

Lake County's Forgotten Commerce



Virgin hardwood forests, a huge freshwater lake and vibrant pristine streams awaited our county's first settlers. Taking these natural resources and combining them with an entrepreneurial spirit the names Pease, Abbott, Paine, Storrs, Klyn, Coe and others made Ohio's smallest county a Midwest commerce giant. Here are some mini-chapters of Lake County's first industries.

Dave Pease, and years later son Curtis, settled in Concord Township in an area known as Cascade Valley. The year was 1850 and the site of their famous mill near Big Creek and Girdled Road can still be viewed today. The original mill had five lathes, saws, jointers and planers. Their wooden vessels provided safe storage of food. Sock darners, tables and chairs were other significant items produced at the **Pease Mill**. 'Pease Ware' is highly

collectable and sought after today.

N. Lee Dietrich and four Loxterman brothers pooled their money in the late 1940s and opened a dairy business in Kirtland Hills. Another dairy soon opened on Chester Street, and in the 1950s, **Locke-Lee** was born. By 1966 sales totaled 3.2 dollars annually and daily milk processing surpassed 200,000 pounds. Opening up a Convenient Food Marts site in 1961 rocketed milk sales past Lawsons. In 1985 the partners sold their local business to Dairyman's. Their Chester Street plant now is home to Avery-Dennison.

Graphite Oil Products Company was the original name for Lubrizol in 1928. Founded by Kent, Vincent and Kelvin Smith, with partners Frank and Alex Nason along with Thomas James, the company soon settled in Wickliffe. Their original idea was to establish a lubricant additive business to stop squeaks in the automotive spring industry. From these humble beginnings, Lubrizol and Wickliffe are known to this day.

Leonard Anderson and H.H. Coe met in 1852 to build steam engines and sawmill machinery. The Civil War interrupted their Painesville based industry. Anderson sold his interest to a Fredrick Wilkes. Wilkes was an engineer and inventor. In the years following the war, **Coe-Wilkes** improved upon lathes, created a toothpicks industry, added a foundry and later a veneer and plywood plant. The company thrived well into the early 1970s.

Lunch box entrepreneurs included Gerald Klyn (1921), Felix Zampini (1946), Jesse Storrs (1855), James Harrison (1856) in the nursery business. C. Merkel, Castello's, J. Fracci and Havel were also famous names from our county's past.

With apologies to A.E. Vrooman, Hadfield-Penfield, Henry Coulby and the infinite others I cannot list this time- part II is in the works.

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