

The Globe Milling Company

Watertown
Wisconsin

1845 - 1945

Digital file only: [Globe_Mill-1845_1945.pdf](#)

Scans by Chris Martin

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,

Back of the flour, the mill;

And back of the mill,

the wheat and the shower

And the sun, and the Father's will.

—Stevenson

Changes of ownership in the early days were frequent. The roster of early owners includes such names as Luther A. Cole and Edmund S. Bailey, builders of the original "Old Yellow Mill" in 1842. Subsequent early owners of this mill and two others included in the Globe group were Ebenezer Cole, Linus R. Cady, Jacob Weber, J. H. Sleeper and Philip Quentmeyer. Still later in the mills history are the names of The May Bros., Mulberger and Sproesser. Most of the families of these early millers have disappeared from the scene, though the names of Mulberger and Sproesser are still actively identified with the banking and business interests of the city.

The period from 1845 to 1860 is too far removed to enable us to depend upon more than legal records and occasional references in local papers and pamphlets for our information, but there are still living in the community those with keen memories, who are familiar with conditions and events in the years subsequent to 1860, information not obtainable from any records or historical sources.

A country mill, in early days was something more than just another manufacturing establishment. It was separate and distinct, of the very woof and warp of the communities life and progress. Here came the farmers with their grain to sell and supplies to buy. Here they gathered in visiting groups to discuss their crops, their plans and to roar in rib-racking laughter as some story teller spun his yarn. Here, too, came the towns people for their flour, the feed for the horses, cows and chickens, kept by the thrifty householder to combat the not so high cost of living.

The mill no doubt could vie with the historic New England town pump as the source of many a wild tale and rumor.

The farm wife, too, brought her eggs and butter to be traded at the general store for needed groceries and calicoes.

The mill yard was stacked high with cordwood traded

in by the farmers as they cleared their heavily forested land, furnishing a cheap fuel for stoking the mill boilers. Dollars in those early days were scarce, but barter played an important part in keeping the wheels of commerce turning.

The hum of machinery in a country mill gave off soft music in the small hours of the night, bringing assurance to the timid that men were awake and about their business. Its low-pitched whistle was the first to sound the alarm of fire, summoning the volunteers to their duties. It stood sentinel over the sleeping town.

In the 1850's that outstanding statesman and soldier, Carl Schurz, settled in our community and came regularly to the mill, driving in from his hill-top home, the Karlshuegel of today, on the northern outskirts of the town, taking with him the flour for the little cakes so eagerly awaited by the children in his wife's kindergarten. This was the first school of its kind to be established and maintained in the United States.

Another young visitor of note was Ralph Blumenfeld, delivering to the mill office business forms printed at his father's shop where was published "The Weltbuerger"—a German language paper of wide local distribution and influence. The smell of printer's ink pointed his career of great prominence in journalism—first at the age of twenty-seven as editor of the "New York Herald" and later in still greater fields as editor and chairman of the Board of the world's most widely circulated paper, "The London Daily Express". Today at eighty-two, Ralph Blumenfeld has seen his recent book, "Hometown" (Watertown), go into its third edition for his English public.

Somewhat later there also came trudging young Joe Davies to carry home on his cart the flour needed by his gifted ordained Baptist Mother; the same Joe Davies to become his country's ambassador at Moscow and Brussels.

Still another hometown boy destined to make his way in the world, Ed Broenniman, busy as a youngster in helping his widowed mother support her family, found time to peer in the wide doors, inhaling the floury aroma of a well kept mill, an aroma clinging to him throughout a busy life, first as a salesman in midwestern territory for his boyhood mill, and shortly before the turn of the century as an established flour broker in the New York market, his firm becoming an outstanding factor in that city's trade. It was his knowledge of flour and markets, nurtured first at this mill, that led to his logical appointment by Herbert Hoover to handle all Belgium Red Cross Relief purchases during and following the First World War, transactions totaling in excess of \$350,000,000. He also served at this time on the British Wheat Purchasing Agency. For more than fifty years Globe flour has been and still is a matter of Ed Broenniman's personal interest and concern.

Many others could be named who went out to make their mark in the world and whom, because of our place in the community's life, we consider as part of the mills heritage and background.

We have been writing of the period between 1860 and 1890, before the days of the automobile, of country telephones, of rural delivery, or good roads, of the days when in the late fall the farmer took home great supplies of flour, feed and groceries expecting to be snowed in for weeks at a time; of the days when this section raised good red winter wheat and much of it, marketed at the mill as the chief cash crop.

As the wheat lands of Minnesota and the Dakotas were developed, wheat gradually lost its importance and by the middle eighties barley began replacing it as the leading cash crop. The original seed imported from Germany combined

with Wisconsin soil and climate produced a quality wanted above all others by Milwaukee brewers.

In later years with the phenomenal development of dairying throughout this section, comparatively small amounts of grain were brought to market. Farm production reached the consumer in the form of fluid milk, butter, cheese, eggs, and pork and beef.

Up to this point we have briefly noted the early history of the mill and its place in the community. If our review is to have any value historically, it must include specific information regarding the milling properties operated under the Globe name.

The Rock River at Watertown flows in a northerly direction, along the eastern outskirts of the town, curves westward along its northern fringe and then turns to flow south through the town's center. In that distance of between three and four miles within the present city limits, there is sufficient drop to have warranted the erection of three dams, two of which at least had nine foot heads. Along both banks within the town's limits there were, in the late sixties and seventies, no less than six flour mills, drawing their power from the impounded waters.

