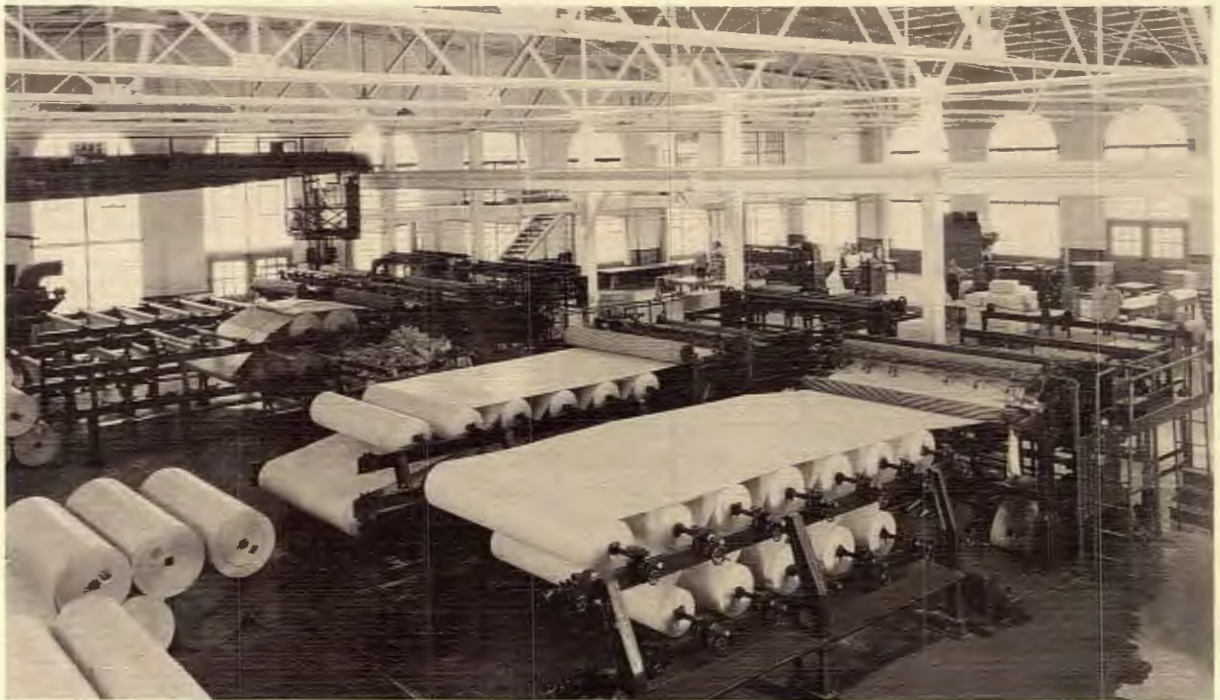
Amazingly, the grade proved to be a minor success! So much so that in subsequent years we brought out companion grades which included Nepco mimeo, duplicator, envelope, register bond, and tablet. An offset line of papers was introduced under the name of Nekoosa Offset. However, our most expensive product in 1932 was Artone Ledger. Perhaps that's why only ten tons were made that year, selling at a price of \$46.49 per ton.

The acceptance of a few tons of business paper in the marketplace did not translate into total success. Accordingly, in 1930 the younger Alexander again



This finishing room was built at Port Edwards in 1927, to accommodate the new finishing equipment that was required for finishing

the new and improved grades of paper being introduced by Nekoosa Edwards.



Interior of the Port Edwards finishing room in 1928. Sheeters of advanced design could handle as many as twelve rolls of paper

at a time, reducing it from rolls to sheets.

made a plea to his father asking for a switch to fine papers. His letter states:

*"(We) must get into the production of high grade specialties and those papers which will not be directly competitive against the South."*

In another letter to his father John Alexander wrote:

*"Our production (of wrapping papers) is still the critical issue. The problem is a serious one and the immediate outlook is none too bright for this company."*

Next, Alexander persuaded his good friend and associate, Len Smith, Manager of the Nekoosa Mill, to write to the senior Alexander. Alexander had taken up residency in Florida for the winter. Smith's letter, in addition to telling how grim business was, outlined his remedy for improving these conditions.

*"In order to establish ourselves on these grades we must, in turn, take the business away from someone else; either through a better sheet or a sheet nearly as good at a lower price. We*



A quality paper requires quality raw materials. Here a wood technician evaluates the quality of the wood. A sample of a log is being microscopically examined.

*have little support from the sales department because they perhaps know less about the higher grades."*

Smith explained this last statement by saying that the salesmen sent the mill an inquiry and the mill

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Cut paper waiting to be packaged at Port Edwards. The paper is NEPCO mimeo paper. The sign illustrates NEPCO's motto of

producing quality and delivering service in a safe working atmosphere.

made it. He advocated a reversing of this policy, whereby the mill would come out with a line of papers and then turn them over to the sales department to sell. "Thus Nekoosa-Edwards would become an initiator rather than an imitator," as Smith prophesied—powerful advice to be served to a corporate president!

The sales department had an answer for Mr. Smith. A. R. Jackson, Chicago Sales Manager, directed a letter to his staff. The contents of the letter dated November 4, 1933, became the creed of Nekoosa-Edwards in 1933 and remains our philosophy to this day. Jackson's letter is important enough to be reproduced here in its entirety.

C. A. Hodlmair    I. N. Frisby  
C. A. Polansky    W. E. Nash Jr.  
A. J. Archibald    R. A. Love  
N. E. Nash        J. H. Manske

Chicago, Ill., Nov. 4th, 1933

GENTLEMEN:

**Subject: SALE OF FINE PAPER GRADES**

Supplementing my earlier letter of today under this subject.

You have been assigned definite territories with definite customers and prospective customers.

It takes a long time to build mutual confidence and a complete understanding between a mill and its representative. Such associations once established are not to be thrown over for a temporary advantage, no matter how inviting it may seem.

The efforts of any sales department are undeniably checked if the product is sub-standard.

You are advised here that the Nepco Management and Manufacturing Departments have assured us that they have reached Standards of Quality which are not surpassed in their respective class by competitive mills—you are assured of GOOD paper, good SERVICE and necessary UNIFORMITY. Proceed at once therefore with full CONFIDENCE that the product will be right.

Do not overlook that "good will" and an "equitable business policy" are fully as important as a worthy product.

Good business policy requires, —

1. Square and fair adjustments.
2. Regular personal contact.
3. Quick and reliable information when needed.
4. Selective list of customers that work in harmony.
5. Active cooperation in securing desirable orders.
6. No direct selling to ultimate customers.
7. Advertising.

Equipped with all the above, go forth at once and see that ORDERS ARE SENT — and to the right ADDRESS.

I am counting on all of you.

Yours for success,

A. R. Jackson

cc: J. E. Alexander  
L. M. Alexander  
L. E. Smith

With that, we had our foot in the door of the fine paper field. We were not established in the field yet. Rather, we were feeling the climate of the business

paper market by offering an unwatermarked line of paper. Progress would come, but slowly. The Depression years of the thirties would not help.

## Chapter Twenty-Seven: Look For the Strutter

In an effort to further expand the business paper and specialty lines that Nekoosa-Edwards had established in the the late 1920's, in 1935 the company turned toward the converting of paper to consumer products.

The first step was the introduction of a grade of paper called Destiny Bond. From this grade of paper we brought out a line of school supplies. With an ever increasing population, we were assured of a growing market, or so we thought.

In order that we might convert Destiny Bond into school supplies, we had to purchase the proper converting equipment. On a mezzanine floor in the Port Edwards finishing room, we installed drills, cutters, stitchers, a rewinder, and ruling machine. Forty people operated the equipment, producing two companion lines of school products. The premium line was

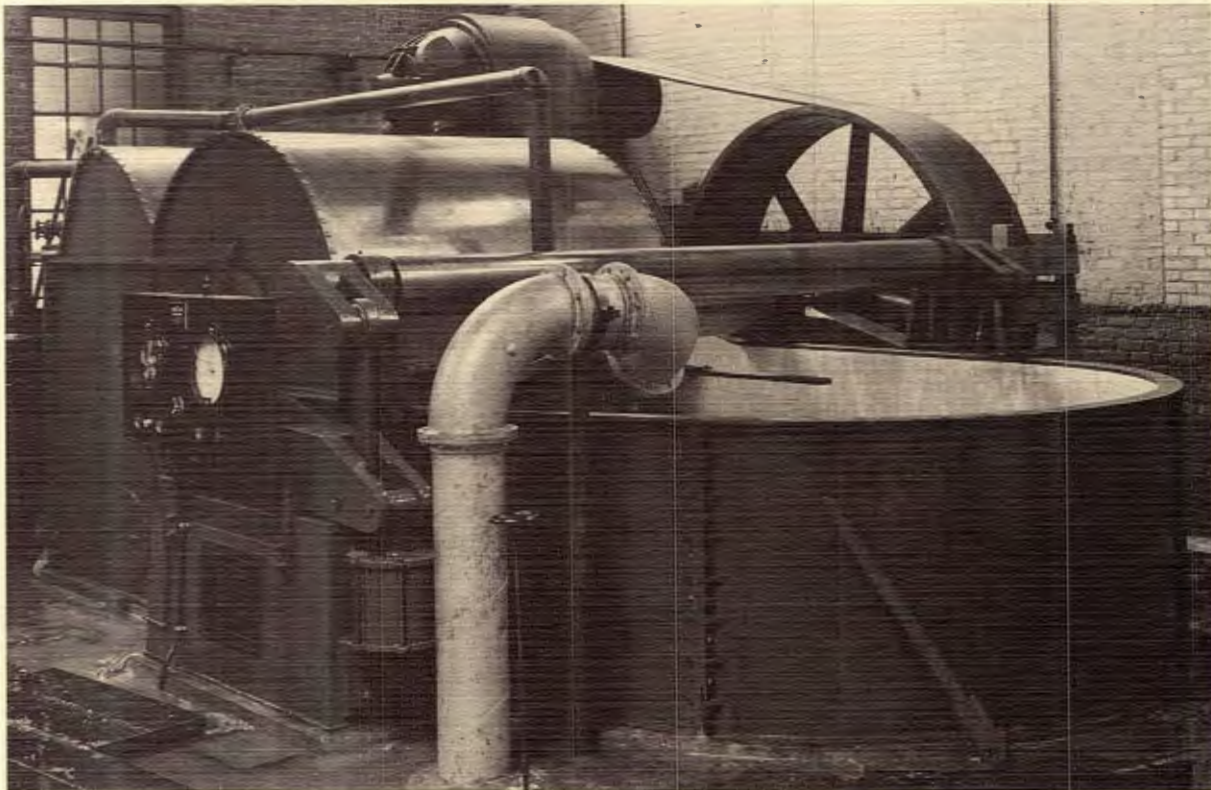
sold under the name Destiny, and the trademark portrayed the permanence of two Grecian pillars and the slogan, "Pillars of Destiny." It would be interesting to determine just why this was picked as a trademark for school supplies.

The trade name for the companion line was Strutter and pictured a strutting drum major as a trademark. Certainly this mark would relate to school students more than a couple of Greek pillars.

Nekoosa-Edwards was now into converting. The line of products included tablets, loose leaf fillers, index cards, adding machine rolls, gummed tape, and blue books (the traditional college examination book). Shortly thereafter household shelf paper and gift wrap tissue were added to the line.

With this new line of products, in early 1935,

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As a step toward producing a cleaner pulp for a finer grade of papers, wooden beaters were replaced with new steel ones which

had a ceramic tile lining inside. This one supplied number seven paper machine with clean stock.

Nekoosa-Edwards announced that its sales department would now be categorized into three divisions; Course and Wrapping Papers, Fine Papers, and Ruled and Specialty Products.

Less than two years later the program was abandoned. In November 1936, the ruling machine was sold, the reason being that the grades were unprofitable. Finally, all of the products of the Ruling and Specialty Division were dropped. Unprofitability was one reason. However, the reason announced to the trade was that the products we were manufacturing were in direct competition with some of our customers, which did not promote good customer relations.

As for the speciality line, it would continue with a line of papers, which we made and sold to converters. Paper for school supplies, place mats, sucker sticks, straws, baking cups, doilies, gummed tape, floor coverings, and auto seat covers would be sold by the Specialities Division.

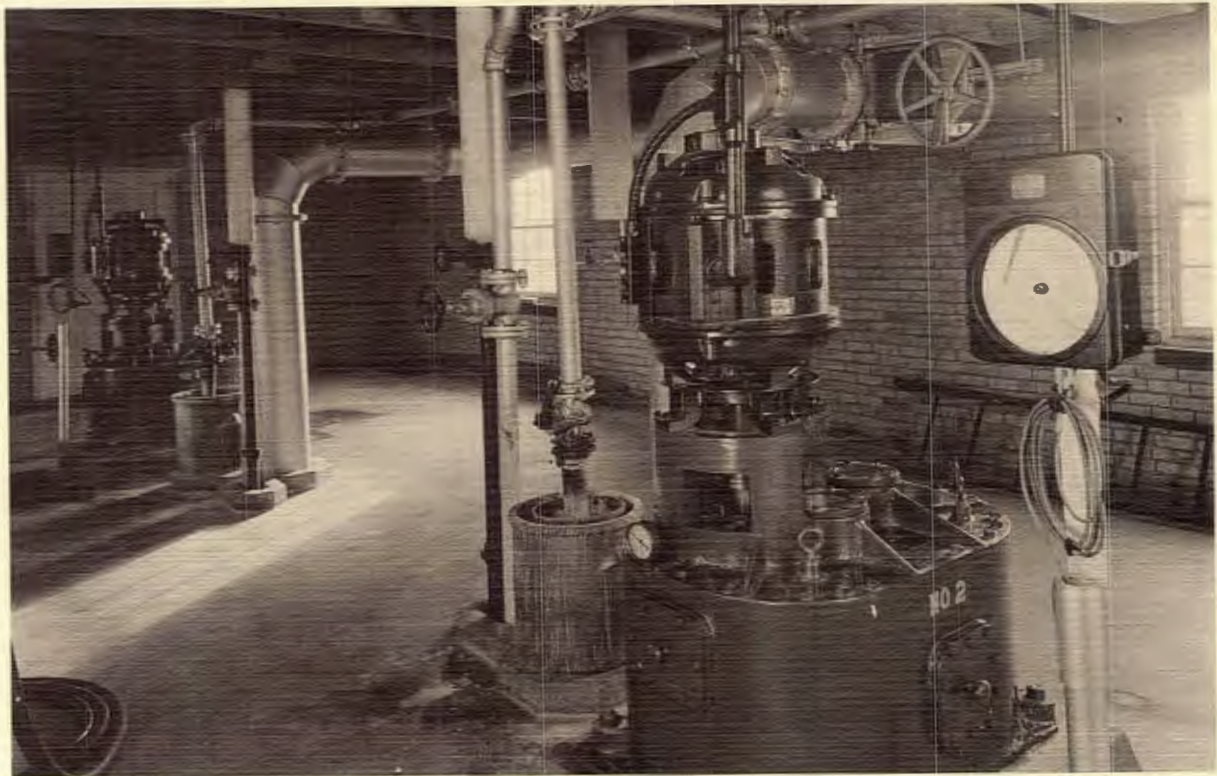
for Nekoosa-Edwards it was one more step on the road to becoming a leader in watermarked business papers.



The smallest rolls of paper ever produced at Nekoosa-Edwards were rolls of adding machine paper, shown here.

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Converting came and went in a brief two years, but



Cleaner and brighter pulp for improved papers was assured in 1928 by the building of this bleach plant at Port Edwards. Shown

in the photo are the motors and gear boxes for the bleach tanks that are under the floor.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight: Pre-Tested Papers

If Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company thought it had reached the acme of fame when it became the world's largest producer of butcher paper, the distinction was small when compared with the phenomenal growth that this company experienced after introducing watermarked business communication papers. Note that the word 'business' is inserted in the grade identification. Actually, we had watermarked papers in our line, but they were in the wrapping paper field. We were in business papers also, having introduced our Nepco line some years prior.



Watermarking rolls such as these, along with watermarking dandy rolls were used for putting the Nekoosa watermark into the paper. These are for Nekoosa Duplicator.

Now in the mid 1930's, we were once more evaluating the market to see if it might be timely to introduce a number one, watermarked line of business and writing papers.

John Alexander, who had promoted getting into fine papers as the salvation for this company, now seemed to have some reservations. He dictated a letter to his manager of manufacturing asking some questions, mostly on the subject of quality of a proposed watermarked sheet. Alexander's questions included the following:

1. Will the color be white and bright enough?
2. Will it have proper printing character?
3. Will it have "feel" acceptability?
4. It must be clean.
5. Will it take laid marks and watermarks satisfactorily?

