

# ARTIFACTS

## Images *from the* Age of Paper



COVER: Counting sheets at Port Edwards mill of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. President's message by Phil Brown, 2; West Grand Avenue 1971 by Lori Brost, 3-7; NEPCO paper mill photos by J. Marshall Buehler, 8-25; Eight Corners by Scott Brehm, 26-31.

## Reflections at 60



Phil was “born here”: St. Paul, Minn., c. 1955

By Phil Brown, SWCHC President

In the spring of 1972, South Wood County Historical Museum opened its doors to the public for the first time.

Built in 1907 by Isaac and Charlotte Witter, our beautiful facility at 540 Third Street South is our greatest asset. In that spirit, the SWCHC Board of Directors has set up a special maintenance fund and the Building Committee will be consulting with a local inspector to help us determine where our greatest needs are to preserve “The Witter House.”

Founded in 1955 (the year that I was born), SWCHC will celebrate our 60th year in 2015. I also will hit that milestone in January 2015; but it’s not about me. It’s about the many board members, general membership and volunteers who have given so much.

Certainly at the head of that list is our charter board member and long-time volunteer, J. Marshall Buehler, the distinguished Port Edwards historian. On a sad note, this issue of *Artifacts* marks the passing of his beloved wife, Patricia A. Buehler, 86, on August 26, 2014, at River-view Hospital. To Marshall and his family we extend heartfelt condolence.

According to her *Daily Tribune* obituary, Pat was born in 1927 in Port Edwards, the daughter of Arthur and Florence (Lowe) Kennedy. During World War II, her family moved to Manitowoc where her father helped build submarines as a pipe fitter. She graduated from Manitowoc Lincoln High School.

Pat was a teacher who began in a one room country school house. Returning to her hometown of Port Edwards, she reacquainted with Marshall, a childhood classmate; they were married in 1951 at St. Alexander church.

The couple lived in a small apartment above the “old Post office” on Main Street, Port Edwards. Their first child, Kenneth, played in the Post Office lobby. Gretchen was born a year later, and after 10 more years, a third child, Juli.

Pat returned to college to complete her degree at UW-Stevens Point and became a reading specialist in the Nekoosa school district. In 1996, she received the Friends of Education Award from the Port Edwards schools.

She also won an honorary title as the “Crane Countess,” for her support of Wisconsin’s annual Sandhill Crane count.

In her late fifties, Pat learned how to scuba dive and sailed the Caribbean with scientists from Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium. She also explored the coral reefs of Fiji with her friend Bunny Hall.

Pat and Marshall traveled the world in search of history. They walked Civil War battlefields and climbed Mayan ruins in Central America. When their train de-railed in Russia, they shared their cheese and sausage with the train crew. During a trip to Ireland, Pat and her sister, Mary Ellen Belmont, toasted their Irish heritage in pubs at night and prayed in churches the next day.



# Before the Mall

## *West Grand Avenue 1971*

By Lori Brost  
Museum Administrator

I've heard it referred to as "the Rapids that I remember" by so many of our members. But I am too young for those memories. Luckily, it is possible to visit the past through photographs. Even better, I had a fantastic tour guide for this trip, former Rapids police officer and lifetime resident Donald Knuth. Don sat down with Uncle Dave and me to go over a group of photos donated in 1972 by Everett Lambert and Don Andersen, documenting an area marked for the "redevelopment" that would include a new City Hall, Rapids Mall and Riverview Expressway.

Landmark for a generation, the building was purchased from Frank Garber by Leonard and Jeanette Romanski in 1930 and operated as Rapids Meat Market. In 1955, Farnum "Buzz" Bouton rented from the Romanski's and opened Buzz's Bar. Just after this photo, the location was operated by George Dallman as the Cell Block.



In 1911, August Gottschalk and Nate Anderson built Gottschalk & Anderson Grocery Co. at West Grand Avenue and 4th Street. In later years, the property was home to Blenker's TV, run by Mr. & Mrs. Donald Haydock. The final residents were the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department while the new City Hall was being erected. During that time, officer Knuth occupied space above the stairway. The house located to the right was owned by F.F. Bender (brother to L.L. of the Bender Brothers). The next building was constructed by Bethke Chevrolet to be used as an enclosed car lot.

Looking west on Grand Avenue. On the left, the first building is Miller TV. The taller structure next door is the Hiawatha Bar, named after the Hiawatha Depot and the Hiawatha train. Kellogg Brothers Lumber Co., next, was purchased by Marling Lumber, previously located on 3rd Avenue South, bringing an end to the Kellogg family presence here. Further west, the Blue Line Cab and service station and the Standard station can be seen. Across Grand at right is the original home of McKercher Milling Co., which started as a flour mill but in its final days was a feed store. The McKercher family lived on the corner of 10th Avenue and West Grand, where Danny K's currently stands. Metcalf's Rapids Lumber and Supply operates out of the McKercher mill location.



Wisconsin Rapids boasted four railroads and depots at one time. The Milwaukee Road is the one everyone has heard about. Teenagers cruising through town would turn around here and make another lap. The building adjacent is the Railway Express Agency.



Looking west on Grand, first at right is the Bandelin Hotel, operated by Emma Bandelin as a boarding house. In September 1918, Emma died. Her daughter, Aurelia Soucek, sold to Cynthia Holcomb in 1923, shortly after Aurelia's husband's death. In the building later was the Grand Avenue Tap, run by Willis and Vi Hammel. To the left was the "Swarick building" in which Joe and Ann Romanski ran Romanski's Bar on the first floor and rented rooms on the second. In the background is the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific (Milwaukee Road) depot.





Looking east on Grand toward old City Hall. Building at right was owned by optometrist William Weller Sr. Weller Jr. was a watch repairman and jeweler. In later years, the Weller building housed Richard Stensberg Insurance. Next is a tavern owned by, among others, Chet Swarick, whose father, Frank, ran a tavern directly across Grand. Frank was the original owner of the Golden Gate Supper Club. Anderson Bakery originally operated out of the next building; this photo shows Stan Simkowski's Army Surplus Store there. The one-story Bender building at left of center housed a barber shop, café and Red's Dixie Bar, owned by Red Bouton who moved to Rapids as a baseball player. His brother, Buzz, tended bar for Red prior to opening Buzz's Bar.



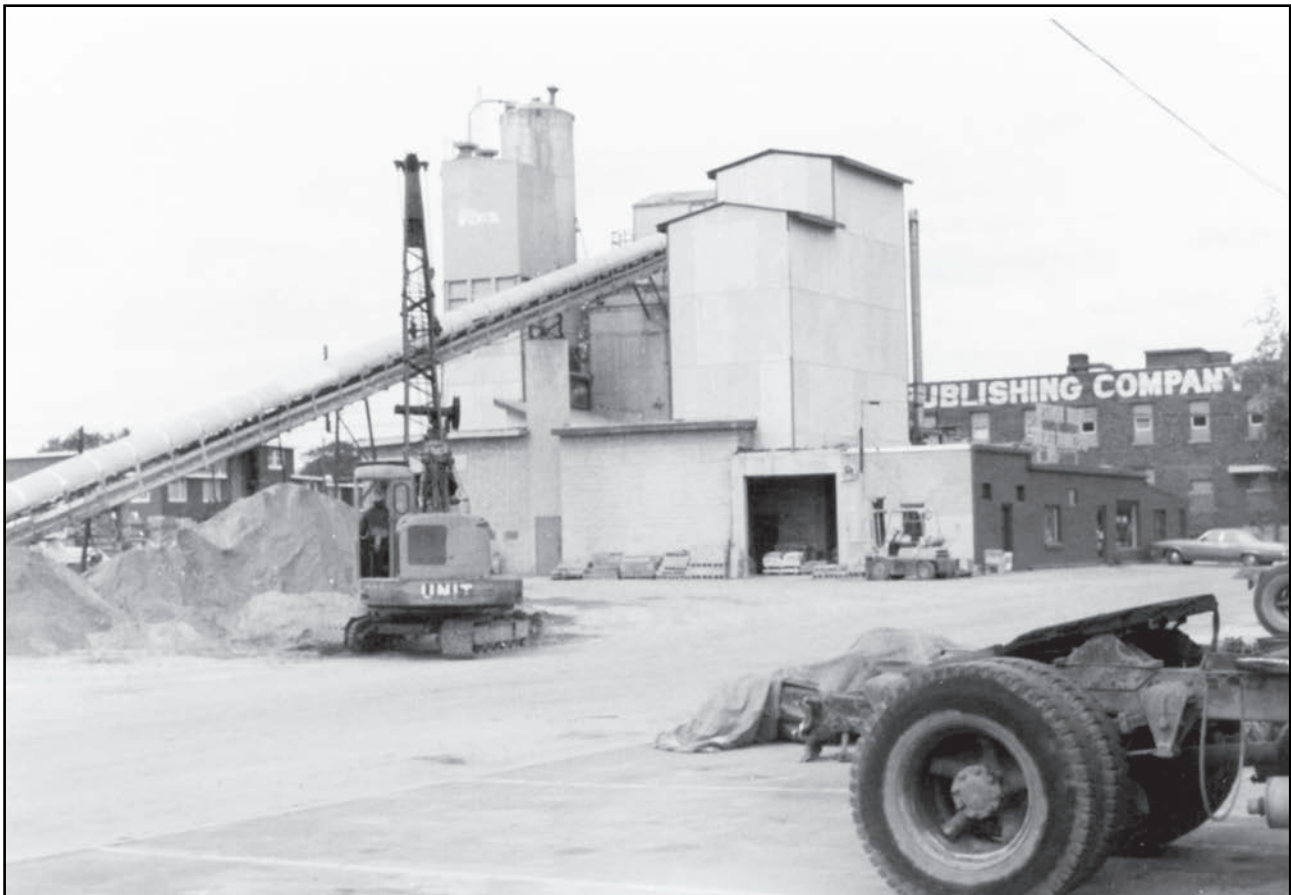
This photo of the old City Hall makes it easy to see the division between the original portion of the building on the right that housed the police department and the addition at left. Next door had been the Julien Hotel, later a warehouse for Montgomery Ward—where an eager young Don Knuth went with his dad to pick up his new Hawthorne bicycle. The Julien was replaced by the Felker Service Station shown here.



On the backside of City Hall, the white building to the right was used as a garage/storage building. The rear of City Hall was the very important place you (and editor Uncle Dave) had to visit to get your driver's license.



Still standing and used as the NewPage paper company box shop. Occupying the block between High and Harrison streets, it was built by Art Clark as a Chevrolet agency for his son, Art. Jr.



Wisconsin Valley Concrete, still in operation. Former headquarters of Fey Publishing Co., now owned by NewPage Corp.





Looking to the west on McKinley Street, north of Grand. The first set of tracks seen are the Soo Line. On the right is Tork Lumber Co. and then the Frank Garber Co. building. The two-story warehouse-style structure to the left is listed in the 1941 City Directory as Luick Ice Cream Co. The Northwestern tracks can be seen in the background.



Rapids Feed and Supply Co. and Family Natural Health Foods, south of Grand Avenue, had been a freight depot purchased from Ida Burchell by Frank Hittner. During redevelopment, Frank moved Family Natural Foods to the former Erickson's service station on West Grand. Frank's son, Michael, continued the business, passed on this year to Mike's son, Stephen, and daughter, Katrina.



Donald Knuth, right, discusses West Grand photos with *Artifacts* contributor Billy Parker and assistant editor Lori Brost. (Photo by UD)

# A Look Inside the Mill

By J. Marshall Buehler

This year, the Museum features a display of area paper mills from the time of their beginning to more current renditions. Whereas the pictures included are mostly exterior views, the *Artifacts* editor thought it would be interesting to show some interior views over the years. Fortunately, the Alexander House archives provided a couple hundred photos that show workers in the Port Edwards and Nekoosa mills of the former Nekoosa Edwards Paper Co. From these, a sample were chosen for this feature.

How did these valuable historical items come to be available to the public?

On a Sunday afternoon in 1961, John Alexander, President of Nekoosa Papers Inc., was packing up his office belongings in preparation for the next day's move into the new administration building. I received a call from John (who did not have the word "tomorrow" in his vocabulary) asking me to come down to his office immediately. I did so and he pointed to a deep file drawer packed with documents, letters, photos, contracts, etc. Knowing my interest in local history, he asked me to sort through the contents and determine what was worth saving.

After inventorying the contents, placing the papers in film sleeves and writing a short description of each item, I returned to him two large ring binders.

John was impressed and then told me there was a file cabinet on the second floor of his garage. Why didn't I go through that and see what could be gleaned?

