



Figure 1. Photograph of the Crescent factory, taken by Elmer Harrold—circa 1920.
ORIGINAL PHOTO FROM THE COLLECTION OF KEITH RUCKER.

A Short History of the Crescent Machine Company

Part II: 1920 to Present

by Keith S. Rucker

Introduction

This article is the final part of a two-part history of the Crescent Machine Company. The first part ("A Short History of the Crescent Machine Company Part I—1894 to 1920," The Chronicle 60, no. 4 [2007]: 137-157) covers the history of the company from its beginnings through 1920.

The End of World War I and an Economic Recession

As a whole, the 1920s were pivotal in American history, a period of vast social changes and unprecedented economic fluctuation. The decade, however, did not begin with the fanfare that most people associate it with. During World War I, industrial production was at an all time high as factories across the nation churned out the many products needed to fuel the war effort. When the war ended in 1918, many companies found themselves with a production capacity that was far greater than the demand for their products. The end result of this situation was an economic recession that continued for several long years.

With that post-war recession, demand for industrial tooling, including the band-saws and other woodworking machinery produced by the Crescent Machine Company, was almost nonexistent. Orders for new machinery at the Crescent factory (Figure 1) dropped off significantly, frequently forcing the company to resort to three- or four-day work weeks throughout this period.¹ While the news was not great for Crescent, the truth was that many formerly prosperous companies were failing at record rates. Crescent considered itself lucky to be just surviving. The worse news for Crescent was that with

the production slowdown, several long-time and highly experienced Crescent employees left the company in order to look for more stable work elsewhere.²

As if things were not bad enough, in March, 1920—in an effort to increase their wages and to receive union recognition by the owners—the molders in the foundry decided to strike. During this strike, no work was done in the foundry, resulting in the entire plant being forced to shut down due to lack of parts.³ The strike continued for several weeks, until an agreement was reached and work at Crescent resumed. At the conclusion of the strike, the molders were successful in acquiring higher pay, but the Crescent management refused to recognize their attempt to organize a union.⁴

Fortunately, both for Crescent and for the nation, the economic downturn of the early 1920s was short lived. By the end of 1921, economic conditions had improved across the nation. The price of many household necessities had once again dropped to pre-war levels. Wheat fell from nearly \$3.00 a bushel in 1920 to \$1.15 in 1921; hogs from \$0.20 a pound to \$0.08; and sugar from \$0.30 a pound to \$0.05. With more money to spend, the public began to buy more consumer goods, resulting in a higher demand for industrial goods such as woodworking machinery. The Crescent shops were once again running at full pace.

A Generational Shift

At the end of 1921, with the company back in good shape, Elmer Harrold decided to retire from Crescent. He wished to spend more time traveling and visiting his family. Harrold sold his stock in the company to his

nephew Robert C. Harrold (Figure 2). With Elmer Harrold's own son living in California and not interested in taking the reins at Crescent, Elmer wanted to leave his share of the company in family hands. Since Robert was a nephew to both Elmer Harrold and Clint Wilderson (the son of Elmer's brother Albert and Wilderson's sister Ella), he was a natural fit.

Educated at Spencerian Business College in Cleveland, Ohio, between 1906 and 1920, Robert Harrold was employed by the New York Central Railroad at Collinwood, Ohio. In 1920, Robert left the railroad to become treasurer of the Crescent Machine Company.⁵ Because Robert could not afford to buy the stock outright, in a gesture of kindness, Elmer Harrold worked out an agreement by which he would be paid for his stock over time from the profits of the company. Unfortunately, for Elmer, this arrangement resulted in little money ever being paid to him.⁶



Figure 2. A photograph of Robert C. Harrold from the 1940 *Crescent Junior Line Catalog*.

The End of Annual Catalogs

The next year, 1921, was a year of many changes for Crescent—one of which was that it was the last time that Crescent published an annual full-line catalog. In the years that followed, Crescent instead promoted its machinery with individual circulars, each devoted to a specific machine that they made. Because Crescent would only have to print new circulars when it made major changes in a particular machine or when new machines were introduced, this policy helped to reduce printing costs. The 1921 catalog featured several new items, including improvements to the no. 3 and no. 5 saw tables, the no. 2 motor-driven saw table, and the hollow-chisel mortiser (Figure 3). Crescent also introduced a new motor driven option for its shaper in this year's catalog.⁷

With the short-lived recession behind, what remained of the 1920s—until the Crash—is remembered as a period of almost-full-employment and record spending. Demand was high for industrial goods to support the booming economy. While production at the Crescent Machine Company probably did not quite reach the levels of the 1910s, the company's growth continued. In 1921, the Mercantile Agency—a company that rated the credit and net worth of companies all across America—had listed Crescent with a pecuniary strength of between \$125,000 and \$200,000.⁸ By September 1926, Crescent's pecuniary had nearly doubled, to between \$200,000 and \$300,000.⁹

Throughout the 1920s, as industrial technology evolved, Crescent made many improvements to their line of machines. New features, such as the introduction of ball bearings as a replacement for Babbitt bearings, became an option for many machines. Reflecting a changing national concern for preventing industrial accidents, other improvements to Crescent's line of machines included safety features, which were included on the machines being shipped from the Leetonia plant.

Small Machines for Home Shops

Perhaps the most important contribution to the Crescent line of machinery in the 1920s was the introduction of a new class of smaller “portable” machines. Because wage earners had more disposable income in the 1920s than ever before, a new market for machinery was developing—smaller-scale power tools—designed for the home woodworker. For many Americans, woodworking was an increasingly popular hobby. For the first time, woodworking machines were being sold not only to the large factories but also to individuals for personal use.

To cater to this new market, Crescent created a new line of small table saws, jointers, and band saws. Table saws, or “saw tables” as Crescent referred to them, were among the most popular new items. A 1928 circular of “Crescent Portable Woodworking Machines” listed five different models of portable saw tables with different features as well as three models of “combination woodworkers”—a small portable machine that contained a saw table and jointer combined in a single machine (Figure 4).¹⁰

With the new markets created by the home woodworker, new machines were being designed and tested by the Crescent engineers at the fastest pace since the



Figure 3. A 1925 advertisement from “*The Wood-Worker*” showing a sample of the Crescent line of woodworking machinery.

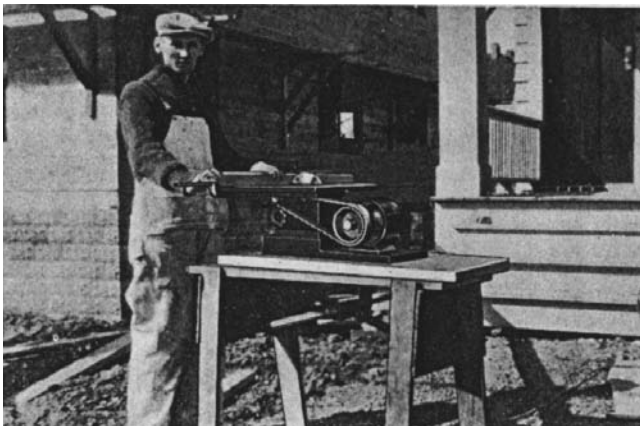


Figure 4. R. S. Hoyt Co. (contractors and builders from Syracuse, New York) using a no. 15 Crescent bench saw, circa 1928.
IMAGE FROM 1928 CRESCENT PORTABLE WOODWORKING MACHINES CATALOG.

very early days of the company. An insight about the 1920s operating policy of Crescent Machine comes from Donald Harrold. Grandnephew of both of the Crescent co-founders, when Donald was in high school in the late 1920s, he worked in the pattern shop and later worked for the company full-time after he graduated in 1933. In a 1988 article, Donald describes how a new Crescent machine was designed and tested:

It was interesting work. The company built 238 different kinds of machines. A set of prints would be given to me and I'd make the patterns; then I'd follow it through the foundry. Then one machine [prototype] of that new model would be placed in the pattern shop where it was operated for one year before that particular model was put on the market.¹¹

Donald Harrold also related the following concerning the care in which parts for new machines were handled by the foundry and machine shops:

Uncle Clint would order 100 or 200 band saw tables through the foundry, which he would age for a year to be sure the tables would stay straight. There would be rows of those tables standing alongside the outside of the building. After a year, those tables were brought inside where they were sandblasted and steam-cleaned before starting any machine work.¹²

The Great Depression

The good times, the Roaring Twenties, could not last forever. On October 24, 1929, the American stock market crashed with a massive sell off, a day forever remembered as Black Thursday. Many fortunes made in the 1920s were lost in a single day. The "Crash" plunged the nation into what historians have long called "The Great Depression."

