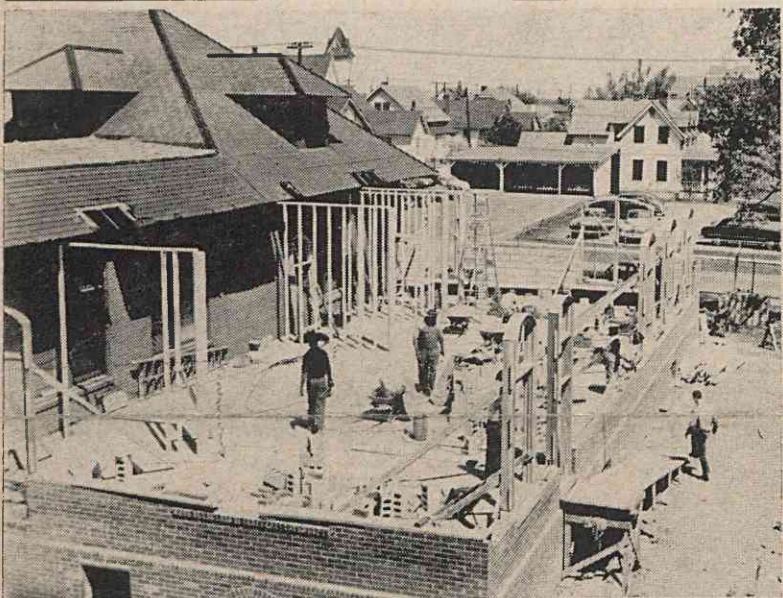




SAFETY DIRECTOR L. B. McABEE, right, is shown receiving from Forest Shuford, Commissioner of Labor in North Carolina, our plant's fifth consecutive safety plaque for lowering accident frequency. To earn the award industrial plants must show a specified decrease in accident frequency as compared with their record for the preceding year. In our case the decrease was 45 percent to the record low of .76 lost time injuries per million man hours worked. Sharing honors with Mr. McAbee is George Brooks, representing the Belmont Throwing Company which also qualified for the award. The presentation above climaxed the annual Gastonia Chamber of Commerce Safety Banquet April 17, at the Masonic Temple. Sixty-six Gaston County industrial plants were recognized for their work in accident prevention at this event.



THE NEW office addition is rapidly taking shape. Measuring 32 by 70 feet, it will boost main office space to 5,595 square feet, adding 50 per cent to the present 3,755 square footage. It is scheduled for completion by June 1.

Main Office Gets Needed Expansion

A brick and masonry one-story addition is going up at the east end of the main office which will increase floor space in the office by 75 per cent. The new wing, measuring 32 by 70 feet, will be

modern in all respects with year-round conditioned air, fluorescent lighting, and fire protective sprinklers.

The addition will provide needed expansion space for the Pay Roll Department, as well as new quarters entirely for the Plant Manager, and the Insurance, Yarn Sales, Purchase, and Job Analysis Departments.

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 Department of Industrial Relations
R. H. HOOD, Editor
 Department Reporters

- Carding—Leila Rape, Lurlene King, Jessie Westmoreland.
- Spinning—Lois Bolding, Helen Bolick, Janet Hartgrove, Evie Thomas, Grace Christopher, Bertha Ellis, Mary Turner, Ray Cloninger, Mae Hyleman, Fannie Bruce.
- Spooling—Nell Bolick, Rosalie Burger, Ruth Easler.
- Twisting—Carolyn Anderson, Nevie Dalton, Mable Hanna, Hazel Clark, Lassie Crawford, Corrie Johnson, Dean Haun, Ellease Austin, Ruth Waldrop.
- Weaving—Mary Johnson, Lucille Davis, Clara Wilson, Irene Burroughs, Betty Martin.
- Cloth Room—Margie Waldrop.
- Cable Respooling—Theodore Thomas.
- Quality Control—Dealva Jacobs, Irene Burroughs, Catherine Isham.
- Winding—Dorcas Atkinson, Ann Stephenson, Mayzelle Lewis.
- Shop—Cramer Little.
- Warehouse—Anne King.
- Main Office—Mozelle Brockman.
- Superintendent's Office—Sue Van Dyke.
- Personnel Office—Christine Clark.

More About Plant Progress In Gastonia

(Continued from page 1)

in chronological order, as follows:

The Gastonia plant was acquired by The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company on April 2, 1935 from the Manville-Jenckes Company. Mr. W. A. Karl, now President of Firestone Textiles, was at that time in charge of textile purchases at Akron. Mr. Harold Mercer, present plant manager, assumed the position of comptroller and assistant treasurer on the day the plant was acquired. The first name of the company was "Firestone Cotton Mills, Inc".

After completing the rearrangement of machinery to improve product flow, production was obtained in June, 1935. During the period ending October 31, 1935, production totaled 3,159,368 pounds. This is about three week's production today. Clock employees enrolled as of October 31, 1935, numbered 1361. Average pay at this time was \$13 weekly. . . . not an unusual figure to earn in one day in 1952!

In July, 1936, weekly production exceeded 500,000 pounds for the first time. This level of production was reached with 1850 employees. It is significant that with today's more modern methods and machinery, 2300 employees produce at the rate of 1,350,000 pounds per week.

THE YEAR 1937 was devoted to production refinements and on October 31, 1937, production averaged 520,000 pounds weekly with 1625 employees enrolled. Mr. Nelson Kessell, plant superintendent since the first year of operation, assisted by Mr. F. B. Galligan who later joined the organization, guided these and all subsequent plant modifications. This year marked the beginning of the Christmas parties for Firestone children and was also the first year for the All-Sports Banquet.