6. Will it be competitive in price with competing products?

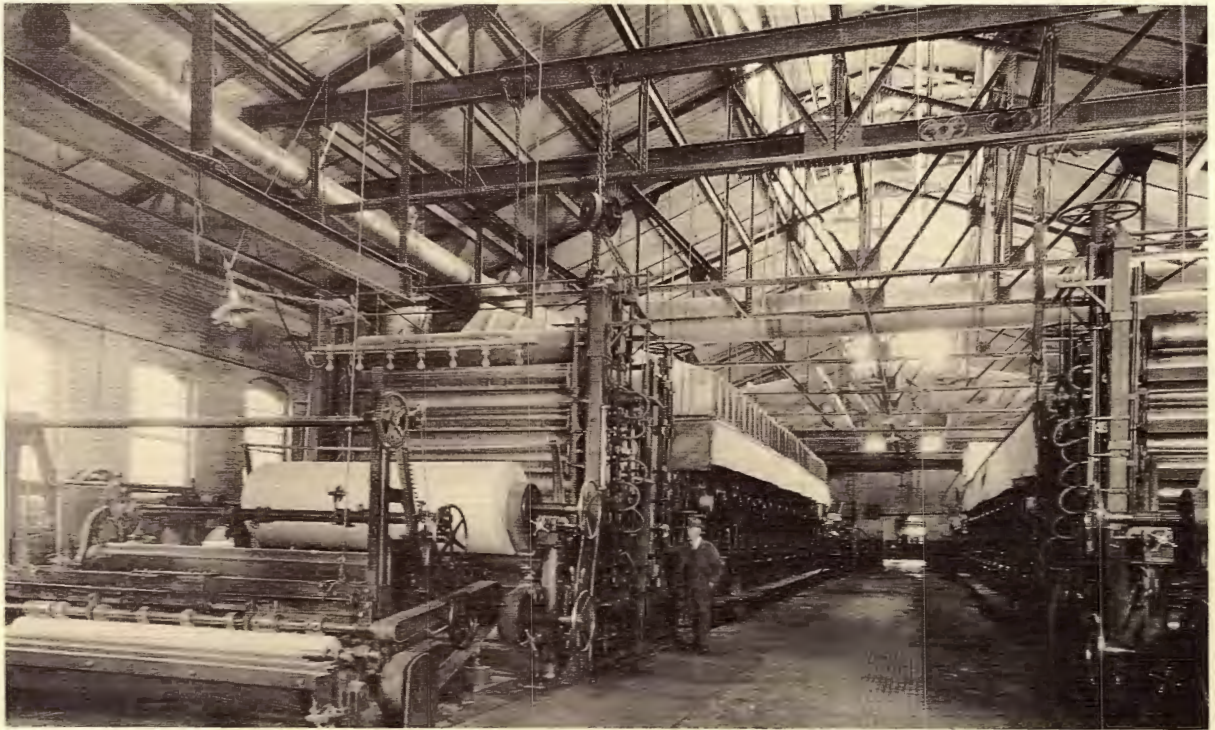
He then went on to propose "sending a quantity of bleached pulp to a mill that would be willing to run it across their machine to determine the appearance of our sheet in comparison with that, say of Howard's product." This sounds like a rather unorthodox way of making a trial run. It seems that any competitor would deliberately make the sheet look poor. Whether these trial runs were carried out is not known.

Alexander again wrote to the manufacturing department:

*"The two paramount characteristics that will have to appear in this sheet, as I see it, will be that of whiteness and brightness of color, as well as cleanliness."*

Evidently, Alexander was convinced that Nepco could achieve the goals he had set forth. In 1936 he proposed to his father that an expenditure of \$250,000 be made to begin the conversion of the mills from wrapping grades to watermarked writing papers. The money would be used for equipment changes, as well as research and development. In asking for the funding, Alexander stated that in spending these funds, "this company would be taking out an insurance policy for the future; and which policy if not adopted, I am afraid, will make the coming years lean ones."

The year 1936 was not as lean as the years during the depression. Although hardly growing money trees, father did listen. He managed to raise enough money to embark upon a general mill cleanup which was necessary to manufacture a number one sheet of paper. Concrete storage tanks were lined with tile. Walls and ceilings were scraped and painted. Iron and wood pipes were replaced with bronze ones, thereby eliminating rust and splinters. Brass agitators replaced wooden paddles. Bleach plants were cleaned up, assuring the paper mill a cleaner pulp. Stock lines were even repiped to eliminate sharp angles and were replaced with gentle, sweeping curves, there-



Number five and six paper machines at Port Edwards. Number five was the machine that made the first run of Nekoosa Bond paper in 1936. Notice the bank of lights over the reel of paper.

This was for a running inspection of the paper for formation characteristics and cleanliness.



Hand wrapping of folio sizes of paper is being done by these finishing room personnel. The yellow and blue wrapper would

remain a symbol with Nekoosa until replaced by a new style wrapper in the early 1980's.



by eliminating corners where stock might lodge and start to mold.

The efforts all came together in 1936 when number five paper machine at Port Edwards made a run of Nekoosa Bond. It was called a number one bond sheet, but it was not up to Alexander's standards as outlined earlier. Additional steps had to be taken to bring the sheet up to the quality necessary to meet the competition. One of these additional steps was the conducting of special classes to train operating personnel on how to make the new paper. A quality supervisor was retained around the clock. A distinctive blue and yellow striped wrapper was adopted to protect the paper after it left the mill. Finally, another attempt was made. Results were encouraging, and accordingly, number five paper machine went to full-time production of Nekoosa Bond. Companion papers were John Edwards Bond, Ardor Bond, and Mirra Mimeo. Four months later, number six machine was also put on these grades.

With the dawn of 1937, Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company had built up a sufficient inventory of these papers to announce to the world that they were now

in the watermarked business and writing paper field. The event was announced with the preparation and distribution of a booklet entitled "The World Behind The Watermark." It portrayed the manufacture of Nekoosa Bond Paper.

The printing world was now convinced that Nekoosa-Edwards was established in the printing and writing paper field. Encouraged by the reception of its products, in 1939 Nepco added Nekoosa Duplicator.

In April of 1940, number seven machine was converted to part-time production of bond grades. The following spring, a two week shutdown for improvements on this machine made it easy for full-time production of watermarked grades.

During all this time, we were still deeply rooted in wrapping papers. So much so, that in June of 1940 we introduced Nepco Refrigerated Locker Paper, available in white and tan. As late as 1950, we were still introducing wrapping papers as we announced King Cold Laminated Freezer Paper, a premium companion sheet to Nepco locker paper.

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The Port Edwards finishing room staff are busy inspecting, trimming and packaging Nekoosa Bond. The quarters would soon

prove to be inadequate in size for the popular new line of Nekoosa papers.

The installation of a humidity controlled testing laboratory in the Port Edwards mill in 1940 warranted the adoption of the slogan "pre-tested"



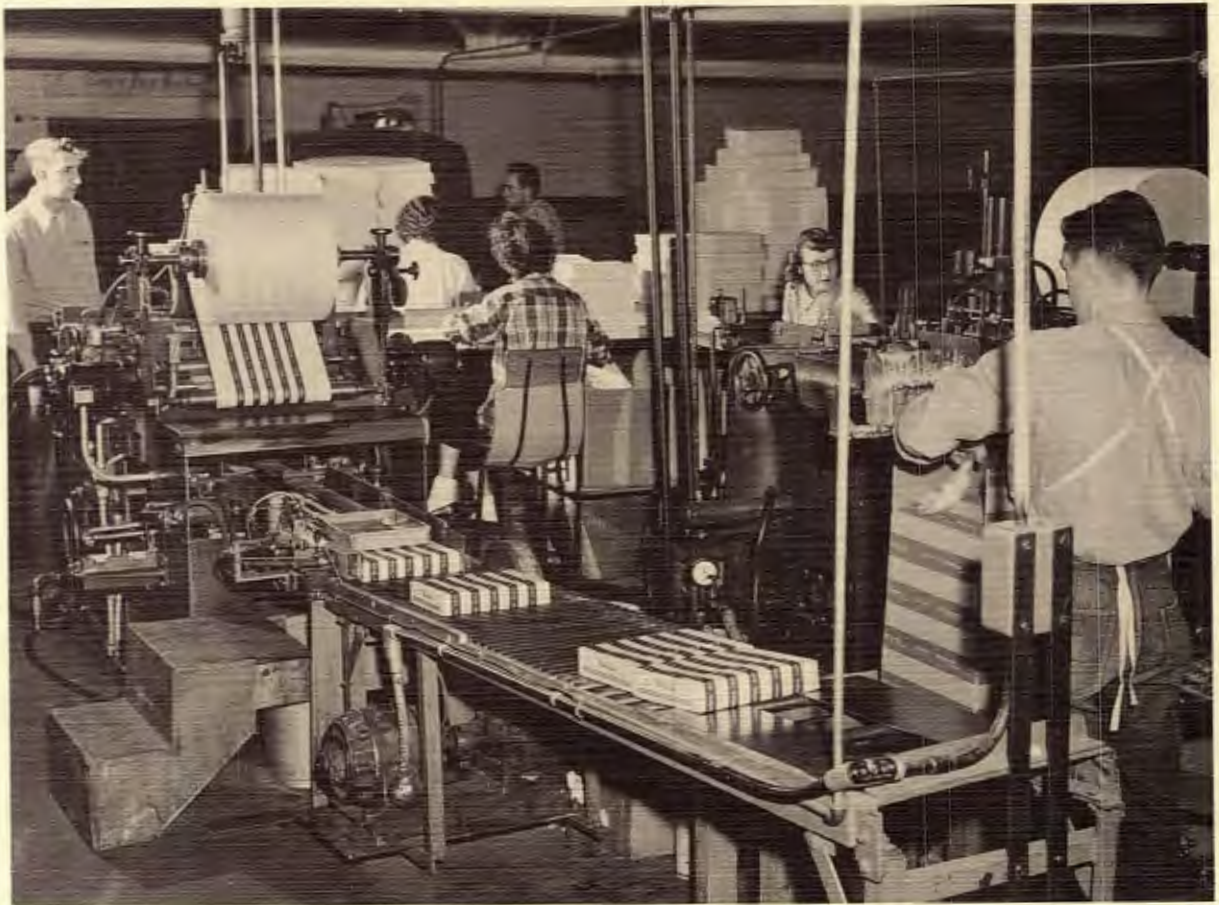
Testing apparatus for pre-testing Nekoosa papers is shown here. A brightness test is being made by the man in the photo.

papers. All those physical characteristics of quality that John Alexander worried about could be checked before shipment was made.

And ship we did. By 1938, only one year after its introduction, fine bond papers accounted for 22 percent of Nekoosa-Edwards' annual production!

The product was distributed nationwide through a network of paper merchants, who agreed to stock the complete line of papers. Most of these were the same merchants who sold our wrapping papers. They pledged their support and turned their efforts toward our fine papers. They have continued their support to this day. Although we do not have a merchant south of the border, it is interesting to note that in 1941 the Mayan Inn Hotel, in Chichicostengango, Guatemala, reproduced its letterhead on Nekoosa Bond! The pre-tested paper called Nekoosa was on its way to world-wide acceptance.

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Wrapped packages of Nekoosa Bond come out of a wrapping machine and are manually placed in a yellow and blue striped

carton. A laminated, wax treated wrapper surrounded the paper.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine: Drafting a Team

There's more than one team performing in a successful company. The men and women who produce the product comprise one of the most crucial teams, but there are others. There is the management team, the team of craftsmen who maintain the equipment, and the supporting teams of clerical personnel. However, there is one team which makes it possible for all the other teams to play in the game, and that's the sales team. In 1936, when Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company was getting ready to enter the competitive fine paper business, they had no team trained for this new role. There were salesmen and sales managers scattered across the country, but they were not a team that could take on the competition. These men knew all about caliper, mullen tests, and tear strength; but they were not conversant with brightness, smoothness, and wax pick tests. They were wrapping paper salesmen, who were now faced with selling watermarked printing and writing papers. New blood was needed in the sales department, from top management right on down through the ranks.

So it was that Adam Remley was hired from an eastern Wisconsin mill in 1935 to fill the position of Assistant Sales Manager, rising to the position of Sales Manager only a few months later. In this position, Remley successfully coached Nekoosa-Edwards' salesmen through the early years of our metamorphosis from wrapping papers to business papers. Upon his retirement, Remley was able to look back on a job well done.

At Remley's first sales conference late in 1936, he compared his sales force with a football team. In fact, the theme of the conference was "The Rosebowl." At the close of the conference Remley stated, "The Rosebowl football game represents the best of America's football teams meeting together. I have the same feeling toward the team in this room."

Remley really had two teams to coach. In the wrapping paper division there was Neil Nash calling the plays, while the fine paper division was looking to A. Brown, their sales manager.

Remley placed his emphasis on the fine paper group



Hired in 1935 to oversee the sale of a new line of watermarked papers to the business and printing world, was Adam Remley. Remley accomplished his assignment as evidenced by the position that Nekoosa holds in those fields today.



Dean of Nekoosa salesmen, L. A. "Bill" Gardiner elucidates on the salient features of Nekoosa papers during a sales colloquium. Bill was noted for his command of vocabulary.

and immediately drafted new teammates to help sell the product. The year 1936 saw the hiring of several new, first-line fine paper salesmen. Two of these men were Carl Schiebler, who retired as General Sales Manger of Nekoosa, and Nekoosa's well-known ambassador of good will. L. A. "Bill" Gardiner.

These were trying times financially, so much so that there was a limit on the number of new salesmen that could be added to the staff. Accordingly, Remley, took some of the wrapping paper salesmen and made them dual representatives. Wearing two hats, these men promoted both wrapping and fine papers. Charles Polansky, Ken Podvin, and Larry Lyons were some of those individuals who eventually found a permanent position on the fine paper team.

At the 1939 sales meeting Adam Remley stated that "Quality, service and the customer's viewpoint are to be stressed in your daily calls." By now his words were being heard by Nash, Booten, Cole, Leonardson, Vanderheiden, Frisby, Ferris, Bloomstead, Love, Manske, Hartwig, Rohr, and Hodlmeier. Some of these early salesmen will be recognized quite readily, for they played out their entire career for the Nekoosa team. Others left for other teams.

With a sales team somewhat comparable with a six-man football team, Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company challenged the established teams representing the competition. They returned to the locker room which also served as President Alexander's office and held their 1938 sales meeting. They had sold, in that first year of 1937, 583 tons of Nekoosa Bond, 367 tons of Nekoosa Mimeo, 108 tons of Nekoosa Ledger, and 374 tons of John Edwards Bond. This made a grand total of 1,432 tons of watermarked business papers. Alexander wanted more and told them their goal was 20,000 tons! The team accused the coaches of spiking the water pail. Meanwhile, the wrapping paper team smiled since they had long ago surpassed that figure. During the closing dinner of the conference, held in the Port Edwards Hotel, Remley told his team that "Ninety percent of our selling success depends upon the men that do the job of selling it."

So they went out, only to return a year later to hear the statistics. They had sold 1,921 tons in 1938—an



The traditional trip through the mill was and still is a part of many sales conferences. Here a group of Nekoosa salesmen get a lecture on ream wrapping from a young guide, Jim Dupree, on the far left.

increase of about 500 tons. At this rate they should reach that 20,000-ton goal in 1974! The inventory of finished watermarked paper ready for shipment was almost equal to the annual sales of that line, which was 1,800 tons.

Carl Schiebler was one of those first salesmen hired by Remley to concentrate on the sale of fine paper. Focusing his efforts on the eastern market, Carl's preparation for that battle consisted of three weeks of training at the mills and home office. Asked if he had confidence in this wrapping paper mill, which was entering the fine paper field, Carl stated that he had made up his mind that he had moved for the last time; and therefore, he was going to make it succeed! Carl did make one more move, but that was back to Port Edwards to take over the team in 1946.

Carl was charged with the responsibility of introducing Nekoosa Bond to the East Coast merchants, a difficult task since the East Coast paper mills dominated the merchants' stock at that time. He proudly reminisces how he not only sold one merchant on the idea of being a stocking merchant, but then negotiated the rental of warehouse space in that merchant's building from which Nekoosa could ship to other merchants in the area. Many of them were competitors of the merchant in question—now that takes salesmanship!

Some of the things Carl remembered about those early years of his career, after retiring in 1966, are as follows:

*"The new watermarked papers had a decided wrapping paper formation and feel. They were hard to sell. When you mentioned Nekoosa, they couldn't even pronounce it. How could they order it if they couldn't say the word? It usually came out as 'Kenoosa'."*

*"Without the support of our merchant network, which already marketed our wrapping papers, we might have never made it."*

*"One salesman came to our sales meeting and told us that the last shipment must have been alright because we didn't get a complaint on it."*

Upon Remley's retirement, a young salesman followed who would complete his Nekoosa career as president of the company. G. E. Veneman was named as Vice President of Sales in 1954 and promoted to President in 1970. H. G. Brown and R. H. Weymouth, respectively, followed Veneman as Vice President of Sales.

Over the years there have been many teammates on the Nekoosa team. Some have retired, some thought the competitive team was more appealing, and some changed careers to go into another field. To those who devoted a lifetime to Nekoosa, those who spent a portion of their career on the Nekoosa team, and those playing the field today, we on the other Nekoosa teams send up a rousing cheer to all of you!



Oversize top hats replace helmets on the heads of the "team" in this 1972 formal sales photo. It should be noted that the average

age of the salesmen is definitely older than it is in more recent photos of the Nekoosa Sales Team.