Before the Crash, America enjoyed good economic times, with plentiful jobs for nearly everyone who want-

ed to work. But as the twenties ended, America found itself with millions out of work and out of money. As with nearly every other business in America, the Crescent Machine Company struggled to survive. Orders for new machinery were practically nonexistent.

Before the Great Depression, the Crescent factory employed about 125 workers, who worked on average about forty-eight hours over a six-day work week.¹³ When the Great Depression set in, the number of employees able to continue working at Crescent dropped considerably; Crescent employed just enough men to fill what few orders trickled in. Work time was also reduced, sometimes to only two or three days per work week. Just to keep the company afloat, management did everything possible to reduce costs and to sell product. Regardless of how hard management tried to keep people working, the economic slowdown had significant affects on the many men who made their living working in the Crescent factory.

How bad was it for Crescent? At the height of the Great Depression, Crescent owed the Fairfield Township \$16,000 in back taxes. Unable to pay the entire amount, Crescent had the good luck of working out an agreement with the township trustees, settling the debt for \$9,000 cash. Rather than to foreclose on Crescent—a move that likely would put Crescent out of business for good—the trustees ultimately decided that it was better for Crescent to continue operating and, thus provide to the community what few jobs they could¹⁴

With Crescent Machine Company struggling to survive during the depressed economic conditions of the early 1930s, the health of both Crescent co-founders began to fail. On April 19, 1931, Clinton Wilderson died.¹⁵ Having no sons, Wilderson left the Crescent Machine Company in the hands of his nephew, Robert C. Harrold, and his long time business manager, Wilber Bess.¹⁶ Within a month of Wilderson's death on May 11, 1931, his original business partner, Elmer Harrold, also died. Harrold had spent the last ten years of his life in retirement, enjoying his hobbies, which included photography and science. He was a benefactor of Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio, the college his daughter Martha attended, and where he had donated the dome and telescope of the Clark Observatory.¹⁷

While business was poor at the Crescent Machine Company, in some ways, the company was still making small progress. Around 1931, the company's chief engineer, E. W. Dustman, made a major redesign the Crescent planer, in order to modernize it. Rather than a line-shaft

drive, the new model would run off an “integrated” electric motor.¹⁸ The resulting machine was designated the “Electric Beltless” planer and came in a 24-inch model (Figure 5).¹⁹ The significance of this machine was that it was the first machine in the Crescent line to have a major redesign done to it in order to modernize the machine to new technology. Before this upgrade, most machines in the lineup were simply modified to accept new features and individual electric motors, resulting in machinery that basically looked the same as it had since the early 1900s. While the popularity of this newly designed planer is not really known, at the time, it was a major step for Crescent. No doubt exists, that as orders for modernized machinery trickled in, it helped to keep the company afloat during very lean years. Ultimately, the gamble to spend precious money during the early Depression on design work provided dividends over the next few years.

The country suffered through four years of the economic difficulty, but significant changes were about to occur. Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president of the United States, largely due to his promise to pull the country out of its financial crisis. Roosevelt developed a series of projects and plans that are, collectively, called “The New Deal.” One such program was the National Recovery Administration, referred to simply as the “NRA.” The foundation of the NRA, the president’s Re-employment Agreement, stated in part that “this agreement is part of a nationwide plan to raise wages, create employment, and thus increase purchasing power and restore business.” Under the plan, participating employers agreed to not work any individual more than forty hours per week and to guarantee minimum wages for all workers. By decreasing the maximum hours one person could work, it was hoped that employers would have to

hire more people to get the same amount of work done, in essence, spreading the work load around.²⁰

The Crescent Machine Company was the first company in the village of Leetonia to sign Roosevelt’s blanket agreement, supporting the President in his recovery efforts totally. In July, 1933, when Crescent signed on to the NRA agreement, the factory employed only about 50 men, a much lower number than the payroll of 125 workers that it had had when the factory was operating at full capacity. With the new agreement, employees received notice that their total hours would be cut from 48 hours a week to 40 hours, but at the same time, a wage increase would actually give them more take home pay than before. In 1933, for the first time in four years, things finally began to look up for the Crescent Machine Company.²¹

While the impact of the New Deal was felt locally—by the increased pay for Crescent workers—Roosevelt’s New Deal was really having a much larger impact on Crescent than just putting people back to work. Slowly, with people across the nation once again being employed, demand for consumer goods began to rise. The net effect for Crescent: orders for new machinery increased with the result of more work at the factory and more jobs created.

Even though things were starting to look better for Crescent, by 1937, the current owners, Robert Harrold and Wilber Bess, had about taken all of the red ink that they could stand. Forced to file for bankruptcy, the Crescent Machine Company went into receivership, with R. S. Geddes and Associates of Cleveland, Ohio, being appointed by the courts to operate Crescent. Records of this transaction are sketchy, but we know that after the sale, Mr. R. S. Geddes served as president of the Crescent Machine Company, and the new parent company made the operating decisions for Crescent.²²

While there is no doubt that the company was continuing to struggle through this period, there were some bright points. By 1938, a report of a company banquet indicated that 71 employees were present, representing nearly all of the active workers. While not anywhere near the pre-Depression employment of 125 workers, the company had added a considerable number to its payroll since the reported 50 employees in 1933.²³

Another bright point for the company was that during this period—from 1933 to 1938—both improvements and additions to Crescent’s line of machinery were reported. Around 1938, Crescent further streamlined its planers, which had been re-designed just a few years earlier, and introduced the vastly improved P-18

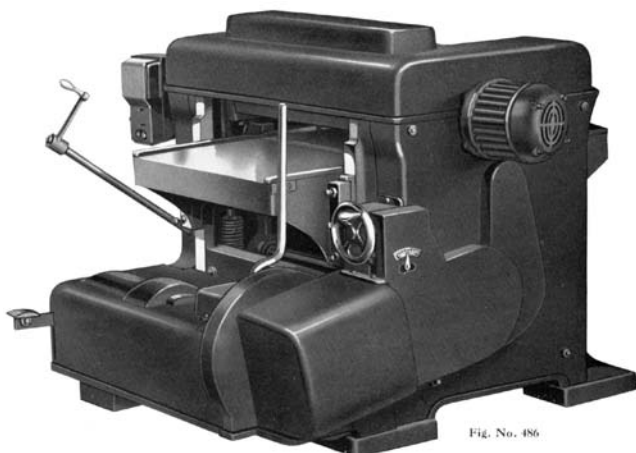


Fig. No. 486

Figure 5. The Crescent Electric Beltless Planer.
IMAGE FROM A 1931 CRESCENT CIRCULAR DETAILING THE MACHINE.

and P-24 single-surface planers (Figure 6). The new design features included a “Reeves variable speed feed works with a dial indicator to show rate of feed,” a control panel with push button start and stop buttons for the cutter head, and, a start-stop-brake control for the feed mechanism. Optionally, the planer could be equipped with a knife grinder and knife jointing device, to allow for sharpening the knives without removing them from the cutter head.²⁴

At the conclusion of the 1930s, the leadership of the company consisted of the Board of Directors, made up of R. S. Geddes of Cleveland, serving as president, R. E. Wilcox of Cleveland, and M. A. Macbeath of Akron. In addition, to providing local management for the company, R. C. Harrold served as vice president of Crescent and Matt L. Larson served as general manager and both served as directors. Other key figures in the Crescent management included E. W. Duston, chief engineer, J. A. Arnold, foundry superintendent and W. P. Harrold, shop superintendent.²⁵

The Second World War

In 1939, with Europe at war, the prospect of America’s engagement in the hostilities loomed. In response to the threat of war, as well as to assist America’s traditional allies, the government began building up its military defenses. The result was a definite upturn in economic activity—especially the manufacturing sector—in a way the New Deal never achieved (Figures 7 and 8).

**Production Must March —
and Accuracy Go Along With It**

The Crescent P-24 Planer turns out a lot of fine surfacing at a cost as pleasing as the workmanship. Rigidity and accuracy go together. The one-piece, semi-rigid cast frame is sand cast and substantially ribbed to do away with vibration. The one-piece bed, carried on carefully machined ways, stays aligned. A short cylinder practically eliminates whip. Other features: easily accessible hand wheel and Reeves variable speed drive handle many varieties of work at proper speeds; separate motor on cutter head and separate feed motor; hinged cast aluminum guards and cover promote safety and cleanliness; round, high speed safety head mounted on precision type ball bearings; built-in knife grinder and jointing attachment available.