Next he directed me to a closet in the old carriage house where the YMCA is presently located. It contained files from John's father, Lewis Alexander. The ring binders were growing in number.

Then came the mother lode.

I was told on a Friday afternoon that the original Nekoosa Paper Co. office building in Nekoosa was to be razed the following week. A

room in the basement was full of records, invoices, contracts, letters and drawings of the old Nekoosa Paper Co. I had the weekend to gather what was worth saving.

All these caches became the nucleus for a small museum in the new Nekoosa Paper Inc. administration building. Adjacent to the company's library, it was named the Nekoosa Archives Room. I was named the company historian, in charge of the archival collections.

With a preservation policy in place, documents, drawings,

maps, photos, letters, etc. started coming in from other departments. Hidden files, desk drawers and dusty storage rooms provided a flow of materials into the Archives. Public Relations, Sales, Advertising, Engineering, Research and others added to the growing collection.

Our efforts were recognized by the Wisconsin Historical Society which presented Nekoosa Papers Inc. with a CERTIFICATE OF MERIT.

The expanded collection became the nucleus for the historical archives at the Alexander House in Port Edwards.

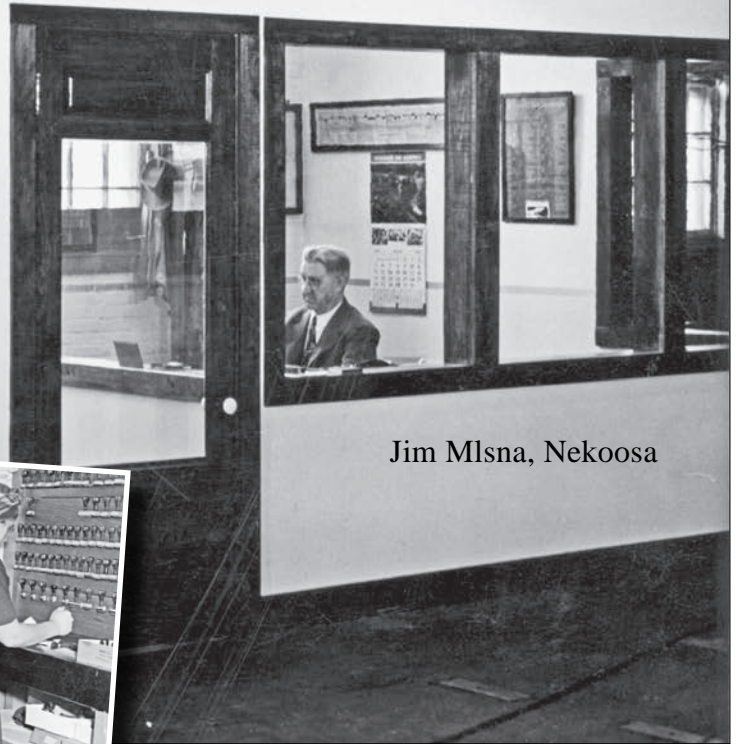
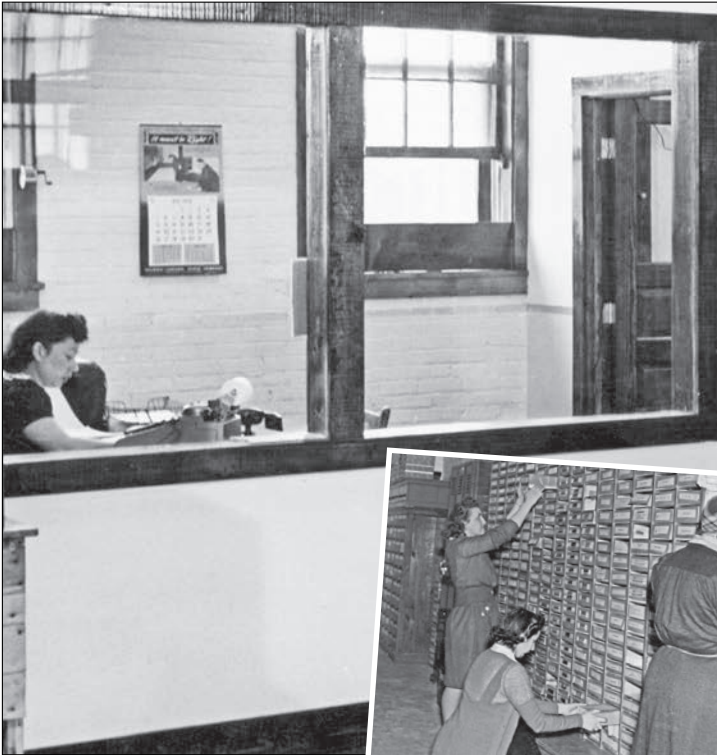


Dr. Herbert Rower, left, Marshall Buehler, 2nd from left, at Nekoosa-Edward Paper Co., Port Edwards



Port Edwards





Jim Mlsna, Nekoosa

Port Edwards, paper samples



## The Office

At the height of the Age of Paper in central Wisconsin, two local corporations ruled their unique domains:

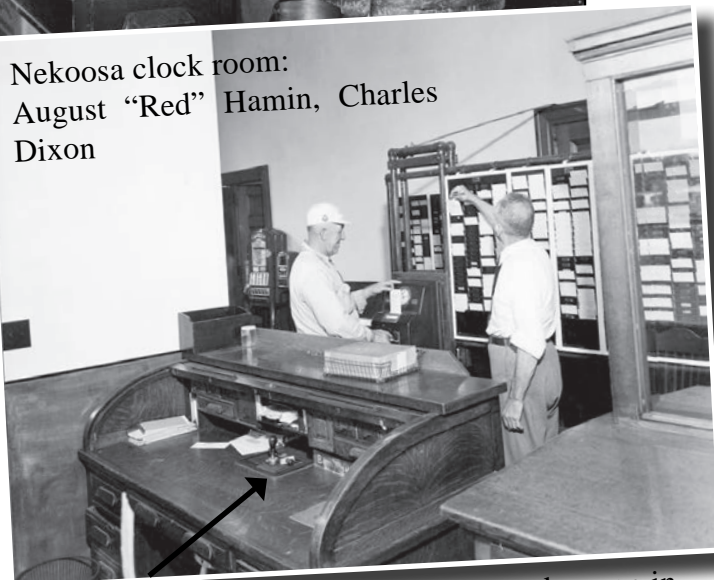
- Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. with world headquarters in Port Edwards, makers of stationery and other fine paper.

- Consolidated Papers, Inc., with world headquarters in Wisconsin Rapids, makers of coated enamel products such as those used by *Life* and *Time* magazine.

The men and women featured here worked for NEPCO at their Port Edwards and Nekoosa mills at various times in the 20th Century.



Nekoosa clock room:  
August "Red" Hamin, Charles  
Dixon

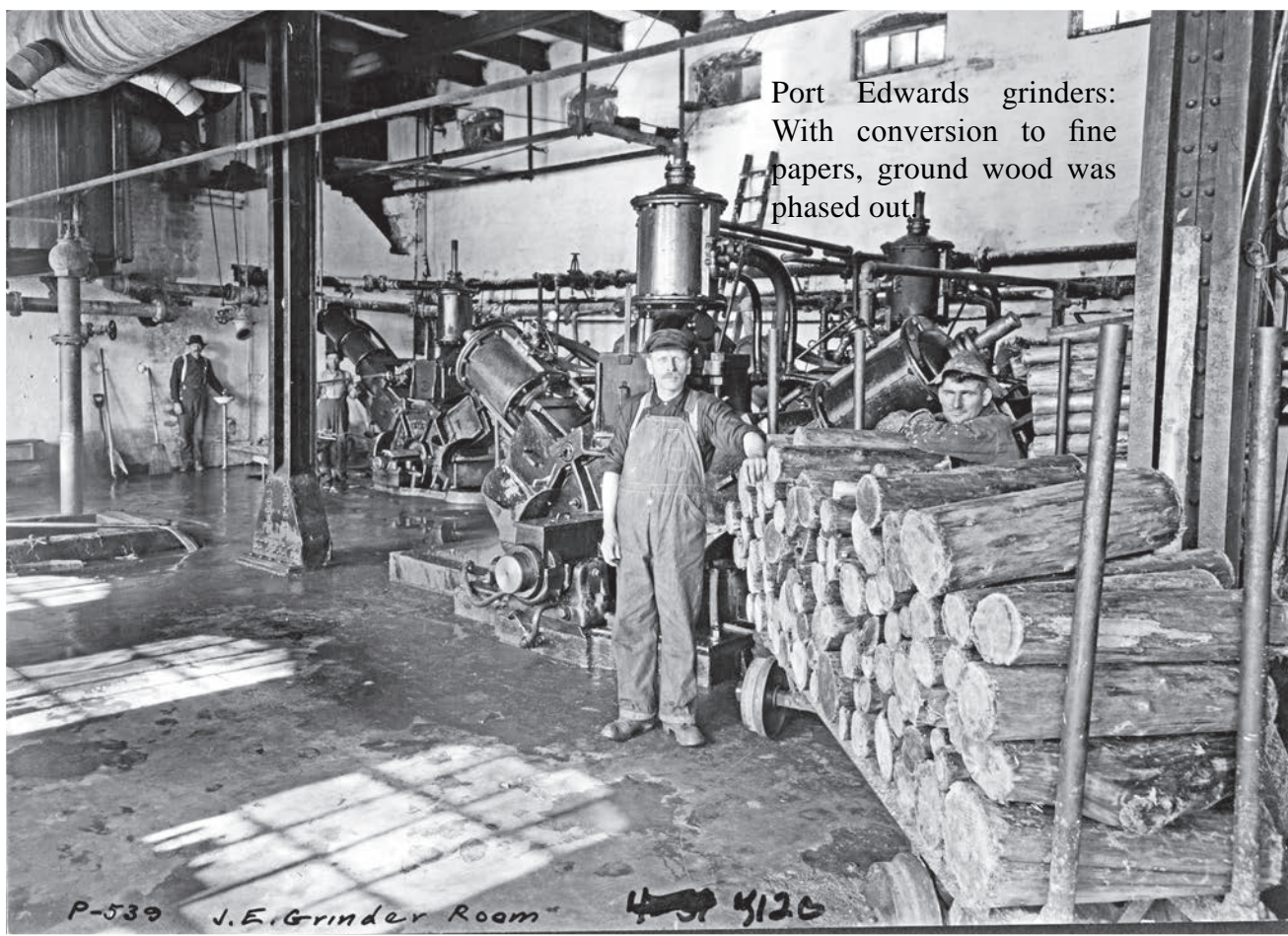


An old Baby Ruth candy bar box can be seen in this desk, no doubt for very special papers.



