

J. B. Conant & Company, auctioneers, Lowell, Mass., say, under date of June 15:

"Again it is our pleasure to report a very successful sale of manufacturing property—a long way from home—in name the properties of The Buell Manufacturing Company, of St. Joseph, Missouri. To-day was certainly a very rare day in June—and a day that St. Joseph should be more than proud of from a weather and fresh air standpoint. Conditions here to-day were somewhat reversed from the usual order of things in manufacturing sales—there was far more demand for the real estate than there was for the machinery. The most active bidders, however, at the sale were from many scattered districts—covering north and south and west. Personally, we are very much pleased with the sale and are also convinced that the owners of the property are equally well pleased. Lot One, the manufacturing realty, brought \$25,433; Lot Two, an adjoining vacant lot, brought \$3,725; and Lot Three, also an adjoining vacant lot, but on the opposite side of Lot One, brought \$2,700—the respective purchasers being Harry Block, of 6th and Felix streets, St. Joseph, and W. F. Davis, also of St. Joseph. The personal property went broadcast—part into New England, part into the Middle Atlantic States, and some South, and still more West; the amount realized being about \$2,700. This makes the total sale about \$41,858. The real estate was an exceptional parcel of manufacturing property—though somewhat large and spread out; the machinery, while in good shape and well up-kept—was not by any means as desirable as was the real estate.

By J. E. CONANT & Co. Auctioneers

OFFICE LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

THE BUELL MANUFACTURING CO., OF ST. JOSEPH, MISSOURI,

herewith pledges to the highest bona fide bidders at absolute auction sale

FREE FROM ALL ENCUMBRANCE

Its modern and excellent manufacturing real estate in three lots, its machinery and mechanical equipment and other personal property in lots to suit purchasers, also its name and good will in a lot. It is not a frequent occurrence to find a lot of brick manufacturing buildings of a first-class type, possessed of all modern manufacturing conveniences, of moderate value, suitable for most any manufacturing purpose, connected by independent spur track with four great railroad systems. In the midst of excellent labor supply and conditions, with a strong local market for general manufactures right at hand, natural gas at fifteen cents per one thousand cubic feet, electric power and light as low as one and one-quarter cents per kilowatt hour, pure filtered water as low as six cents per one thousand gallons, steam coal at the boilers at from \$1.15 to \$1.30 per ton, trunk and local lines of trolley cars at hand, in a manufacturing section, in a handsome city with a good business and social atmosphere and a banking centre.

THE MACHINERY

Mechanical equipment and all other personal property in good condition, though not all modern. The sale will take place upon the premises, South Eleventh Street, near the corner of Garfield Avenue, on Thursday, the 15th day of June, 1915, regardless of any condition of the weather, commencing promptly at eleven o'clock in the forenoon. The entire property is illustrated, fully described, and set out in detail in catalogue which may be had upon application at the office of the auctioneers, where all inquiries must be made,

J. O. FAIRBANK, President

St. Joseph, Mo. Reports current locally state that the Buell Manufacturing Co. plant, idle since 1912, will be sold at public auction next month. This concern formerly operated on blankets, robes and flannels, and at last report there was installed in the plant an equipment of 8 sets of cards, 54 broad looms, 3,840 spindles, 1 garnett, 3 pickers, etc.

BUELL MILL SALE

Plant to Be Disposed of at Auction on June 15

The plant, real estate and equipment of the Buell Manufacturing Co., St. Joseph, Mo., will be sold at auction Thursday, June 15, under the management of the Lowell, Mass., auctioneers, J. E. Conant & Co.

The plant consists of a main building, 263 by 62 feet., brick boiler house, picker house, dyehouse, warehouse-office buildings, and wool storage and sorting building. The real estate on which the buildings are located consist of $9\frac{3}{4}$ acres, another parcel of practically an acre, and a third lot of $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres are included. The equipment is in first-class condition. The product has been the well-known "Buell Blanket," Indian robes, Pullman blankets, steamer rugs, flannels and smelters' cloth for fume bags.

The business was established in 1858 and has been uniformly successful. The plant was closed four years ago, because none of the owners was at that time in a position to give the business personal attention.

ORDER OF PUBLICATION

State of Missouri, County of Buchanan,
ss.

In the Circuit Court of Buchanan County, Missouri, January Term, 1917.