THE CRESCENT MACHINE COMPANY
North Cherry Fork Road, LEETONIA, OHIO

The Crescent P-24 Planer

Furniture makers and others who must have cabinet finish at low cost are invited to write for price and full information.





Figure 6. Advertisement for the Crescent P-24 planer appearing in the March, 1940, issue of Wood-Working Machinery.

With the increase in manufacturing, business at Crescent finally grew at a faster and faster pace until the company had finally escaped the despairs of the Great Depression. At the Crescent factory, orders for woodworking machinery were received, and new employees were hired. Then, on December 7, 1941, the inevitable happened, and the United States entered World War II. For nearly every manufacturing company in America, production for the war effort became the primary focus.

To sustain America’s war efforts, a great need existed for new, modern machinery of all kinds. Suddenly for

Crescent, production levels soared to near record highs. After nearly a decade of the Depression—with manufacturers patching up existing machinery instead of buying new—orders for new machinery were rolling in, and manufacturers made improvements to their factories to increase efficiency. Many factories across the country were quickly converted to producing items needed for the war, a shift that often meant changing the entire factory layout. A factory that once manufactured vacuum cleaners might be retrofitted to make machine guns, or an automobile plant might manufacture airplanes.

As a testament to the demand for woodworking machinery, Crescent was never asked to make any items other than woodworking machinery throughout the entire war. According to a one retired Crescent worker, during the war, machinery made in the Crescent plant was primarily manufactured for subcontractors of



Figure 7 (above, left). Band saw castings awaiting completion in the Crescent machines shops, circa 1939.

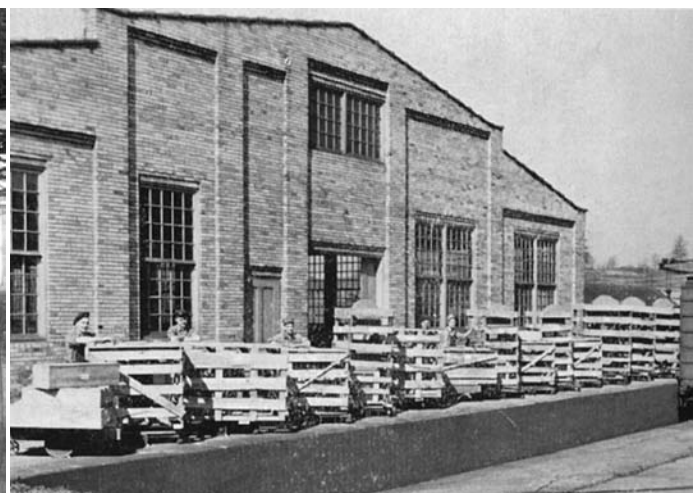


Figure 8 (above, right). Crescent machines being prepared to load in railcars for shipment, circa 1939.

the U.S. Army Air Forces for production of airplanes. Machines manufactured during the war years with the highest priority were 16-inch jointers, 14-inch table saws, and 36-inch band saws. However, as long as other machines in the Crescent line were needed for war production, they could be ordered, but these other machines were considered a lower priority, and often delivery took longer.²⁶ Demand was so high and priority so great that, during the war, Crescent achieved some of the highest production levels in their history.²⁷

As had happened in World War I, men and women at the Crescent factory showed plenty of patriotism. Employees voluntarily contributed part of their salaries towards the war effort. No sooner had the war begun than the Crescent employees had pledged to buy \$831.50 in bonds each month, and in February, 1942, Crescent received letters of “congratulations” from the Treasury Department.²⁸ By October of 1942, the amounts of pledges coming out of the Crescent Factory entitled them to earn the “10% Award”—given to acknowledge that employees pledged at least ten percent of their total salaries for War Bonds. Crescent was one of only six manufacturers with more than a hundred employees in all of Columbiana County, Ohio, to earn this award.²⁹

Just as war time production was reaching record high levels, Crescent suffered a setback. In December of 1942, a fire blazed through the foundry section of the Crescent factory. The fire, which was discovered at about 11:15 P.M., was quickly reported by a passerby, and fortunately fire departments swiftly arrived on the scene. The fire, which took about forty-five minutes to bring under control, caused much damage. In the area of the fire, many of the patterns—used for casting parts for new machines—were destroyed, and many foundry casks charred beyond repair. Damage was considerable, but the building itself was saved. To quickly restore production to its war time pace, the burned portion of the building was repaired and patterns remade. Fortunately for Crescent, nobody was injured nor was there any lost time reported from workers due to the devastating fire.³⁰

For Crescent, in many ways, World War II was a blessing in disguise. (This was true, perhaps, for most other manufacturers across the country as well.) For the first time in nearly ten years, demand for manufactured products was not only up, but at record levels throughout the war years. For Crescent, it meant that a company struggling a few years earlier to keep afloat was now thriving. Crescent expanded its factory even further and

modernized many of the machines in their machine shop, increasing efficiency and production capabilities.

And, since the Crescent factory was never converted to manufacture other products, as wartime restrictions ended, the company was in an advantageous position to immediately begin manufacturing for the public. As early in the war as the fall of 1943, Crescent began to advertise in trade magazines for potential customers to “anticipate” their post-war requirements immediately, and get orders in for delivery when wartime priorities would allow.

With war time production in full swing, the workers at Crescent were finally successful in something that they had never been able to accomplish—forming a labor union. A group of production workers, maintenance employees, and watchmen put in a petition with the Local Union No. 175 United Construction Workers of America to be recognized by Crescent as a union. On August 18, 1944, the group met, voted, organized, and received a charter on September 1, 1944. The union roll counted 103 members out of a total of 113 eligible employees. For the first time in the long history of the company, the employees of Crescent were now union employees.

The Rockwell Era

In 1945, as World War II wound down, change was occurring all across the country. The boys who had gone off to war came home as men, looking for jobs. Crescent was not immune to the postwar changes that were affecting so many companies. The headline of the June 8, 1945, *Leetonia Reporter* read “Crescent Machine Company is Purchased by Pittsburgh Concern During the Past Week.” The Crescent Machine Company had been bought by Pittsburgh Equitable Meter and Manufacturing Company. Reports were that Crescent would “retain its own identity and the personnel of the local plant will remain about as it is.”³¹

Headed by Colonel Willard Rockwell, the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter and Manufacturing Company was actually a conglomerate, comprising of many companies that manufactured items ranging from water meters to ball bearings. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, Pittsburgh Equitable Meter and Manufacturing Company had been aggressively buying manufacturing companies, which at the time of the Crescent purchase included: Merco Nordstom Valve Co., Oakland, California; The Rockwell Machine Co., Hopewell, New Jersey; The Edwards Valve and Mfg. Co., Inc., East Chicago, Indiana; The Delta Mfg. Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin; The V. & O. Press Co., Hudson, New York; Rockwell International

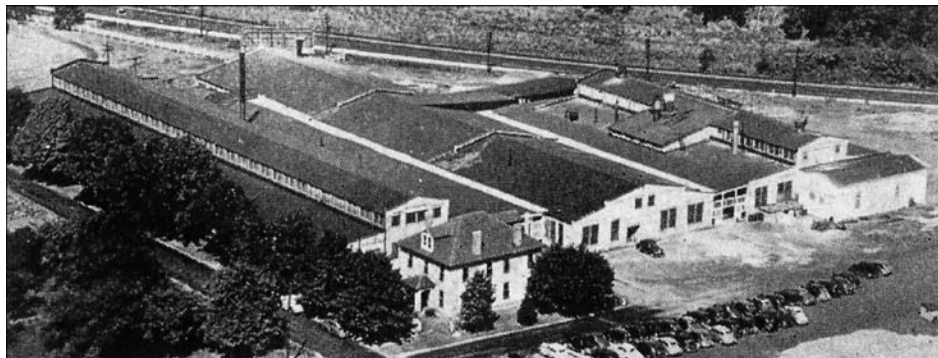
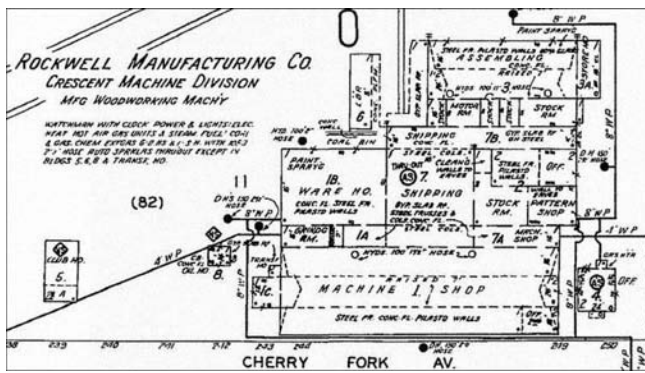


Figure 9 (top). Map of the Crescent factory after the 1946 additions. Notice that all of the buildings had been expanded so that the entire factory was connected into one big building.

SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP, LEETONIA, COLUMBIANA COUNTY, OHIO, PUBLISHED BY SANBORN MAP COMPANY, APRIL, 1950. (IMAGE OBTAINED THROUGH THE OHIO PUBLIC LIBRARY INFORMATION NETWORK.)

Figure 10 (bottom). Aerial view of the Crescent Factory after the 1946 additions.

IMAGE OBTAINED FROM THE 1946 CRESCENT CATALOG.

Corporation, New York, New York; and The Monessen Foundry and Machine Co., Monessen, Pennsylvania.³²

Concern was high among Crescent employees. A large corporation now controlled the reins of the company that provided their bread and butter. In this case, however, most employees evidently thought that change would be good. With the loss of war production contracts, many manufacturers in the area needed to lay employees off due to lack of demand for their products. For the workers at Crescent, the outlook was much brighter. In August, 1945, instead of receiving pink slips, they were informed that they would receive a shop-wide increase in pay, retroactive back to July 1. "Despite the war cancellations," General Manager R. C. DuBrucq declared, "we still have enough backlogs of government and private contracts to keep the shop running on its full fifty-five hour a week until well after the first of the year."³³

There was even more good news. Crescent, under Rockwell management, wanted to increase the number of employees in both the machine shop and the foundry, and, moreover, they particularly wanted to rehire and/or hire returning veterans. "We have made the necessary arrangements with the union and company

officials," Mr. DuBrucq added, "and [we] are ready to start an apprenticeship program that will welcome beginners in both the machine shop and foundry."

By November of 1945, Crescent had increased the number of its employees considerably. Now on its payrolls were twenty-one World War II veterans. Some veterans were former workers who were simply re-employed while others were hired as new employees.³⁴

The good news about the increase in the workforce did have a downside for Crescent—once again, the factory was running out of usable space. To overcome this problem, an expansion plan was designed: all of the separate buildings would be tied together into a single structure, allowing them to utilize the space between the buildings. The expansion project—which took about three months to complete—was finished around January, 1946 (Figures 9 and 10).³⁵

In January of 1946, change of a different nature also was in the air. At the last directors meeting of 1945, the board of the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter and Manufacturing Company voted to rename the parent company. Effective January 1, 1946, the collection of companies owned by Willard Rockwell and his investors would become the Rockwell Manufacturing Company. More than four thousand people were now employed by Rockwell in its various subsidiaries and divisions. Crescent Machine Company was now a subsidiary of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company.³⁶

With the Rockwell takeover of Crescent only a few months old, the unionized workers and the Rockwell management had the first of many labor disputes. In February, 1946, a small group of workers in the Crescent foundry refused to work on patterns for the Crescent line of machinery. Why? Because patterns owned by Crescent were sent to the Monessen Foundry Company (another Rockwell subsidiary) to be cast (Figure 11). However, before the patterns could be completed, the Monessen plant struck as part of a nation-wide steel strike. The patterns were returned to Crescent, and the Rockwell management asked the Crescent foundry to make the castings. By doing this, the workers at Crescent felt that they would be betraying their brothers at their sister plant. They refused to make the parts, but their decision



Figure 11. Crescent foundry workers pouring cast iron parts for Crescent Machines.
IMAGE FROM THE 1946 CRESCENT CATALOG.

had repercussions. With the foundry refusing to cast the patterns, the Crescent management was forced to cease operations throughout the entire factory due to lack of parts. It was a move that put approximately 150 employees out of work until the dispute could be settled.

After sixteen days of the entire factory setting idle, Ohio Governor Frank J. Lausche stepped in. He strongly recommended that the workers go back to work until the dispute could be settled via arbitration. Unanimously, the union agreed with the governor and returned to work.³⁷

Then, in May 1946, in an attempt to centralize work for all of its subsidiaries, Rockwell announced that the foundry department at Crescent would be discontinued. While this decision was not designed to punish the foundry workers who had begun the strike a few months earlier, it was a significant change: for the first time since the creation of the Crescent Machine Company, the factory would not operate a foundry locally. A letter from Rockwell management to the foundry workers stated in part:

In the process of properly organizing the production of Rockwell Manufacturing Company products — it is necessary that some of the common needs of subsidiaries be manufactured at central points.

In this planning all gray-iron castings will be made at the Monessen plant for the eastern division and in the Arcade foundries for western subsidiaries.³⁸

While the discontinuance of the foundry work at Crescent had a significant affect on the local company, the Crescent plant was not singled out in this action. It affected every foundry in all of Rockwell's subsidiaries. All foundry work would be funneled through two central plants.

With the Rockwell takeover less than a year old, the Crescent Machine Company was about to make another major change—even if only on paper. On August 29, 1946, papers were filed with the Ohio Secretary of State to officially dissolve the Corporation of the Crescent Machine Company with all of its assets being assumed by the Rockwell Manufacturing Company.³⁹ At this time, the name of the Crescent Machine Company was officially changed to the “Crescent Machine Division of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company.” Officers of the company listed in a 1946 catalog were Ray C. DeBrucq, vice president and general

manager; W. L. Veit, sales manager; P. C. Otto, chief engineer; R. C. Harrold, vice president of purchasing; C. E. Dixon, plant superintendent; and Willis Pett, assistant secretary and treasurer.⁴⁰

Before Rockwell absorbed Crescent Machine Company, Crescent had been manufacturing the same machines created by the company since it had begun operations (Figure 12), but this was all about to change. While the Crescent Machine Division of Rockwell continued to manufacture some of the traditional Crescent line, the 1946 Rockwell catalog shows that the Crescent line had been considerably pared down from its pre-Rockwell lineup. Only the best selling Crescent machines were listed in that year's catalog: the S-2 shaper; hollow-chisel mortiser; single- and double-disk sanders in 18- and 24-inch sizes; 20-, 32-, and 36-inch band saws; the no. 9 and no. 10 tilting saw tables; 12- and 16-inch production model jointers as well as the 8-inch light duty jointer; the P-24 planer; and the V-14 lathe. The machines that apparently were discontinued at this time included the 26- and 38-inch band saws; the boring machine; the smaller L-14 lathe; the entire line of cut-off and swing saws; the smaller P-14 and P-18 planers; 18- and 20-inch jointers; the universal variety saws (radial arm saws); universal woodworkers; and several models of table saws as well as virtually the complete line of smaller “portable” machines.⁴¹

While sales literature after the Rockwell takeover is scant, plenty of evidence exists that indicates that while some of the Crescent machinery was discontinued, Rockwell was beginning to manufacture other types of machinery at the Crescent factory. Some of the machines