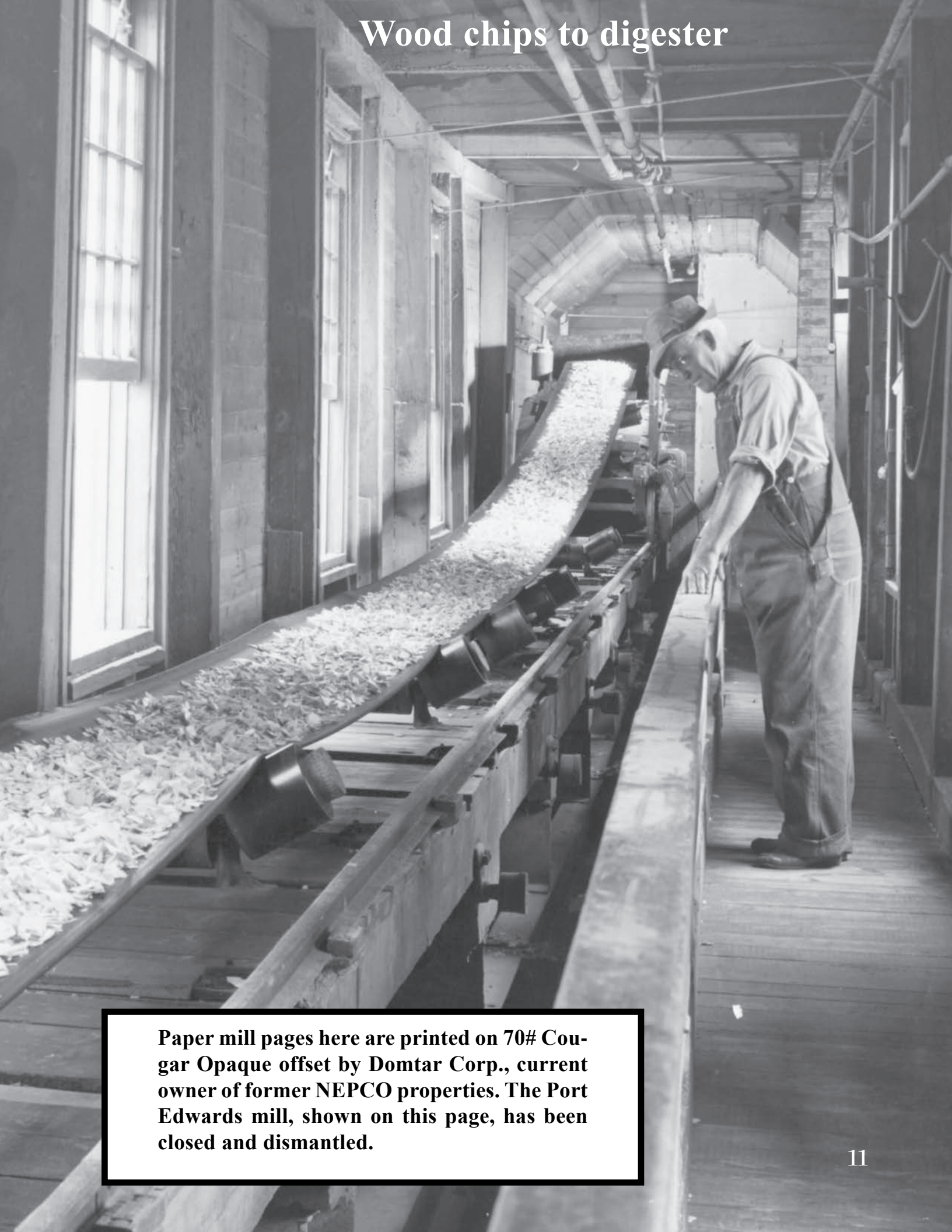
A big scale at Nekoosa mill





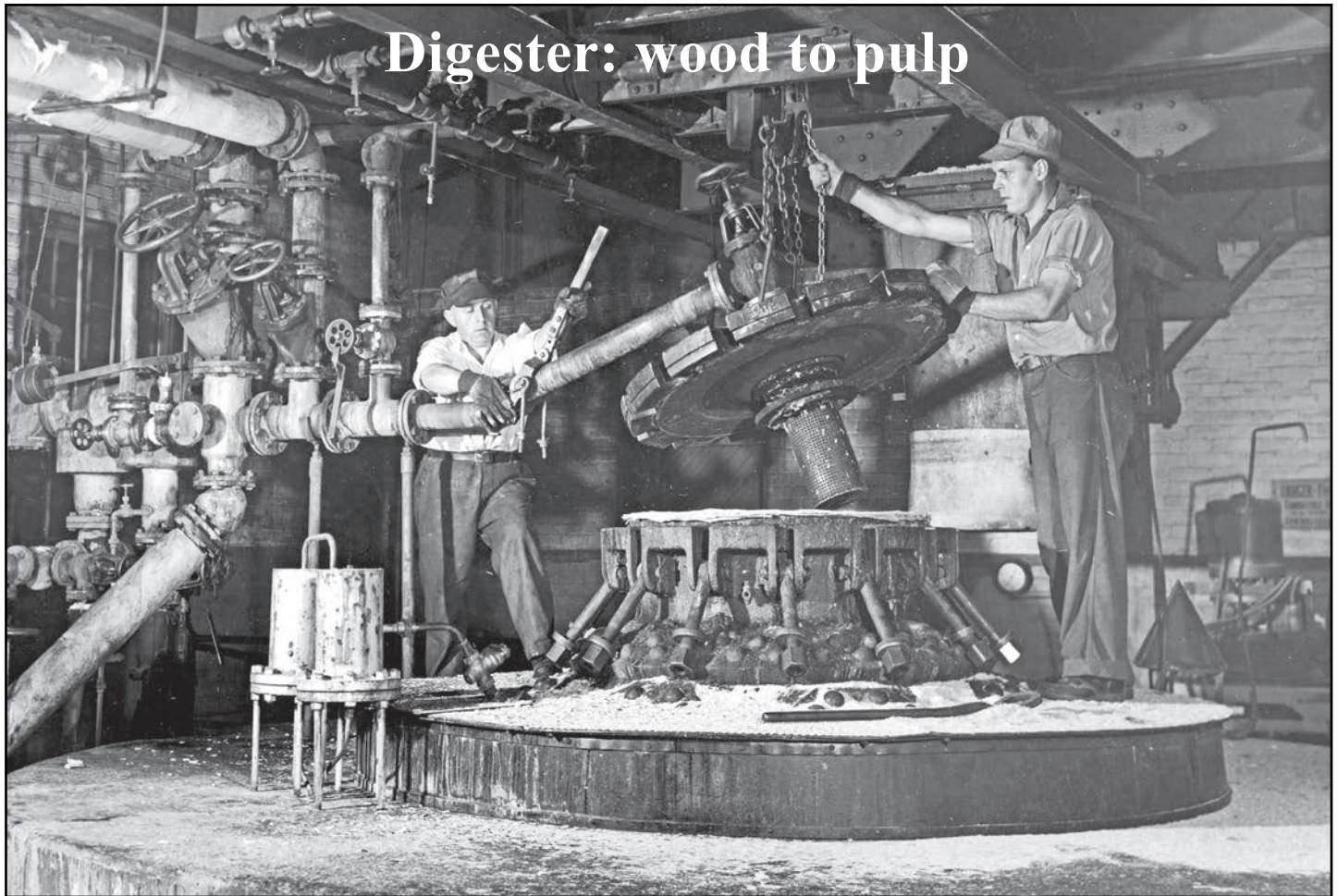


## Wood chips to digester



**Paper mill pages here are printed on 70# Cougar Opaque offset by Domtar Corp., current owner of former NEPCO properties. The Port Edwards mill, shown on this page, has been closed and dismantled.**





John Klappa and Robert Legeunesse at top of Port Edwards digester.

#### AIR POLLUTION

Yes, I was born and raised in a paper mill city.  
It was a nice little town but I thought it was a pity  
That the air was often tainted with sulphide fumes  
That seeped into our clothes and also into our rooms.  
As the years went by, we smelled it less and less;  
That our noses grew resistant is the reason, I guess.  
White clouds still rose from the digester towers  
And spewed out gases at intermittent hours.  
Strangers in the town would cough and choke,  
While we, the natives, thought it was a joke.  
We had been well indoctrinated, we had all been taught to mutter,  
"That stuff that you smell, is our bread and butter."

Just down the river was another paper mill.  
It had the smell of rotten cabbage, and I recall it still.  
They made kraft paper and they cooked sulphate;  
That was a town that we slowly learned to hate.  
Whenever the wind blew from south to north  
We cursed that town for all we were worth;  
The people there claimed they didn't know what we meant  
And seemed immune to that sulphate scent.  
But, when our sulphide blew in their direction,  
The people in that town lost all of their affection.

The moral to this story should be plain enough to see;  
All air should be pure! To that we all agree.  
But, if this world you travel, one fact you will learn well  
Is that each city and each place has an individual smell.  
There is an odor to a forest, as well as to a zoo;  
There is a stench on a beach, and on the mud flats, too.  
Have you ever smelled a steaming jungle?  
Or a field of growing grain?  
Have you smelled the herb aroma of a desert plain?  
Everyone and everything has its own individual scent;  
The odor of pure oxygen is one you might resent.  
In the war on air pollution, we should keep those facts in mind,  
Because a world without its odors, would be a very different kind.

After all my many travels, and as I write this poem,  
In my heart there is a longing for that place that I call "home."  
You could blindfold me, if need be,  
But I'll know when I am there,  
Because to me, it is like perfume . . .  
That tangy, sulphide air.



From *Papermill Poems and Ballads* by Francis E. Schiller, 1985. Uncle Dave's copy is inscribed:  
"To: Ellen P. Sabetta, who I remember fondly and  
am glad she recalls her 1st motorcycle ride.

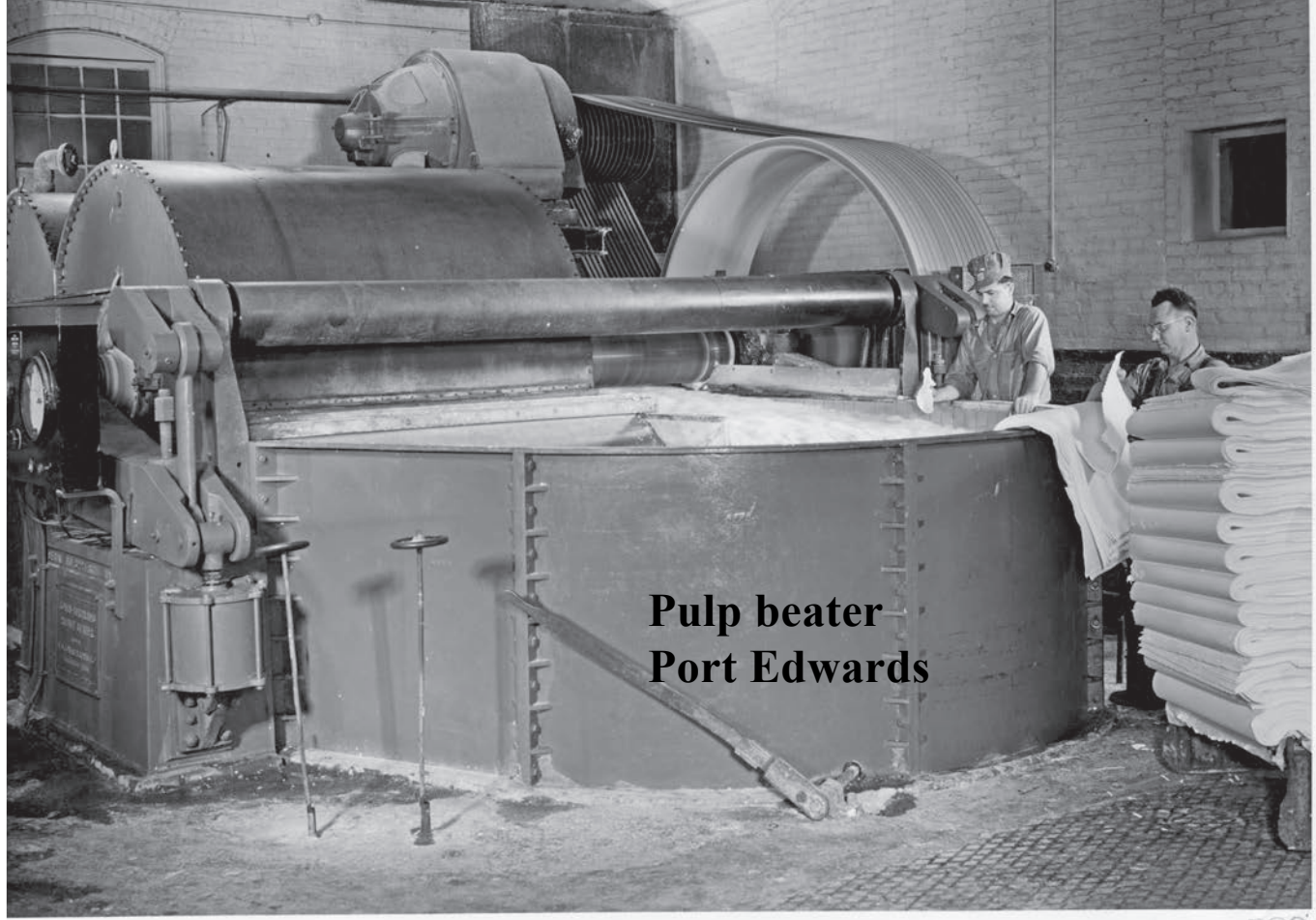
Francis E. Schiller"