In the matter of the application of The Buell Manufacturing Company for dissolution.

Now on this 4th day of January, 1917, comes The Buell Manufacturing Company, a corporation organized under the laws of the State of Missouri, and files its petition, certified by affidavit of its President and Secretary, for the dissolution of said The Buell Manufacturing Company, the object and general nature of said application and petition being to obtain an order or decree for the dissolution of said corporation on the ground that the objects and purposes for which it was organized have been accomplished, and its debts paid, and because the stockholders holding more than two-thirds in value of all the capital stock of said corporation, at a meeting duly held for that purpose, duly adopted a resolution favoring the dissolution thereof;

Wherefore, It is now here by the Court ordered that all persons interested in said The Buell Manufacturing Company, a corporation, whether as stockholders or otherwise, be, and they hereby are, required to show cause, if any they have, in this Court in Division No. 2 thereof, on or before the 27th day of January, 1917, why the prayer of said petition should not be granted and such corporation dissolved as prayed, and it is further ordered that a copy of this order be published in The St. Joseph Observer, a newspaper published in the County of Buchanan, State of Missouri, once a week for three consecutive weeks, in accordance with the statutes in such cases made and provided.

(Seal) CHAS. H. MAYER,
Judge of the Circuit Court of Buchanan
County, Missouri, Division No. 2.

A true copy. Attest:
ROSS C. COX,
Clerk of the Circuit Court of Buchanan
County, Missouri.

(Seal) By R. M. DUNCAN,
Deputy Clerk.

The Buell Manufacturing, Co.

A Brief History of The Buell Woolen Factory, St. Joseph, MO

According to the *History of Buchanan County, 1881* and the *1891 Buchanan County History*, George Buell was born in Jefferson County, New York, where his father Norman ran a woolen mill. Both histories commented that he had very little schooling and was brought up in his father's mill. Norman moved the family to Illinois when George was seven. At eighteen George became manager of a woolen factory located eighteen miles from Quincy, IL. Then in 1848 Norman moved to St. Joseph where he and George operated a flouring mill with two custom "roale" cards. These would have been used to do custom carding for spinners and weavers living in the area.

In 1852 the Buells built a small woolen mill on North 3rd Street, between Louis and Michel Streets. The two county histories claimed it was "the only one west of the Mississippi River" at that time (this popular but inaccurate claim has been applied to local mills in any number of county histories). Norman and George also operated a sawmill on 3rd Street from 1856 to 1860. In 1860 Norman and E. F. Dixon built a second woolen mill, the Buchanan Manufacturing Company—also referred to as the St. Joseph Woolen Factory & Flouring Mills. The mill was on North 2nd Street, between Isadore and Antoine Streets, in downtown St. Joseph. Blacksnake Creek would have provided the power to operate the mill. The mill had two sets of cards and twelve looms. They soon enlarged the mill from two carding engines to four, making it a "four set" mill. Oliver N. Buell was a spinner and carder in the mill, and Willard N. Buell was the bookkeeper. Buell and Dixon also owned a dry goods and grocery store on the northwest corner of 2nd and Isadore.

George married Juliette Bancroft of Clay County, MO in 1862. They lived a few blocks from the mill on 4th street, between Franklin and Pauling. Norman lived not far away on 2nd Street. George and Juliette had six children. After Juliette's death in 1871 George married Clara Madstone from Michigan. They had two more children and by 1883 were living at 221 South 11th Street. A prominent businessman and bank officer, George also served two terms on the city council.

The Buell mill suffered severe losses during the Civil War. After the war the business recovered under George's able management, showing profits ranging from \$11,000 to \$29,000 per year. Norman died in 1872 and George's cousin William N. Buell joined the firm. William left after five years. During that time the company purchased a woolen mill in blue Rapids, Kansas, which they renamed the Buell Rapid Mill. In 1877 the two mills were incorporated as The Buell Manufacturing Co. The officers were George Buell, W. M. [William N.?] Buell, J. W. Bailey, and John S. Lemon. George was company president and Lemon was the secretary. The St. Joe mill was advertised as "the most extensive and popular in this section of the west." Buell's listing in the textile manufacturer's journal, *Dockham's American Report*, reported four sets of cards and

listed the mill products as yarns and cassimeres. Not to be confused with cashmere, cassimere was a popular woolen suiting, similar to serge, with intricate woven in patterns.