## Chapter Thirty: Ignoring Research Was Shortsighted

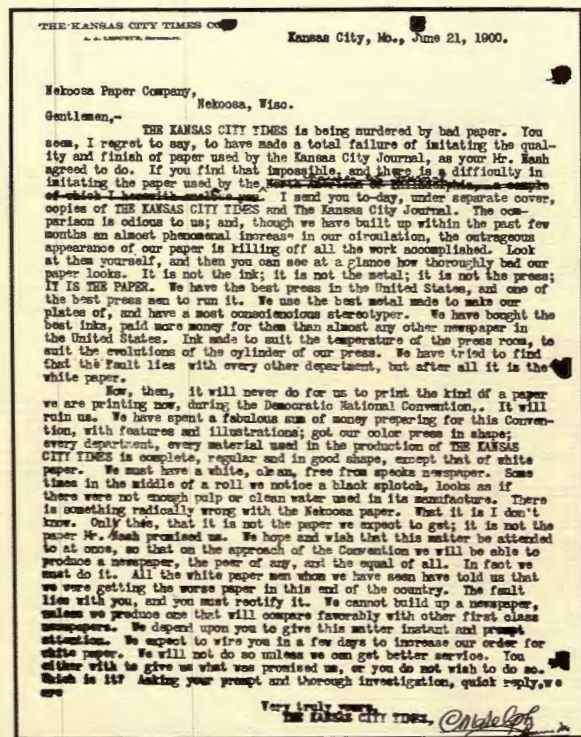
With the completion of the first roll of newsprint paper 100 years ago, the need for technical control was realized. Accordingly, the Centralia Water Power and Paper Company invested in a Mullen tester, a device used for determining the bursting strength of the paper. The tester was probably kept in the area adjacent to the dry end of the paper machine, where the finished paper could be conveniently checked. Basis weight was another quality to be determined and a sensitive balance was added to the "technical department."

The Nekoosa Paper Company was a little more elaborate in establishing their technical department. An old frame building, which had seen prior service as a construction office and administration building, was converted into a laboratory. In this lab, not only was the quality of the finished product checked, but an analytical program was begun for checking the wood, raw materials, and the cooking liquors for the sulfite and kraft mills, which the Nekoosa Paper Company operated.

At Port Edwards, the John Edwards Manufacturing Company, realizing it had to keep abreast of the current trends, as well as keeping up with the neighboring mills, established a laboratory in a small frame building adjacent to the mill.

Thus, all three of our founding companies realized the importance of quality control. These labs were devoted strictly to technical functions; that is, process control and quality control of the end product. Sometimes the latter was not what it should be. The reader's attention is directed to the 1900 letter reproduced on these pages wherein Nekoosa Paper Company took a chastising for their apparent poor quality. However, if the product was saleable and the mill was running smoothly, the labs had apparently performed their task successfully.

In 1919 this attitude was to change when John E. Alexander was appointed chief chemist for Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company. Alexander had just com-



A letter such as this one to the Nekoosa Paper Company went a long way in promoting the need for a Technical Department for quality control. Nekoosa Paper Company was in the paper business for seven years when this letter was written. They evidently still had some need for improvement.

pleted his training at the Armour Institute in Chicago. In this capacity he directed the operations of a new laboratory, which was set up on the second floor of the new time office at Port Edwards. Under Alexander, the technical department undertook the development of several unique projects, some of them resulting in the issuing of patents.

All of Alexander's efforts, as well as the efforts of his department were devoted toward process improvement. No energy was directed toward research or to develop new products to replace the newsprint and wrapping papers, which dominated Nepco's sales efforts at that time.

After serving his apprentice years in the laboratory,

Alexander was promoted to general manager. In this capacity, while reflecting on his past experience, Alexander apparently saw the "handwriting on the wall," for in a 1930 letter to his father, he wrote:

*"We were making a fair return on our investment. We did not need to spend money on research. I admit my shortsightedness.*

*I feel confident that today this company would have been further ahead in the way of its knowledge on how to make more profit if we would have invested in a research program."*

In December of 1930, Alexander, the son, directed another letter to his father, who was enjoying the Florida winter.

*"I am convinced in my own mind that we must invest money in the establishment of a well-organized research department for fortifying this institution in the future."*

*"It will be our only salvation. It may come to pass that butcher's paper will evaporate on the horizon."*

*"...we cannot be too farsighted or cautious in considering a plan to displace this mass of tonnage of butcher's paper that we may be forced to lose in the near future."*

Son evidently convinced Dad, for the following spring John Alexander was allotted time at the 1931 shareholders' meeting to make a pitch on behalf of



Chief Chemist, John Alexander, proudly oversees his new laboratory on the second floor of the new mill office building. The year is about 1920.

a research department. He proposed that the directors set aside an allotment of one-hundred thousand dollars with which he would hire a qualified research director, plus other personnel, to staff the program. Part of the funding would be used for an addition to the mill office building in Port Edwards, which would be outfitted with the necessary equipment to justify calling it a research department.

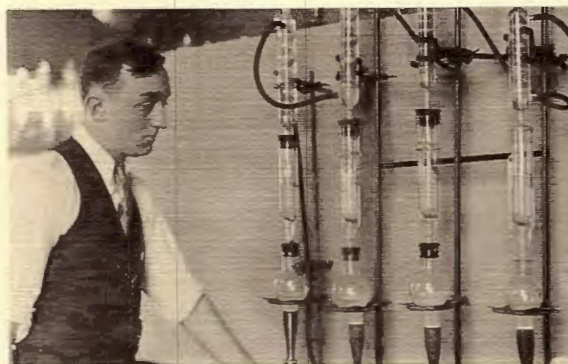


Photo of a chemist at work, complete with vest and gold watch chain. An extraction of an additive to the paper is being made.

In his presentation, John Alexander stated:

*"The value of research work cannot be over-estimated. It is rather difficult to state what new and startling products one can develop."*

John made his pitch at a bad time. A country-wide financial depression, to be remembered as The Great Depression of the Thirties, was rearing itself; and a hundred thousand dollars was just out of the question. However, a compromise was made. A research group was organized as a branch of the technical department. Both groups would occupy the same laboratory space, but a chemist would be hired to look into the study of new products. Research was born for Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company.

Efforts were directed toward the field of specialty sheets, glassine, creping stock, sanitary napkins, flameproof sheets, plastic laminates, photo paper, paper diapers, bed sheets, etc. A successful by-product for waste sulfite liquor (the lignin portion of the wood) was something to be sought after, as well as a use for another by-product, lime sludge. Both of these waste products were being dumped down the river or hauled away for landfill at that time. Another look at corn stalks, rye straw, and

flax as a cellulose source was once again a subject to be investigated.

By 1937 a home-built experimental paper machine was making development grades of paper in the Port Edwards mill, while at the Nekoosa plant, a miniature digester of about five gallons capacity was making experimental cooks of various woods and even some other plants.

Under the direction of Chief Chemist A. Luth, the one room main laboratory was no longer large enough to provide space for the ever-expanding number of projects being investigated. Therefore, some of the programs were carried out in the expanded labs, which were opened in the adjacent "barracks" building having been unoccupied since the strike of 1919. One of the pioneer chemists, who came at this time and remained until his retirement, was Les Wellman. He trained this writer during his first fourteen years with Nekoosa Papers Incorporated.

The year 1937 witnessed the beginning of a new era for the technical department, when Nepco hired its first Ph.D. Doctor T. A. Pascoe was brought in as a chief chemist. A short time later he would head up the research-technical department. He was followed by Doctors Rowe and Crane, both graduates of the Institute of Paper Chemistry. Other graduate chemists hired in the late 1930's were Peter Borlew and Rudy Weiler, both from Germany, and Joe Smart, a hometown chemist from Wisconsin Rapids.

With this crew of trained chemists, augmented by a dozen technicians, the research activities of Nekoosa-Edwards strived forward. In 1940 the importance of paper testing under controlled conditions of humidity and temperature was realized; and accordingly, a humidity room was built in the Port Edwards mill. Only Port Edwards needed such a facility since all of the business papers were being manufactured in that mill. Nekoosa mill, on the other hand, boasted having a color lab, where the color of the many specialty sheets could be developed and matched from one run to another. With the addition of the humidity room, Nekoosa-Edwards was now able to justify their advertising slogan, which claimed that their papers were "pretested."

It wasn't until 1947, that John Alexander's dream of

an addition to the upstairs lab was realized. In that year an expansion to the Port Edwards mill office building provided space for a doubling of the lab area. This new space was devoted strictly to research. The work of research and technical control, however, was still under one department head and would not be segregated until some ten years later.



With the introduction of pre-tested business papers, humidity and temperature controlled testing rooms were needed to enable the paper to be tested under controlled conditions of humidity and temperature. This is one of those early rooms in the mill.

The year 1955 saw the erection of a new technical-research-engineering building where three labs, a pilot plant, and other complementing facilities were contained. Expanded in 1979, the facilities are now totally devoted to research under the direction of a Vice President of Research. That position, at the time of this writing, is filled by Dr. T. O. Norris. Technical work is carried on in laboratory facilities located within the mills.

In addition to the technical and research work carried on in our own laboratories, Nekoosa is a charter member of the Institute of Paper Chemistry at Appleton, Wisconsin. Here special research and analytical projects are conducted, either specifically for us or for groups of member mills. When the Sulfite Pulp Manufacturers' Research League was organized for the specific purpose of finding by-products to be made from spent sulfite liquor, Nekoosa-Edwards joined its ranks, remaining a member until the group was disbanded.

Nekoosa papers are proclaimed to be "The Best Today — Tomorrow Even Better." Research has the challenge of making this a truth rather than fiction.





The two photos on the top half of the page are the laboratory buildings of the Nekoosa Paper Co. and John Edwards Manufacturing Company . The building on the lower left side is John Alexander's long fought for Research Laboratory built in 1920.

The building on the lower right is the same building but after a remodeling and expansion had been completed. This building now houses the Purchasing Department and Product Quality and Service Departments.



## Chapter Thirty-One: Backing Up the Team

One reference indicates that in 1940 there were 51 paper mills operating in the state of Wisconsin. You can imagine the glut of paper available on the market, just three years after Nekoosa-Edwards announced its entry into the watermarked business paper world. The competition was rough. Nekoosa salesmen needed backup support, and that support was forthcoming from the advertising department.

Up to this time, Nepco's advertising department had been occupied with making King William butcher paper the leading meat wrap in the country. Now their talent was directed to promoting Nekoosa Bond. The first step was to hire an advertising manager who was knowledgeable in fine paper promotion. This person was found in Tad Meyer, who joined Nekoosa-Edwards in 1937.

ing departments, Nekoosa Bond in early 1937, had found a home in the warehouses of 12 paper merchants.

These pioneers, who risked their sales reputation on an unheard of watermarked business paper, were:

Butler Paper Co.	Marquardt Paper Co.
Midland Paper Co.	Cincinnati Cordage Co.
Oklahoma Paper Co.	Jacksonville Paper Co.
West Coast Paper Co.	Tampa Paper Co.
Barton Duer Koch Paper Co.	Central Paper Co.
Everglades Paper Co.	Central Michigan Paper Co.

This meager list of merchants would increase over the years, and in 1986 the ranks had swelled to nearly 80 merchants at over 200 locations.

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Through the joint efforts of the sales and advertis-

One of the first strategy moves to be carried out was



Nekoosa Edwards proudly displayed their product at the National Paper Trade Association meeting in 1939. This display was in

a hospitality room at the meeting.



The neck ties identify this group of paper merchants as Nekoosa supporters. The ties are replicas of the Nekoosa ream wrapper.

The event is a Merchant conference held in Port Edwards in the mid 50's.

to gather together management representatives from the merchants stocking Nekoosa Bond. Accordingly, on the eve of the National Paper Trade Association Meeting in the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago on September 17, 1939, sixteen Nekoosa merchants assembled to hear and discuss plans for promoting their new line of papers. A vote at the end of the meeting called for an annual repeat of this program, but the ensuing war years prevented this goal from being accomplished. It wasn't until June of 1956 that the next Merchant's Executive Conference was held in Port Edwards. Eighty-two attendees from 38 states, representing 93 merchant houses, assembled and had a first-hand view of Nekoosa-Edwards; many for the first time.

At this assembly it was decided that a Merchant's Advisory Council should be established. Its purpose would be to meet twice annually to advise Nekoosa as to what direction they should take in production, service, distribution, and promotion of Nekoosa grades. Mutual problems would be discussed and membership would be changed each year. Thus, all merchants would have an eventual input of helpful

information. R. G. Evans, President of Cincinnati Cordage Company, was elected as the first Chairman of the Council.

Although 1956 saw many merchants at the mill for the first time, for others it was not a new experience. As early as 1937, a group of sales personnel of the J. W. Butler Paper Company in Chicago visited the mill via a chartered railroad Pullman Car. The car was sidetracked in the mill yard long enough to permit a visit of the Port Edwards mill.

Mill visits were not new to Nekoosa-Edwards. A mill visitation program had been initiated in 1928, when the Ford tri-motor airplane was purchased. Realizing that mill trips do help sell paper, Nekoosa opened its famous Pullman Car guest house in 1955. Located on the shore of Nepco Lake, the all wooden railroad car, decorated with inlaid mahogany woods, was home for four customers each night during the summer months. In 1966 the need for year-round accommodations dictated that a guest house (Nekoosa Lodge) be built. This new facility, built with the customer in mind, took care of 12 guests,

in addition to providing dining facilities for them. In 1981 a similar facility was opened in Texarkana to accommodate visitors to the Ashdown mill. Nekoosa strongly feels even today, that the mill visitor program is an important sales tool.



Nekoosa's second guest house was the famous Pullman Car on the shore of NEPCO Lake. The car accommodated four guests in an atmosphere that recalled the plush days of railroading just after the turn of the century.

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Another selling tool that the advertising department produced in 1948 was a 35-minute movie entitled "The World Behind The Watermark." The movie



The big production in 1948 was the filming of the movie "The World Behind The Watermark." Here characters, film crew, writer and lighting crews are all coordinated by the director in his traditional director's chair.

received its premiere showing at a paper merchant dinner in Chicago and then was shown from coast to coast promoting Nekoosa's watermarked papers. Two thousand eight hundred people reviewed the movie at its first public showing at the Rialto

Theater in Nekoosa on January 12, 1949. Repeated showings were presented throughout the day.

A word should be included on the subject of Nekoosa publications. After all, it is from these tabloids that much of the material in this book has been gleaned. Nekoosa-Edwards' first employee publication was the *Nepco Safety Bulletin*, which came out in 1919. This was followed by the monthly *Nepco Digester*, a magazine format publication which was printed on non-Nepco paper! With the advent of the depression years in the early 1930's, publication ceased until 1935 when it was reintroduced in a newspaper format.

In 1941, 2,400 copies were being printed. The last issue of the *Digester* was printed in December of 1950, being replaced in January of 1951 by the *Nekoosa News* magazine. This current publication is issued four times a year. Sixteen-thousand copies of each issue are printed and distributed to employees, customers, and shareholders. A recent publication, aimed strictly at the employee's interest, is the monthly *Papergram*.

There are, and have been, other gimmicks, gadgets, and gismos that have been used to promote Nekoosa Papers. The advertising department is truly in there backing up the sales department with new ideas and promotions, all aimed at getting the Nekoosa name foremost in the eyes and minds of printers, specifiers, and artists.



Nekoosa's famous caravans have taken the Nekoosa story across the country on several occasions. The caravans travel from city to city, putting on production promotion meetings for merchants. Two Nekoosa personnel direct the unloading of some caravan display material.

## Chapter Thirty-Two: Check With the Main Office

Call it "headquarters, main office, white house, brass house, or administration building." Every company has a special location, be it a building or only a room, from where the corporate decisions and policies flow forth. The companies that were the forerunners of Nekoosa Papers Inc., were no exception, the office buildings of these companies being illustrated on these pages.

Nekoosa Paper Company actually had two structures that served in this capacity during its fifteen-year span as an independent company. In 1893 Thomas E. Nash had a small wooden building erected near the present Nekoosa bleach plant, which was to serve as a temporary construction office while he was engaged in building the Nekoosa mill. About 1895, with the mill construction completed, Nash turned his efforts toward the building of a suitable office building befit-



Nekoosa Paper Company's second office building was this brick edifice. In later years it saw service as a time office and mill office building.

ting the new mill at Nekoosa. The cream colored brick building, consisting of basement, main floor,

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John Edwards, Jr. built this office building in 1872 to serve the administrative needs of his lumbering operation. In later years

it became the office of John Edwards Manufacturing Company and then the first office of the Nekoosa Edwards Paper Co.

and a small second floor, was designed by an Appleton, Wisconsin, architect and built at a cost of less than two thousand dollars. Included in the building were two fireproof vaults, a reception room, an accounting office, and Mr. Nash's private executive office, which included a fireplace. This new building, ultra modern and architecturally graceful and functional, was to be the control center from which Nekoosa Paper Company was to be run until 1908, at which time it was incorporated into the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company.

The small wooden building, which had been Nekoosa's first main office, was now converted into a laboratory. It was finally moved into the wood storage yard, where it served as a yard office until sometime in the mid 1940's when it was razed.

Following the transfer of administrative activities to the main office building at Port Edwards in 1908, the old Nekoosa main office was converted to a mill office. Here the mill manager's office, first aid room, and a few other supervisory offices were housed. Finally, in 1960, the building was demolished to make room for an expansion of the Nekoosa plant.

Centralia Water Power and Pulp Company's administration building did not have such a varied career. The modest frame building appears to have been a single-room building, located on the river bank, overlooking the mill. A property list of the Centralia Company lists the contents of the building as including a desk, typewriter, vault, and chairs. The building was removed after the Centralia mill burned in 1912.