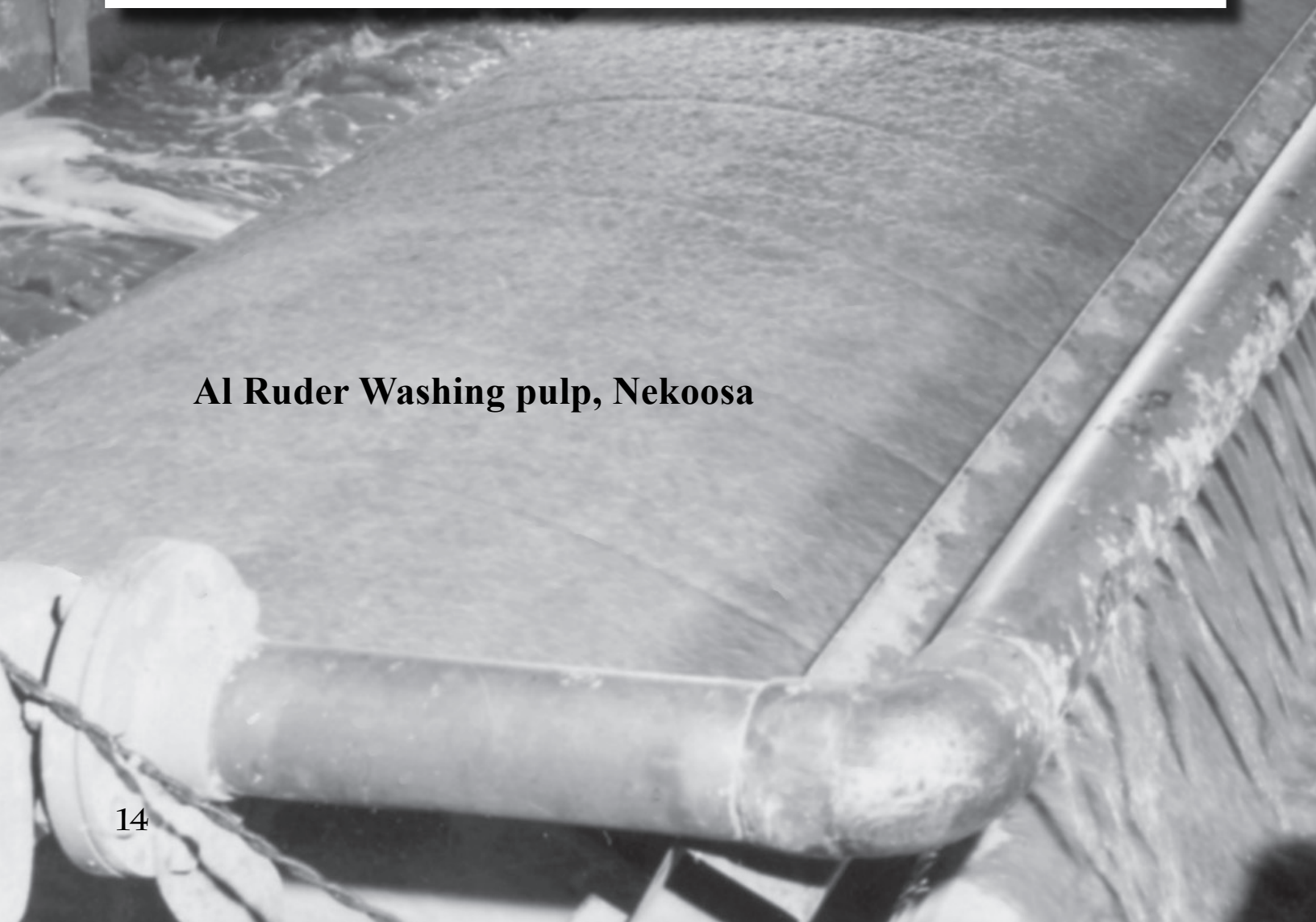
John Klappa releasing  
pulped stock at Port  
Edwards digester





