

THE BIG RED FACTORY

By Gordon Wendt
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The history of the Hinde & Dauch Paper Company has been told and retold by spoken word and in print by many people, myself included. Now, however, their one-time “flagship plant” on what was called Railroad Street, now Shoreline Drive, faces a future vastly different from her seventy-nine year span of producing a multitude of paper products.

So different is her future that even her name has nearly disappeared and re-emerged as “Chesapeake Lofts”. More than 190 individual living suites will occupy most of the building, so it has been said. Outside will be various “water facilities” including a marina, etc.



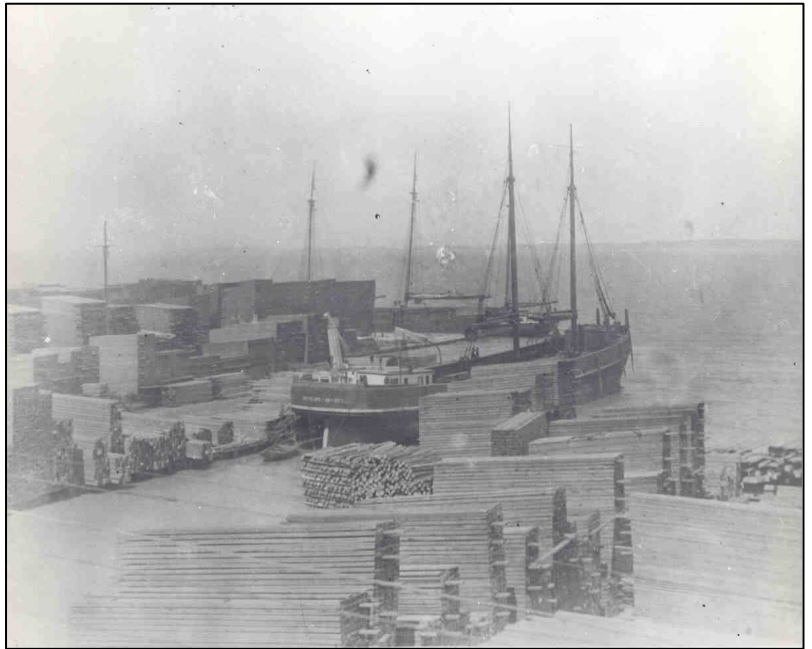
Newly completed, the factory is in operation in late 1918

Now, while some people, mostly former employees and shareholders, still remember the plant #5 as she was known, it is time to concentrate on “her” history as a waterfront landmark and one of Sandusky’s largest manufacturing plants. She was a specialty converter of corrugated fibre products, known as such internationally in the paper industry.

In June of 1913, Mr. J. J. Dauch realized that his company was rapidly outgrowing its manufacturing building on Water Street, subsequently known as the “Kroma Color” building – today, in 2005, as the rapidly deteriorating “Keller Building”.

In 1913, Sandusky’s waterfront west of Columbus Avenue was dotted with

lumber piers as shown in the picture at the foot of Jackson Street. These premises were owned by several local converters that produced sash, doors, wagon wheels and numerous other wooden items. One such pier was directly across Railroad Street from the Hinde and Dauch Water Street plant. Two different companies stockpiled huge stacks of lumber, imported largely from Michigan forests and shipped by sail and steam



Lumber Yard at the foot of Jackson Street, 1880.

barge to Sandusky. The eastern portion of the pier was owned by the Gilcher & Schuck Lumber Company of Sandusky who also owned the pier to the east directly across Jackson Street slip. A Sandusky fire map shows that two million feet of lumber were stored on that portion of the pier to later house Hinde and Dauch plant #5.



The Sandusky Box Company on the pier North of Railroad Street (now Shoreline Drive) between Jackson and Decatur Streets. Note the bridge, at right, connecting it with the Hinde & Dauch office in Kroma Color building. The building was razed to make room for the new factory. The Southeast corner of the Decatur street slip at left was filled in later. Pictured dated April 16, 1914.

The western portion of the pier was occupied by Lea & Herbert, also of Sandusky, who stored three million feet stacked in high piles. The land between the two lumber piles was occupied by several different businesses at the time - principally by a large stone building that housed The Sandusky (Wood) Box Company. The James Woolworth Wooden Handle Company also operated on the pier.

