

"Mr. J. O. Wells reported to me about the progress which is being made towards the collection for the new Hospital. Many of our departments have responded splendidly; others are lagging behind.

"A good Hospital is most essential in any community and it is very much needed in Brevard . . . I want Ecusta to go 100% 'over the top' and I hope all of you will help us."

In that same message, he spoke of coming Spring weather and the need "to organize for activities of enjoyment — sport and recreation. All of us should not only 'work together' but also 'play together'. All suggestions toward this end are very welcome."

This was less than two years after construction of the Ecusta plant was started in June 1938, a period in which much of Western North Carolina was still digging out from under the devastation of the Great Depression. A sleeping giant trying to stir, the area population came to life with the announcement that Transylvania County had been chosen over 59 other sites throughout the United States.

"Citizens of Pisgah Forest, of Brevard, and of this entire section rejoiced when the decision to locate here was announced," the late George McCoy wrote in the March 3, 1940 issue of *The Asheville Citizen*.

"Few American industries sell a product that is used daily by a greater number of people than that manufactured by Ecusta," he wrote. "The paper made here is utilized by manufacturers of cigarettes that are sold to tens of millions of persons daily. It is a splendid industry for Western North Carolina; it has no seasonal variations.

"The jobs given to hundreds, the hundreds of thousands of dollars to be expended annually mean a great deal to this section. Business has been stimulated; people of all classes—the merchant, the theater owner, the lawyer, the doctor, the preacher—have benefited directly or indirectly from the

weekly payroll that amounts to around \$750,000 annually.

"Ecusta has aided very materially in solving the economic problems of Pisgah Forest and Brevard," the Asheville writer stated.

Within the next half-year, a year to the month after the first commercial manufacturer left Pisgah Forest, a \$2,000,000 expansion program was announced; the amount attributed to the original construction. Another 500 jobs were to be added.

Two Transylvania businessmen were credited in the May 5, 1938 issue of *The Asheville Citizen* as being largely responsible for securing the interest of the Ecusta Paper Corporation in the Davidson River site. They were C. M. Douglas, director and publisher of *The Transylvania Times*; and Harry H. Patton, Brevard and Pisgah Forest merchant. The land cost, according to the article, was more than \$50,000.

Transylvania's well known historian, Mrs. Mary Jane McCrary, said that Mr. Douglas and Mr. Patton made an inestimable contribution to this area through their efforts.

"They accomplished what a Chamber of Commerce would have tried to do, to put together the total package that helped convince Mr. Harry Straus that the Ecusta plant should be built at Pisgah Forest. They acted at a time in our lives when the community was unsettled because of other factors. In doing so they blended us, they brought us together as a community.

"They were remarkable men."

The main tract of the property, known in earlier times as the "Deaver lands," was purchased from Capt. W. McK. (Bill) Fetzer. Land adjoining the Fetzer property was bought from John C. and R. R. Deaver, and U. G. Reeves; railroad rights from Carr Lumber Co. and Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Deaver.

Engineers were elated with the tract in more ways than one.

The May 5 article stated:

"A fine bed of gravel was found by engineers just under the surface of the fine alluvial Toxaway loam soil on which the plant was to be built, guaranteeing a fine foundation for the large structure."

It was water, however, that was the most compelling natural resource for choosing this out of five dozen possibilities throughout the United States. The abundance and purity of the Davidson River offered the quality known at the parent plant in France. The May 5 article described it as clear, silvery water seldom muddy even after long rains, due to the protected watershed of virgin and second-growth forests.

To name the new plant after such water seemed appropriate. Ecusta had been, in fact, the name of a post office on the "Deaver lands" in the 1890's, and is reported to be the Cherokee Indian word for the Davidson River: galloping or silvery waters, later defined as rippling waters.

Two residents of the immediate plant section corroborated this in May 1938: Joseph M. Orr, 85, and Mrs. Emma Combs Patton, 86. Mrs. Patton told of being postmistress for four years in the 1890's when she was the widow of James P. Deaver, operating the post office in the Deaver home. She said it had been named Deaver and Puella before her appointment, but was called the Ecusta Post Office during her term of office. After that the name Puella was restored, she said, until the post office was abandoned with establishment of rural free delivery out of Brevard. Interviewed at the time of Ecusta's land acquisition in May 1938, Mrs. Patton and Mr. Orr were reported to be confident of Ecusta's Cherokee derivation.

The \$2,000,000 construction was reported underway in June 1938. Fiske-Carter of Greenville was general contractor, J. E. Serrine the engineering firm.

Twelve experts arrived the following March from France,

adept at every aspect of paper-making but having no acquaintance with the English language. In keeping with Mr. Straus's promise that local people would make up the work force as far as possible, the French men and women were to teach pulping, refining, machine tending, slitting, and quality control techniques to the men and women of Transylvania, Henderson, Buncombe and other counties nearby. From the time they were met at the train by R. Bollore, head of the parent French mill and a director of the new Ecusta Paper Corporation, the French visitors were in almost constant contact with the people they were to teach. Sign language became a form of communication.

North Carolina charters were granted the Champagne Paper Corp. and the Boucher Cork Co., Inc., Mr. Straus's converting firms in New York. Soon they and Endless Belt operations were separate companies working inside the Ecusta plant, providing extra jobs.

Shadows of war were stretching widely over Europe when Ecusta's first cigarette paper was produced at Pisgah Forest in September 1939. The period coincided with Hitler's march into Poland.

The Straus dream had come true, and America had a new industry. No longer was the American tobacco industry dependent on imported cigarette paper, largely French, which the war threatened to quell.

In a welcome to the National Governors' Conference, which visited the Ecusta plant June 24, 1942, Mr. Straus said:

"The establishment of a cigarette paper plant in this country, where cigarette paper is made with American raw materials and American labor, is the realization of one of my greatest ambitions.

"Ecusta manufactures cigarette paper for many of the leading brands of cigarettes.

"It might be interesting for you to know something of the importance of the cigarette industry. During the calendar