



The Saga of Richland Industry

1869 - 1993

By Gordon Warren

JOBS-JOBS-JOBS was a cry in the 1992 presidential campaign; candidates at the State level made industry a high priority; aspiring candidates for city office always express the need for more industry though the hunger for industry seems never to be satisfied. Richland throughout the years has been more fortunate than some communities its size in having work for its citizens. Pluck rather than luck might be attributed to the limited success enjoyed and heritage could be a factor for the town's history shows a record of achievement in this field.

Richland was founded in 1869, a child of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad as it moved west to link the two oceans. History records that in 1875 Dr. James Titterington erected the "STEAM FLOURING AND SAW MILLS." In January of 1889 the citizens raised the sum of \$500 as a bonus to induce Mr. Mosier of Minnesota to establish a canning factory. The factory had a capacity of 8,000 cans per day. There was substantial fruit production to support the factory. I would not attempt to translate five hundred dollars in 1889 money into today's value but it seems like a sizeable sum for the new community to raise. The "WALKER PATENT ELEVATED TRUCK" used to handle baggage and freight was produced locally. Local inventions were a wrench by J.A. Kuncie and an egg case fastener by Mr. G.W. Morgan. I believe Attorney Bill Morgan is a direct descendant of the latter gentleman. Richland was an important rail shipping point for the area. Average annual shipments documented by the rail line showed 198 cars of cattle; 34 cars wheat; five cars dried fruit; two cars green apples; three cars walnut lumber; 150 cars railroad ties; two cars hides. Express shipments included poultry, game and eggs. Richland continued to be an important shipping point for livestock for many years. Before the advent of trucks cattle and hogs were herded to market. I have heard Oscar Jackson and his son, Bryan tell many times of driving their livestock to the rail head from what is now the Fort Wood area.

The railroad continued to be a source of jobs both directly and indirectly. A "Section House" provided a home for the Section Boss and the crew consisted of several local men.



1910 Scene

This scene of Richland in 1910 shows several men working on a tie loading gang. Pictured from left to right are, Henry (Sox) Reed, Bart Newberry, Fred (Coz) Reed, Tommie Fenton, Ed (Spec) Moales, Charlie Johnson and Mr. Grabner, who was the tie loading foreman. With the exception of Moales, all of the men are now deceased.



Track Repair 1900

This Frisco section gang repaired railroad track in and around Richland in the early 1900's. Pictured here circa 1914 from left to right are Bud Kissinger, the boss; Henry Davenport; H. Cornwell; Charley Holder and Spec Moales.

The signal maintainer, W.S. Lea for many years was flanked by telegraph operators who worked in eight hour shifts. They copied train orders but also sold passenger tickets and supervised freight and express shipments. The demand for railroad ties continued to provide employment for timber workers, tie buyers and the crews that loaded them for shipment.

In the 1920's a tomato canning factory provided employment which was strictly seasonal. The owner contracted with farmers to grow tomatoes at a guaranteed price per crate. When the season arrived a crew was employed to operate the cannery. A pickle factory operated in similar fashion except that the cucumbers stored in brine were shipped elsewhere for final processing.

A March 17, 1916 Richland Mirror has some front page news about industry in Richland.

Strawberry Committee

Dr. Oliver, President of the Richland Commercial Club, announces the following committee to cooperate with E.A. Steckel in securing 100 acres of strawberries for this locality. A.E. Campbell, chairman, C.L. Morgan, Chas. Noe, Alvah Pippin and made Mr. Steckel secretary. This is a live committee and we expect to be able to announce soon that it has accomplished its task. (You can see that fruit production was still considered a viable enterprise. The 100 acres of strawberries would allow the community to become affiliated with the OZARK FRUIT GROWERS ASSOCIATION.)

Another item makes the following announcement:

A new enterprise will soon be established in Richland — the skunk business — don't hold your nose for there is money in it so people say who know. T. S. Roach and A.M. Medley are arranging the former's farm just west of town for that business and the latter gentleman will move out there and take charge of the farm. Skunk proof fences are being built and they expect to have a stock of 30 cats in a few days." (The cats referred to are "pole cats" which was a common name for skunk. Hubert Medley, son of A.M. was a classmate of one of my older brothers. I have vivid recollections of driving by the skunk farm. For many

years Red Fox, Opossum and Skunk were popular furs.)