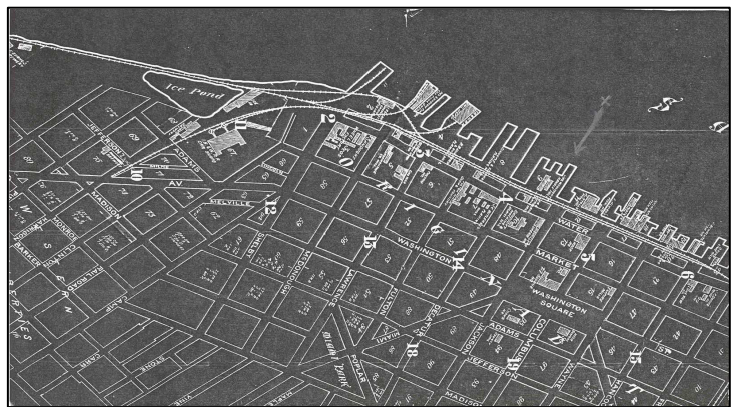
By early 1912, the Sandusky Register said Gilcher & Schuck were going

out of business. They were said to own other businesses in town and so on June 27, 1913, Mr. Dauch purchased their property on both sides of the Jackson Street slip and also the Sandusky Box Company. The ground and water for most of the future big brick box factory was now largely in hand. But construction was not begun yet. Instead, the stone building was used for limited production and storage for the time being.

A wooden bridge over the railroad tracks was built connecting the newly acquired stone building with the Water Street factory. The bridge shows in one of the pictures. It was built in 1913 and demolished in 1917 at which time the stone building was razed in preparation for construction of a brand new plant.

Interestingly enough, the pier on which the new plant was built was not always a rectangle in shape. Two slips or indentations show in the northern face of the pier

which undoubtedly facilitated the delivery of more lumber by the water-borne route. These slips or “docks” as they are properly known were filled in years prior to the beginning of construction of the new plant. The Lea & Herbert property on the western portion of the pier had been purchased also and completed ownership of the pier by H & D.



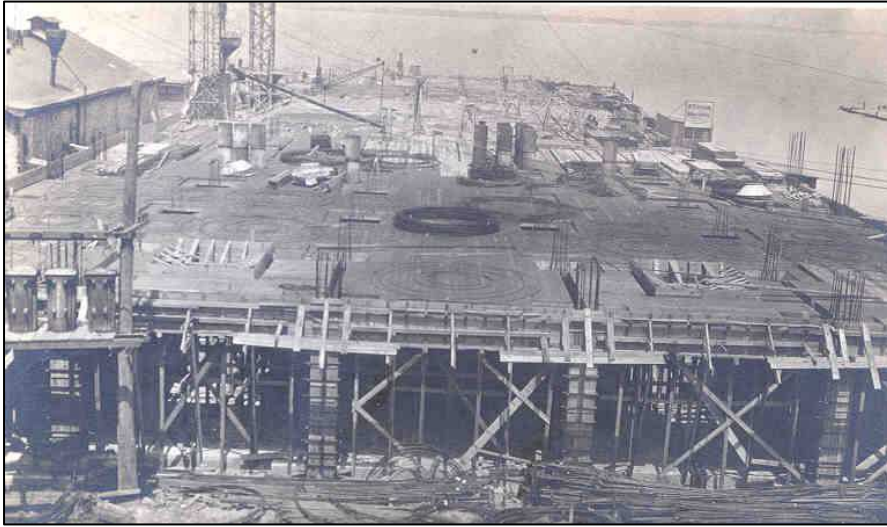
Page from the Sandusky fire map showing two slips in the North face of the Jackson Street Pier. They were filled in later.

The reason for Mr. Dauch’s need for the Jackson Street slip was said to be to make available the dockage for potential shipments by water of Canadian pulpwood to be incorporated in the plant’s production. He accomplished this by purchasing the Gilcher & Schuck property on the pier west of the slip. Nothing ever came of the plan though and the pier was sold to the city for \$15,000 by Mr. Dauch’s estate years later.

A news article March 3, 1914, reported Hinde & Dauch planned to build on the Gilcher & Schuck pier a building to cost \$100,000. It was announced the company capital had been increased from \$2,000,000 to \$5,000,000 to provide for building the

new plant.