**Pulp beater  
Port Edwards**

580



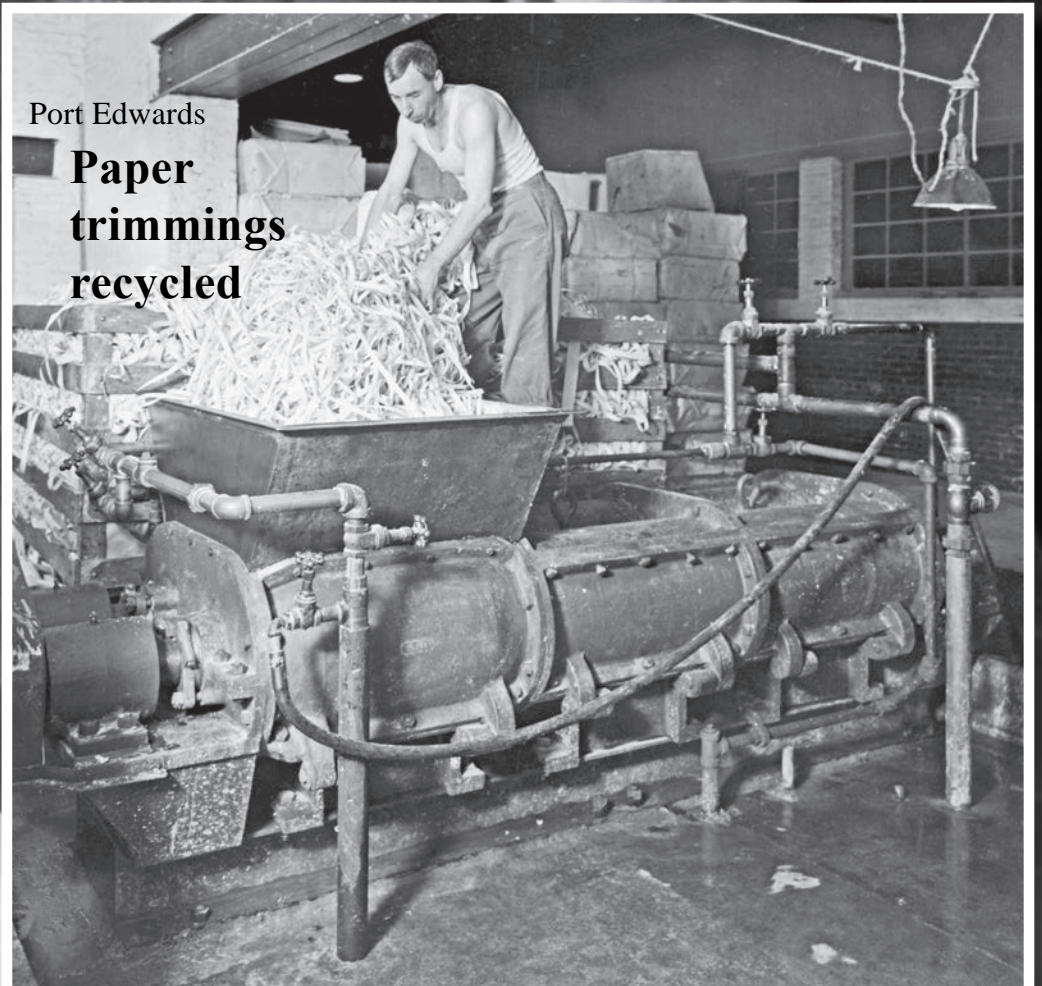
**Al Ruder Washing pulp, Nekoosa**





**Pulp sheets**

Port Edwards

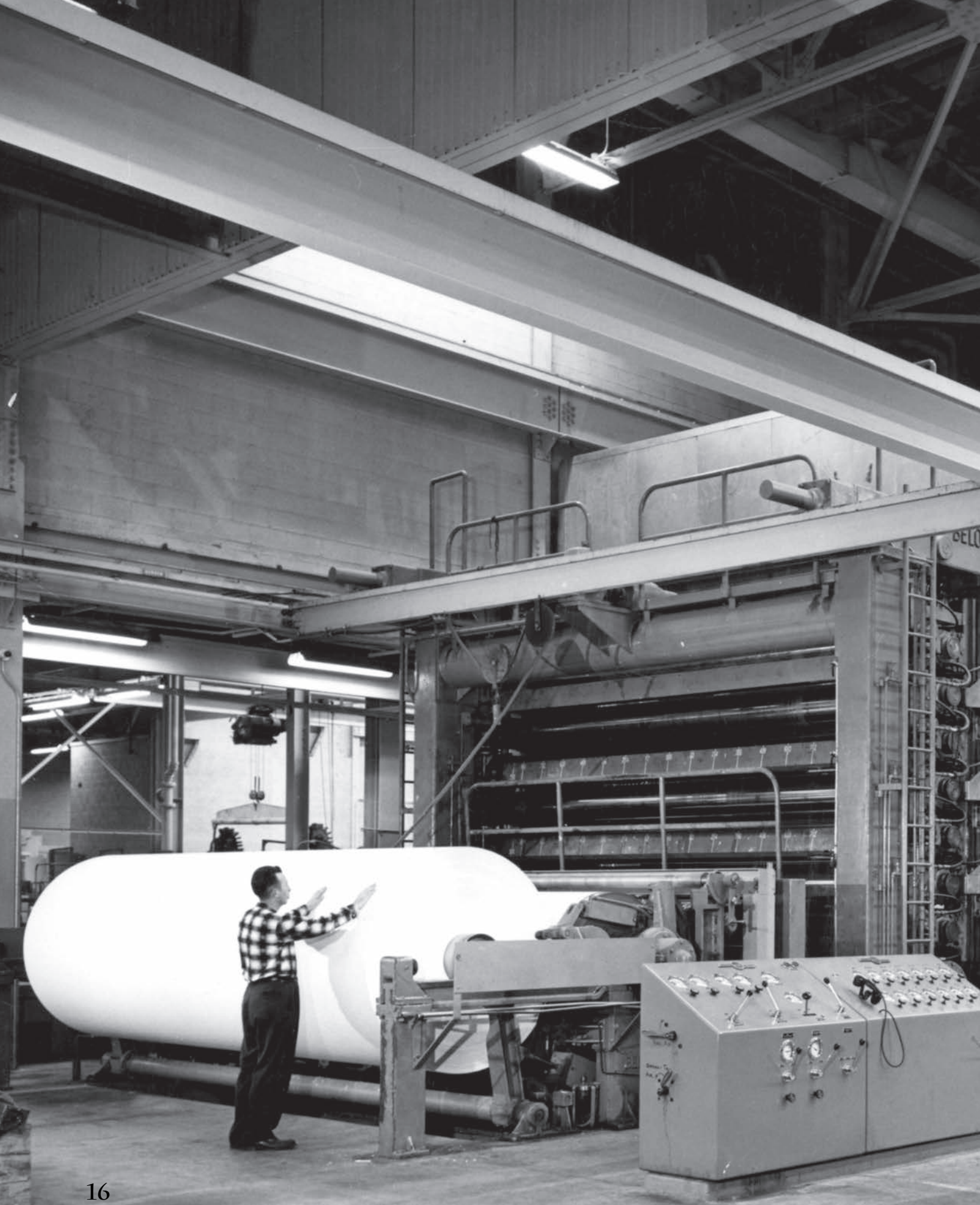


Port Edwards

**Paper  
trimmings  
recycled**



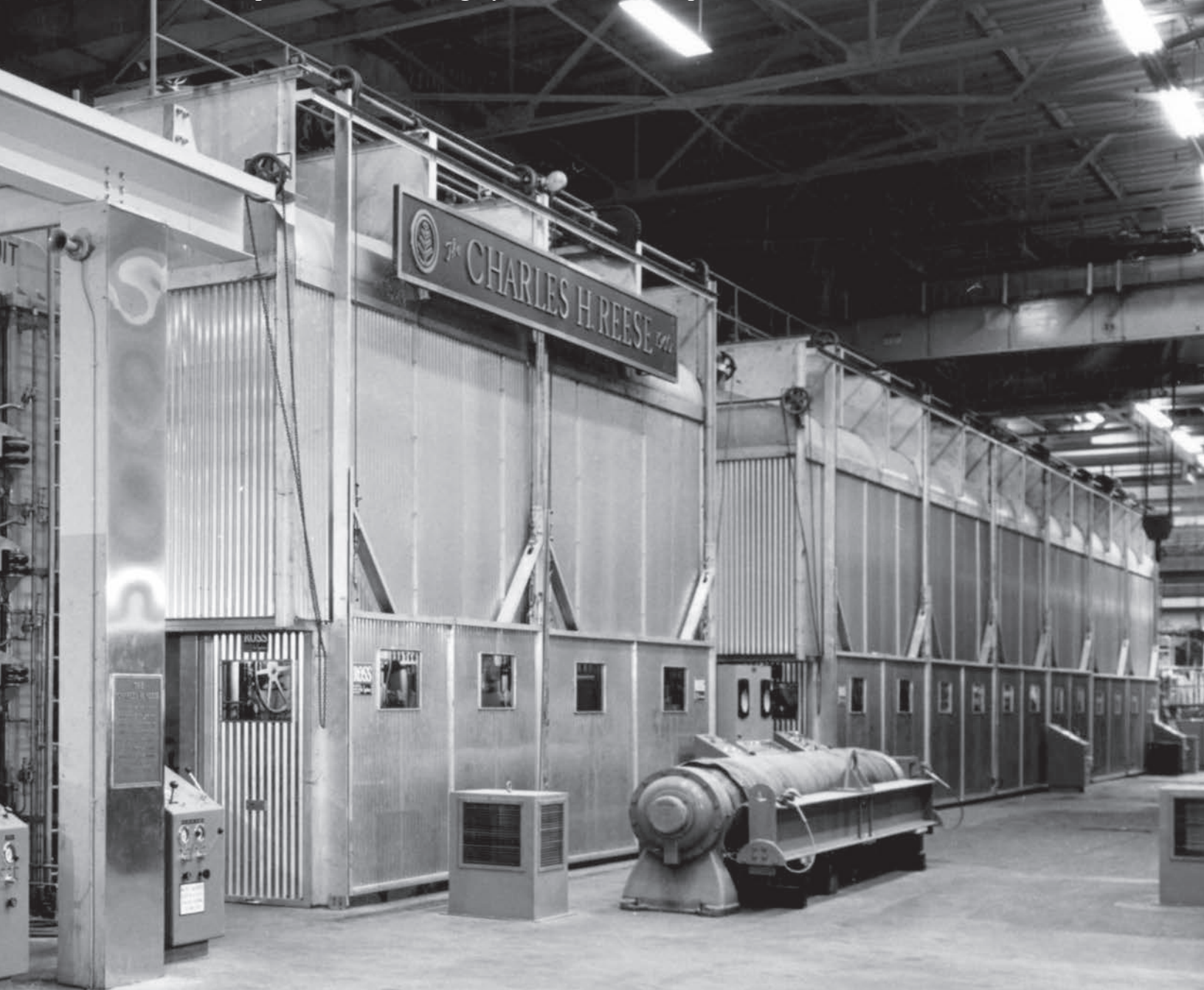






## Number 2 Paper Machine, Nekoosa The Charles H. Reese

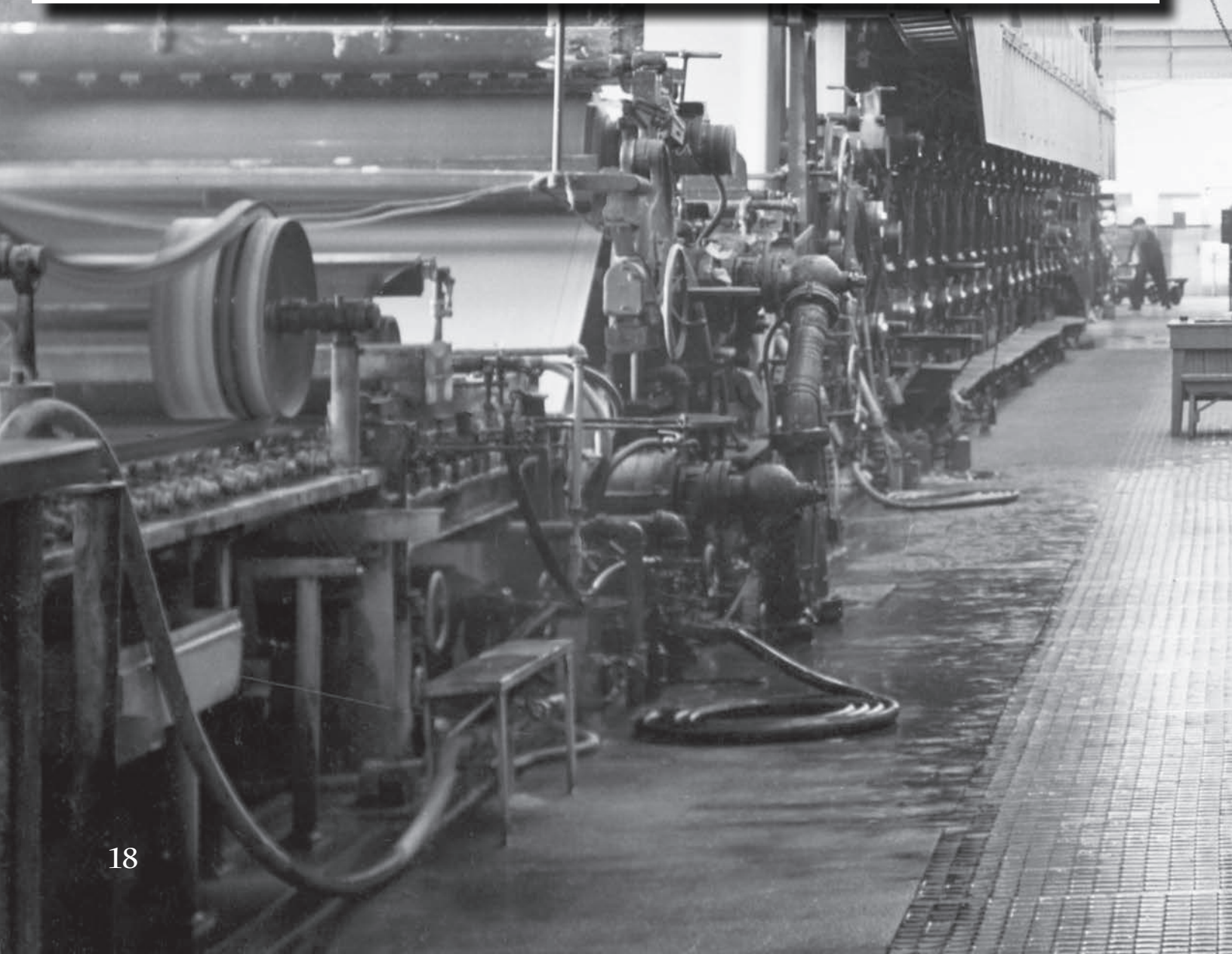
**December 1960 BEGINS OPERATION**—The newest and largest paper-making machine of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. is now in operation at the Nekoosa mill. The multi-million dollar machine shown here has a 195-inch wire and a designed speed of 1,500 feet per minute. When in full operation, the machine will boost the company's over-all production of fine papers about 20 per cent. In the planning stage for two years and under construction since January 1960, the machine has been named The Charles H. Reese, honoring the company's manufacturing vice president who has headed papermaking and development activities for the past 25 years. Commenting on the unusually smooth and trouble-free start-up, Reese said: "All concerned with the planning, installation and operation are to be complimented for the highly successful start-up."







Machine or “dry” end, Port Edwards







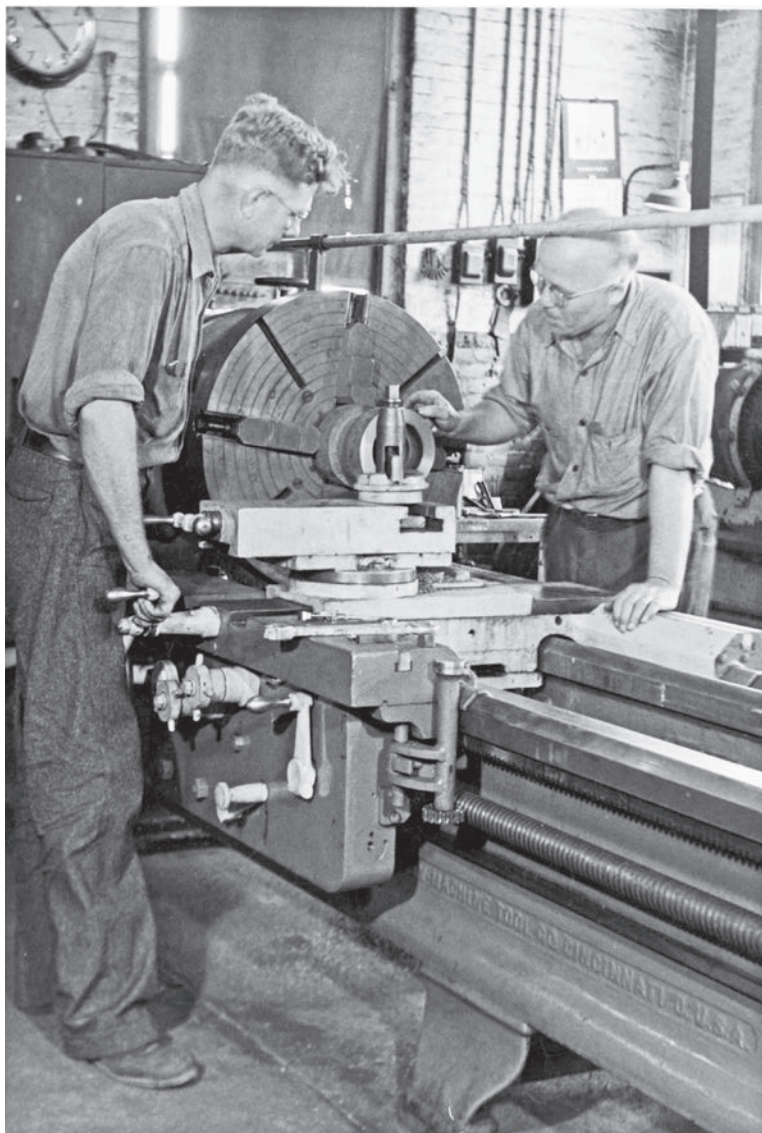
# **Pulp becomes paper: #5 and #6 paper machines Port Edwards**

Dryers

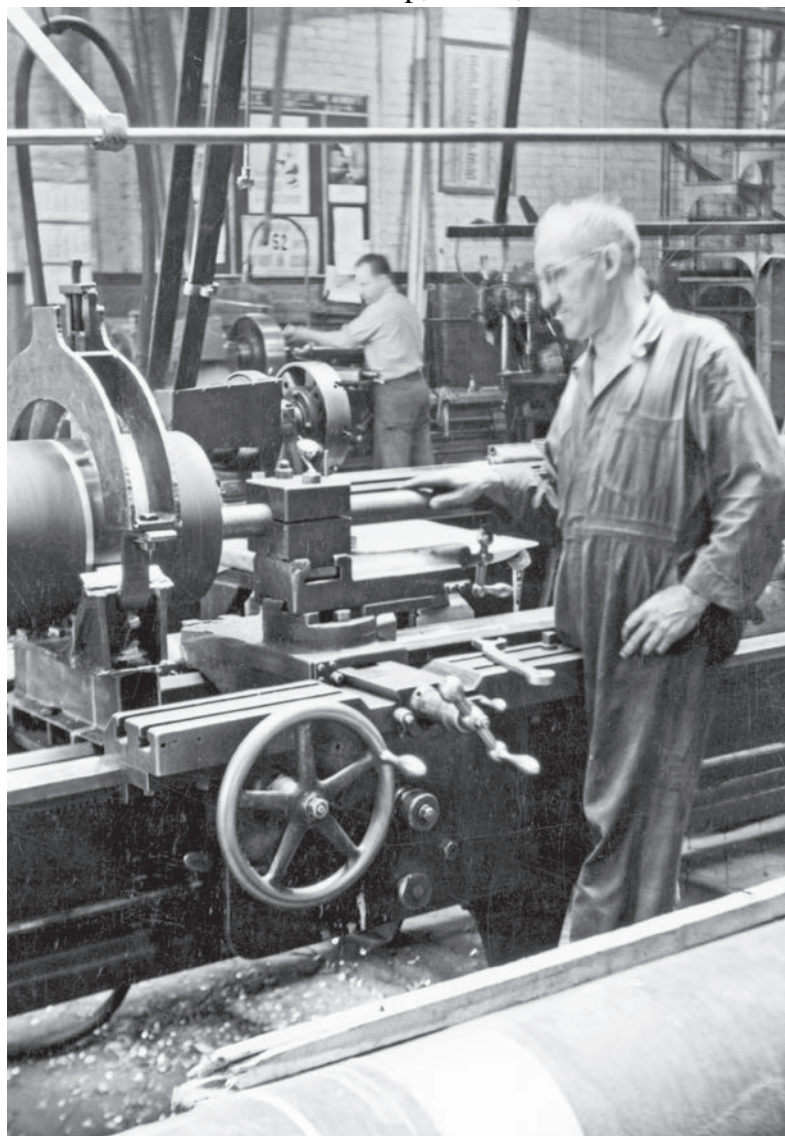
Wet end - pulp enters  
to be pressed and dried



