

MERRILL, WISCONSIN, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1959



Announcement of the sale of the Merrill Woolen Mills to the Rock River Woolen Mills of Janesville has been made. Shown in the above picture during final negotiations are (left to right) Robert Lovejoy, attorney for the Rock River

firm. George Russell, attorney for the Merrill firm; Lyndon Emerich, President of the Merrill firm and James B. Tait, president of the Rock River Mills.

(Freiberg Foto)

Merrill Woolen Mills Sold To Janesville Firm

Lyndon B. Emerich, president and manager, announces the sale of all operations of the Merrill Woolen Mills effective on January 2, 1959 to the Rock River Woolen Mills, Janesville, Wisconsin. The sale includes the complete facilities of the firm, the good will and the widely known name "Merrill Woolens."

The Merrill Woolen Mills had its modest beginning through the opening of a wool carding operation started by Louis Stickler in a small wooden frame building on Blaine street in 1915.

Mr. Stickler catered to local farmers with small herds of sheep, carding wool into wool comforter batts.

Albert Andersen, once Clerk of Circuit Court here, became affiliated with Stickler as a partner in 1916.

In 1917, a group of Merrill businessmen became financially interested when the original corporation was formed with the name, Merrill Woolen Mills. A building was erected for weaving blankets and spinning yarns from farmers' shorn wool.

The men in this early venture were John Van Hecke, Matt Tockley, J. A. Emerich, David Finn and Albert Anderson. Through those early years management changed hands often and among those associated were Harry Kolls, Leo Gensman, Albert Cramer, Max Van Hecke, Julius Cramer, Dr. Otto Sievert, Joe A. Chilsen, Kathleen Regan and Mrs. Ida Tockley. Others became financially interested at one time or another.

In 1934 Lyndon Emerich was employed by the firm as sales and office manager following a fire that impaired facilities and equipment. In the years that followed, blanket making was abandoned, new items in textile equipment were installed and the firm started to manufacture wool fabrics which for quality became widely recognized. Woolen garments were produced through those years on a small scale.

In the late 30's Mr. Emerich cre-

ated the well known Merrill Woolen Mills Jumbo-Jac which brought a widespread reputation to the firm. The Jumbo-Jac was so popular it swept the middle west and large mills and producers copied the style and type of garment. It established the Merrill Woolen Mills over a wide area as a producer of exceptional quality in woolens.

Over the period of years the firm expanded its manufacturing facilities and opened a tailoring plant, the Merrill Sportswear on West Main street. Here sewers were trained so that garments could be manufactured from Merrill made fabrics. Salesmen were employed in the middle west and clothing dealers sold Merrill Woolen garments.

Retail Merrill Woolen stores are operated by the firm in Merrill, in Tomahawk and in Wisconsin Rapids. Franchised Merrill Woolen stores are located in Green Bay, in Madison, in Janesville, Wisconsin, Delis, Minocqua, Bemidji, Minn., in addition to the hundreds of stores featuring Merrill Woolens in states from Maine to California.

The firm also has factory manufacturing space and equipment at Tomahawk and employs a total of 75. Since the opening of the tailoring plants this firm has manufactured and distributed over 1,000,000 Merrill garments publicizing the name of Merrill Woolens far and wide.

In recent years the Merrill Woolen Mills have become large users of high quality woolen fabrics produced by the Rock River Mills. The growing reputation of the Merrill Woolen Mills through its quality garments had attracted the attention of this firm which had been negotiating for the purchase over the period of the past year.

The Rock River Woolen Mills is the largest woolen mill in the middle west and one of America's finest equipped mills for late type manufacturing facilities. The mill was founded in 1849. The first woolen mill established in the state of Wisconsin, it is presently operated by the third generation.

Through the years the Rock River Mills manufactured fine cashmere, suitings, top coatings, flannels, auto upholstery and airplane fabrics. The first real top coating made by any mill in America was first produced by this mill in 1924. Up to that time top coatings had not been popular.

During World War II this mill produced over 3 million yards of Marine uniform fabrics for the U. S. Marine Corps. For this effort

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Merrill Woolen

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the Rock River Mill received a Navy "E" award in 1943 and special commendation in 1945.

Recently this mill has been making fabrics for the interior of the new jet airliners soon to be placed in the service on the major commercial airlines.

Rock River Mills employs well over 200 employees in their mills at Janesville with an annual payroll of approximately \$1,000,000.

The mill has a capacity to produce well over a million yards of fabric per year. Wool is purchased all over the world with supplies coming from the U.S.A., Australia, Cape of Africa and South America. The mill has 11 sets of wool cards, 21 late type spinning frames, 50

completely automatic weaving looms, 10 Warner Swasey weaving machines, plus a complete finishing plant containing a complete unit of modern face finishing equipment and sporting machines.

The open market is served by Rock River Mills through the Leonhard - Heinemann Company with offices in New York, St. Louis, Chicago, St. Paul, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The Merrill Woolen Mills at Merrill will continue to operate here as a subsidiary of the Rock River Woolen Mills. Lyndon Emerich will continue to operate as general manager of all operations in the Merrill division. Arnold Krajewski has been appointed sales manager for the Merrill division in charge of a program of sales expansion.

The parent firm's officers are: James B. Tait, president and general manager; Clifford Peacock, vice president and secretary; William Greene, C.P.A., vice president and treasurer; Lyndon Emerich, vice president in charge of Merrill operations.

The officers and Robert C. Lovejoy, an attorney in Janesville, P. J. Wood, president of the Warner Electric Brake Co. of Janesville; H. S. Lovejoy, chairman of the board of the First National Bank of Janesville, constitute the board of directors.

Donald Milbrandt has moved to Merrill, residing at 1207 E. 8th street and is acting as assistant manager of the Merrill operations.

Eugene Erickson is tailoring plant manager at Merrill. A separate corporation, the Merrill Woolens stores, Inc., is being formed to promote, finance and establish added Merrill Woolen retail stores through the period ahead. A corporation buying firm to serve the retail stores is also being formed.