Production of rayon fabric was introduced in 1938 on an experimental basis. In August of that year Mr. Mercer succeeded H. M. McKelvie as Vice-President and General Manager of the Company. During 1940 the first village house was sold to an employee, under an approval authorizing the sale of a limited number of company-owned houses. A total of 83 houses were sold before the program was terminated because of the war threat. Firestone was one of the first companies to sell their houses to employees. Since 1940 many other textile concerns have adopted this policy.

In 1941 production of rayon tire cord was undertaken on a large scale basis, and during that year Mr. W. A. Karl became President of Firestone Cotton Mills, Inc.

ALSO IN that year the Liberty Mutual Insurance Company awarded the Firestone Cotton Mills, Inc., a safety plaque for having established the world's record for employee safety in the textile industry. This record was set between July 1, 1938, and February 14, 1941, during which time not one lost-time injury occurred in 9,217,145 man-hours of work.

The vacation program for clock employees started in 1942. In April of that year employees having sufficient service could look forward, for the first time, to a vacation

with pay. . . . an innovation in the industry.

During 1942 Firestone Cotton Mills, Inc., and its people began to feel the full impact of the war. Rubber, being a critical war material, was soon on the restricted list for civilian use. Thus tire production for such use was cut, resulting in decreased need for tire cord. To prevent curtailment in operations it was necessary to enter the sales yarn business, and in that year more than 5,000,000 pounds of yarn were sold. Most of this yarn found its way into tent duck for the United States Army. The Gastonia plant also shared in the production of tent duck by weaving 500,000 pounds of it in 1942.

During 1943 yarn sales decreased somewhat but production of army duck expanded 1,000,000 pounds, signifying a change to full-time war production.

THE WAR YEARS were characterized by efforts aimed at the stimulation of production through improved employee efficiency, lower rate of absenteeism, decreased labor turnover and training courses for new employees. Typical of labor saving machinery introduced at that time was the long draft roving for the card room.

To enlighten employees and local citizenry alike, a mammoth display of war products manufactured by the parent company (containing in most cases fabric from the Gastonia plant) was presented at the Gastonia Armory in the fall of 1944.

On February 26, 1944, the late Honorable Robert P. Patterson, Undersecretary of War, notified the Firestone Cotton Mills, Inc., of its selection for the Army Navy "E" Award as a result of outstanding production for the war effort.

The award ceremony took place before a throng of employees and townspeople on the afternoon of March 27, 1944. For the occasion a platform was built from the Main Office to the street, Second Avenue. Brigadier General H. F. Safford, USA, made the presentation for the War Department; Harold Mercer, plant manager, received it on behalf of all the employees. Award pins were presented to the employees by Captain A. T. Clay, USN, and these were received by Ben Davis, employee representative. The late Russell A. Firestone was present, representing the Board of Directors, The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company.

With the introduction of rayon at Firestone's Gastonia plant, it soon became evident that a more inclusive corporate name was needed. Consequently in 1944, the name was changed to Firestone Textiles, Incorporated. Finally in September of 1950 that name was changed, with the dissolution of the corporation, and the present name adopted: Firestone Textiles, operating as a division of the Firestone Tire & Rubber Company.

AFTER the Japanese Surrender and as materials became increasingly available, a program was launched to improve efficiency and working conditions. Considerable improvement was undertaken in the plant with an eye to quality, now that pressure for war production was eased. Some of the more important installations which have been completed to date are:

1. Complete fluorescent lighting throughout the plant.

2. Mechanical materials handling equipment.
3. Overhead cleaning in the spinning department.
4. Controlled atmospheric condition in the rayon weave room.
5. Conveyor systems for handling fabric rolls.
6. New boilers.
7. Loom improvements.
8. New slashers.
9. Complete repainting of mill interior.
10. Tray conveyor system.

In 1946 the John W. Thomas award was presented for the first time to the outstanding Boy Scout of Gaston County. This annual award (established by the late Mr. John W. Thomas, Honorary Chairman of the Board of Directors, The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company) has encouraged scouting tremendously in this area, and is probably the most sought-after individual award offered to scouts in the county.

Two important personnel changes were made in 1948: Nelson Kessell was promoted to general superintendent and F. B. Galligan was transferred from the Bennettsville, S. C., plant, as plant superintendent.

DURING 1949 the sale of the remaining village houses was resumed and practically all of these were sold by the end of 1950. Also this year marked the beginning of the annual Firestone Hobby Show, an event that has grown in size and popularity each year to the extent that now it receives favorable notice from Gastonia people generally.

Late in 1949 it was decided that a program of selling some of our surplus cotton yarns was advisable and since then substantial quantities of high grade carded yarn have been sold to the textile trade. In similar fashion the sale of large quantities of our square woven fabric has been carried out.

The "forties", especially the war years, revealed an increasing interest in home gardens, or Victory Gardens as they were called during the war. Firestone's contribution in gardening earned it the highest National Institute Award for several consecutive years between 1943 and 1948. This program has been discontinued because of lack of suitable land for the gardens.

PERHAPS the brightest star surely the most recent, in our collection of milestones and memories is the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company. The very mention of the year 1950 still brings up comment on the Ringling Brothers Circus' special anniversary show for Firestone employees.

Realizing the need for increased insurance benefits for hospital and surgical care, Firestone has made every effort to see that employees have as much coverage as possible in this connection. By a series of changes in our group insurance, we now have one of the most generous policies of its kind anywhere. Concurrent with the expansion and improvement of insurance has been the development of a retirement plan for employees. . . . And the end is not yet! The story of progress is a continuing story—a living drama that unfolds before our eyes constantly. Something to look for, work for and be proud of. . . . at FIRESTONE.