On March 27, 1917, the contract for the foundation was let to the Underpinning & Foundation Company of New York. The building would be 100' x 800' with



Construction progress in 1917 shows the second story flooring reaching Northward toward Sandusky Bay.

an "el" 350' x 300' or a total of 255,000 square feet. A unique feature of the foundation was the construction of 550 pilings and 227 columns. This entire project was being built on a pier that was on "made land", as is everything north of Water Street.

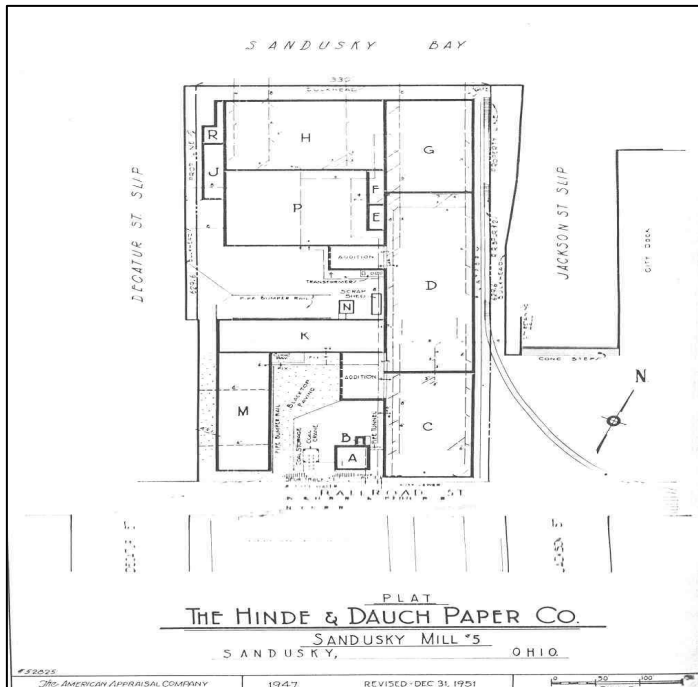
The job moved quickly and the foundation was complete by the 8th of July, 1917. At that time, construction of the building was progressing rapidly and on March 16, 1918, the building was finished and ready to be turned over the owners, an event that took place the following June 1st.

A tragedy was reported August 16, 1918, when J. J. Dauch was killed in an automobile accident at Ohlemacher's curve on Cleveland Road near Huron. He had been devoting nearly 100% of his time to the development of a farm tractor and was traveling to Cleveland to secure financing to satisfy his creditors' committee. (None of his investors lost money - he had secured their interest by an offset to his sizable estate).

As the community mourned the loss of its number one citizen, several weeks later his son-in-law, Sidney Frohman, became president of Hinde



The East wall of the third floor is taking shape in this late 1917 view.



Property plat of the Hinde & Dauch Paper Company. Plant #5 used to identify buildings for insurance purposes.

& Dauch. The plant apparently was successful in start-up production and became one of the two largest employers in Sandusky, providing many people with jobs and those with the foresight to invest in ownership in the company a handsome return.

There are many interesting facets, mostly long forgotten, of the factory story. On June 20, 210, in building “C”, on the plat a cafeteria was opened for use by the employees. Albert Hauser acted as chef for

this pioneering feature – largely unheard of previously.

In the same area was a hardwood floor available for employee dancing. I remember my parents, both of whom worked there talking of it. The cafeteria and the dance area were located in the south area of the main floor building “C”, space that was used later as administrative offices.

The boiler house, Exhibit “A” in the plat, was a separate building with a very tall steel stack, one of the tallest in the city. It may have been its very height that made it a target for the 1924 tornado that swept through Sandusky’s waterfront. It was knocked down. The only other damage to the building was loosening of some coping tile which unfortunately fell down upon Sidney Frohman’s yacht “Navajo 3rd” which was moored in a specially constructed enclosure in the Jackson Street slip. Although long ago filled in, this area is visible today in the southwestern corner of the slip. The boiler house was demolished long ago.

