

## "A Great Opportunity Found in a Casual Remark"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

On November 26, 1897 several Allentown, Pennsylvania businessmen pooled their assets and formed the Lehigh Portland Cement Company. The founding of the out-of-state firm probably went unnoticed locally, however, it eventually had a dramatic impact on Carroll's economic and visual landscape. The Pennsylvania company acquired the Tidewater Portland Cement Company of Union Bridge in December 1925.

The unique circumstances which led to the founding of Tidewater Company appeared in "Carroll County, 1837-1910", a business directory published by the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper in 1910:

"The world's greatest copper mine lay dormant for years, while men sought in vain for deposits of the richer metal, gold. By mere chance its wonderful wealth was discovered. Almost parallel with this is the history of the discovery by the promoter of the Tidewater Portland Cement Company of the rich deposits of almost perfect materials for the making of Portland cement now one of the most important products of manufacture. In 1909 a large glass company of Pittsburg had a chemist searching for lime stone for use in their plant. Among other localities he visited Union Bridge and found the desired deposits, but also found them inaccessible on account of the lack of a through line to Pittsburg. Shortly after his visit here he met Mr. B. T. Scott, of Pittsburg and New York, a practical cement man, who is engaged in cement and fire brick manufacture, and while engaged in conversation, the chemist casually remarked that Union Bridge offered a much better location for a cement plant than for a glass factory and that the conditions seemed ideal for the former industry. Mr. Scott needed no persuasion as he knew the possibilities of his own business and the value of an ideal location. He took the first train for Union Bridge. Being a conservative business man, he was not satisfied with a surface view and immediately employed Mr. Richard K. Meade, the foremost cement expert, who spent several weeks on the property, making explorations and tests. After being fully satisfied with his observations and tests he advised Mr. Scott that according to his best judgment this was the best location for a cement plant that had ever come under his observation. In addition to the ideal location, Mr. Meade reported the unusual fact that a pure white Portland cement of the highest quality as well as the gray Portland cement could be made from the materials at hand in apparently inexhaustible deposits. In addition to this his report said that a very high grade of lump and hydrated lime could be made from the almost pure calcium carbonate or limestone.

Mr. Scott then fully realized the possibilities, but he had an immense problem on hand. It takes money to purchase property, build railroads, and a modern cement plant-money, not in four or five or even in the bounds of six figures, but in the seven figures-millions. The proposition was too big for any one man, so Mr. Scott set to work to interest well known cement men (who were most likely to see the possibilities, knowing the details of their own business) and financiers of national reputation.

In July, 1909, the first meeting of those interested in the project was called. All being careful business men, they collectively decided on further investigation. To eliminate all possibility of a mistake, they employed one of the world's leading geologists, Gen. William Bullock Clark, State Geologist of Maryland and Professor of Geology in Johns Hopkins University. They then reinforced Professor Clark's knowledge with the assistance of Mr. Charles A. Machem, one of the largest manufacturers of Portland cement in the Lehigh Valley.

After these experts fully verified the reports made by Mr. Meade, the property consisting of two hundred and eight acres at Union Bridge was immediately purchased in fee. The railroad was then built to the property from the main line of the Western Maryland Railroad.

Many problems then confronted the organizers which they began to solve one at a time. First, they made a most satisfactory contract with the W. M. R. R., for the transportation of the products to tidewater, thus reaching the entire Atlantic and Gulf Coasts at a cost far below that enjoyed by any other cement manufacturer, as the plant is much the nearest to tidewater-hence the appropriate name. A coal rate from the W. Va., coal fields was then obtained that was gratifying to all concerned.

The company was then organized and the first mortgage bonds issued to the amount of \$1,750,000, this amount being necessary to build, equip, and set in motion this modern cement plant with a capacity of 2600 barrels of gray Portland cement, 800 barrels of pure white Portland cement, and 800 barrels of hydrated lime-a total product of 4200 barrels per day."

The remainder of the article lists the original corporate officers and describes the buildings then under construction. The plant began operations in August 1911. Lehigh operated the former Tidewater plant until a modernization in 1939; additional modernizations were made in 1957 and 1970.

Photo caption: The buildings of the Tidewater Portland Cement Company appear at the edge of the quarry in this April 1918 image. A locomotive that helped haul the immense quantity of limestone processed by the plant is partly visible in the center. Photograph courtesy of Lehigh Portland Cement Company.