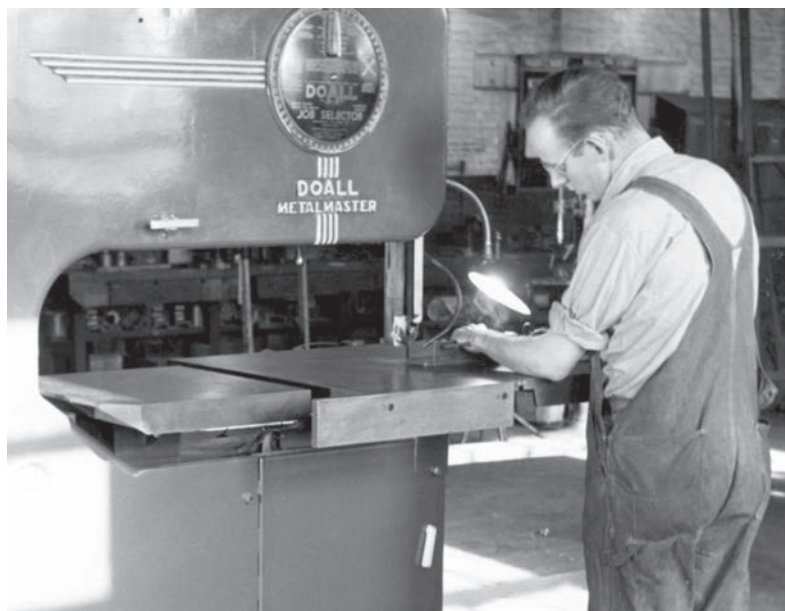
Port Edwards machine shop



Nekoosa machine shop, Bandt, Herrick

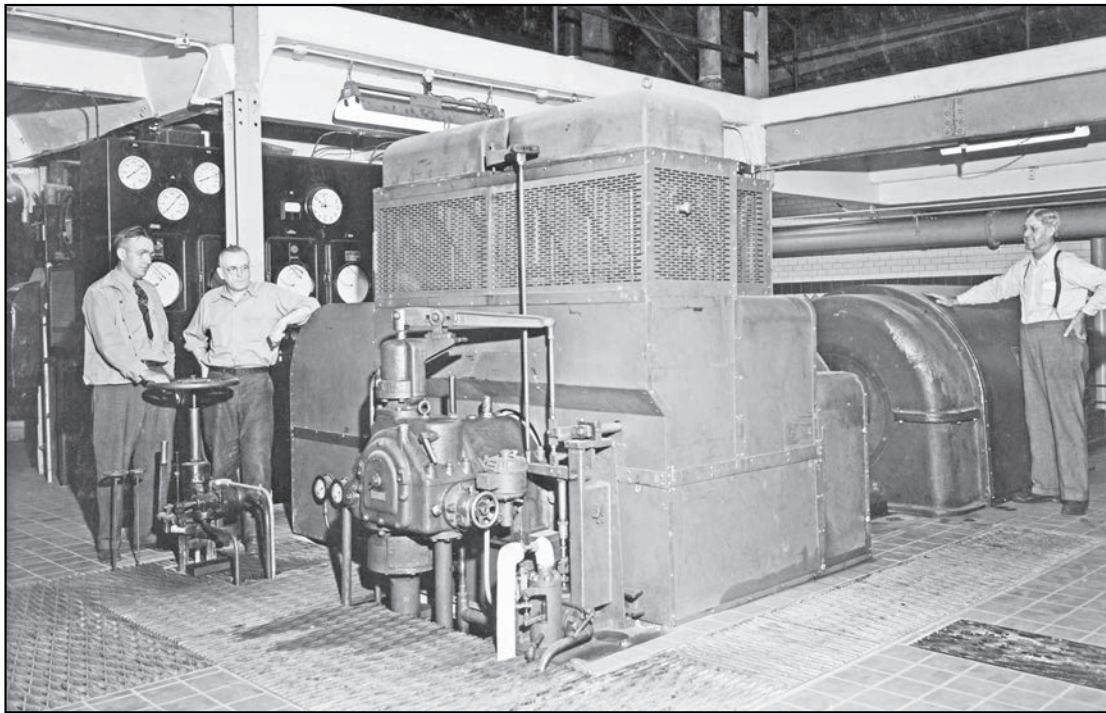


Digester cook Roland Klevene, Port Edwards

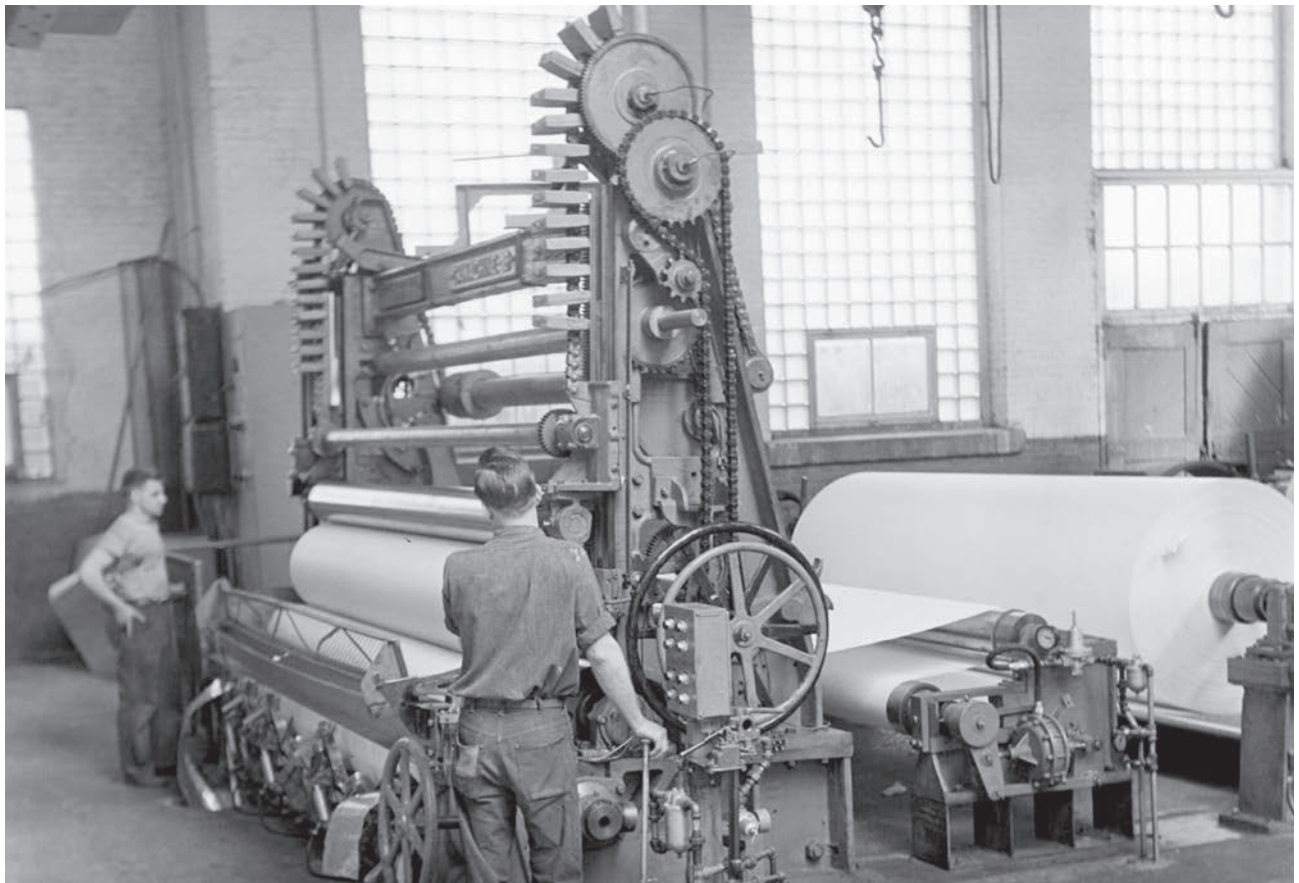


Band saw, Port Edwards





According to former NEPCO engineer Barry Jens, #5 steam turbine generator was ordered in 1941 but WWII intervened and the original was sent to Russia as part of the war effort. Its replacement was not delivered to Nekoosa until 1946. "We took it out about 1990," Jens said.



Port Edwards rewinder





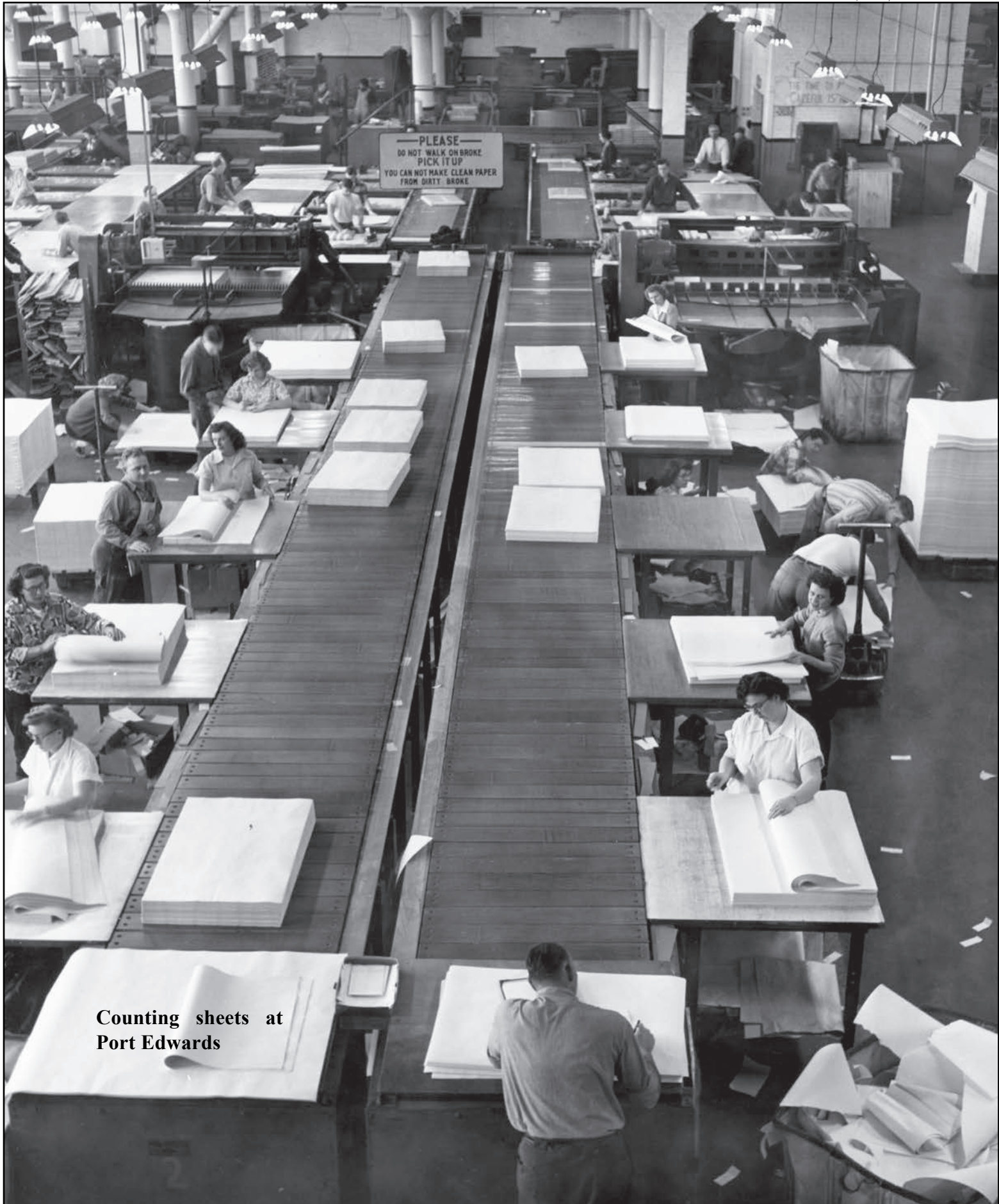
Port Edwards  
“girls,” in  
background  
at cutters,  
1928