A particularly intriguing characteristic of the boiler room was its steam whistle which announced the beginning and ending of working hours. It played musical scales heard all over town! It also saluted the New Year and other important occasions with prolonged loud renditions of the ups and downs of the scale. The whistle was

procured by Mr. Dauch and was said to have come from a lumber tug. These tugs towed huge rafts of timber encircled by a chain forming a large area known as a "boom", a serious potential damage to any vessel unlucky enough to stray into it in foggy or other inclement weather. The screeching whistle - known by sailors as a "Modoc" warned of the presence of the tow. This unique whistle resides temporarily in my basement pending a more permanent home.

The Sandusky plant was a "specialty" operation that produced items not made at other H & D box plants. In building "K" on the plat was a large machine shop and stock room. Originally none of the other plants had such complete machine shops. Their major needs were supplied by Sandusky. S. S. Knisely was the longtime manager of the machine shop. This building no longer exists either.

Building "M" on the plat had various uses throughout the years. First, when the plant was new, it served as a horse barn. Then it was used as a garage for employees. Later, a completely equipped design service known as a package lab was housed there where intricate interior protection was developed for a multitude of products. Then, when the plant produced only "Point of Purchase" display stands, they were designed in this building. In fact, H & D was first in the industry to design the products which were known as "Selmor" stands. These items became the plant's main output throughout its final years under local ownerships. Supermarkets and other large "box" stores are full of display stands.

During its years of producing mainly slotted fibre shipping boxes, Building "M" also housed a complete testing facility needed to assure the high quality of the corrugated sheets as well as the ultimate shipping containers. Strict government specifications control the quality of the box industry production

A complete chemical testing laboratory was included with the other material testing equipment. This department was managed by John Little who developed a product known as "M.R." board which was used extensively in packaging products requiring a degree of "leakproofness". Building "M" no longer exists.

On the main floor in the area marked "H" was the color room. H & D was the

first to pioneer the process of producing colored liner board used in the outer facing of the corrugated sheet. This was marketed successfully as “a traveling advertisement for your product, Mr. Customer”.

The big three story building was opened by Hinde & Dauch and used by it from 1918 until 1953 at which time the West Virginia Pulp & Paper Company, later Westvaco Corporation, absorbed H & D and took over ownership of all of its property including Sandusky. We became their Container Division.

This arrangement prevailed until 1981 at which time the factory operation was shut down under my direction under orders from New York. My first instructions were to “mothball” the plant, shipping machinery to other plants within the company.

The building was gifted to the City of Sandusky – not a new concept as the main office building had previously been given to the Sandusky Board of Education and prior to that, the small paper mill property on Filmore Street, the birthplace of Hinde & Dauch, was given to various charities.

Fortunately for all concerned, the building was given a “stay of execution” when a group of eastern men purchased the business from Westvaco. They leased the building from the city – later purchasing it, and operated with the same employees, same customers, same machinery and same product as had Westvaco. This organization was Displayco Midwest.

After a number of years, Displayco Midwest ceased operations and were succeeded by Chesapeake Display & Packaging Division, part of a very large east coast paper company. Ownership of the factory remained with the proprietors of Displayco Midwest.

In 1997, Chesapeake Corporation underwent a major management revision with one of its results the cessation of their display operation in Sandusky. Employees, machinery and everything else were shuffled to a modern plant in Kentucky.

This, the third “manufacturing retreat” from the big red factory left ownership of an empty building with the same people who purchased it from the city many years previous. After a serious effort to market the building at a figure many times its cost, it

was sold back to the city at practically the same figure for which it had been purchased. Thus the city owned the building for the second time.

Now, after 87 years, the big red building enters a new and exciting future although under what seems a historically inappropriate name. A look at the top of the south façade reveals a large slab of marble under a coating of red “gunk”; presumably weather coating, on which is cut the name: “The Hinde & Dauch Paper Company”.

Surely when the building is completely renovated and occupied its name should appear prominently someplace inside to prevent its loss for all time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

At the time of this writing, November, 2005, Gordon Wendt is one of the few remaining third generation Hinde & Dauch employees. His grandfather, V. H. Wendt, and his father, L. R. Wendt, both joined the company in 1910. Gordon was first employed in 1939 and worked until 1982, excluding four years while serving in the U.S. Army. He began in sales and as the company Credit Manager, and later worked as Regional Administration Manager for ten box plants.