The business affairs of the Centralia Water Power and Pulp Company were conducted in this modest building, located on the west bank of the river, overlooking the mill.

The John Edwards Manufacturing Company's main office had the most colorful background. Built by John Edwards in 1872, the frame building, built from lumber sawed at Edwards' own mill, was the seat of administration for the Edwards lumber industry. Inasmuch as the sawmill was the nucleus around which the settlement of three hundred inhabitants was to grow, Edwards provided space for a post office and a retail store in the new office. Postal service was established at Port Edwards in the mid 1840's, and until 1935 was transacted in the Nepco Main Office building. Odd? No, for John Edwards, Jr., was postmaster for about 30 years.

To further provide for the needs of the residents, Edwards included a retail store in the same building. A stock of groceries, dry goods, and hardware was carried. Credit was extended to nearby lumber camps and cutters for these supplies. Several promissory notes are on record indicating that payment was to be made to the "company store" the following spring in shingles or lath at market price. This store continued until around the turn of the century when other retail establishments were begun in the village.

Edwards culminated the building of this office by having a three-foot high escutcheon carved and placed on the peak of the roof, indicating that the building was completed in 1872. This substitute for a cornerstone is preserved in the Administration Building at Port Edwards.

In 1872 the modest building was ample for conducting the business affairs of the lumber company and still house the village post office and store. All that was needed was a desk for the president, a high table and stool for the bookkeeper, and a steel vault. There was no need for a sales department since lumber was the only product we sold. There was no need for a traffic department since there were no railroads, and all lumber was floated down the river in the spring of the year. A woodlands department was unnecessary since who would ever imagine that this great forest of trees would ever be exhausted, and in 1872 even eccentrics weren't dreaming of such things as electronic tabulating machines!

However, as the years progressed, the nature of the business completely changed. The product became

paper with a year-round market. Competition necessitated adding a sales force. Conservation-minded forefathers established a woodlands department. River transportation was no longer suitable for transporting the product to market. Thus, railroads were built and a traffic department came into being. Production increased, sales went up, accounts became larger, and so did the accounting department. In 1920 the records indicate that the main office force consisted of about twenty persons.

Added business activity constantly increased this office force, and in 1941 necessitated a complete remodeling and enlarging of the main office. In that year additions increased the working area and added an attractive conference room. Subsequent additions made in 1953 and 1956 further increased the working space of the main office. In spite of all remodeling and additions, the exterior of the building remained painted white in tradition with a village custom, thereby perpetuating the village sobriquet, "White City."

The old building witnessed many important cor-

porate decisions being made. Great financial and industrial leaders, including two of our own past presidents, L. M. Alexander and Thomas E. Nash, met here and changed the destiny of an industry and a community. In 1890 the building witnessed two men sitting at a desk, perhaps by kerosene light late into the night, as John Edwards, Jr., turned over management of John Edwards & Co., to L. M. Alexander. This took place when the former was elected



The nurse of the Nekoosa Paper Company takes a moment off from her first aid duties to have her picture taken in front of the fireplace that originally saw use in the office of Thomas Nash, President of Nekoosa Paper Company.



The "White House," was the nickname applied to the main office of the Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company. This view of the

office shows the many appendages that were added to the building over the years.



Used lumber for sale! Some of it was well used for nearly a hundred years by the time this old office building was demolished.

The ground that the building occupied is now a park area, incorporating formal gardens and a statue of John Edwards, Jr.

to the State Legislature. In 1896 the old building reverberated with the enthusiasm of a group of Wood County pioneers as they made plans for a paper mill to be constructed at Port Edwards to replace the sawmill. It housed some important financial transactions in 1908 when several small paper manufacturers incorporated into Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. Sometime in the 1930's there were heated discussions which took place when a board of directors proposed to convert from a wrapping grade mill to a bond manufacturer.

For many years the affairs of the village were carried on from the conference room, which served as the meeting place of the Village Board. Changes were gradually eroding away the grandeur of this stately building. The original line of hitching posts was changed into a wide sidewalk. This in turn gave way to an additional ten feet of modern highway. Spacious lawns made way for parking lots. Vandals caused the removal of the small cannon on the front lawn, which had many and varied tales connected with its origin. Finally, in 1961, the entire building



John Alexander, President of Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company, proudly places a sealed box of documents in the cornerstone of the new administration building in Port Edwards. Directors and guests witness the event.

was removed by the wrecking contractor after the corporate business activities had been transferred to a new administration building, dedicated in 1961.

Financed by the employees retirement fund, the annual rent payments made by Nekoosa Papers Inc., were in turn placed back into the fund. The 220'



x 104' two-story building is an architectural work of art. Corners are of Cold Spring Rainbow granite (the quarry is now exhausted) while the walls are Thinlite Curtain glass blocks. Six carvings in granite blocks flank the main entrance and portray the papermaking process. White and colored lights highlight the building exterior.

Inside the edifice, flexible wooden partitions adjust to any room configuration. Completely carpeted halls, with special lighting, serve as a local, hometown art gallery. The artwork is changed regularly and the public is welcome to view the talents of the artist being featured.

In front of the building, an Aqua-Hue fountain with constantly changing patterns of water sprays, takes on a rainbow of colors at night when colored lights illuminate the water.

The functions performed within the building are all inclusive, from the decisions being made by the company president down to the hiring of a new employee.

With so many decisions, policies, and directives coming from this building, it is no surprise that mill personnel often "pass the buck" with the expression, "Check with the main office."



The road to the mill (Wisconsin River Drive) is dirt, littered with horse debris in this view of the John Edwards Manufacturing

Company office. Building on left is the Port Edwards Village hall. (About 1900)



Steel framework for a new administration building for Nekoosa Papers dwarfs the old office building that it will replace. Building

on the right is the Research and Engineering Building.

## Chapter Thirty-Three: Remembering Those Who Held the Ladder

In 1927 Nekoosa-Edwards' President, John Alexander, wrote to an associate of his, "...always keep in mind that the real man who has climbed to success will not forget the men who held the ladder for him. Accordingly, we should never forget those who held the ladder while we climbed to the top."

What Alexander said was directed toward his personal achievements in the business world. However, it can appropriately be related to the company he directed. Nekoosa Papers Inc., during its successful career, has definitely remembered the men and women who helped it attain the successful position it enjoys today. One of the ways in which this has been accomplished is through Nekoosa's community service efforts. It is beyond the scope of these few pages to tabulate the hundreds of community projects that have been supported financially by

Nekoosa Papers Inc. A few of them are worthy of mention.

In 1927 a thousand dollars given to the local high school for band uniforms was considered a sizable contribution. Seven thousand dollars toward a new high school gymnasium, was certainly an indication of this company's loyalty to the community and its employees.

As inflation grew over the years, so did the size of the gifts. Being the major property owner in the area, it was quite easy for Nekoosa Papers Inc., to make contributions of land to the State of Wisconsin—Griffith Nursery, Wood County—Edgewater Nursing Home and Nepco Lake Park, and to the local community—park properties. On a smaller scale, there have been programs developed by con-

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In an effort to make his home town more attractive and to better serve the residents of Port Edwards, most of them Nekoosa employees, John Alexander was the motivating force behind the

building of the Port Edwards shopping center. The business unit was built by Nekoosa Edwards Paper Company.

tributing city lots to employees for the building of their own homes.

In 1940 Nekoosa-Edwards launched and financed a recreation program for the youth of Port Edwards and Nekoosa. Among other activities, the Boys and Girls Club had access to a specially-built camp on the shore of Nepco Lake. Included in the arrangement was a log mess hall, screened cabins, toilet and shower facilities with running water, and a complete aquatic facility. Six years later, upon the completion of World War II, Nekoosa-Edwards invested once again in the youth of Port Edwards by building a \$135,000 swimming pool.

In 1948 a shopping center was built in Port Edwards, replacing the country store buildings that had been located along Market Street.

The list goes on almost endlessly, since the company's contributions are an ongoing thing. Some items include: fire protection service, a tree planting program, college scholarships, a village garage and fire station, employee's recreation area, etc., etc.

In 1948 Nekoosa-Edwards established the Nepco Foundation. An initial grant of \$144,000 was given to the Foundation, whose purpose it was to promote charitable causes, education, and community service projects.

I'm sure most people will agree that Nekoosa Papers Inc., has made a tremendous impact in the communities in which it is located.

Although these small communities may fall into the category of "company towns," most residents will agree that it definitely has its advantages. As evidence of their conviction, they will point with pride to the John Alexander YMCA Community Center in Port Edwards, which was made possible by John Alexander. Built in 1957, the facility cost over a million dollars and serves the youth and adults of the area. Very few metropolitan areas of 40,000 people can point with pride to a facility as beautiful and functional as the "Y" in Port Edwards.

John Alexander remembered his co-workers and for that the community continues to benefit.

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What better way to remember his fellow employees than to build a YMCA Community Center. Nekoosa Edwards Foundation, with John Alexander's backing, built the John E. Alexander

YMCA Community Center in 1958. It is located on the site of his childhood home.

## Chapter Thirty-Four: Seventy-Five Cents A Day

For that amount, one could exploit the fruits of labor of a woman or a horse. Both were valued at that amount for a day's labor. Perhaps nothing has witnessed more changes over the years than labor relations. The trends that began with the national labor reforms at the turn of the century came home to Nekoosa and its predecessor companies as well. Reflections of the past are interesting to look back on, so here are a few for your amusement. In reading over these next few paragraphs, note the vast magnitude of changes that have improved working conditions over the years. Also, be mindful that where dollar values are quoted, they must be considered in the light of the purchasing power of the dollar at that time.

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In 1878 John Edwards makes note that he hired William Harber at a rate of four hundred dollars a year, "for any kind of work." That was in the lumbering era. Things had improved only fifteen years later when Tom Nash began construction of a paper mill at Nekoosa. Nash wrote to a would-be employee, "There is plenty of work here at \$1.50 per day. Men hauling rocks on the dam receive \$1.75 per day, but that is hard work and the jobs are all filled up..."

What would you do if you received the above let-



Some of those valuable teams at the John Edwards Manufacturing Company. Workers tended their steed like some men look after their autos today. Ernest Eichstead is the foreman in the center of the photo.

ter? The recipient of the letter accepted Nash's offer and came to work. It was more money than he could make working on his father's farm at Wautoma, Wisconsin.

A man with a good team of horses could make more, depending on how good his team was. The usual rate was \$2.50 a day for a man with a team. In several instances a horse or team was hired without a driver. There are several places in the time books where a horse is listed as an employee and was actually carried on the payroll! The rate for a horse alone was 75 cents a day.

Upon completion of the mill, Nash turned to recruiting a production force. Most of the construction laborers migrated into mill operating jobs. A crew of one hundred and thirty people kept the mill operating in 1896. Of this, one hundred and twenty-one were men, eight were women, and three were boys under the age of eighteen. Two shifts kept the mill operating around the clock. A day shift, noted with a white marker on the clock for the benefit of those who could not read, consisted of eleven hours. The night shift, with the black marker on the clock, consisted of thirteen hours. "Swells," as the office staff was labeled, worked only ten hours; i.e., 7:00



Seventy-five cents a day and all the water you wanted to drink from this water drum. Germs from the common dipper went with the drink.

a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The time books show instances of many people working more hours than a normal shift without the benefit of premium pay.

Other people's salaries and wages are a matter of curiosity, yet are usually confidential. The lapse of time will permit us to look at some rates being paid in 1904. The figures are from John Edwards Manufacturing Company's labor report.

Machine Tender (Herman Zurfluh) . . .	.31 cents/hr.
Back Tender (Chas. Leverance) . . . . .	.20 cents/hr.
Fourth Hand (Albert Krenke) . . . . .	10½ cents/hr.
Beater Man (Albert Oilschlager) . . .	13½ cents/hr.
Pulp Skinner . . . . .	8½ cents/hr.
Electrician . . . . .	\$2.00/night
Yard Man . . . . .	.15 cents/hr.
Yard Boy . . . . .	12½ cents/hr.
Steam Power	
Engineer (John Shellhammer) . . . . .	\$75.00/month

The starting rate for women in the finishing room in 1893 was seventy-five cents a day, while for men

it was a dollar and twenty-five cents. Horses received seventy-five cents a day! Discrimination against women was quite the thing in the 1890's. There was, however, some equality provided for employees. The early issues of the *NEPCO Safety Bulletin* were printed in Polish as well as English, thereby making their message knowledgeable to the non-English speaking employees.

Here are a few other interesting employee relation matters that have arisen over the years. In 1902 an appeal was made to L. M. Alexander, by his "Christian Brethren," to ban work on the Sabbath. The movement would have the mill shut down from 6:00 p.m. on Saturday to 7:00 a.m. on Monday. Alexander responded that he would consider the request but reminded his "fellow brethren" that paper machines were not like other factories that could be turned off at midnight on Saturday.

In 1915 Nekoosa-Edwards, along with nineteen other Wisconsin paper mills, went on record as endorsing the Efficiency Institute whose motto was



The crew of the Port Edwards finishing room proudly pose for the photographer in this view. The time is early 1930's and it

appears that the women are happy to show off their new uniforms.

"Alcohol Is Not Food But Poison." Since Port Edwards had no saloons, it must have been the Nekoosa mill that prompted the move!

Another file of employee's letters to management contains the following excerpts which are dated around 1910:

*"Some employees sleep during the night, 2-4 or more hours."*

*"The Nekoosa mill is considered an easy place to work. The Port (Edwards) mill gets full value from every man."*

*"The night watchman is instructed to wake up men, but they will not listen to him."*

*"The Port Edwards night superintendent, 'Lit' Vechinski, is called a man killer. He does not allow sleeping or loafing."*

*"New employees are initiated and treated in a*

*most unpleasant way. There is horseplay, and they put dresses on the new men."*

*"There are women in the mill at night."*

*"There is much stealing of paper, brass, and pipe."*

Perhaps it was for these aforementioned reasons that an employee's handbook was published in 1919. A pass was now required if an employee was to leave the mill other than at shift changes. Warm-up time and clothes changing time were expected to be on personal time, before or after the shift hours. There was absolutely no smoking within the mill fence or yards. Failure to comply with this latter rule resulted in immediate dismissal on the spot.

Accidents were quite frequent. The tendency toward accidents was due to poor working habits, employee fatigue, a lack of safety equipment, and the absence of a safety program. For these reasons, Nekoosa-Edwards inaugurated an extensive safety program

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Some days it was a cold walk home after a long night in the Port Edwards mill. It was for this reason that paper machine operators

went barefoot at work. This habit assured them that their shoes would be dry when walking home in the snow.



You can tell who is the machine tender in this group. He is the one who gets paid enough to buy a pair of shoes to wear on the job.

just prior to World War I. The program included a nurse, who spent her mornings at one mill and afternoons at the other. A first aid room was established in each mill. Safety suggestions were rewarded with cash gifts or a medal. An employee's handbook was issued listing several pages of safety rules, a few of which are listed here:

1. Keep fingers out of calender stacks. Use closed knuckles to feed paper into the nips of the rolls.
2. Going barefoot is dangerous and many accidents are caused by not wearing shoes. Furthermore, a papermaker wearing shoes can do more and better work than one who is barefoot.

One of the best received benefits instituted by Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company came about in 1921 when the Nekoosa-Edwards Mutual Benefit Association was started. This insurance program was first available only to the wage earner and not



Nekoosa Safety Committee, 1915.

his family. The cost to take part in the program, which was voluntary, was \$1.50 per month, with an added option of life insurance for an additional ten cents per month. The plan paid two dollars a day to an injured or ill employee and two and half dollars if he was hospitalized. Fifty percent of surgical costs were covered, but not in excess of seventy-five dollars. (They weren't doing heart bypasses in 1921!)

A bonus plan in 1936 and 1937, known as the Standards Plan, paid cash bonuses for exceptional performance. The plan was not popular with most employees, believe it or not; and after a vote by the workers in 1937, the plan was discontinued. To the dismay of the workers, management announced that "the standards set up for production will be retained."

If the aforementioned policy was not popular, the program that initiated the retiree's pension plan in 1948 was well received. The voluntary, co-contributed plan had 98.15 percent participation and saw the retirement of fifty employees on January 1, 1949, all taking advantage of the benefits offered to them by the pension plan.

The ranks of employment have swelled as Nekoosa has grown, from eight hundred and sixty-nine in 1929, eleven hundred in 1938, to a high of nearly thirty-seven hundred in 1986!

Not to mention, women have won out over the horse. Five hundred and seventy-one women are employed by Nekoosa Papers Inc., with several in management or supervisory positions. Compare that to what happened to the horse!



Port Edwards Mill Safety Committee.

## Chapter Thirty-Five: Ins and Outs

During that span of Nekoosa's history lasting from approximately World War I to the present, several small, and in some cases, diversified companies have found their way in and out of the annual financial report. One of these has been covered in a previous chapter where the history of Nekoosa-Edwards Light and Power Company was presented. Very briefly, some of the other subsidiaries of Nekoosa Papers Inc., will be reviewed here. Some are still in our corporate family, while others have been disposed of.

### Alexander Clarke Timber Co.

Organized in 1944 and liquidated in 1952, this wholly-owned subsidiary was a pulpwood producer with cutting rights on two hundred seventeen square miles of Canadian government lands. This company in turn had its own subsidiary. Sturgeon Lake Transportation Company, which operated a seven-mile railroad in Canada, moved pulpwood from the cutting site to a railhead. Regulations enacted by the

Canadian government made this operation less lucrative after World War II and it was, therefore, liquidated.