**Finishing room**

Nekoosa





Counting sheets at  
Port Edwards



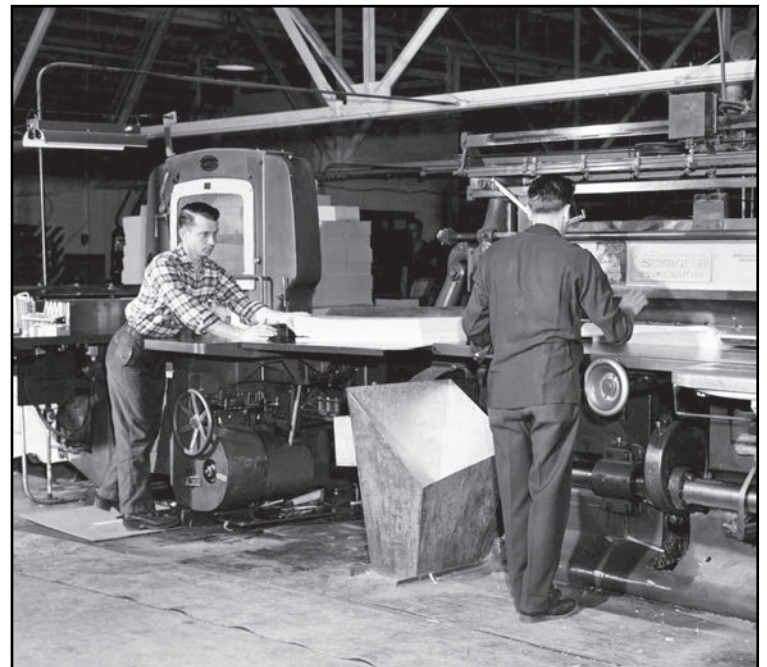
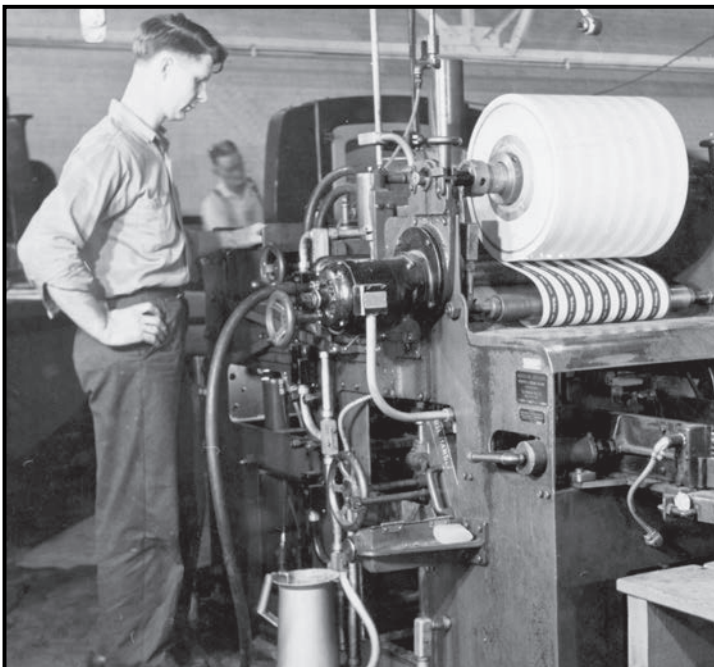
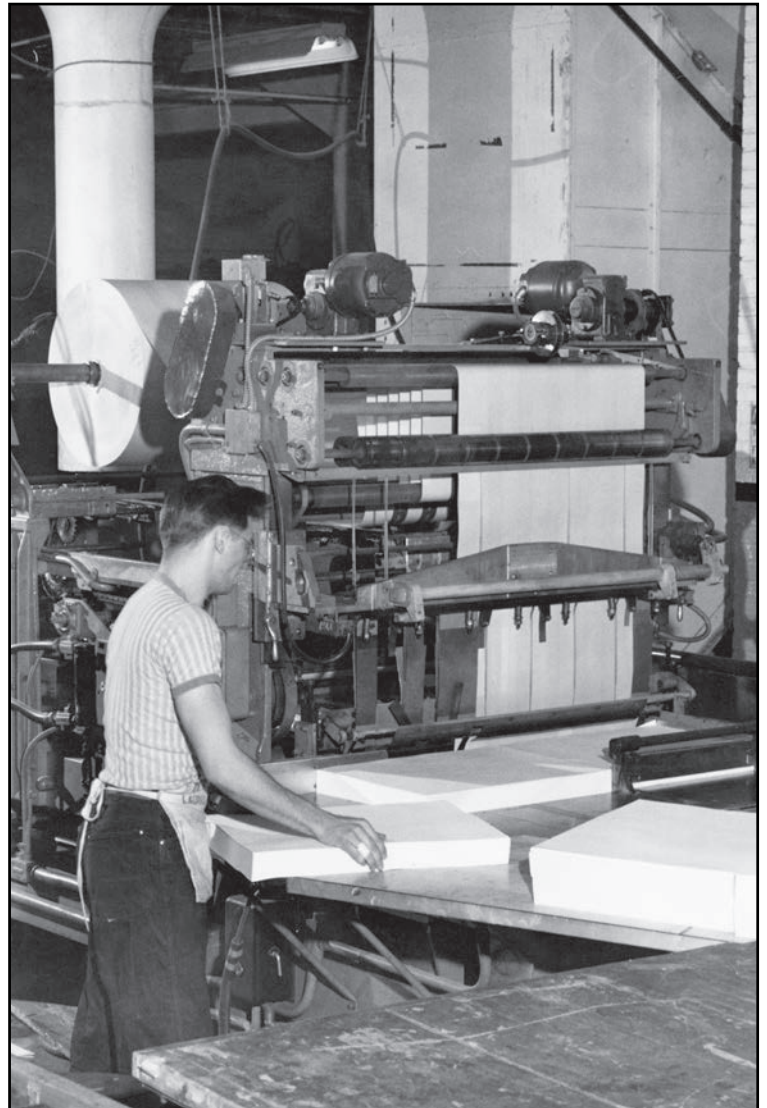
Francis E. Schiller, *Papermill Poems and Ballads*, 1985

Trimmer, Port Edwards

# HOW TO PREPARE A MILL ORDER TO SEND TO A PAPER FINISHING ROOM

Identify the customer who is buying the mess,  
Print clearly his name and his shipping address.  
Describe the paper stock and its present location;  
Show size, basis weight, grade name, and application.  
Give plain instructions as to what must be done;  
Is it sheets? Is it rolls? List the sizes to be run.  
Give diameters, widths, and the preferred type of wrapping;  
Is it cartons, bundles, or on skids with steel strapping?  
What is the weight each package should be?  
Minimums and maximums are important, you see.  
What type of count? Give the number of sheets  
Each package should have when the user it greets.  
Is it pallets or skids? There is a difference, you know.  
What kind of stencilling should each package show?  
Does it need special labels? Item numbers, and such?  
List these all on the order or we will be in Dutch.  
Can we ship an overrun or is the quantity set?  
Show all of the specifications that must be met.  
Is it coated side up or is it coated side down?  
Is it billed net weight or is it sold by the pound?  
How many piles or tiers can we place on one skid?  
Must the runners be long? Or short? Say so kid.  
Is machine trim OK or must it be T-4-S?  
We have enough problems, don't force us to guess.  
Should the sheet grain be long, or should it be short?  
Is the shipment domestic or is it export?  
Does it need waterproof wrapper and special protection?  
Is the trucking firm shown who will make the connection?  
What is the actual, true shipping date?  
A false alarm could cause delivery to be late.  
Are the mill and the customer's order numbers there?  
A paper finishing room don't run on a wing and a prayer.

To properly prepare a mill order is quite simple, you see,  
Just picture yourself as a plain, finishing employee.  
Then admit that you do not have any special psychic powers,  
If you do this, it will save countless hours. And hours.







Nekoosa?



Calendar says November 1953. Paper being shipped is Plover Bond .

Nekoosa?



# Eight Corners

By Scott Brehm  
Vesper Correspondent

I last left you at Kissinger Hill in the town of Seneca. My new venture covers the area called Eight Corners. According to the 1923 *History of Wood County*, “eight corners” referred to the intersection of County F and County P (now County HH) with three township roads, at the common corners of sections 16, 17, 20 and 21, Sigel Township. The term included the neighboring rural community.

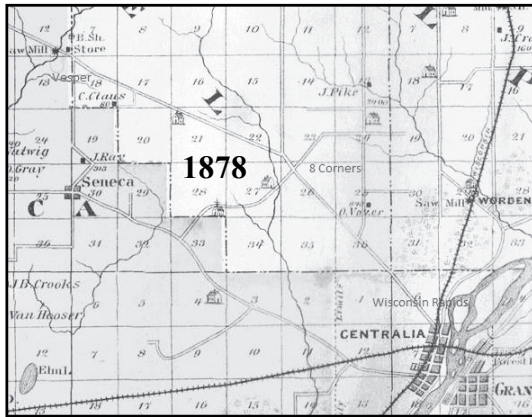
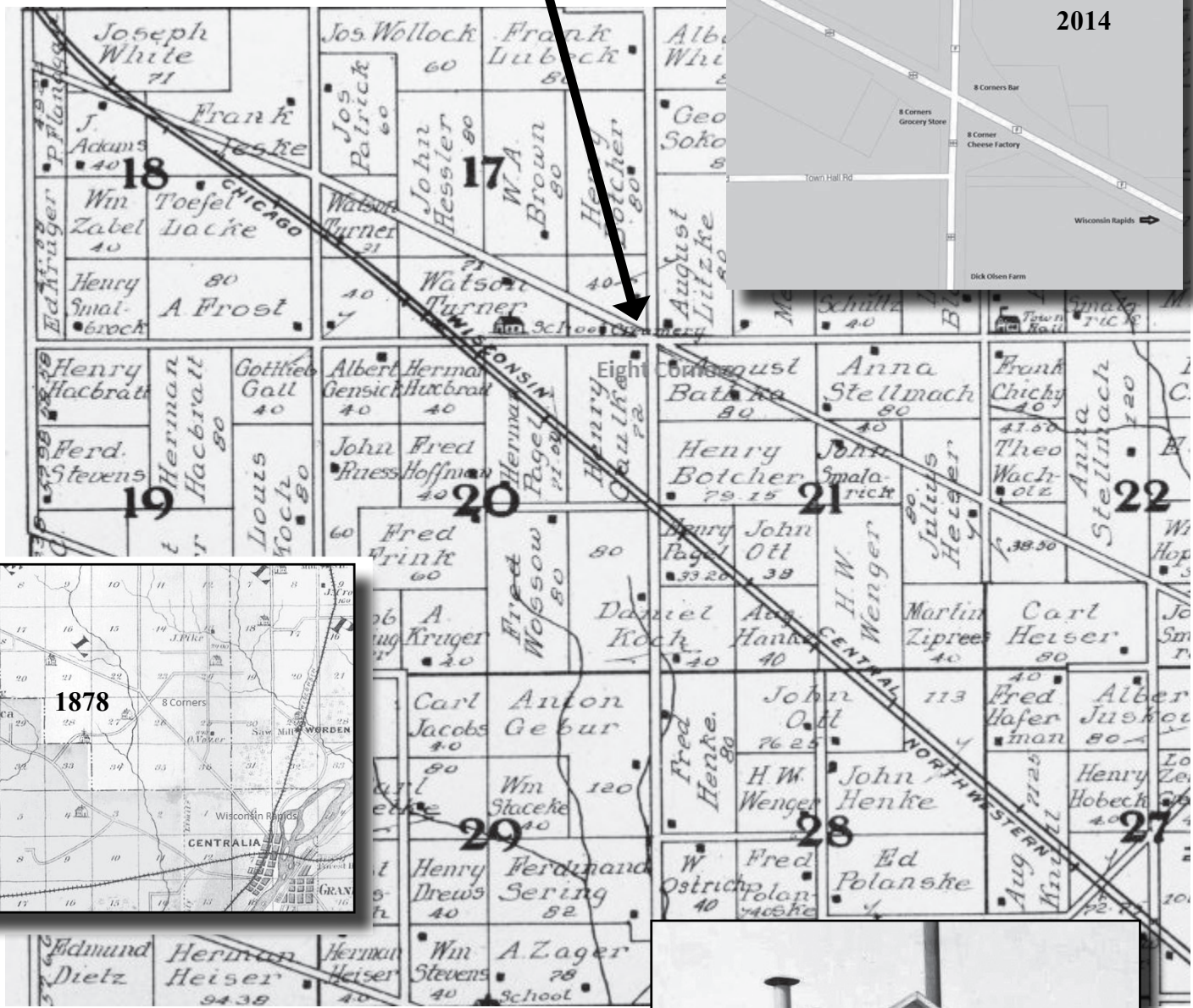
Eight Corners became an early meeting place, located at the only intersection along the Centralia-Vesper road where crossroads met forming a least eight corners. All others were “T” intersections where roads came to a dead end at the Centralia-Vesper road. Depending on what you call a corner, from 1878 to the present, the intersection has had more than eight.