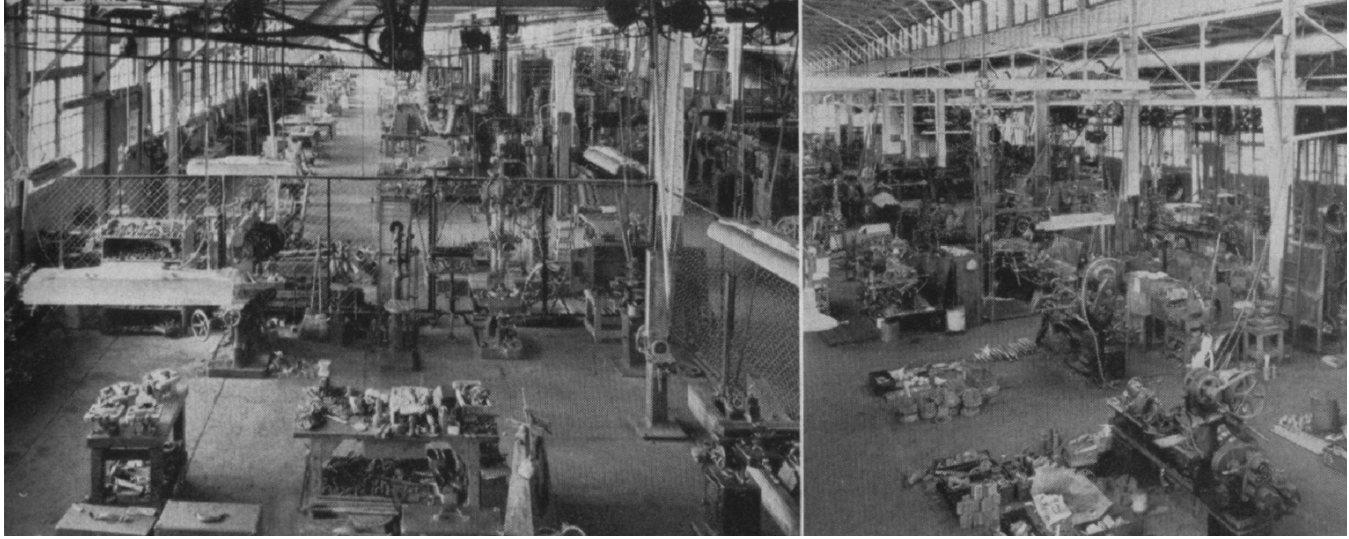


Figure 12. Scenes from inside the Crescent machine shops, circa 1946.

advertised after the take-over are the 12-inch/14-inch tilting arbor table saw (Figure 13) and a newly designed 20-inch band saw (Figure 14). Exactly when both of these machines were introduced is not known, but they began to show up in the late 1940s. While these machines are “badged” as Crescent/Rockwell, or in some cases Crescent/Delta, the engineering suggests a different approach than the old Crescent line. Crescent had made a mark in the industry by manufacturing heavy duty, but simple machines, made primarily from cast iron. The new machinery coming out of the Crescent factory appeared more “modern,” and more likely made of steel, rather than cast iron. This is not to say that the new machinery was not well made, it was just made very differently from what the Crescent line had been in the past. Engineering on the new machines appears to have been influenced more by Rockwell engineers than by Crescent engineers. In fact, some of the newer machinery manufactured at the Crescent plant carried patents to Herbert Tautz, founder in the 1920s of the Delta Specialty Company, which had also been bought by Rockwell.

Even though major changes were taking place at Crescent, production

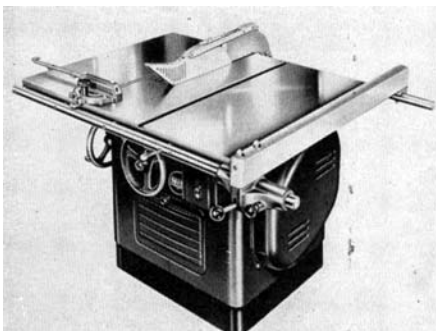
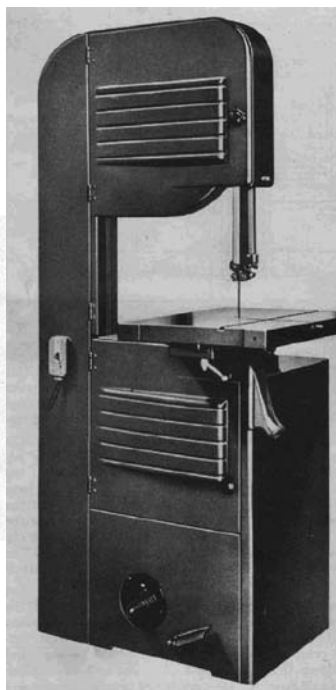


Figure 13. The Delta/Crescent 12-/14-inch table saw.

Figure 14. The Delta/Crescent 20-inch band saw



was increasing at a swift pace. To reward employees for a job well done, the company decided to give all employees a ten-cent-per-hour raises effective February 1, 1947, even though the contract that Crescent-Rockwell had with the union called for an increase in wages no earlier than spring of the year. Company officials estimated that the increase in salary would equate to, in the aggregate, an extra \$4,000 to \$5,000 in monthly payroll.⁴²

Business at Crescent remained constant throughout 1947 and, in the spring of 1948, raises were again given to all Crescent employees. Management and union representatives negotiated an eight-cent-per-hour raise for all employees across the board effective May 1, 1948. Total payroll for the company had this time been increased by another \$2,500 to \$3,000 per month.⁴³ Business was good not only for the Crescent plant, but for all of Rockwell’s subsidiaries, as well. Realizing that the demand for woodworking machinery was growing, Rockwell decided to purchase yet another manufacturer of woodworking machinery in order to expand their line. This time, Red Star Products of Norwalk, Ohio, the manufacturer of the “Multiplex” brand of radial arm saws, was purchased. With the addition of Red Star, the Rockwell Company now comprised seventeen different subsidiaries, from coast to coast, manufacturing machine tools, meters, valves, control devices, and computing mechanisms. The Red Star radial arm saws would be sold through existing Crescent and Delta dealers under the Delta brand.⁴⁴

After World War II, economic conditions in most industrial communities were pretty good. At the end of the war, enough war-related contracts were still in effect so that most manufacturers were able to continue working at full capacity for quite some time. This was the case in the Crescent plant; a voluminous

number of back orders kept the factory running with two shifts. As a result, in 1947, the company enjoyed one of their best years ever. However, by the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949, the backlog of orders had been whittled back to practically zero, and once again, Crescent was out looking for business. Business had declined so much that by the end of 1948, the plant was forced to cut back to a four-day-work week.⁴⁵

While the management was optimistic that conditions would improve in 1949, as the year progressed it became evident that a trend was developing: compared to the preceding year, 1949 witnessed a decrease of about fifty percent in the demand for new woodworking machinery. By May, the factory was forced to cut back even further, with most employees only working on a part-time basis, usually only three days per week. This condition caused alarm. Realizing that the future existence of the Crescent factory could be justified by higher Rockwell management only if the plant was being utilized efficiently, the local management at the Crescent Division began to look for ways to increase production in their plant—including manufacturing products outside its traditional line of woodworking machinery. Management at Leetonia implemented a plan to put the factory back to work full time by manufacturing parts for gas- and water-line valves for the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company, another subsidiary of Rockwell. In order to begin manufacturing the No. 2½ gas meter, a product of Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company, eight new screw machines were purchased along with other new machinery, including drill presses, turret lathes, grinders and tool sharpeners.⁴⁶

The lack of demand for new woodworking machinery affected not only operations of the Crescent Machine Division of Rockwell, but the other divisions in the organization making woodworking machinery were also having their share of difficulties. To streamline all of the power tool products made by Rockwell, the company decided in July 1949, to consolidate the Crescent Machine Division of Leetonia; the Arcade Manufacturing Division of Freeport, Illinois; Red Star Products, Inc. of Norwalk, Ohio; and Delta Manufacturing Division of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, into the new “Power Tool Division” of Rockwell Manufacturing Company. While the different divisions would still manufacture their products independently, the new Power Tool Division would handle all sales, service, and advertising for the entire group. By combining all of the power tools products together into a single line of woodworking machinery, Rockwell hoped that more orders could be generated for all divi-

sions, and at the same time save money by centralizing all services under one management.⁴⁷

By the end of 1949, demand for woodworking machinery was still lagging well behind production levels of just a few years earlier. With the loss of production in the Rockwell plants manufacturing power tools, the upper management could no longer justify having four separate plants producing machinery. One of the Rockwell plants would have to close. Crescent employees were worried for their jobs, but good faith was smiling on the people of Leetonia. In December, 1949, it was announced that the Red Star plant, which had been renamed the “Delta Multiplex Division,” in Norwalk, Ohio, would be shut down, and all production of the Multiplex radial arm saws would be moved to the Crescent plant in Leetonia (Figure 15). Nearly overnight, the lack of production problem that had been plaguing the Crescent location for over a year suddenly appeared to be resolved; the extra production of the Multiplex line would put Crescent back at work at near one hundred percent levels.⁴⁸