I speak from my own memory when I talk of the World War I era. The War sparked a demand in agricultural products and one of the most pressing demands was for mules. Mules were an important element of military equipment; they furnished the power for moving armament. Mule buyers made regular trips to Richland, bought mules for rail shipment to the east coast and thence by boat to France. My VFW compatriots will know that the rail cars in France were rated to carry forty men or eight mules and that is where the "Forty and Eight" name originated. Arch Cohn, father of Henry and Arthur, first came to Pulaski County to buy mules. As late as 1924 when Richland voted bonds for a new school building, the slogan was: "MISSOURI — FIRST IN MULES — THIRTY FIRST IN SCHOOLS: By 1993 we had dropped to thirty eighth in school ranking according to some reports but I have no tabs as to mules. I recall one farmer who had a team of prize mules for which he was offered \$1,000 which he refused, much to his regret when the depression came following the war.

The other War fueled demand for wheat. The United States furnished the food for Europeans whose agricultural production was erased by war. In response to the high price (over \$2.00 per bushel) and the availability of a market, farmers plowed and sowed wheat in ground that should never have been row cropped. Bohannon & Son and H. E. Warren & Sons both had grain elevators and bought wheat for carload shipment. Rail cars were hard to secure as there was a shortage during and following the war. One time my brother gave a freight train conductor ten dollars and he set out a car so that it could be loaded with wheat for shipment. The Bohannon elevator is still in use in the family business but the Warren Elevator is now part of the Richland Plant Food operation. Following the war came the depression of 1919-1920; mules lost most of their value and wheat dropped to less than one dollar per bushel. Farmers suffered severe losses as did most businesses. The economy made a rather rapid recovery which lasted until "BLACK THURSDAY," October 1929 when the stock market crashed.

In the interim the Shubert Sprout Mower was manufactured by Henry C. Shubert, whose factory was in Richland. It was a horse drawn machine that embodied the idea of the present day brush hog. Instead of a circular motion it had a horizontal shaft with chains attached that whipped the sprouts when the machine was in motion. Shipments were made by rail to purchasing customers and dealers.

Nature provided the incentive and impetus for an agriculturally related industry that provided employment for a number of persons and is still an important and viable element of the Richland Area economy. "Hallowed Methodist Tradition was related to a free flowing spring and site of the "Camp Ground Methodist Church." In early days of Methodism in Missouri this location now on Highway 7 about six miles north of Richland was the scene of religious camp meetings. When crops were laid by families gathered at this site for one to two

weeks of camping and religious services. The quality and volume of water flowing from this spring attracted two gentlemen from Tulsa, Oklahoma: namely, Dr. Furrow and F.L. Bailliere. They originally intended to produce trout but discovered that ornamental fish were a more lucrative product. Dr. Furrow dropped from the enterprise but it was continued by Mr. F.L. Bailliere and his family are still principals in what has developed into a vast enterprise located in several states and the largest GOLDFISH HATCHERY in the world. Goldfish from Ozark Fisheries are exported to a number of countries. The employment afforded by this organization has been a boon to the Richland area.

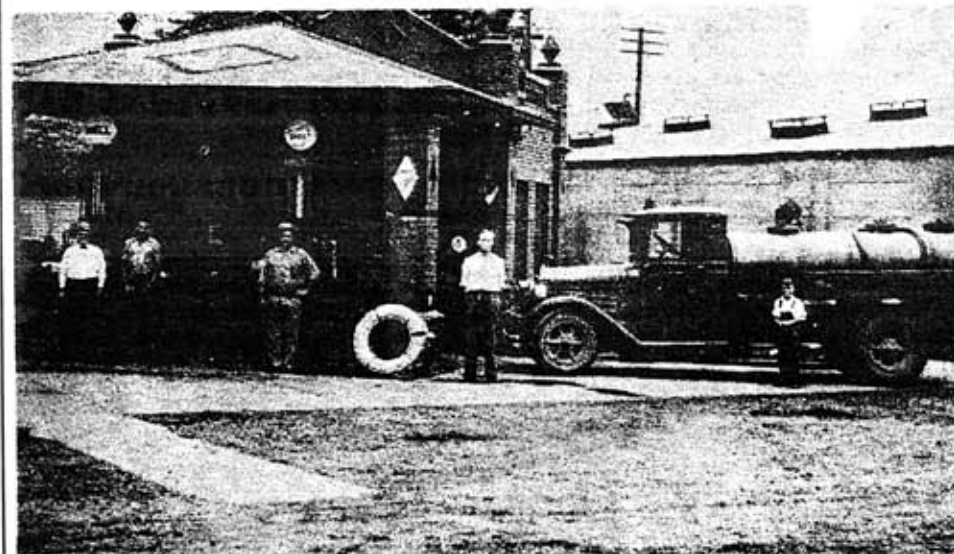
In the early 1920's the Shell Pipe Line was built from Oklahoma to Woodriver, Illinois. This provided work during the construction period and when completed a pumping station (no remote control as today) on the site of the present Play Craft and Charger Boat Factory operated with a crew twenty-four hours daily. Also a line maintenance crew was based in Richland that provided much needed jobs. Again in 1931 and 1932 the Shell Company laid a second line alongside the original. The construction work provided by this expansion delayed the effects of the depression reaching this vicinity until about a year later than in most of the country. This original pumping station was to play an important role in industrial development at a later date.