According to the 1880 U. S. Census the Buell mill was the largest in Missouri. It employed 100 people—eighty men, fifteen women, and five children. The mill paid \$21,600 in wages annually, with the average wage being \$216 a year. As a contrast, the next largest Missouri mill, in St. Charles, paid their seventy hands an average of \$157 a year. The difference was due to the St. Charles mill's workforce being primarily women and children—fifteen women and forty-five children, but only ten men. The children in the Buell mill were probably runners—boys under sixteen training to be skilled mill operatives by serving an unofficial apprenticeship. The large number of children in the St. Charles mill indicates that they were doing a great deal of the production work. While St. Charles had much lower labor costs, the quality and quantity of goods produced there would have been decidedly inferior to the goods turned out by Buell's well paid male operatives, most of whom would have been highly skilled professionals. Buell's census report lists materials valued at \$97,800 and products valued at \$125,300. Whether this was goods on hand, or materials used and woolen goods produced over the last six or twelve months is not clear.

In 1882 the Buell Manufacturing Co. constructed a new, much larger, mill on a twenty-acre site just outside the city limits at the south end of 11th Street. On July 1st, 1883 the company moved from the old mill at 813 N 3rd to the new location at 11th and Atchison Street. The new mill was a large two-story brick structure, some sixty feet wide by 250 feet long, with two three-floor towers. The decorative north tower housed water tanks for the fire sprinkler system. Toilets and more water tanks were located in the smaller south tower. Fire was a constant danger in textile mills so water tanks were located in the engine house and dye house as well. Fire hydrants were supplied by the city water system, and the mill had two hydrants of its own, and a large well for backup. Fire hoses hooked to water pipes were located throughout the buildings. All of the mill buildings had fire resistant metal or composition roofs. According to the Sanborn fire maps the mill was well lit with banks of windows along all four sides.

Carding, spinning, weaving, and finishing were done in the factory building. Other processes were done in separate support buildings. The mill was powered by a steam engine supplied by a Babcock & Wilcox patent steam boiler. The engine house's ninety-foot chimney would have been visible for quite some distance. The picker, which loosened the wool prior to carding, was located in a two-floor building that also housed the office and shipping room. A second picker was in the two-story dyehouse behind the mill. In case of fire the dye house windows could be secured with iron shutters. Wool was washed, dyed, and dried in the dyehouse, which was connected to the mill by two second floor walkways. The engine house was also connected directly to south side of the factory. The bleach house, where wool was carbonized, was adjacent to the engine house boiler room. A switch line for train cars ran beside the dyehouse and engine house. The two warehouses, a wool sorting platform, the steam drying house, the carpenters' shop, a second bleach house, and the stable were located across the tracks.

In 1880 the mill was capitalized at “not far from \$250,00 including the machinery.” Its principal stockholders were George W. Buell, William G. Fairleigh, James S. Lemon, Dr. J. S. Logan, and the Tootle Estate. The company advertised its blankets, carriage robes, and flannels as “all first class goods in every respect, and a large assortment of over fifty styles, which they design, of blankets.”

Under Superintendent J. R. Walker, the mill was producing cassimeres, flannels, kersey (a fabric used for overcoats), blankets, carriage robes, and yarns. In 1880 they had six sets of cards, seven spinning jacks with 2,000 spindles for spinning yarns, 16 broad looms, and 22 narrow looms. By 1883 that had grown to 8 sets of cards, 3,612 spindles, and 49 broad looms, and increased to 10 card sets by 1885, and 3,749 spindles by 1887. By then they were also advertising that they had a steam boiler and could do dying.

During the 1880s the woolen industry changed. In the 1870s the number of woolen mills in the U.S. had grown to over 2,400; 881 of them in the Midwest. At first these mostly small mills did very well selling to local markets but by the mid-1880s the market place had changed. Trains now carried eastern goods to every part of the country. As fancy eastern fabrics and, especially, ready-made clothing became readily available people stopped buying woolens to make their own clothes. In 1885 the bottom dropped out of the market for most Midwest mills, and only a handful were still operating by the end of the century. A few, like the Buell mill, were able to survive by supplying a niche market. As demand for cassimeres, kerseys, and other fabrics dropped off, the mill was able shift its production toward more blankets and carriage robes. A mainstay was their popular line of brightly patterned Indian blankets. The colorful blankets were in great demand for the Mission and Arts & Crafts styles fashionable for turn-of-the-century interiors. This is reflected in the disappearance of narrow looms and the increase in the number of broad looms used to weave blankets.