Partially due to the post-war housing boom, the Multiplex radial arm saw was one of the few machines in the Rockwell lineup that was selling well. In an effort to not affect overall production of these hot selling machines, the moving of the machinery to Leetonia was accomplished in such a way as to not interfere with the numbers of machines rolling off of the assembly lines—machinery was operated at the Red Star facility right up until the time that it was moved and production began again as soon as the machines were installed at Crescent. Over about a two-month period, more than forty new machines as well as all of the other tooling necessary to produce the radial arm saws were moved from Norwalk to Leetonia—in all, about fifty truck loads were needed to complete the move. With the near-new machines being moved the factory, Crescent was able to dispose of about twenty-five older obsolete machines—which were moved out of the factory and sold. With the transfer completed, it was estimated that production at the Crescent plant would be roughly doubled, meaning that many laid off and part-time workers could return to work full time.⁴⁹

With production and employee numbers finally restored to earlier levels, many employees felt that it was time for Crescent workers to get an increase in pay and benefits. Having weathered the storm, the economic challenges of the previous two years, Crescent workers were beginning to see the sun appear through the clouds. They believed that management could easily justify increases in wages. With the old



Figure 15. Multiplex 20-A radial arm saw, one of several Multiplex models that was manufactured at the Crescent factory under the Delta/Rockwell name beginning in 1950.

contract expiring in May of 1950, negotiations began between Crescent management and union representatives for a new contract, with added incentives. While Crescent management agreed to a wage increase, union representatives also demanded additional insurance benefits, including having Crescent pay for the cost of adding dependents. In response, management proposed to give each employee a six-and-one-half-cent-per-hour pay raise and adding six paid holidays. Due to the past year's poor business, Crescent argued, they could not even justify the offer they had on the table, much less the demands of the union. In a letter to the employees, R. C. DuBrucq, vice president and general manager, stated that although the company had a backlog for its new products, a "strike at this time would be most inopportune as the company swings into high gear on its full-employment program; ... a strike at this time would do untold damage."⁵⁰

Regardless of the company pleas not to strike, on May 16, 1950—with demands for a better contract offer—the Local No. 175 of the United Construction Workers decided to strike. The strike caused considerable stress to the management as they worried that the walkout would mean Crescent might lose the recently obtained Multiplex line. Before the strike was resolved, reports were heard that several other Rockwell plants were actively lobbying upper management to move the Multiplex from Leetonia production to one of their plants. This would have been devastating to the projected future production levels and would definitely result in layoffs. Due to a drastic decline in demand for

the old line of Crescent machines, it would have been difficult to justify keeping the Crescent plant open without the addition of the Multiplex line. Concerned that the Multiplex line production would be moved to another facility, Rockwell went as far as delaying the final few deliveries of the remaining jigs, fixtures, and tooling required to begin production of the new 40-B Multiplex saw to the Leetonia plant.⁵¹

For three bitter weeks, nearly 175 employees at the Crescent plant did not report for work but finally the issue was resolved. In the end, a one-year contract was signed. It allowed for a five-cent-per-hour increase in pay, four additional holidays, and full insurance for employees and dependents with the cost of the insurance being shared between the company and the workers. When everything was over, while not getting all that they had asked for, the workers received increases totaling slightly more than seven cents per hour, more than the original Crescent management offer. The best news for both sides was that, with the strike settled and a contract signed, production of the Multiplex would stay in Leetonia. The cost of the strike to the employees was the loss of three weeks' wages, estimated at more than \$8,000 per week—wages that would have gone into the local economy. The new contract went into effect June 6, 1950, and covered the period between May 1, 1950, and May 1, 1951.⁵²

With the near devastating strike of 1950 over, increased production at the Crescent factory was finally being realized. Only one month after the Crescent employees went back to work, production levels at the local plant were up by nearly 60 percent. During the month of July 1950, a total of 559 machines were manufactured at the Crescent plant. Of these machines, 391 were the new Multiplex saws, with the remaining 168 machines the sixteen legacy Crescent products, an indication of the importance of acquiring the new production. The added production resulted in major additions of new employees at Crescent. In January 1950, Crescent employed 105 workers, but by July of the same year, there were 188 production workers and plans to increase to 200 workers within a few weeks. Assuming that the necessary materials to produce the machines could be acquired, the goal was to increase production to five hundred Multiplex units in the month of August. In addition to the Multiplex saw, in August, another new product, a redesigned Crescent/Delta 8-inch jointer, was introduced, a move that promised even more production levels for the factory.⁵³

Impact of Leadership

Much of the success of Crescent during the trying times of the late 1940s and early 1950s could be directly credited to Ray D. DuBrucq (Figure 16), vice president and general manager of the Crescent Division. Ray DuBrucq originally came to Crescent in December 1939, as general manager, and continued in that post until 1944, when he left Crescent and moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, for unknown reasons. After Crescent was acquired by Rockwell in 1945, DuBrucq returned to his post as general manager of the Crescent plant, where he also assumed the role of vice president in the parent company. Prior to coming to Crescent, DuBrucq had spent at least twenty years in the woodworking machinery industry, primarily in sales.

During his tenure as general manager at the Crescent factory, he provided the company exceptional leadership during some of its most trying years, including bringing the company out of the Depression, and gearing it up for tremendous production levels during World War II and the post-war years, when most industrial manufacturing companies struggled due to leftover manufacturing capacity following the war. Many believed that the Crescent plant would not have survived in Leetonia as long as it did had it not added the Multiplex saw to its production. And most of these people credited DuBrucq for convincing Rockwell's upper management to move it to Crescent.⁵⁴

DuBrucq's leadership was not limited only to the happenings at the Crescent factory. In 1950, he was elected president of the National Association of Woodworking Machinery Manufacturers, serving in that post for two years. He was also very active in local civic activities, including serving as a member of the board of trustees of the Central Clinic and Hospital, as a member of Leetonia and Salem Ohio Chamber of Commerce, and as a member of the Salem Rotary Club.⁵⁵

In October of 1950, Rockwell announced that after over ten years as general manager and vice president of the Crescent factory, DuBrucq would be transferred to the Delta Power Tool Division to handle special sales assignments, but that he would retain his position of vice president of the Crescent Machine Division in the Rockwell Manufacturing Company. The general manager position was filled by William R. Brown of Freeport, Illinois, who held the same post for the Arcade Division of Rockwell. Brown assumed his duties



Figure 16. Ray D. DuBrucq

on October 23, 1950, working with DuBrucq for a short period of time.⁵⁶

Change in leadership at the Crescent factory did not stop with DuBrucq's departure. Three months later, in January, 1951, Robert C. Harrold, vice president and purchasing agent of the Crescent Division, announced his retirement, effective March 1, 1951. Harrold had been associated with Crescent since the company was first incorporated in 1904. Since 1921, when his uncle and Crescent co-founder, Elmer Harrold, retired, Robert had worked there full time. "Bob" was Crescent's longest tenure employee. With the retirement of Robert Harrold, the last remaining link ceased between the founders and the current management of the company. Harrold was succeeded in his job of purchasing agent by Neil Kegelmyer, who had served as his assistant for some time before.⁵⁷

Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, Rockwell continued to make woodworking machinery at the Crescent factory under the Crescent, Delta, and Rockwell names. By this time, all that remained of the original Crescent line was a handful of the more popular machines that had continued to sell. In addition, Crescent produced the dual-badged Delta/Crescent 20-inch band saw, 12-/14-inch table saw and 8-inch jointer, and the Delta Multiplex line of radial arm saws. All of the machinery was sold through the Rockwell Power Tool Division and all bearing the Delta brand.

The Strike of 1953

After the brief strike of 1950, production at the Crescent factory progressed smoothly until the spring of 1953, when labor disputes would be the catalyst causing the final undoing of the company. Usually, labor contracts between the local union and management were renewed annually, for a period from May 1 to April 31. When negotiations began for a new contract in May, 1953, talks quickly began to break down. The main point of contention was the union's demand that the company pay employees for holidays that did not fall on a working day. (For example, if a regular holiday fell on a Saturday or Sunday, when the workers were not scheduled to work, the union felt that the company should pay the employees for an eight-hour work day to compensate for the missed day off for the holiday.) In the company's point of view, they paid workers for a 40-hour work week, Monday through Friday. If a holiday fell on a Saturday, and Rockwell were to pay the employee eight hours for

the holiday, they would in essence be paying the employee for a 48-hour work week. Instead, initially the company counter-proposed an additional one-cent-per-hour raise, for all employees, above the scheduled (unspecified) pay increase, "previously agreed upon." Unsatisfied with the proposal, the union voted to strike.⁵⁸

As both the Union and company refused to budge on their positions, talks between the union and Rockwell continued without breakthroughs. When the strike went into its fifth week, with no end in sight, general manager William Brown sent letters to all employees stating in part the following:

Many of our old-timers will recognize that we have been building fewer and fewer heavy woodworking machines in recent years. To overcome this loss of work, we have attempted to substitute other machines to keep this plant operating on a reasonable basis. We cannot continue to keep production of these levels at Leetonia and tell our customers they cannot have them because of strike action. Therefore, it will be necessary for us to discontinue manufacturing the Cut-off [Multiplex] saw at Crescent.