### Tomahawk Timber Company

Organized in 1940, this company operated a lumber mill in Ely, Minnesota, where it had timber cutting rights on a tract of three hundred square miles of Superior National Forest land. The assets of the company were jointly owned by two Wisconsin paper mills, one of them Nekoosa-Edwards which owned fifty percent of the company's assets. An embargo by the National Park Service brought about the building of a lumber mill in 1954. Up to that time, only pulpwood was being cut. However, the embargo stipulated that all merchantable wood must be cut under the agreement with the Park Service. Thus, the sawmill was built to cut three million board feet of lumber annually in addition to the pulpwood. The corporation was dissolved in 1984,

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In addition to providing pulpwood for Nekoosa-Edwards mills, Tomahawk Timber Company operated this lumber sawing opera-

tion in Ely, Minnesota. Pulpwood was rafted across Lake Superior to Ashland, Wisconsin.





Bibler Lumber Company operates this lumber mill at Russellville,

Arkansas. It produces dimensional lumber and wood chips.

although production had terminated in the late 1970's.

and made a division of Great Northern Nekoosa Corporation.

**Bibler Lumber Company**

Bibler Lumber Company operated sawmills in Russellville and Clarkesville, Arkansas, plus an extensive turkey ranch and beef cattle raising operation when acquired by Nekoosa in 1974. The beef cattle operation, turkey ranch, and Clarkesville mill were disposed of by Nekoosa shortly after being purchased. The Russellville plant was sold by Nekoosa in 1986.

**Marplex Products Company**

Marplex is a lumber mill in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, and became a part of the Nekoosa group in 1977. The company saws lumber and manufactures pallets and skids. It is a pulpwood chip supplier to the Wisconsin mills. As of 1987, it was carrying out these operations as a Nekoosa subsidiary.

**Butler Paper Company**

Nekoosa's first relation with Butler Paper Company was in 1907 when J. W. Butler Company became a newsprint customer of Nekoosa Paper Company. Fifty-five years later, Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company purchased a half interest in the Butler merchant business at a cost of approximately seven million dollars. For a similar amount in 1965, the balance of the Butler business was obtained. In 1985 Butler Paper Company, which operates merchant warehouses in sixty-five cities, was given autonomy

**Nekoosa Envelope Company**

After having purchased in a series of separate transactions, Wisco Envelope, Pakwell Envelope, Mailwell Envelope, Rockmont Envelope, Southwest Envelope, Heco Envelope, and Photo Bag Inc., they were incorporated into Nekoosa Envelopes Incorporated in 1977. Plants for producing envelopes of every description are located all over the country. The company, whose corporate headquarters was moved to Colorado, has been given division status under Great Northern Nekoosa Corporation. Thus, after 1985, it was no longer a Nekoosa subsidiary. Nekoosa Envelope Company consists of 14 plants.

#### Whitewood Post and Pole Company

Located in Whitewood, South Dakota, the company produced treated and untreated posts and poles, lumber, and treated wooden basements, as well as wood chips for papermaking. The plant operated as a subsidiary of Nekoosa Papers Inc., from its purchase in 1975 to its sale in 1981.

#### East Texas Iron Co.

Incorporated in Texas in 1975, this company is a land holding company in Texas. Although the title implies mining ventures, no iron ore has ever been mined.

There were some other subsidiary companies in the family of Nekoosa. Some served us directly, com-

plementing our business, while others were operated as community services. Some of those community service subsidiaries are listed here. All have been dissolved on the records of Nekoosa Papers Inc.

Nepco Airways

Tri City Flying Service

Tri City Airways

Wisconsin Rapids Street Railway Co.

Shanagolden Investment Co.

Sturgeon Lake Transportation Co. Ltd.

One of Nekoosa's financial officers publicly stated that Nekoosa Papers Inc., always got "burned" when venturing out of the business it knows best—papermaking or associated endeavors.

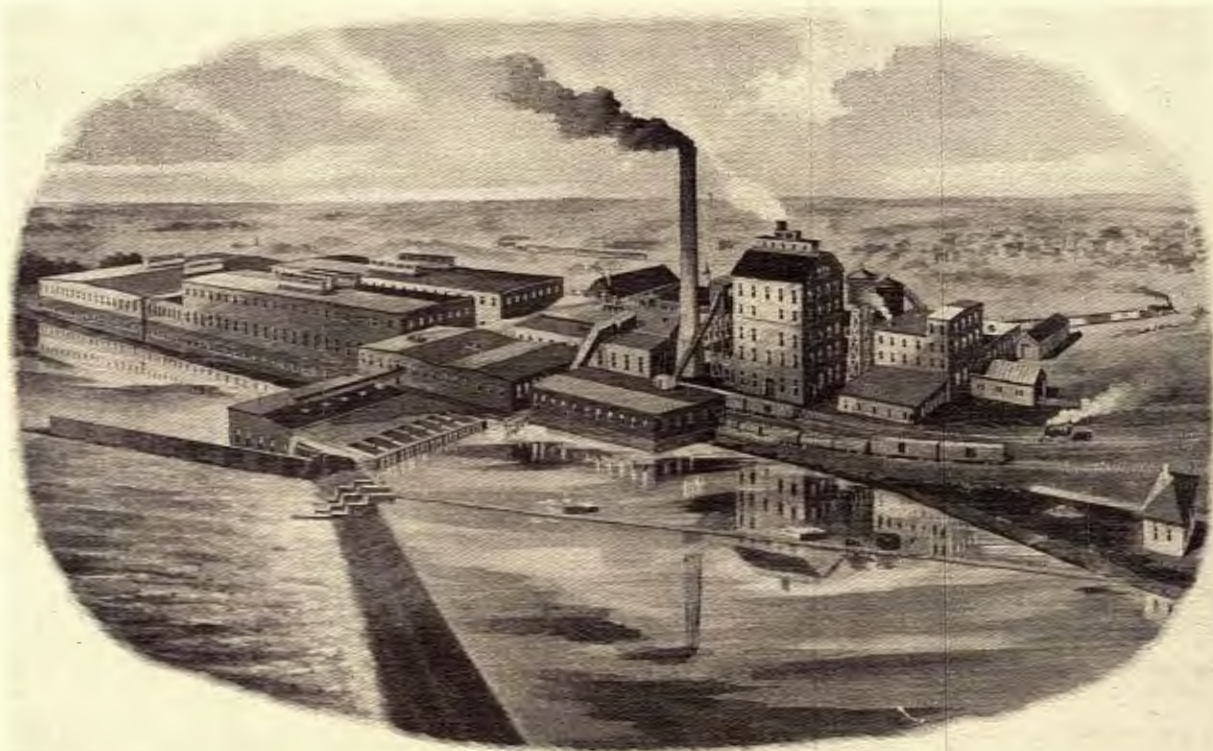
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Marplex Products is located in Rhinelander, Wisconsin and is a producer of hardwood lumber. In addition they manufacture

skids, pallets and wood chips for Nekoosa Papers Inc., as well as for other customers.

## Chapter Thirty-Six: An Appropriate Mouthful



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An artist's rendition of the Nekoosa Paper Company in the early 1900's when several of the Wisconsin paper mills were con-

sidering consolidation. The artist has enhanced the proportions of the mill including a reflection of the buildings in the river.

In its one hundred years of papermaking history, this company, like most other companies, has at times promoted mergers, while at other times it has fought them. We can reflect on the former, but actually we have not had to "fight off" any takeovers.

met secretly in Neenah, Wisconsin, to work out a proposed merger of the two companies.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, those fledgling paper mills that made up Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, did consider a possible merger around the turn of the century. Most of the mills in Wisconsin and Minnesota were being considered as candidates for joining the International Paper Company group. Instead, three of the mid-Wisconsin mills carried out their own consolidation forming Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company.

Consolidated's president, George Mead, had suggested it. His proposal was based on the fact that certain departments such as traffic, purchasing, and sales could be combined, thereby cutting costs for each mill. The new purchasing department, for instance, would have more "clout" in making purchasing contracts. Furthermore, Consolidated needed a source of chemical pulp to augment their ground-wood fiber supply. Nepco was operating two sulphite pulp mills and a kraft operation. We had the chemical pulp that Consolidated needed.

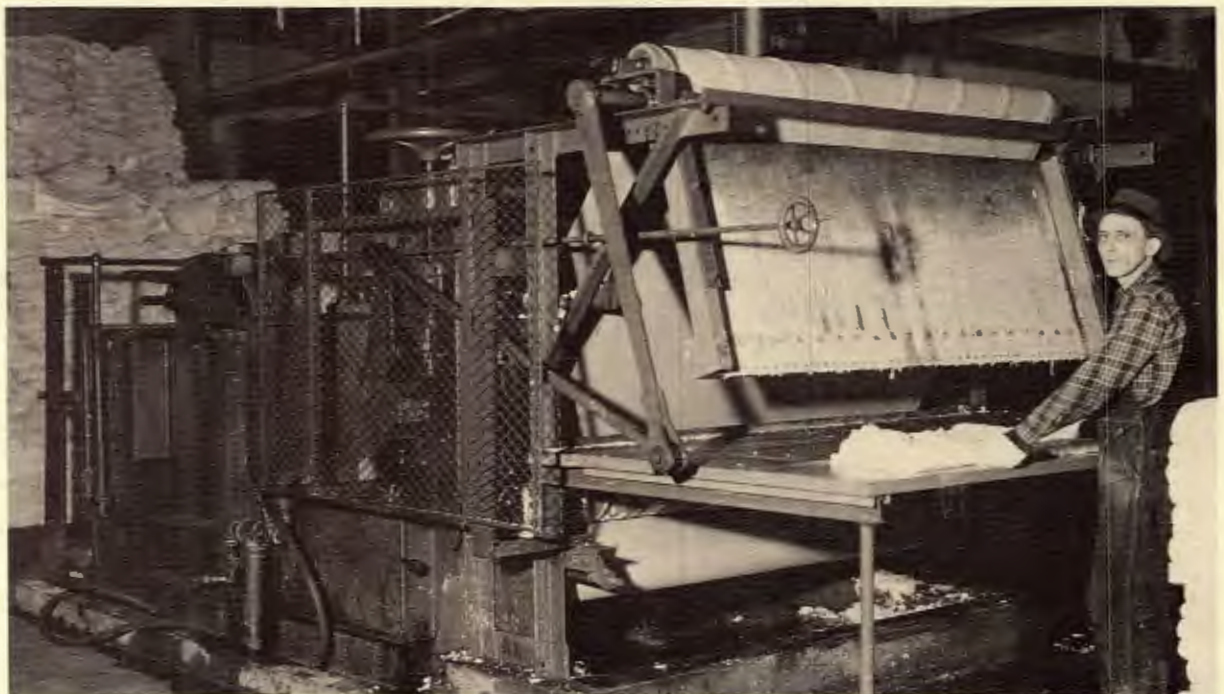
The next merger fever rose in temperature in 1919. While a personnel department coped with strike-related problems, Nepco management and managers of Consolidated Water Power and Paper Company

The transactions went so far as to even propose a name for the new company, which would have been Consolidated Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company. As one Nepco official involved in the merger talks stated, "It's quite a mouthful but is deemed ap-



John Edwards Manufacturing Company's grinder room about the time merger proposals were being discussed just after the turn

of the century. A grinding stone is shown on the left while a bank of grinders are on the right.



NEPCO's supply of chemical pulp was an incentive that made it a desirable partner for another mill in a 1919 proposed merger.

In the photo, sulfite pulp is being formed into laps on a Rogers wet machine.

propriate for a company of these proportions."

The proposal was dropped, however, the reason never being found out by this writer. Consolidated



Upon completion of the successful merger of Nekoosa Papers Inc. and Great Northern Paper Company in 1970, the logo shown on this beverage glass was adopted to indicate that two smaller companies could now stand up to the bigger companies.

built a sulphite pulp mill and Nepco went back to healing its wounds from the strike.

In 1968 merger fever again erupted when Nekoosa-Edwards entered into discussions with Continental Can Company. After several meetings over a period of several months, the proposal was dropped, and the fever rapidly subsided as Nekoosa "kicked the can." Sam Casey, Nekoosa-Edwards president in 1969, stated in a letter to the trade, "We are in communication papers. They just aren't compatible with the Continental Can Line."

The last time the fever emerged, it climaxed with

a successful merger between Great Northern Paper Company and Nekoosa Papers Inc., in 1970. At that time, the name of the Great Northern Paper Co. was changed to Great Northern Nekoosa Corp., and in this name it still operates under an old 1897 Maine charter. Nekoosa Papers Inc., is a wholly-owned subsidiary. Until 1974, Great Northern operated as a division of the newly named company. Then, however, it became two separate organizations, Great Southern Paper Co. and Great Northern Paper Co., each a division of Great Northern Nekoosa. Now, Great Northern Nekoosa Corp., with its executive offices in Stamford, Connecticut, is technically the old Great Northern Paper Co., which is now a division of Great Northern Nekoosa.

Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company shares moved from the over-the-counter market to the "big board"—the New York Stock Exchange. It is now part of a company that is included in Fortune's Top Five Hundred companies.

All of this enabled Nekoosa to establish a better foundation to raise needed capital for its Ashdown expansion program. On the other hand, the amalgamation of the companies gave Great Northern Paper Company a market outlet for its products via Nekoosa's wholly-owned merchant network. Neither mill was a competitor of the other in the paper market. Rather, they now complemented each other's lines of paper.

It is worthy to note that two of Great Northern Nekoosa's three presidents had their roots at Nekoosa. S. A. Casey began his career in Nekoosa's legal department, and W. Laidig started out in Nekoosa's engineering department.

Was it a success? The corporate growth of Great Northern Nekoosa since 1970 attests to a resounding "yes." The two little guys were now able to stand up to the big guy.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven: Two Castoffs

An urge to expand in the paper business became the goal of Nekoosa Papers Inc., in the 1950's. The route chosen to accomplish this was via acquisitions of other mills in contrast to the alternate route of expansion of existing facilities. It was this situation that brought about the acquisition of two mill properties during this era—the Potsdam and Plover mills.

In 1867 a sawmill was built by George W. Sisson at a site on the Racquette River, two miles north of Potsdam, New York. In 1890 Sisson and James Outterson persuaded a group of local Potsdam men, including Sisson, to build a paper mill. Thus, the Racquette River Paper Company was born. Corporation papers were signed on February 10, 1892, with a capital stock of \$50,000 authorized. This was about a year before the incorporation of the Nekoosa Paper Company.

The mill established a national reputation for its products which consisted of wrapping grades, but-

cher paper, envelope paper, and converting specialties.

In 1925 a bleach plant was added to the property, and the Racquette River Paper Company entered the fine paper field. In 1929 the management foresaw a promising future in the further conversion of its products as a part of their own production. They, therefore, purchased a German made embossing machine and began making a Rexall Drug Company embossed wrapping paper.

A new converting plant was built in 1938 to house the embossing machines, as well as a battery of new printing machines to make decorative wrapping papers. A paper bag factory was added in 1951.

In 1955 the Sisson family interests in the Racquette River Paper Company were transferred to the Orchard Paper Company, which operated the paper mill as a subsidiary until the summer of 1957 when

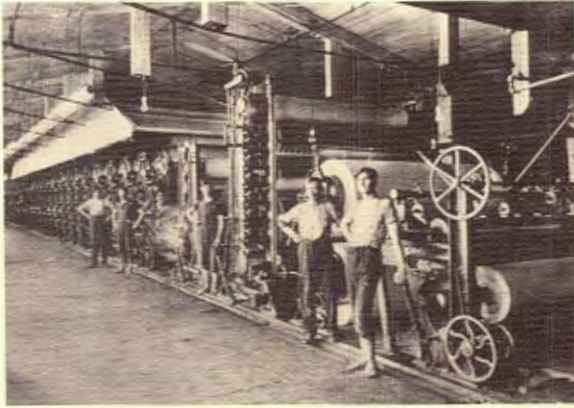
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An early aerial view of the Whiting Plover Paper Company. Raw materials entered at the lower portion of the "U" shaped building

and worked their way around to exit as cotton fiber paper at the upper right portion of the building.

Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company purchased the mill.



Number one paper machine in the Potsdam mill, is shown in this 1912 picture. This machine produced paper for Nekoosa Edwards after the mill had been purchased by them.

Under Nekoosa ownership, the Potsdam plant produced two lines of products. Complimenting our Wisconsin tonnage of business papers, Potsdam produced about 100 tons per day of these grades primarily for the eastern market. In addition, they continued to produce a line of converting papers which were sold to the converting plant on the property. These papers were for decorative cover and wrapping uses.

After 22 years of operation, Nekoosa-Edwards decided to dispose of the operation in 1977, and accordingly, sold the mill to a group of investors who then assumed operation of the facility.

A paper mill located at the confluence of the Plover and Wisconsin Rivers came under the dominance of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1964, where it remained until it was sold 17 years later in 1981.

In 1887 George Whiting became associated financially with L. M. Alexander, Frank Garrison, George Steele, and J. D. Witter. This group was responsible for building the first paper mill on the Wisconsin River, the Centralia Water Power and Paper Company.