Turkey production was a sizeable industry in the Richland area for a number of years. It started in a small way with a group of farmers organizing a federation. It led to the establishment of a dressing plant that operated for several years. In the 1950's Karl Stout and Everett Bedinghouse established the "Stout's Turkey Hatchery." A large volume of business was carried on through this operation. In time vertical integration took place in the industry and the small operator was forced out of business.

In 1947 Roy Ballew, an uncle of Maxine Farnham, was employed in the plant location department of the International Shoe Company, St. Louis, Mo. Roy graduated from Richland High School and on a visit here let it be known that Richland might be considered as a site for a shoe factory. The community responded in a very positive fashion with the newly revitalized Lions Club taking the lead in sponsoring the program. In brief the proposal called for Richland to organize a corporation, furnish a site and \$50,000 cash. International Shoe would build the building, maintain it, pay a nominal lease amount and the building would revert to the local corporate ownership if the company ceased operations. Lynn Bohannon was a prime mover in the project. He had bought the Gove Farm, proposed to subdivide it and donate the plant site and the National Avenue lots to the corporation. The Warren family donated the tract now known as the Warren Addition. These tracts were subdivided into building lots. A Five Hundred Dollar investment gave you stock in the corporation plus a city lot. It may sound easy but \$50,000 in 1947 dollars would be close to half a million today. Ed Aubuchon superintended the construction but Lynn



Above is an aerial view of Ozark's first hatchery area which had grown to 1.9 miles long by 1951. The other aerial photographs are necessary to show the company's total of 500 ponds. At least twice a year each of the ponds is usually drained, dried out and treated before re-stocking.



Back in 1925, we were the Diamond T Oil Co.



H. E. Warren's Store. This photograph, supplied by Holland Warren, show several people in the H. E. Warren General Merchandise store about 1903. The four clerks in the back of the counter at right are, H. E. Warren, Jr., Charlie Bryant, Monta Warren, and Ed Oliver. The man with a hat on and sales book in his hand is C. W. Warren, the tall man with a mustache is Henry (Sox) Reed and the man in the left front is Captain H. E. Warren.

spent countless hours assisting in the construction work. Another stumbling block was that there had to be rail service at the plant which meant that since the established siding was on the south side of the main line and the factory on the north the main line had to be cut. Getting this done was as easy as asking the president of the Frisco to let us amputate his right arm; the obstacles were overcome and the factory boomed until suddenly in 1961 we experienced the Dixon-Brown Shoe nightmare. The bad dream lasted until 1963.

After two years of fruitless efforts to locate an occupant for the International Shoe Building the H.D. Lee Company which had come to Lebanon to occupy the empty Rice-Stix factory building indicated an interest in the Richland site. They were in the process of setting up a plant in Houston in a building International Shoe had vacated there. Again the city was called upon to renovate the shoe factory building, replace the water tower and make improvements to the grounds. The obstacles were overcome and Lee initially hired about two hundred employees. The Lee Company bought a vacant building in the industrial park and thus expanded their operations. They now employ about four hundred persons. The Lee Company is a firm of excellent character and an excellent asset to the city.

Back to the Shell Pipeline Pumping Station referred to above. In the mid 1950's Shell decided to build a new pumping station north of town and abandoned the old one. The brick building and forty acres of land on which it was located was for sale. A group of Richland business men bought the tract and made it available for industrial development. Gordon Schneider, a former Bendix engineer from Kansas City, negotiated for the location and established the Richland Manufacturing Company which produced and marketed the "Richline" boat. Over a period of years and several changes of ownership this original endeavor has evolved into a top notch industry; namely Play Craft-Charger which employs some in excess of one hundred workers and is the second largest employer in Richland. The company not only produces craft for the domestic market but is involved in exporting to several foreign countries. Jim Dorris and his son, Joseph are the principals in the business.

Richland's success in part has been due to having bought a forty acre tract in the southwest corner of town for an industrial park; it has a 300,000 gallon capacity water tower and an eight inch fire main to support sprinkler systems in the industrial buildings. Two buildings of about 30,000 square feet each were constructed through an industrial development bond issue. There have been several occupants and one is now the site of the Lee Cutting Operation.

