

## **History of Ace Metal Products, Inc.**

In the Fall of 1946, at the suggestion of Curtis Odom, Edward H. Pratt of Belleville contacted the New Baden Chamber of Commerce with regard to occupying the factory building that had been erected on the old Southern Coal & Coke Company mine property by the New Baden Building Association. In due time a deal was consummated and Ace Metal Products, Inc. became a New Baden industry. The certificate of incorporation was issued on February 10, 1947.

Share holders attending the first meeting of this new corporation were Edward H. Pratt, Alfred Zachary, Howard Plumb, Joe Malina and Curtis Odom—all of whom were employees. Pratt and Malina are still with the corporation.

The first product produced was bar hangers, a product used in home and industrial electrical wiring. The first truck load of steel came in before any unloading facilities had been installed and only through the help of Lewis Manwaring with his auto wrecker was it possible to get this 20,000 pounds of steel bars inside the building.

Soon heavy machinery began arriving and within the first year production of switch boxes was added to the now full production of bar hangers. The number of employees has increased from the initial five men to seventeen.

The building, originally 60 feet by 120 feet, became crowded and too small for the ever increasing operations so a 60 foot by 60 foot addition was started in August of 1951 and completed in December, when an anniversary party was held to celebrate five years of successful operation.

With these expanded facilities, a broadening of operations was instituted. Several new customers were added and products now manufactured included precision machine tools, die making and products from small washers to heater stove oil tanks. The Ace 3-Way Awning was invented, which contains an original principal of design for which a patent was issued February, 16, 1954. This awning line has now been expanded to include door hoods and another style of window awning which are all being enthusiastically received by the buying public.

In March 1948, Robert Imming joined the company as office manager and became secretary of the corporation in November 1952. The Board of Directors of the corporation now consists of Edward H. Pratt, president and treasurer; Alfred A. Switter, vice-president; Robert E. Imming, secretary; Dr. E. C. Asbury, director and O. W. Billhartz, director. Under this able management, Ace Metal Products, Inc. expects to continue its successful operation and aid in the industrial development of New Baden.

## **William J. Lehrter**

William J. Lehrter is serving his fourth term as County Judge of Clinton County. He was elected for his first term of office in 1942.

“The Judge” is 59 years old and was born in Germantown, Illinois on July 30, 1896. He came to New Baden in 1912 and remained until 1921. During this time he worked as a barber in the shops of Otto Meyer and Fred Jonas. He resided in St. Louis, Missouri until 1929 when he returned to New Baden and operated his own barber shop.

Mr. Lehrter’s hobby is music and he has been active in musical organizations from 1914 to 1953. He served as mayor of New Baden in 1931-1932.

**E. C. Asbury, M. D.**

Dr. Asbury was born in O'Fallon Township January 25, 1889, the second son of James W. and Nellie Grant Asbury. He graduated from St. Louis University in 1915 and interned in St. Louis City Hospital two years. In 1917, during the construction of Scott Field, Dr. Asbury treated patients for the Unit Construction Co. and the government. On May 4, 1918, he opened his office in New Baden and has practiced here for 37 years.

Dr. Asbury is a member of the American Medical Society, Illinois Medical Society, Clinton County Medical Association. He has served as president of the County Medical Association and during the process of organizing the staff of St. Joseph Hospital in Breese, Illinois he was president for three years.

We are proud to have the opportunity in this centennial year to say "Thank you, Doctor" for your many years of professional service.

New Baden Centennial Book, 1855-1955, pages 48-49.