Whiting now ventured out on his own, moving north about 20 miles to a site on the Wisconsin River

just south of Stevens Point. At this location, the abundant water power permitted him to build two paper mills separated by two miles of rocky river bed.

One of these mills, built in 1892, was the Whiting-Plover Paper Company. When completed, the mill cost in the neighborhood of \$200,000.

Two paper machines were installed to produce fine writing paper and book paper. However, the production of fine writing paper was hampered by the lack of clean water supply, the river water being traditionally dark colored and unsuitable for fine paper manufacturing. Geologists and well drillers told Whiting that well water in quantity was not available in the area. However, Whiting persisted and in 1912 Whiting Spring was tapped just a short distance from the mill. The spring produces to this day a source of crystal clear water sufficient to supply the paper making needs of the mill.

With this abundant source of fresh, clean water for fine paper production, the mill was converted to the production of cotton fiber paper exclusively. The name was changed to Whiting-Plover Paper Company in 1912.

The two-machine mill was purchased by Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1964 in exchange for 37,500 shares of preferred Nekoosa-Edwards stock.

Plover's grades of paper were added to our stock list of business papers, but still retained their own identifying mill names.

In 1980 the Plover mill underwent a strike of 59 days. Shortly after, in 1981, the mill was offered for sale and was purchased by a mill in eastern Wisconsin.

The tonnage of paper Nekoosa sacrificed from the disposing of these two plants was more than replaced by the expansion of our Ashdown facility. Furthermore, many of the grades being made by these two mills were doing nothing to enhance the sale of our Nekoosa Business Papers. Thus, they became the castoffs.

# Chapter Thirty-Eight: To Exist Perpetually

To record the financial transactions of this corporation would result in a much too complicated and detailed volume. Furthermore, a lot of facts, figures, and charts only create a textbook on economics—and they are usually dull! One Nekoosa sales manager used to tell his guests that, “Nekoosa’s mill tours show you everything except the washrooms and the corporate books. The washrooms are reserved for the employees and the corporate ledgers we show only to the IRS.”

Upon incorporation of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1908, a charter was granted by the State of Wisconsin. Said charter states that this company is incorporated to, “exist perpetually.” However, there were times during the years following 1908, that it was quite questionable as to whether this company would exist indefinitely. Fortunately, it survived through those turbulent years.

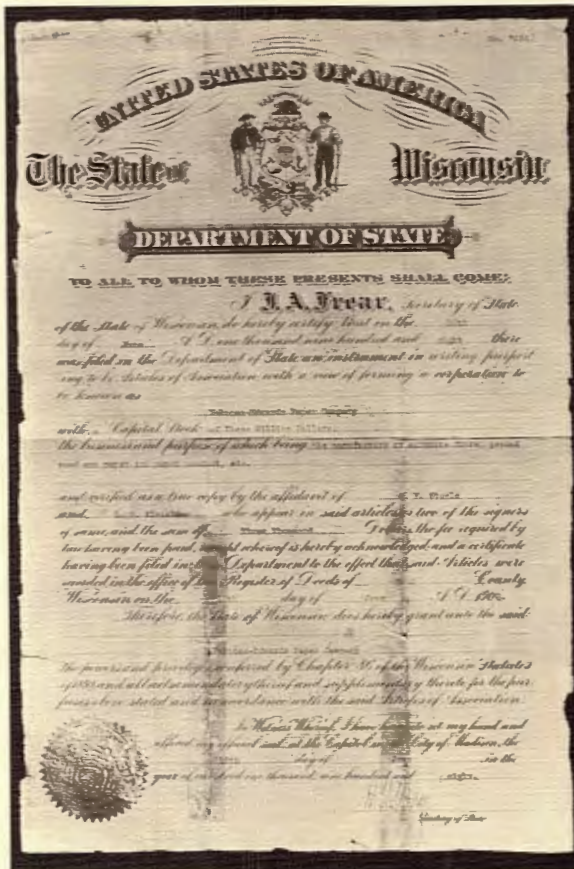
Passing over the years between 1908 and 1930, there is not a lot to dwell on. Some major expansions and capital investments took place in the last 1920’s, and the records indicate that from 1921 to 1930 over six million dollars were spent in capital improvements. They included, among other things, two paper machines.

In 1923 a bond offering was issued and \$600,000 was raised for capital improvements. This was primarily for hydroelectric generating capacity and the building of our Nepco Lake water supply.

Five years later, another bond issue was authorized in the amount of ten million dollars. Of this, only three and a half million dollars were actually issued at an interest rate of five percent. With this money, the 1923 bond issue of \$600,000 was redeemed, thereby leaving three million dollars to be used for extensive expansion in both of the mills. Included were the two Yankee paper machines, pulp mill expansions, and a new finishing room at Port Edwards.

Now Nekoosa-Edwards ran into some financial troubles. The 1930’s and those unpopular depression years fell upon Nepco. In 1932 payment on the bonds could not be made, nor could the interest be paid. A promise to pay on January 1, 1934 was not kept. Accordingly, on January 1, 1934, a letter was sent to the bond holders, outlining how bad business was and how costs continued to rise. “We regret to inform you,” the letter stated, “but we can’t pay.” The letter suggested sending the bonds to a named bank for payment sometime in 1934, as a new plan of financing was being worked on with the bank’s assistance. Said plan promised payment sometime in 1934.

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Charter granted to Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1908 by the State of Wisconsin.

Nevertheless, there are some important highlights in our past that were definitely influenced by financial transactions. It is some of those highlights that will be reviewed in this chapter. The numbers become exceptionally interesting when compared with today’s economy.



The plan called for an extension of payment of the 1928 bonds to 1943. It didn't help, for in 1937 Nekoosa-Edwards once again defaulted in their payments, there being a little over two and a half million dollars in unpaid securities.

The First Wisconsin Trust Company sent an "overseer" into management's ranks to look after their investment. Joseph Auchter was that person, arriving in 1934. With a tenth grade education, he entered the banking business as a typist. Now he would closely watch the purse strings of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company until his "resignation" in 1939.

Things did not greatly improve under Auchter. In fact, at times they even became worse. Sales in 1934 were \$3,984,711. A corporate operating budget for maintenance and improvements was only \$671,985. Any expenditure over five hundred dollars had to be approved by the president of the company. In 1933 outstanding Federal taxes amounted to \$171,928.50 and Nekoosa was forced to mortgage their water rights on the Wisconsin River to the IRS

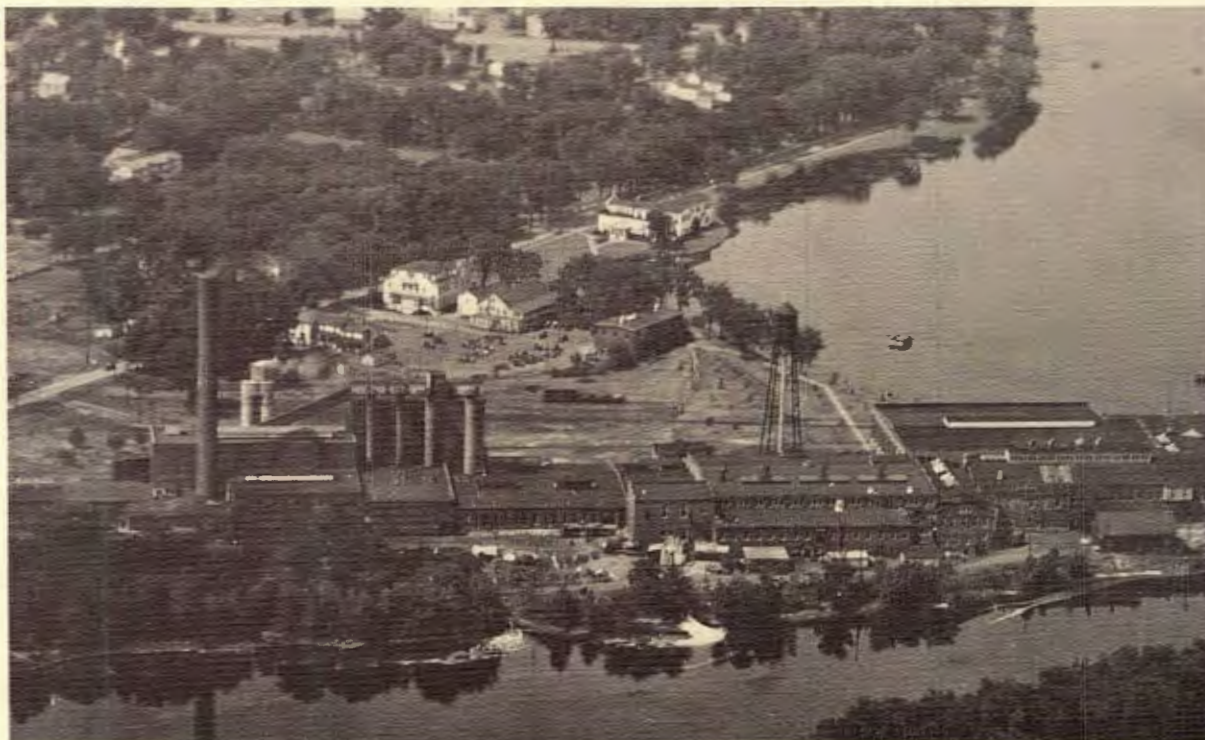
to secure payment of the taxes due. Later, settlement would be made by the forfeiting of land titles in northern Wisconsin to the Federal Park System.

In fact, there were times when Nepco's treasurer, C. A. Jaspersen, asked Nekoosa's president, L. M. Alexander if he couldn't make a personal loan to Nekoosa-Edwards to cover a payroll or bond payment!

The year 1934 saw the tax bill grow to \$239,236 and Nepco was forced to make a second mortgage on its property. In addition, Nekoosa assigned 450 shares of Nekoosa-Edwards Light and Power Company and 770 shares of Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company to the IRS as security on its debt, while they struggled to pay \$6,000 a month on the tax bill.

The year 1937 seems to have been the turning point of Nekoosa-Edwards in its financial struggle. Remember what happened in 1937! It was the year we made our debut in the fine watermarked paper-business. To put it bluntly, it saved the day and Joe

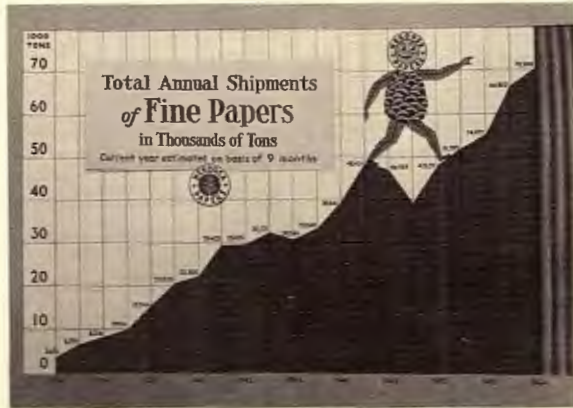
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Nekoosa always maintained their plants in excellent condition, whether the periods were financially good or bad. This is an air

view of the Port Edwards mill about 1940.

Auchter was sent back to his Milwaukee bank!



Growth chart portrays the phenomenal growth that Nekoosa's fine papers made in their first twenty years after introduction. The first three years represent sales of NEPCO BOND.

In 1940 the outstanding bonds, slightly over two million dollars worth, were reissued at a lower interest rate. Guy Babcock, president of Wood County National Bank of Wisconsin Rapids, was appointed vice president and treasurer of Nekoosa-Edwards, which probably indicates the refinancing source.

Again in 1942, the bonds were called in, only to be reissued at a still lower interest rate.

The war years were in progress and demand for Nekoosa Papers was constantly growing. Following the close of World War II, Nekoosa capitalized on the reputation it had established and in 1945 brought out a new bond issue of two and a half million dollars. Half of this retired the 1942 bonds and half was used for postwar improvements in the plant. In 1946 additional funds were forthcoming from a new stock issue of 63,000 shares of Nepco stock. This raised roughly 1.6 million dollars which also went toward plant improvement. Then in 1950 another bond issue was made, this one in the amount of two and a quarter million dollars; said funds to be used for improvements and the retiring of all previously issued and still outstanding bonds.

In 1951 shareholders authorized a loan of five million dollars to purchase and install a new paper machine in the Nekoosa mill.

It seems that this chapter has become just what it

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Air view of Nekoosa plant in 1940's. The markings on the roof indicate to pilots, the direction of north, the direction to the

nearest airport, and that they are passing over the city of Nekoosa.



Group of shareholders tour Nepco Lake Nursery following a shareholders' meeting. George Kilp, Manager of NEPCO Wood-

lands Department explains the nursery operations.

was not supposed to be; a textbook in economics and business finance. There were other bond issues, including the largest of them all, the Ashdown mill bond issue. However, that and other issues, were really industrial development bonds issued by a municipality and only guaranteed by Nekoosa.

Following the merger with Great Northern Paper Company, all major funding has come from the parent company, Great Northern Nekoosa Corpora-

tion; and that is beyond the scope of this book.

Incidentally, throughout this book references have been made to Nepco, Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, and Nekoosa Papers Inc. The title used in the text in a particular chapter is the one in use at that period in history. In 1976 the name Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company was changed to Nekoosa Papers Inc.; to live on and "exist perpetually." This truly becomes a challenge for the company to achieve.

## Chapter Thirty-Nine: Why Ashdown?

It's April 30th, 1966, and the annual shareholder's meeting is in progress. The group sits in awe. They are spellbound as they listen to a fantastic proposal being outlined for them. They are being told Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company is going to build, from the ground up, a new pulp and paper mill. The pulp mill will be capable of producing four hundred tons of pulp daily, while the new paper machine will turn out at least two hundred tons of paper daily! The cost of the project is what really stuns them—forty-six million dollars! Actually, it would exceed that figure, being closer to fifty-four million dollars by the time of completion. No need, however, to startle these investors any more than necessary at this point.

Shareholders were put somewhat at ease when told that even though this would be Nekoosa-Edwards' largest ever single investment, they should have no fear. The city of Ashdown (where's Ashdown?) was going to finance the building of the mill by issuing industrial development bonds to be guaranteed and redeemed by Nekoosa-Edwards over a twenty-year period. Thus, the city of Ashdown (that's in Arkansas) was the actual owner of the mill for the first twenty years.

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Nekoosa Edwards Management officials along with government officials break ground for Nekoosa's new mill in Ashdown, Arkansas, July 12, 1966.

That was the end of April 1966. Seventy-three days later, on July 12, 1966, ground was broken in ceremonies that would culminate with similar fan-

fare two years and five days later when the mill started up.



Nekoosa Edwards was a welcome neighbor in Ashdown, Arkansas. This sign appeared on a utility pole in down town Ashdown.

Now there converged on the small town of Ashdown (that's twelve miles from Texarkana) some two thousand construction workers. Brown and Root Contractors were awarded the turn-key contract. They, in turn, scoured the southwest to find trade craftsmen, engineers, teamsters, equipment operators, and laborers. Ashdown (not Ashton) grew from 3,400 to nearly 6,000 people as workers moved into mobile homes or rented any available housing. In fact, rooms were rented by the shift; one person occupying the accommodation while his partner was home for a few days.

Why Ashdown, Arkansas? It is reputed to take three basic commodities to make paper. One must have cellulose fiber. There were three and one-half million acres of dense forest lands within a fifty-mile radius of the mill. Furthermore, replenishing of cut-over lands required only half the number of years that were needed in the North, due to a longer annual growing season.

Secondly, one needs water—lots of it. Millwood Reservoir was only a few miles away and guaranteed a constant year-round source of water for the mill.

Thirdly, the human touch is needed to manipulate the fiber and water in order to form a sheet of paper. Ashdown had an abundance of labor available. Four hundred and twenty-five people would be permanently employed at startup of the mill. Oh yes, and the fact that the city was willing to risk its "all" in staking a forty-six million dollar bond issue, also helped persuade Nekoosa to build a mill there. Thirty-four hundred men, women and children were laying their pocketbooks on the line to raise forty-six million dollars. That's almost thirteen thousand dollars per person. Nekoosa papers, however, was guaranteeing payment of the debt.

Finally, the site would provide fast service to Nekoosa's ever growing Southwest market.

Target date for the startup was August 1, 1968, but that date was advanced to July 17 when the mill

began operation. A formal dedication followed on November 8, 1968, with many state and national dignitaries participating.



An early airview of construction of the Ashdown mill. The buildings with the white roofs are buildings erected first to be used as headquarters and shops for the contractor. The warehouse to the rear was built first to provide a place to store incoming parts.