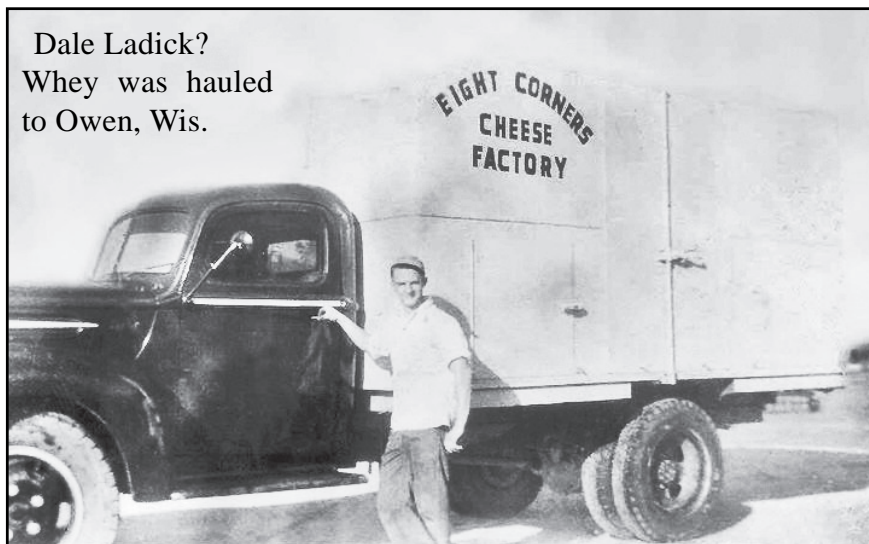
Emil Schara was one of the owners of 8 Corners Bar, which was added on to make room for a barber “from up north” around 1937. The bar sold gas under the Phillips 66 name brand in the early 1940s. The tanks were taken out of the ground in the 1970s.



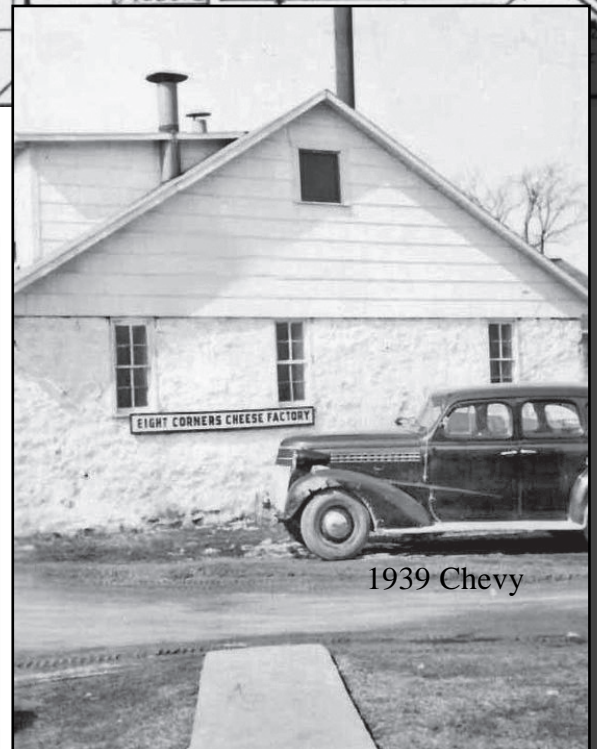
## 8 Corners



1909 Atlas



Dale Ladick?  
Why was hauled  
to Owen, Wis.



1939 Chevy

Historical photos were taken by Marie (Sticka) Pelot and are courtesy of Penny Pelot.



*Scott Brehm, Eight Corners*

I met with Dick Olsen and his son, Jerry, at Dick's residence just several properties south of Eight Corners. Jerry explained that area residents, including my cousin, Ron Ladick, meet each day at Dick's house at 9:45 a.m. for coffee and to talk about old times.

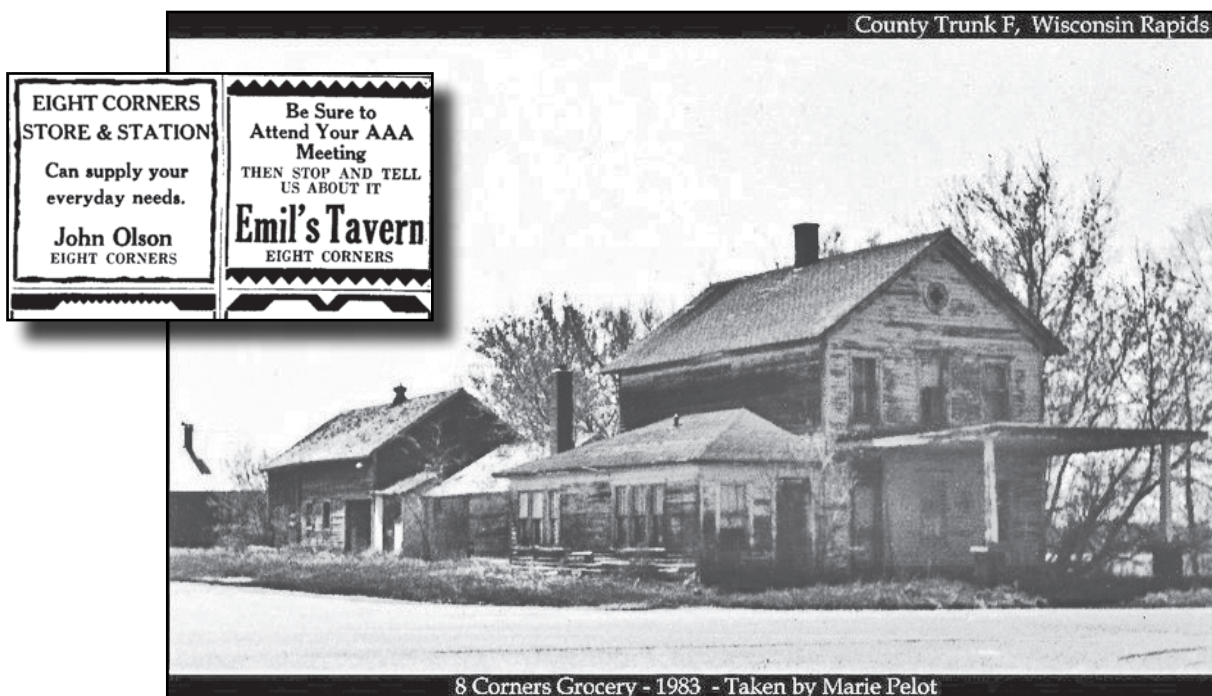
We discussed three prominent establishments at Eight Corners:

- 8 Corners Bar and Barber Shop
- Eight Corners Cheese Factory
- Sinclair Grocery and Gas Station, which Dick's parents owned.

The area neighbors during this time were: Ray Gaulke, who lived in the southwest corner; Frank Bathke in the southeast; and Emil "Doc" Staven in the northwest of the Eight Corners.

In *Artifacts* Volume II #41 page 28, an article from the May 21, 1931, Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* reported that Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kissinger of Seneca Corners, Yvonne Ellie's parents, celebrated their golden wedding at the home of their daughter, Mrs. Emil Staven, at Eight Corners, with 50 relatives and friends.

How small our world really is!



Dick Olsen states that this building, known as the 8 Corners Grocery Store or the Sinclair gas station, was originally used as a parsonage for St. John's Lutheran Church on St. John's Road in the town of Sigel. It was moved to the southwest corner of County HH and County F in 1931 by Dick's parents, John and Ruby Olsen. Dick and his family lived in the back rooms until they closed the store in 1951. The building was torn down in 1982.



Cheese factory owner Peter Sticka (also “Styka”) and wife, Rose. They had come to Eight Corners from Kewaunee County in 1940—and sold to Jack Moran, Rudolph, in 1962.



According to Dick, W.C. Constantine built the Eight Corner cheese factory. It was a private cheese factory operated by H.H. Peterson from 1912 until 1916, when a cooperative society of farmers took it over. At one time, the factory was taking in 15,000 pounds of milk per day and making 1,100 pounds of cheese per day.

Dick recalls that, back in 1933 or 1934, several dogs broke off of their chains from across the street. The dogs then ate most of cheese. Pete Sticka, the owner at the cheese factory at the time, didn't know how he was going to keep the doors open after the dogs ate all of his profits.

Dick went into the service in 1943. When he came out, he hauled milk from 1945 to 1947 for Eight Corners. Dick chuckled when he realized that he hauled milk with my grandfather, Carl “Sam” Brehm. Dick explained that, to this day, the farm down the road on County HH, where my grandfather grew up, is still called the Brehm Farm, even though the family has not owned it for two generations.

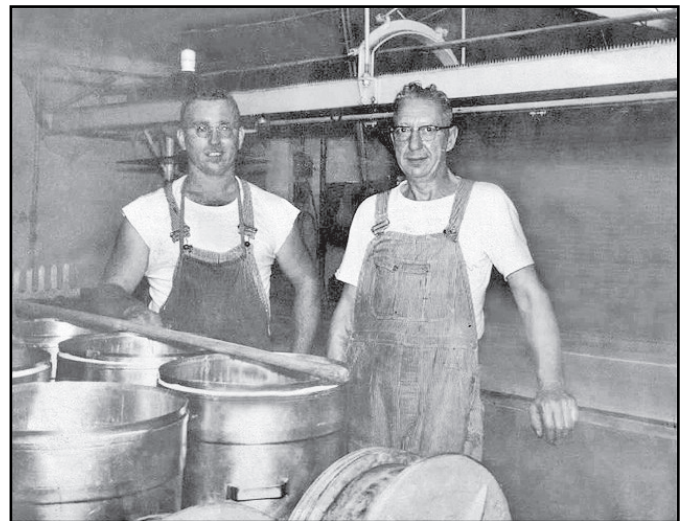
Dick then started farming in 1962 on the property he is still living on today.

After spending a short time with Dick and his son, I was invited back for morning coffee. Sounds like another adventure into country history.

Scott Brehm



Eight Corners cheese factory, similar to many that once dotted the Wisconsin countryside. The visible portion above has been removed—and a section of the wall preserved by Scott Brehm.



“Hunsie” Hass/Haas and Pete Sticka





Inventor and recurrent *Artifacts* cameo Reuben Lindstrom at the Olsen grocery store with Eleanor Olsen O'Keefe and Marie Pelot in the early 1940s. In 1929, Marie was the daughter of Pete and Rose Sticka, who ran the cheese factory. *Tribune*: Mrs. John Olsen and children of Eight Corners store "spent Sunday with the former's mother, Mrs. Thomas Hanifin."



Whey from tank was loaded in trucks and hauled to Owen, Wis.



## Editor's Notes

Eight Corners is mentioned in local newspapers as early as 1917, sometimes under the heading of "Moccasin Creek."

For instance, Albert Swetz, Frank Swetz, Alice Paterick, Walter Schultz and John Thon are credited with working at the cheese factory—Frank Botcher, president. In Oct., 1926, the factory is purchased by "Zentner [George H.] and Swetz," owners of several cheese factories in the Vesper and Arpin vicinity. It had been operated by a farmers cooperative, Albert Whitrock president. A June 6, 1958, *Daily Tribune* said the factory manager was Peter Styka, more often spelled "Sticka."

•Many early residents have Polish names and attend the Polish Catholic services in Sigel's Holy Rosary church. Other references are to St. John's Lutheran church, spiritual home of Germans.

•References are made to Pioneer School and later, Turner School.

•Nearby cranberry marshes provide seasonal employment to supplement the dairy farming that had become predominant. In autumn 1917, silo filling, threshing and digging potatoes are "the order of the day." April of the next year brings sowing of wheat and oats.

An October 1920 auction across from the Eight Corners cheese factory on the former August Lietzke farm offered 40 Holsteins and Guernsey, four horses, farm machinery grain binder, champion mower, McCormick hay rake, New Idea manure spreader, disc, smoothing harrow, springtooth drag, broadcast seeder, sulky

cultivator, truck wagon and a DeLaval cream separator. In 1926, the Frank Lietzke family moved onto the farm.

In the late 1920s, milk production is on the increase in this vicinity. The milk haulers have had to put on an extra team which is driven by Edwin Hass/Haas.

•Dances are held frequently at homes such as that of the family variously spelled Konieseka, Konieczki, Koneski, Konieszki.

•A baseball game between the Mud Hens and the Sigel Gophers is well attended. In 1933, Eight Corners fields a team in the Wood County League that includes Native American names such as Wilson, Shegonee, Young, Lincoln and Mike.

•April 8, 1918: Elbert Whitrock becomes "proud owner" of a Ford car. In 1928 an "oil station" is opened by Irven Polansky

•Dec. 11, 1931, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Knuth, daughter Irene, and son Donald, of Wisconsin Rapids, are Sunday supper guests at the Wilbur Ott home. This is the same Don Knuth who identified West Grand photos in this issue.

Knuth said that his aunt, Ella Ott, was the Eight Corners correspondent. "We used to joke about it. Every time we went out we'd get our name in the paper."

•Also of interest, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Brehm were dinner guests in Wisconsin Rapids. They were the great grandparents of Vesper correspondent Scott Brehm.

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**Former Cheese Factory  
Eight Corners 2014**



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