The decision has been made to produce it elsewhere to keep from loosing our customers. Also, consideration is being given to removing the smaller planer and other units to plants that have the capacity and desire to produce them.⁵⁹

Since well over half of the production was the popular Multiplex saw, the loss of the machine from the Crescent plant had dramatic impact on the total production level. Whether the decision to move production of the Multiplex was a firm decision or simply a ruse to get the employees back to work is not known. If the intention of the letter was to "scare" the workers back to work, the plan backfired. Instead, at least some union strikers decided to instigate an incident outside the plant on the picket lines, which resulted in the company having to obtain a court order. In a statement, general manager William R. Brown wrote:

Until Friday, May 29, picketing of the Crescent plant was conducted in a peaceful and lawful manner. On that date, however, members of the Union participated in illegal picketing when more than 25 of them prevented a Pennsylvania Railroad switch crew from removing a boxcar from Company property. The railroad crew was prevented from performing their work by verbal threats and stone-throwing on the part of the pickets. As a result it was necessary to obtain police protection in order to remove the above mentioned car on Monday, June 1.

Again on Tuesday, June 2, members of the Union participated in illegal picketing when more than 60 of them prevented the foreman and certain other employees from entering the plant.

As a result of these occurrences Judge Joel Sharp issued a temporary injunction on Wednesday, June 3, restraining the Union and all of its members from participating in any further illegal practices.

The order also restricts the number of pickets to three at any one time, and permits free entry to and exit from Company property for all employees, potential employees and visitors. The order further provides for the free flow of material and finished goods into and out of the plant.

It is regrettable that our labor problems had to be complicated by these unfortunate events, but it is hoped that with legal clarification of our position, it will be possible to effect an early and peaceful settlement to our differences.⁶⁰

Eventually, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Commissioners Russ Turner and Walter Wagner of Cleveland, Ohio, were called in to help mediate a solution for the strike between union and company representatives. Several meetings were conducted between the groups, and on June 20, an agreement was reached. However, at a meeting of Crescent employees held on June 22, the workers failed to ratify the agreement, and, instead, offered a substitute proposal, which was unacceptable by Rockwell. Ten weeks into the strike, once again, talks fell apart.⁶¹ Even though more than 150 employees had endured over two months of striking, without any pay, the union leaders managed to convince the workers to not ratify a supposed agreement between the union and management. For the time being the strike would continue.⁶²

As a last ditch effort to get the workers back to work, the Crescent management purchased a full-page advertisement in the *Leetonia Reporter* newspaper that read as follows:

OUR EMPLOYEES MUST ANSWER THIS QUESTION SHALL CRESCENT MOVE?

We have tried our level best to negotiate an honorable agreement with the committee representing our employees—a sound and fair agreement under which this Company and its employees might continue to work profitably and peacefully.

On three different occasions agreement was supposedly reached at the bargaining table but on no occasion were our employees given an opportunity to vote by secret ballot. The committee did not even allow the last proposal to reach a vote. This committee has now resorted to name calling, misrepresentation and personal attack.

Under the circumstances we believe the Committee can no longer speak for Crescent employees who believe in fair play.

Therefore, we must ask our employees to speak for themselves.

It is economically impossible to operate in an area

where labor cannot or will not cooperate. If Crescent employees want the plant to remain in Leetonia, thereby protecting their jobs, seniority and the security of their families, they will report to work on Monday, July 6, at the regular time. Employees who report will receive the increased wages, insurance, and other benefits which were last offered the union. This includes the return-to-work payment of \$22.00 or \$37.00 depending on length of service.

The injunction now in force protects our employees who return to work and legally prevents anyone from interfering with their right to return.

The company will request that the terms of that injunction be strictly enforced.

If our employees do not report on July 6, we will be forced to move our production facilities to other areas. Our employees must now decide whether Leetonia will continue to receive the benefits of the Crescent payroll amounting to more than \$625,000 per year, or if those benefits will be enjoyed in other areas.

WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?

Crescent Machine Division

ROCKWELL MANUFACTURING COMPANY⁶³

Three days after the posting of the notice, on the allotted day, July 6, the Crescent workers did not return to work. Faced with no other choice, general manager William R. Brown sent out a letter to all employees of the Crescent factory to inform them that the factory would indeed be closing down for good. The letter read as follows:

I regret that I must tell you the Crescent Machine Division of Rockwell Manufacturing Company has ceased operations in Leetonia. The factory will close permanently and all productive facilities will be moved to other locations as quickly as arrangements can be made.

If you have tools or personal belongings in the plant, please remove them by Friday, July 10. The personnel office will be open temporarily to handle your group insurance, withholding tax forms, termination slips and other similar problems.⁶⁴

Regardless of this stark prediction—shutting down—shortly after Rockwell's decision, union president, Gerald Beltempo, stated "we are still working with Rockwell officials and we feel that there is still hope of bringing a peaceful settlement of the local dispute to keep Crescent in Leetonia."⁶⁵ However, most people in the community believed that the possibility of working out any deal between the two groups was hopeless.⁶⁶ The time for a peaceful settlement of the strike had passed, and the ultimate outcome would mean that Crescent and its many important jobs would leave Leetonia for good.

On July 27, 1953, a personal letter from W. F. Rockwell, Jr., president of the Rockwell Manufacturing

Company, was sent to each of the former employees of the Crescent division. The letter disclosed what had happened behind the scenes, at least from the prospective of the company. In his letter Rockwell noted that the company had "no quarrel with the international union to which most of you belong. We have complete respect for this and other unions and are always willing to bargain with them in good faith."⁶⁷

Rockwell noted that the company has an obligation to its stockholders and that it had to remain competitive. He then outlined the company's position.

At our last meeting before the plant was closed, agreement had been reached on all but three issues: (1) reinstatement of one clerk and one foreman in their previous positions, (2) holiday pay for holidays falling on Saturdays (non-working days), and (3) a \$25 Christmas bonus.⁶⁸

Rockwell noted that the company had already agreed to give workers the four-cent-an-hour raise (a penny more than the original request), to pay the difference between wages and jury duty pay, and to increase employee health benefits. But the company, he wrote, would not reinstate certain, "clerical, technical, and supervisory employees."⁶⁹ He also added,

Rather than allow the union to gain control of the hiring and firing of supervisory personnel of this sort and thus, in effect, take over management of the plant, the Company felt obliged to discontinue operations.⁷⁰

Rockwell then went on to admonish the union leaders for some of their behavior, especially their treatment of William R. Brown.

Such incidents as the highly unfair misquoting of our plant manager, William R. Brown, added bitterness to the dispute but did not affect our willingness to hear all further proposals submitted by your committee.

Mr. Brown, you remember, was quoted in a committee advertisement as having promised that no shipping would be attempted during the strike. What Mr. Brown actually promised was to notify the union in advance before doing any shipping. Your union president later admitted to Mr. Brown had kept this promise.⁷¹

He closed his letter by noting the company had worked very hard to avoid the current situation, including sending a special representative to Leetonia to meet with union leaders. Finally, however, he expressed his disappointment with the workers at the factory,

I know that many of you were not in sympathy with the rigid position taken by your bargaining committee. However, it was disappointing to note that less than half of you took enough interest in your jobs to attend the

final meeting and vote. This allowed a few irresponsible men controlling a minority of the eligible voters to block all approaches to reasonable compromise.

Once again, I would like to repeat how sincerely sorry we are that we were forced to discontinue operations in Leetonia.⁷²

After nearly sixty years of continuous operation in Leetonia, the Crescent factory would finally close its doors for good. With all of the good and bad times that Crescent stood strong, it was ultimately the inability of the leaders of both the union and company management to reason with one another that finally broke the back of a once industrious business. In the end, Rockwell decided to keep the very popular Multiplex radial arm saw, the Delta/Crescent 12-/14-inch tilting arbor saw, 20-inch wood-cutting band saw, and the newly designed 8-inch Delta/Crescent jointer in its lineup. Machinery and tooling for these items was moved to other Rockwell plants. As for the other machines in the once proud Crescent line, Rockwell decided to sell the patents and rights and provide parts for these machines to the highest bidder. An important chapter in the history of Leetonia, Ohio, had come to a close.