Ashdown's first paper machine was named The Communicator, commemorating John E. Alexander. This unit was capable of producing in excess of

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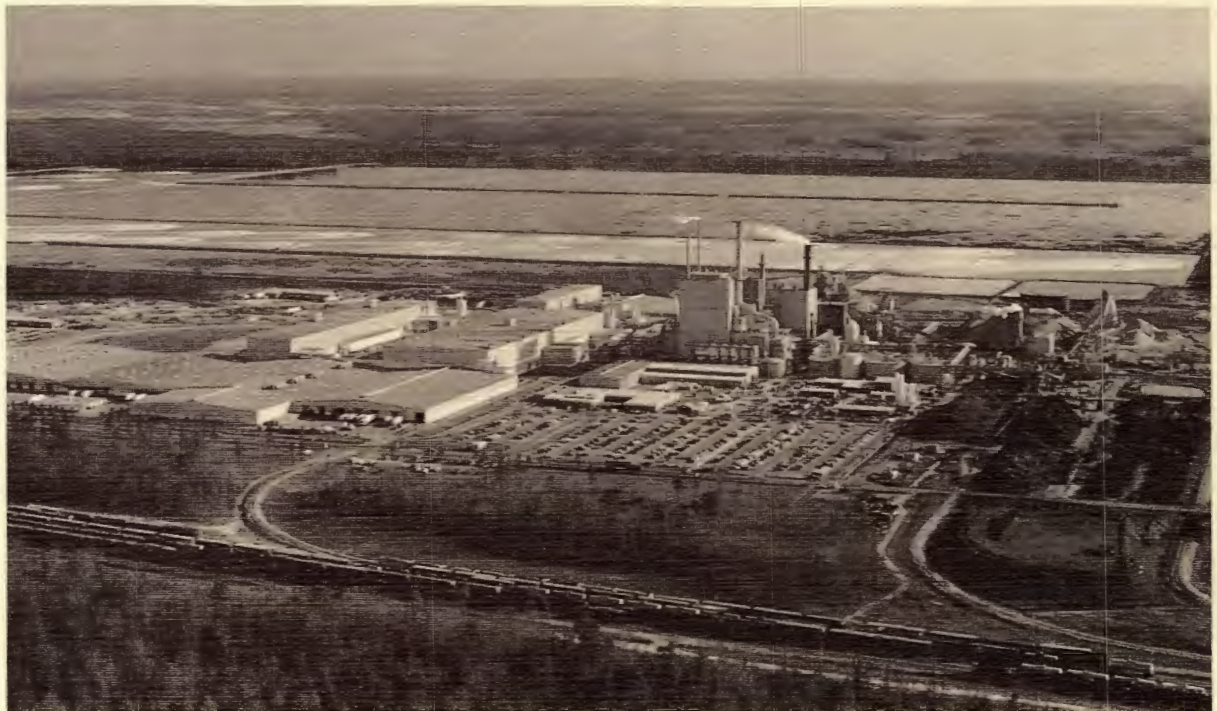
Ashdown's first paper machine is being erected in this view of the mill interior in 1967. Although a giant when built, the machine

would be superseded by two larger machines, built along side of this one in years to follow.



Illustrated is the Ashdown mill after completion of phase one.

This is how the single machine mill appeared in 1968.



Current status of the mill at Ashdown is shown in this view. Three paper machines and two pulp mills occupy the site. Behind the

mill is part of the waste treatment site. Shown is the one square mile stabilization pond.

65,000 tons of fine paper annually.

Things ran smoothly following startup, and Ashdown settled down to its normal routine. Its population returned to more conventional numbers, but not for long. After all, the mill site consisted of 1,900 acres, and only a small portion of that land was being utilized. Therefore, in 1973, an announcement was made that Ashdown would be expanded by the addition of a second machine, at a cost of thirty-nine million dollars. The 308-inch machine was called Enterprise II, and it began operation in the summer of 1975.

Nekoosa, however, does not rest on its laurels. Rather, it strives to achieve new goals. In January of 1978 it was announced that a third expansion of the mill would be undertaken. This time, the pulp mill and paper mill would be increased in capacity. A new pulp mill would be built alongside the present pulp mill. Using a continuous digester for pulping wood, 280,000 additional tons of pulp would be added to the annual production. A third paper machine, The Challenger, would add 130,000 tons of paper annually to Nekoosa Papers' production capabilities.

If shareholders were stunned in 1966 when an expenditure of forty-six million dollars was proposed, what then was their reaction in January of 1978, when they were told that this new expansion in

Ashdown had a price tag of two hundred and forty-five million dollars!

The Challenger started production in 1980 and represented the "State of the Art" in papermaking equipment. Built in Finland, the machine was assembled in the plant of Valmet, then disassembled and shipped to Ashdown where it was reassembled in the mill. The machine operates at speeds in the neighborhood of three thousand feet of paper per minute and produces 130,000 tons of fine paper annually. That can be translated to thirty-four miles of paper an hour! It also represents about 3,250 truckloads of paper annually.

Each time the shareholders heard the name Ashdown mentioned, it meant usually one thing, a new expansion expenditure. Each one had the reputation of being the largest Nekoosa expenditure to date, and each one was larger than the previous one.

The net result of it all is a fine paper mill reputed to be the largest fine paper mill in the world, capable of producing 460,000 tons of paper annually. An additional 75,000 tons of bleached softwood kraft pulp is marketed each year after satisfying its needs for the three paper machines. Some of this excess pulp is utilized in the Wisconsin mills.

Where's Ashdown? Three miles from Nekoosa's paper mill in Arkansas!

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Local citizens stare in amazement at Number 61 paper machine at Ashdown. This photo was taken on the day of the dedication

of the Ashdown mill.

## Chapter Forty: Heart and Soul

The dictionary defines soul as "a necessary or center part." Certainly, the paper machines that make the paper for our company would qualify for the title of "soul of the paper industry." That one object which keeps pumping life into something is a heart. In our simile, the crews that operate and maintain the paper machine are, in a way, the heart of our industry. Without paper machines and labor to operate them, we would not have paper mills as we know them today. Thus, it is with a certain amount of respect and recognition that we refer to them as the heart and soul of papermaking.

Nekoosa Papers has operated at least twenty-three paper machines over the years, but of these, only twelve are in operation today. Others were sold, some were scrapped, and some were sold as part of a mill sale.

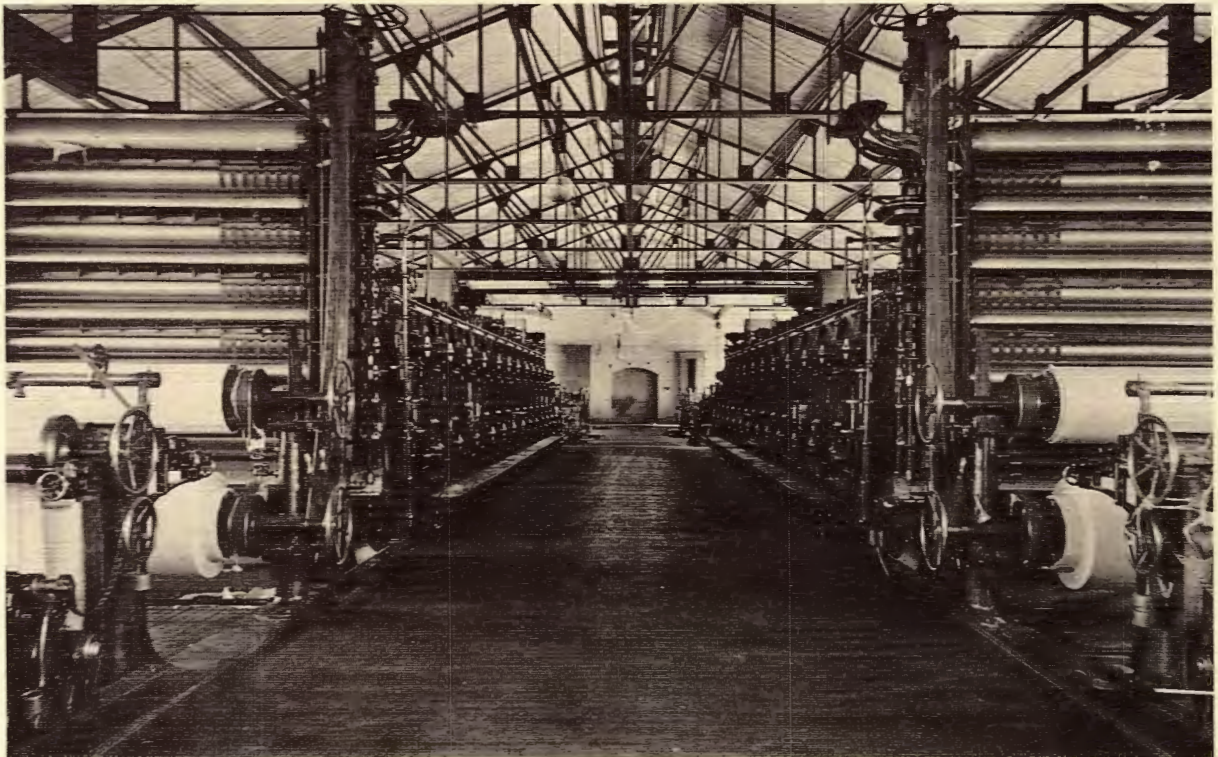
all its own. Furthermore, the crew of each machine could sit and reminisce for hours on the problems, idiosyncrasies, and shortcomings of their prodigy. Likewise, they could boast of the age of the machine and the records it has set.

There follows a chart which outlines some of the more pertinent facts concerning Nekoosa's present complement of paper machines. However, bear in mind the number of operating paper machines does not determine papermaking capacity. One must also consider the size and speed of these machines. Furthermore, the newness of a machine does not necessarily indicate superiority over other machines. Efficient performance comes from the way a crew operates a machine, and the quality of raw materials fed to the paper machine.

Finally, Nekoosa's overall versatility in the marketplace is due to the selectivity it has in its machines.

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Each of these machines has a personality and history



Wooden floors and an arc light overhead date this photo of a pair of veteran paper machines at Port Edwards. These are

Numbers five and six machines.



There are small machines for the small specialty order, medium size machines for colors, and giant gargantuan for those large volume products. Nekoosa

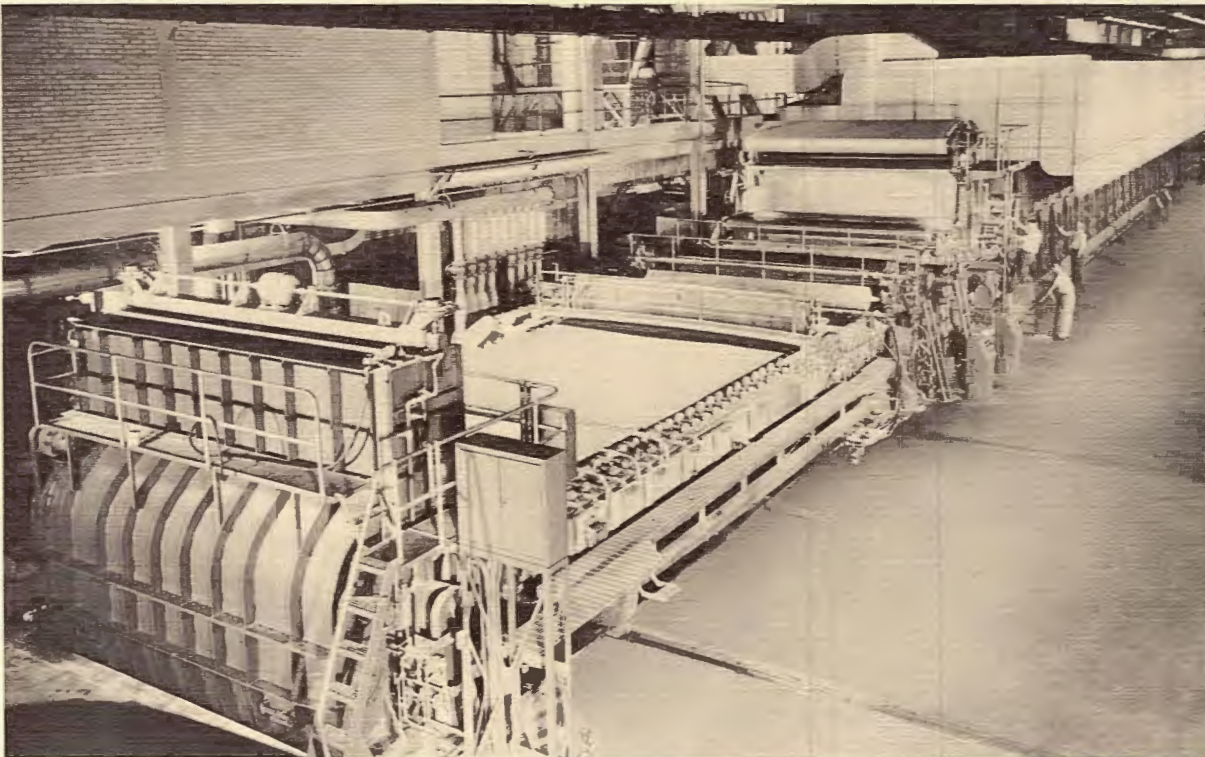
has the facilities to best serve all the needs of its customers.

### NEKOOSA PAPER MACHINES

Machine Number	Location	Year Built	\$ Cost	Width Inches	Remarks
1	Nekoosa	1892	21,400	104	
2	Nekoosa	1961	3.9M	172	The "Charles H. Reese"
3	Nekoosa	1898	26,750	94	
4	Nekoosa	1900	43,000	114	
5	Port Edwards	1896	*	96	(*)Numbers 5 and 6 bought as a pair at total cost of \$57,000.
6	Port Edwards	1896	*	107	
7	Port Edwards	1893	19,100	96	"Columbian" World's Fair Machine.
8	Port Edwards	1966	3.1M	155	"The Paper Merchant"
9	Nekoosa	1952	1.9M	164	"The Pioneer"
61	Ashdown	1968	5.6M	230	"The Communicator"
62	Ashdown	1975	15.5M	308	"Enterprise II"
63	Ashdown	1979	23.7M	238	"The Challenger"

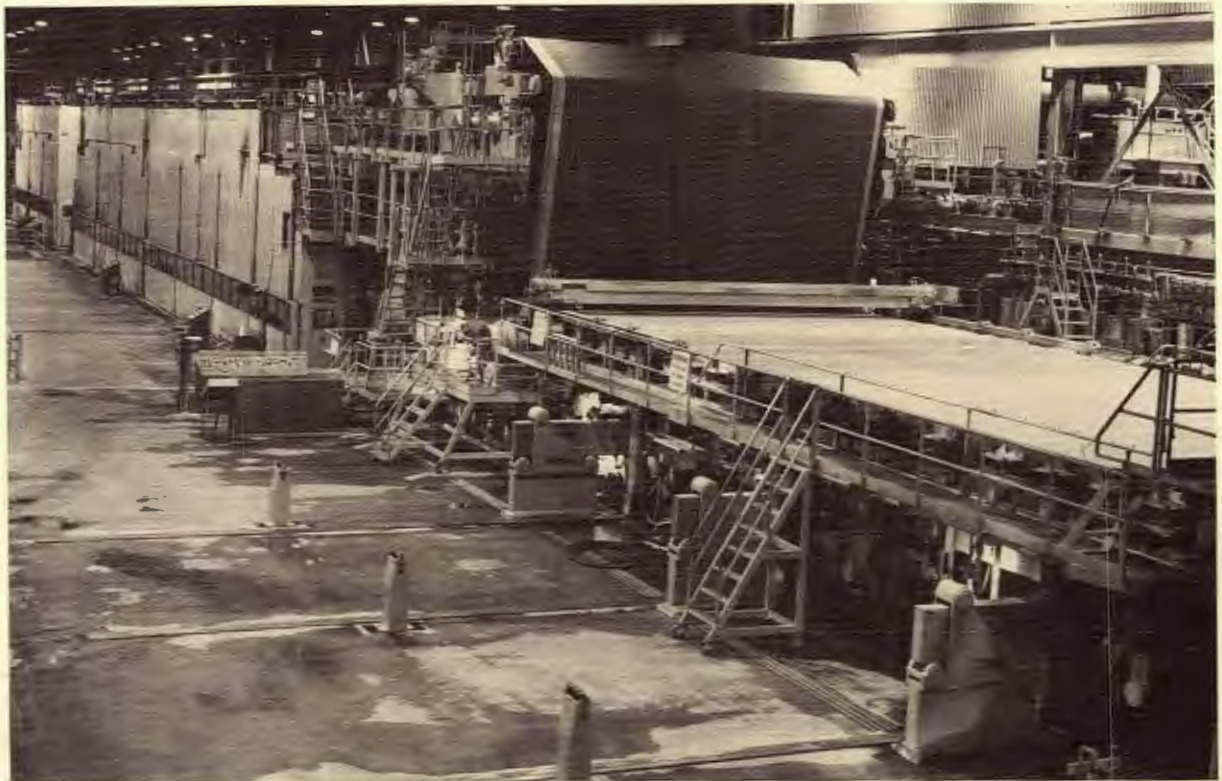
Note: Numbers 7 and 2 are actually the second machines to be so numbered. The first two were purchased as a pair—one for Port Edwards and one for Nekoosa. The cost was three million dollars for the pair. One was moved to Potsdam, New York, and the other sold to a used equipment manufacturer.

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First of the large paper machines was Number Nine machine erected at Nekoosa in 1952 and named the Pioneer in honor of

L. M. Alexander, Nekoosa Edwards' second president.



Enterprise II was the second paper machine to be built in Ashdown. Over three hundred inches wide, this machine is cur-

rently Nekoosa's largest paper machine.