After thirty years of manufacturing blankets the mill had achieved an annual blanket production valued at \$250,000 in 1890, and a marketing territory reaching from Duluth, Wisconsin to Galveston, Texas. They employed 175 people, three-quarters of whom were skilled operatives. They had a payroll of \$5,000, with wages ranging from \$1.00 up to \$5.00 a day. They bought \$80,000 worth of wool every year, most of it grown in Missouri. Even so, Buell closed the Blue Rapids mill and moved its equipment to St. Joseph.

Walter Fieldhouse was the mill superintendent, or foreman, in 1888. He lived in Atchison, where he boarded at the Ogden House. Two years later John Buell was identified as the mill's wool sorter (another John—John O. Buell, was listed as a printer for Combe & McCreary), and Henry Buell was a fireman at the mill. By 1894 John E. Custer was the superintendent and John O. Buell had become the assistant superintendent. James S. Lemon was now the company's treasurer as well as the secretary. In 1898 Milton Toolte was named vice president.

The number of cards in the mill had dropped to eight sets by the early 1890s. Although the mill now operated 58 broad looms, they no longer had the narrow looms needed for

fancy fabric production. The mill had stopped cassimere and yarn production, concentrating instead on blankets, robes, and flannels. John O. Buell was now listed as superintendent along with Custer. Although the mill was still selling some goods direct, they had replaced travelling agent H. Hazelton with the Boston firm of Thomas Kelley, Selling Agents.

The company management saw a number of changes as the 20th century dawned. George died in 1900 and James O. Farleigh was elected president. Around the same time John J. Tootle stepped in as vice president, and Milton Tootle Jr. took over Lemon's position as secretary and treasurer. In 1901 Percy L. Clay was named manager. A cashier, John D. Flint, was now listed in the city directories. By 1908 George Dahlenburg succeeded Clay as the general manager. Within a year Dahlenburg became the mill's buyer and Robert L. Dawson was the superintendent.

The mill was still making Indian and carriage robes. Dry goods distributors Tootle and Campbell carried twelve different Indian blanket designs made at the Buell mill. The robes were made in four sizes and most of the patterns came in four different color combinations. All twelve designs had Indian names: Aztec, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Comanche, Hanolchadi (or Chief's Style), Idaho (or point blanket), Mohawk, Moki, Otoe, Sioux, Shoshoni, and Zuni. Cheyenne and Shoshoni were the three-color designs. Although three of the blankets were based on traditional Indian designs, most were loose adaptations. The names were chosen for marketing purposes and were not accurate—"Zuni" was copied from a Hopi design, and "Shoshoni" was actually a Navajo pattern.

The mill's own catalog advertised Buell Manufacturing Co. as "The Original Power Loom Manufacturers of Indian Robes" and claimed to make the best blankets in the country. They pointed out that some of their designs were woven in three colors, unlike those from other mills, which only came in two colors. Buell developed a secret weaving technique that allowed them to make three color blankets. On most looms only two colors can be on the same side of the blanket at any given point, the third will have to be on the other side in order to hold the threads in place. That means that only two colors can show at the same place on the same side, the third will be on the other side of the blanket. Buell's method let them hide the threads in a way that allowed all three colors to be brought to the surface on the same side at any point in the design. These three-color blankets were not only unique in design, they were heavier than Indian robes featuring only two colors. Buell blankets are easy to recognize. The edges were whipstitched, while other mills used a trade cloth binding on the edges of their Indian robes.

Despite the popularity of the Indian robes, the Buell mill was becoming less profitable. They were now selling through Farris-Stafford Co. of New York, but began to add services to other mills to increase their income. They installed a second steam boiler and advertised their steam dyehouse in the textile directories. In 1909 they were also offering to do finishing and carbonizing (a process that removed vegetable fibers and burrs from wool) for other mills. The mill equipment now included ten sewing machines and they advertised that they bought #12 and #20 cotton warp for use in weaving and binding their

blankets and Indian robes. Despite these changes, the new management was not able to keep the mill going.

The Buell Manufacturing Co. closed in 1912. The mill complex was sold to Quaker Oats, which remained at the site until the end of the century.