The End of One Era and the Beginning of Another

With the fateful strike that ended production of the Crescent line in Leetonia, Ohio, finally coming to an end in July, 1953, Rockwell quickly put out feelers for any company that might like to purchase the rights to the Crescent line. Within a month of Crescent closing its doors, on August 27, 1953, it was announced that the Enterprise Division of the William K. Stamets Company of Columbiana, Ohio, would be purchasing the patent and manufacturing rights for the Crescent P-24 planer and the Crescent 32-inch band saw, two of the more popular machines from the old Crescent lineup. With a more than seventy-five-year history of sawmills, lathes, steel mill equipment, and conveyor units, the Enterprise Division was a well-established manufacturer in Leetonia's neighboring city of Columbiana.⁷³ In some ways, it is fitting that Enterprise would be the company to ultimately own the Crescent line; it was at Enterprise, after all, where—before beginning Crescent and the company—co-founders Clint Wilderson and Elmer Harrold originally learned the machinist trade. At one time, Enterprise was even owned by the Harrold family. Sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s, Enterprise was sold to the William K. Stamets Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but Enterprise continued to operate as a

wholly owned subsidiary of Stamets.

While the earliest reports indicate that Enterprise had only acquired the P-24 planer and 36-inch band saw, another report tells of how, in September 1953, the entire Crescent line of machinery, including several experimental machines that Crescent/Rockwell had been developing, was shipped to Enterprise, “to use however they liked.”⁷⁴ At first, Enterprise evidently focused its manufacturing efforts on the very popular P-24 and P-36-inch band saws, which had been the biggest sellers in the Crescent line. Eventually, Enterprise added more and more of the old line of Crescent machines to its lineup. Enterprise offered the very popular Crescent jointers, in 8-, 12- and 16-inch models. Over time, Enterprise re-introduced the Crescent single-end tenoner, the S-2, S-5 and S-55 shapers, the Crescent 18- and 24-inch disk sanders, the P-18 Planer, and the Crescent hollow-chisel mortiser. Enterprise even developed its own models of a 30-inch and 36-inch planers—based on the popular Crescent “P” series—which Enterprise marketed as the P-30 and P-36 (Figure 17). And finally, under the Crescent brand, Enterprise introduced a brand new table saw, the Model TA 620 tilting arbor saw.

In 1959, Enterprise even dusted the cobwebs off the experimental design of a 36-inch band saw that Crescent/Rockwell developed in the early 1950s. Called the RX-1, the experimental machine appears to be a scaled-up version of the popular Delta/Crescent 20-inch band saw, which Rockwell continued to market after selling Crescent. Enterprise acquired the experimental saw when they acquired the rest of the Crescent line in September, 1953. When the Navy Bureau of Ships asked for bids on fifteen

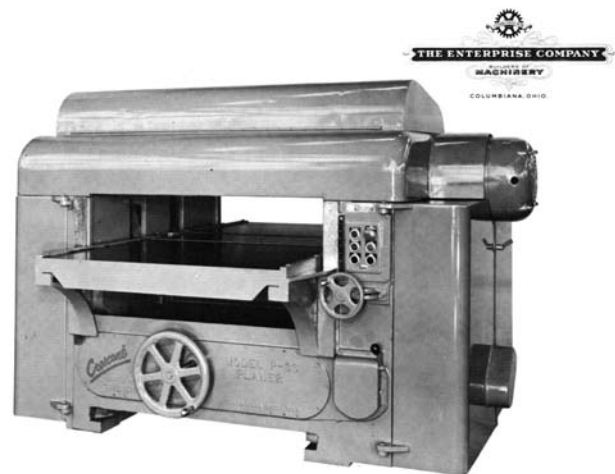


Figure 17. The “Crescent” P-36 planer manufactured by Enterprise and based on the earlier Crescent P-18 and P-24 planers.

36-inch band saws, in 1959, Enterprise did some fine tuning to the RX-1 design and won the contract to produce the steel- and wood-cutting band saws. Enterprise called these units the 36-inch band sawing, filing, and polishing machine (Figure 18). An article in the December, 1959 issue of *Enterprise Today*, the company newsletter, stated:

After receiving the order, our Engineering Department went to work and made a complete survey of all similar machines available on the market today. Using this information as a background, plans were made for the design of three different models. The design was initiated on the first model which met the Navy specifications. Several new features were added to this machine, some of which were borrowed from the RX-1, making this a relatively new and improved machine over the models now on the market.

The first machine was designed and built in record time. To be precise, 105 days elapsed from the date of the order to the day of the first unit tested. Several tests were conducted for the Navy inspectors and the machine passed these tests with flying colors.⁷⁵

Even though the Crescent line was owned by Enterprise and sold under its name, Enterprise continued to market the machines under the well-known Crescent brand. In fact, many of the machines made by Enterprise could hardly be distinguished from the old Crescent line. Some machines still had the name “Crescent Machine Company, Leetonia, Ohio” cast into their bases. The only way to tell if the machine was indeed made by Enterprise was to look for a badge or serial number tag that indicated Enterprise as the true manufacturer.

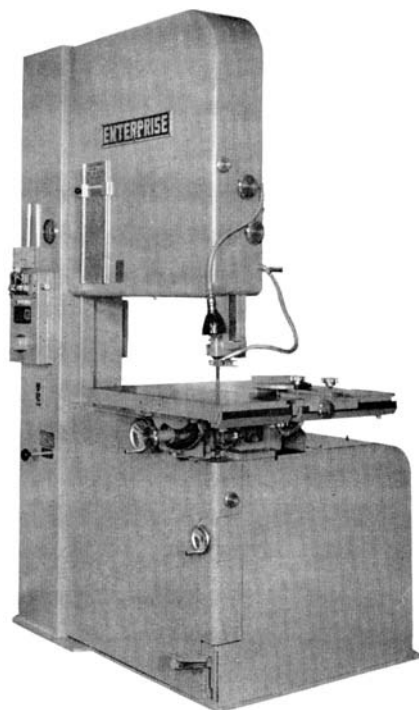


Figure 18 (left). The Enterprise 36-inch band sawing, filing and polishing machine, introduced in 1959 and based on an earlier Rockwell experimental design that Enterprise acquired with the Crescent line of machines in 1953.

Figure 19 (above). One of the last Enterprise manufactured “Crescent” 12-inch jointers. Made in 1972, this jointer uses a welded steel base as compared to the cast iron base used for over sixty years on Crescent jointers. Most of the other parts on the machine are identical to earlier Crescent machines.

MACHINE OWNED AND RESTORED BY JAMES CARVALHO.

How long Enterprise continued to manufacture and sell machines from the Crescent line is not known, but as recent as the early 1970s, Enterprise was still manufacturing a limited number of “Crescent” machines. At least one jointer has surfaced with a manufacture date of 1972 (Figure 19). This jointer looked almost exactly like the old Crescent line, except that the base was built of welded steel plate, rather than cast iron, but the overall design was virtually identical to the original Crescent designs, dating back as far as 1903.

By 1985, Enterprise and Stamets were completely out of business. In April of 1986, however, Columbiana Machine Company of Columbiana, Ohio, announced the purchase of both the Crescent line of woodworking machinery and the Enterprise line of saw mill equipment.⁷⁶ Eventually, Columbiana Machine transferred the Crescent line to Jefco Industries of Columbiana and then again to J.E.S. Technologies, also of Columbiana, Ohio. In 2005, the company again traded hands to become Alloy Machining of Columbiana, Ohio, and reportedly a limited amount of parts were still available through Alloy Machining for some Crescent machines.

Rockwell, under both the Rockwell and Delta brands, continued to manufacture the old Crescent 12-/14-inch tilting arbor table saws and the 20-inch band saws at other plants through the early 1960s.⁷⁷

Today, while Crescent’s noble history grows fainter in memory, as a testament to its craftsmanship in creating fine, long-lasting, woodworking machines, its reputation

remains in perpetuity. The machines made by Crescent are often treasured by collectors of old machine tools as well as production shops who find the machines still working great—in some cases over a century from when they were originally made.

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