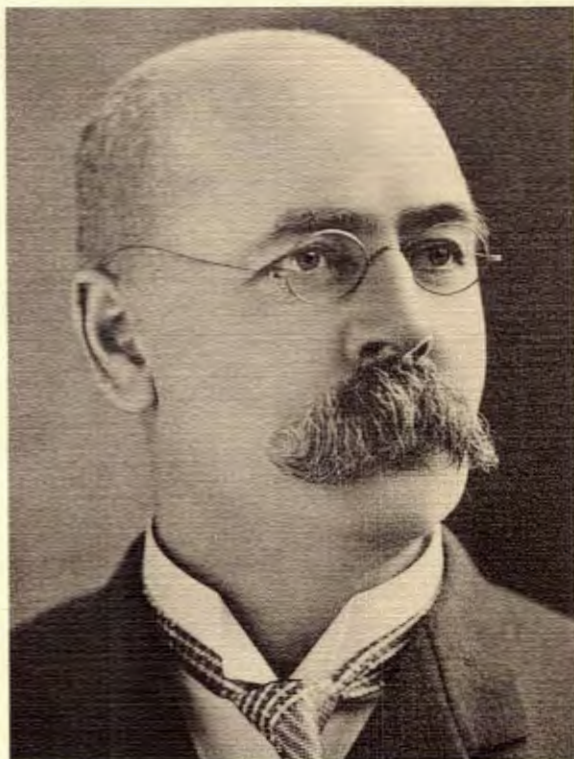
The wet end of Number 4 paper machine at Nekoosa illustrates the state of the art features of paper machines in 1915, i.e., deckle

straps, gravity headbox, screens, and wooden steps.

## Chapter Forty-One: Meet the Presidents

It is not the intention of this book to be a biography of our presidents. However, leadership is always necessary, for without good leaders governments would fall, organizations will become weak, military campaigns are lost, and corporations become weak and fail. Nekoosa Papers Inc., has had good leadership over its corporate history, as is attested to by the success and growth it has experienced.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it will give the reader a brief synopsis of the goals and accomplishments of these presidents. Secondly, it will pay recognition to these men for those accomplishments.



**Thomas E. Nash**

Industrialist, builder of railroads, telegrapher, miller, postal clerk, and statesman; all can be used to describe the honorable Thomas E. Nash, president of the Nekoosa Paper Company and first president of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, 1908-1911.

Born in Ohio in 1852, Tom Nash moved with his

family to Milwaukee where he received his education. At an early age he applied for work with a railroad construction crew, where he learned telegraphy in his spare time, qualifying him for a position as telegraph operator at the age of fourteen.

In 1874 he was made station agent for the Green Bay and Western Railroad at its Shiocton station. Then in 1877 he assumed the same position for the Milwaukee Road, working at Centralia (now Wisconsin Rapids), Port Edwards, and Remington. The railroad appointed him traveling freight agent for the road, a duty he held until 1884, when he was elected to the state legislature as assemblyman.

Following his term in office, he was appointed chief clerk of the Post Office department and later superintendent of Railway Mail Service. In 1888 he and his brother purchased a flour mill in Grand Rapids, Wisconsin.

His railroad building knowledge, gained as a boy some ten years earlier, was again put to use in 1889. He supervised construction of the Port Edwards, Centralia and Northern Railroad from Port Edwards to Marshfield, which later became part of the Soo Line.

The year 1891 saw Nash start the development of the Nekoosa Paper Company at the site of Witney's Rapids, having acquired the waterpower rights from Frank and George Wood. He was active in managing this company until its incorporation into the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1908.

Upon formation of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1908, Thomas Nash was elected president of the corporation, a position which he held until 1911 when, due to failing health, he was compelled to resign. Nash closed an active career and life in 1917 at the age of 65.

### **Lewis M. Alexander**

A native of Iowa, Lewis Alexander summarized his own career in a letter he prepared for reading at the 1933 shareholders' meeting. Illness prevented his attendance, and he died before the 1934 meeting.



Lewis M. Alexander

*"In January of 1889 I came to Port Edwards, a settlement with a population of about one hundred. Nekoosa was a marsh and wild country on the west side of the Wisconsin River. Centralia, including the south side, had barely a thousand people, and Grand Rapids possibly twelve hundred. Roads were almost unworked and one train a day of not very inviting equipment served the area. To these surroundings, I was earnestly invited to cast my lot. I did so.*

*"Opportunity arose to make a strong virile community, developing at first south Centralia, then Nekoosa, and lastly Port Edwards. Time and work moved us ahead rapidly. Nine men put their shoulders to the wheel and we went forward.*

*"Prior to my coming to Port Edwards, I was engaged in the banking business in California. Then Mr. John Edwards, Jr., whom I had met during the California gold rush days, invited me to join him in operating his lumbering business at Port Edwards. I accepted his offer and came to Port Edwards where we organiz-*

*ed the John Edwards Manufacturing Company. Upon the death of Edwards in 1891, I became president. However, it was a perturbing sight for me to see that the choicest trees had been removed from the forests. No longer could we obtain large white pine trees with which to run the mill profitably. All that remained was an abundance of small trees that had been rejected by the woodsmen. If the John Edwards Manufacturing Company was to remain in business, and Port Edwards was not to become a ghost town, it would be necessary to follow in the footsteps of Thomas Nash and Frank Garrison and convert the lumbering business into the manufacture of pulp and paper which could utilize these small trees.*

*"In 1896, I directed the dismantling of the old sawmill and erected in its place a groundwood pulp mill and a two-machine paper mill. During this time I was active in the management of the Nekoosa Paper Company, the Centralia Pulp and Water Power Company, and the Port Edwards Fiber Company. My partners and I decided that it would be to our advantage to incorporate the four mills into one company. This we did in 1908, forming the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company of which I was vice-president. Upon the retirement of Thomas Nash in 1911, I was elected president.*

*"Under my direction, the Nekoosa mill added the kraft and sulphite pulping facilities. The Port Edwards mill expanded, primarily in the pulp mill and finishing facilities. I saw the addition of two new paper machines to our mills. One of my greatest projects was the building of Nepco Lake as a supply of fresh, clean water for our mills. The conversion of mills from steam and water power to electric power was done during my term as president. The highlight of this step in progress was the building of the Centralia hydro-electric plant."*

Alexander was also active in the management of other paper mills, banks, and paper sales organizations. He was involved with three real estate companies and two woodworking companies. A founder of the Institute of Paper Chemistry, he was a trustee

of that college or its parent college, Lawrence University, for thirty-five years. He personally donated one gymnasium to the University and when it became outdated, he contributed half of the funds for a newer and larger facility.

After an active business, civic, social, and religious career, L. M. Alexander's term as president of Nekoosa-Edwards terminated upon his death in 1934.



**John E. Alexander**

Born in 1894 in Port Edwards, John Alexander graduated from the Armour Institute of Technology with a degree in chemical engineering. World War I was building up to a climax at that time and accordingly, Alexander became one of the first navy pilots. Upon the termination of the war, Alexander joined Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in the position of chief chemist. In 1925 he was made general manager. Upon the death of his father in 1934, he became president, serving in that capacity until being made Chairman of the Board in 1962. In this position he served until his death in 1963.

Alexander wrote, in a letter to his father in 1918,

*"I realize that I am at the bottom of the ladder and at the beginning of my career which I hope will be a successful and a Christian one. I am young and have many things to learn and accomplish."*

And accomplish he did! In another letter he wrote to an associate of his in 1927.

*"It is my ambition to again, at least during my lifetime, double the production of these mills (then 230 tons per day), and I see no reason why it should not be possible to realize and produce three hundred to five hundred tons of paper daily at our mills. This may sound incredible to you, but I am young and ambitious and do not lack the courage of my convictions to feel that eventually this program will be realized and my dream fulfilled. I will be glad to discuss with you in detail and show you plans for Nos. 9 and 10 paper machines, and perhaps even 11 and 12 machines."*

With these goals, Alexander took over the presidency of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1934. He led Nekoosa during the depression of the thirties. The company's cash box was no healthier than most others around the country. Faced with this handicap, he managed to bring Nekoosa-Edwards through this crisis and nurtured it into a growing organization to become the leader in the manufacture of writing and printing papers.

In the field of paper technology, he is recognized for several patents which he held pertaining to the production of paper. In the business world, his name is associated with banking as well as papermaking. As for his outside activities, every child in the area recognizes the name John Alexander. Among his many community projects, a favorite is the John E. Alexander South Wood County YMCA Community Center which opened in 1958.

No one will argue with you if you say John is the father of aviation in the Tri-City area, for who had a bigger hand in bringing aviation to the area in 1929 and again in 1959?

John Alexander's list of accomplishments, projects, and hobbies could fill a book. He made not only

his own dreams, but those of his father and his grandfather come true. "But these dreams," he says, "would not have been possible without the help and confidence of the men and women of Nekoosa-Edwards and our communities."



**Samuel A. Casey**

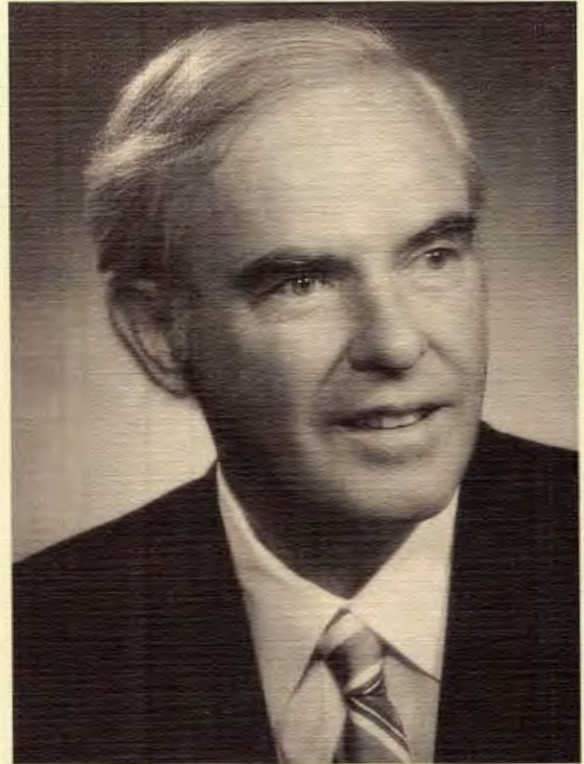
A barrister by training, Sam Casey joined Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company in 1946 as secretary of the company. He became executive vice-president and treasurer in 1954 and then in 1962, upon the semi-retirement of John Alexander, Casey was appointed president.

It was during Casey's tenure as president that Nekoosa-Edwards undertook the all important step to build a pulp and paper mill in Ashdown, Arkansas, in 1966. Also under his direction, Nekoosa-Edwards ventured into cotton fiber papers when they purchased the Whiting-Plover mill in 1964. Thus, Casey saw Nekoosa-Edwards grow into a five-mill complex, although it would not remain that way for long.

Sam was active in the Lake States Pulp and Paper Manufacturers' Association and the American Paper

and Pulp Association. He served in positions of leadership for both organizations.

In 1970 he was honored by the Great Northern Nekoosa Board of Directors when he was appointed president of Great Northern Nekoosa Corporation. He filled that position until his retirement.



**Gerard E. Veneman**

Coming to Nekoosa-Edwards in 1949 as a field salesman, Veneman moved to the home office in Port Edwards in 1953 when he assumed the position of general sales manager. Next, he was elevated to executive vice president and director of sales in 1962. In 1970 he succeeded Sam Casey as president of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, a position from which he retired in 1985.

Under Jerry's leadership, Nekoosa changed its corporate image from "the world's largest manufacturer of food wrapping papers" to "one of the largest, if not the largest, producers of business and writing papers." He accomplished this by directing the installation of two giant paper machines at Ashdown, as well as overseeing the substantial increments in production at the Wisconsin mills.

During Veneman's term as president, Nekoosa became active in the merchant field, having acquired several merchant operations across the country. He also thought it appropriate to diversify Nekoosa's operations, not only in the raw material end of papermaking, but also in the finished product. Accordingly, he was responsible for the acquisition of lumber companies that could serve as a wood chip source, and he also directed the acquisition of several envelope producers which could provide a market for Nekoosa's end product.

Mr. Veneman played an active role in the Writing Paper Manufacturer's Association. In 1981 he had bestowed on him the title of Papermaker of the Year. The president of the American Paper Institute stated in the presentation speech,

*"He is one of the greatest warriors of the paper industry. He is always willing to pitch in and fight on any issue on behalf of the industry."*

In 1984 he was further honored by being chosen as the Citizen of the Year by the Wisconsin Rapids Chamber of Commerce.

### James G. Crump

Nekoosa Papers' presidency is currently filled by Jim Crump who replaced Mr. Veneman in 1985. Jim has had an active career in the paper industry even though his tenure at Nekoosa only covers a period of six years. He came to Nekoosa in 1981 as vice-president of manufacturing.

After securing a degree in paper science from the University of Maine, Jim spent some time with a sister company of Nekoosa, Great Northern Paper Company. He served as technical director and paper mill superintendent.

Jim has created a reputation for himself in the field of employee relations where he has spearheaded an employee involvement program.

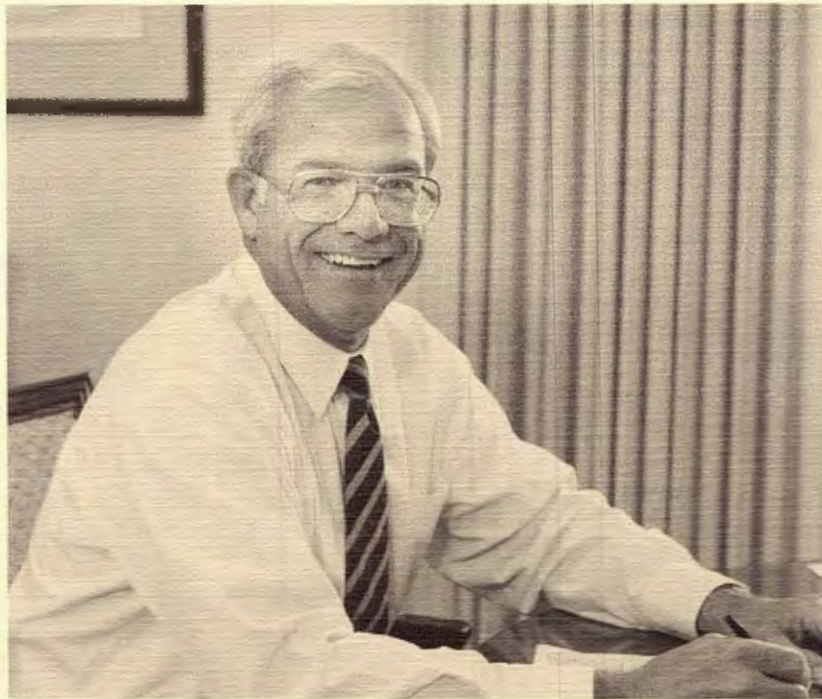
At the time of this publication, Mr. Crump had held the position of leadership for slightly over a year. Thus, it is premature to write of his accomplishments. However, on the following page of this book, Mr. Crump summarizes his goals and Nekoosa's goals for the future of Nekoosa Papers Incorporated.

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Nekoosa's executive office is located in the Port Edwards Administration building. The building retains some association with our past. Rough sawed lumber, historic displays and the

escutcheon from the old Main Office building add interest to the building.



We at Nekoosa Papers are proud of our heritage which goes back 150 years. This was a time when our predecessor, Nekoosa Lumber Company, began sawing the abundant white pine trees into lumber to meet the needs of settlements downstream on the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers. Nekoosa Papers' history, chronicled so well by Marshall Buehler in this book, follows our organization through its move from lumber into the manufacture of commodity paper grades and finally to the high quality business papers where we continue to excel today.

Marshall Buehler has dedicated this book to all of our employees, past and present, who have participated in our growth, from the management people who guided us to the production of ever new and better products, to the many dedicated people who have worked so hard over the years to produce a quality product worthy of the Nekoosa name.

Building on this base, we at Nekoosa Papers dedicate our future to continue to work closely with our customers and provide for their product requirements in an expeditious and efficient manner.

Sincerely,

James G. Crump  
President



## Chapter Forty-Three: Yours Truly



J. Marshall Buehler is a native of Port Edwards. His career with Nekoosa began in 1945 when he was employed, upon graduation from high school, as a lab technician. This position lasted three months due to his being drafted into the army. After a brief army career in a finance office, as well as operating a post theater, he attended Marquette University, majoring in chemistry. During this time, he spent three of his summers in the Nekoosa labs as a lab technician.

After a couple of years of retail merchandising, Buehler returned to the technical department at Nekoosa-Edwards in 1952, hired as a water technician. In 1968 he transferred to the Sales Department, where today he serves as Manager of Customer Relations and Internal Transportation.

Marshall has written nearly a hundred historical articles for *Nekoosa News*, all on the history of this company. Other writings of his have been published in the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, *The Papermaker*, and *TAP PI Magazine*.

His interest in local history has earned him the title of "Company Historian." He is a director of the South Wood County Historical Corporation and served as president or vice-president of that group for fourteen years.

He is responsible for originating and maintaining the Nekoosa Papers archives collection. This collection was recognized by the Wisconsin State Historical Society in 1963, when they presented an Award of Merit to the company for their efforts in preserving their heritage.

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### INFORMATIONAL SOURCES

#### BOOKS

History of Wood County  
History of Northern Wisconsin  
Lumbering in Wisconsin

#### PERIODICALS

Nekoosa News  
Nepco Digester  
Grand Rapids Tribune  
Hercules Paper Maker

#### SOURCES

Nekoosa Papers Inc., Archives Dept.  
Nekoosa Papers Inc., Records Dept.  
plus

A multitude of current and retired Nekoosa employees