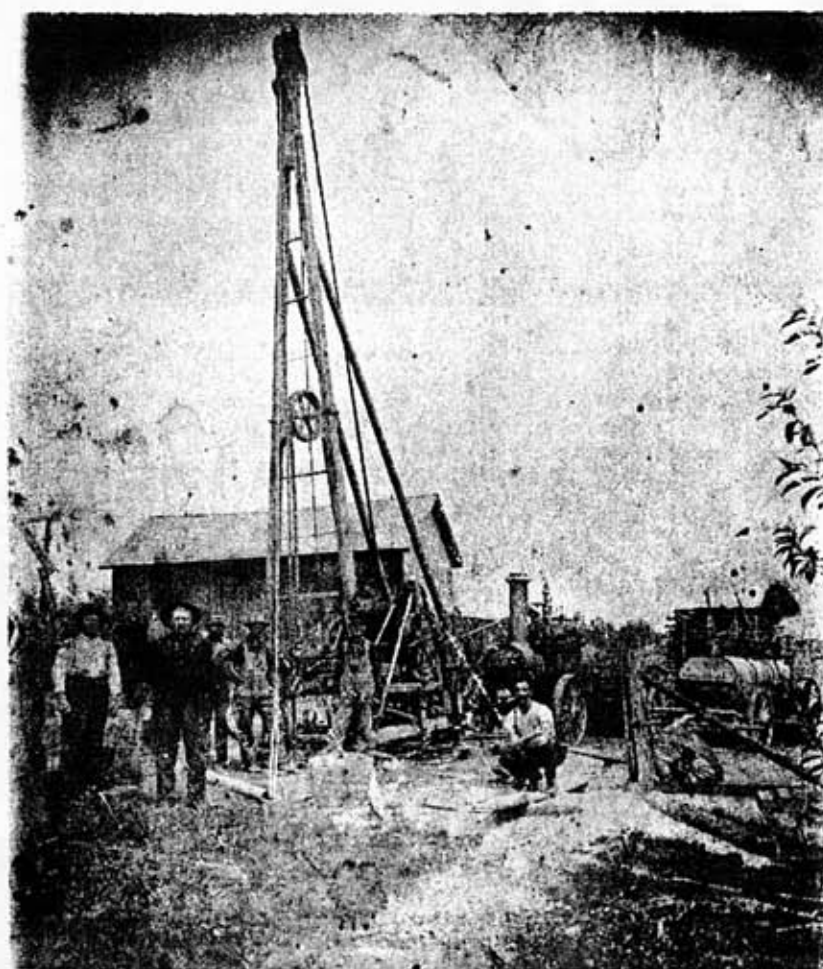
This park also accommodates the AIR ENTERPRISES, a dealer in light bulbs of every description. From Air Runway flood lights to minute compute bulb units are available at this company which receives orders over 800 phone lines from all over the country. The principals are brothers Michael Reagan and Tom Reagan. Their crew is kept busy maintaining stock and filling orders which have to be packed carefully for shipment.

TRICO MANUFACTURING INC. also occupied this park. This is a machine tool operation specializing primarily in producing parts for the aircraft industry. Many of the contracts received are for retrofitting in addition to those for new production. One of the contracts of which this organization is most proud is for parts of the Patriot Missile which played such a prominent part in the DESERT STORM ACTION. The building is shared by THERMAL SOLUTIONS which specializes in rebuilding giant air conditioning units and even has mobile units that can be supplied in case of failure of an existing unit. For example, if a hospital unit fails the mobile unit can be put in place and service restored in a very short time.

Land for a second Industrial Park was purchased by the city on the East side of town and is now occupied by the TRI COUNTY WOOD CRAFT operated by Daniel Howlett and the RICHLAND ARCHERY, FLORAL AND GIFT operated by Denver and Ruby Sullens.

In 1916 the RICHLAND MIRROR, referred to above, in reporting on a banquet held by the Richland Commercial Club states: "We have never been present at a banquet made up of a more loyal, enthusiastic and optimistic group of men. Unselfish devotion to the interests of Richland and its tributary country was manifest in every part of the exercises." May this spirit prevail now and extend into the future as in the past.

Moore & Ciarke,
PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS,
Calls Promptly Attended.



Early Well Rig

This steam engine powered well drilling rig, owned by John Powers of Richland, operated in the Richland area around 1903. Powers' crew were responsible for many of Richland's early wells.



RICHLAND'S TOMATO CANNING FACTORY