The mills were small by any present day standards, with from two to eight run of stone, but in the aggregate Watertown



in those days was a point of some importance in flour production.

The first of these mills was built in 1842 by Luther A. Cole and Edmund S. Bailey and was known as "The Old Yellow Mill." This was only six years after Timothy Johnson, the first settler appeared upon the scene. Its location was that now occupied by the Electric Power Co. plant at the western end of what was then known as "The Rough and Ready Dam." Ownership changed several times in the first few years. In 1848 the owners of Old-Yellow built another mill on the present site of the City Water Power Plant.. This was enlarged in the eighties and was generally known as "The Big Brick Mill." Its capacity, actual, not rated, was 800 bbls. daily and by consolidation it became the main plant of the Globe Milling Co. group.

The same year, 1848, there was built "The Emerald Mill" on the site now occupied by the present Globe Milling Company plant. This mill burned in 1871 but was immediately rebuilt.

In 1874, Mr. Christian May, a successful logging and lumber operator, purchased the Emerald Mill and shortly after brought about a consolidation with the Big Brick Mill, operating as the Globe Milling Company, giving the Globe group, as improvements and expansion took place, a combined capacity of approximately 1,000 bbls. daily. From that time on The Emerald Mill was known as The Empire Mill. It was at this time that Mr. Christian May's eldest son Gustavus took over the management of The Big Brick Mill, while son Edward managed The Empire Mill.

In 1880 rolls were first used to replace buhrstones in the Pillsbury Empire Mill at Minneapolis. In 1882, a few rolls were installed in The Big Brick Mill at Watertown and from that time

on there was a gradual elimination of buhrstone grinding in local mills. An old time miller still living in the city recalls that he worked a twelve hour day, six days a week, and "dressed" the stones on Sunday. He is still well and hearty at eighty-four.

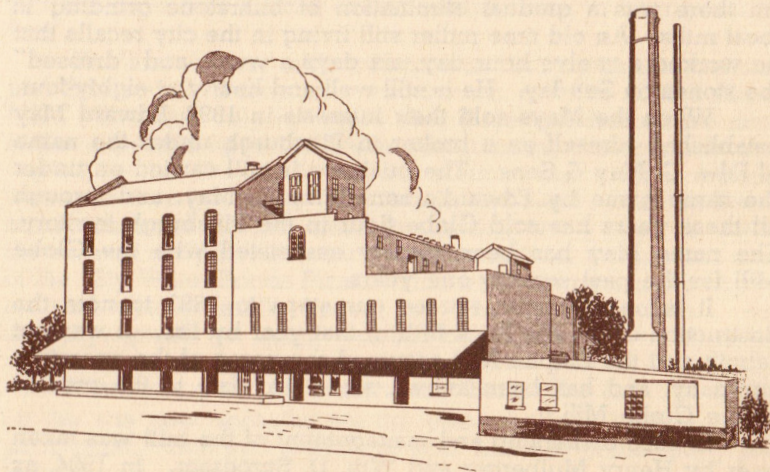
When the Mays sold their interests in 1898, Edward May established himself as a broker in Pittsburgh under the name of Edw. C. May & Sons. The business is still carried on under the same name by Edward's son Harry C. May, and through all these years has sold Globe flour in the Pittsburgh territory. The name May has been closely associated with the Globe Mill for the past seventy-one years.

It is necessary to retrace our steps to 1891 to note the destruction of the Big Brick Mill in that year by fire. It was not rebuilt and the Empire Mill assumed the name of the operating company, and has been known since that date to the present as the Globe Mill.

In 1898 ownership and management of the mill was taken over by Henry Mulberger and Wm. D. Sproesser. In 1904, as a partial offset to capacity lost by the destruction of The Big Brick Mill, Messrs. Mulberger and Sproesser purchased a 250 bbl. mill at Oconto, Wis. This was moved to Watertown and from then on the Mill operated two 250 bbl. units under one roof, one unit grinding wheat, the other, rye.

During the next few years the new owners found it necessary to devote more of their time to their banking and other business interests, and George Manschot, with many years of experience with the well known milling firm of J. B. A. Kern & Sons, Milwaukee, was engaged to take over active management.

In 1917 still another change in ownership took place. Shane Bros. & Wilson Co., owners and operators of the Milbourne Mills in Philadelphia had entered upon a program of



expansion which included not only the erection of new mills, but the purchase of established mills throughout the mid-west.

Included in those purchases were the Globe Milling Co. and a 500 bbl. mill in two 250 bbl. units at Portage, Wis., owned but not recently operated by York Bros. of that city. Extensive improvements were undertaken particularly at the Portage Mill which was practically rebuilt with the addition of a large and well equipped warehouse.

In the meantime the Watertown mill had been turned over to rye exclusively, and by 1919 the rebuilt Portage mill was ready for operation.

At that time the present management came to Watertown with instructions to combine the Watertown and Portage mills

financially as well as in general management and sales. It was an unwise decision. The Portage mill was heavily in debt due to improvements and new buildings. It had neither established trade nor brands. The United States public had been forced to use a percentage of substitutes for wheat flour during the war and with the removal of those restrictions wanted nothing to do with substitutes, with which they unfortunately classed rye. It was impossible under those conditions to sell successfully the combined rye capacity of the two mills, totalling 750 bbls. daily.

The Portage mill continued to be a drag on the well established Watertown mill, and it was sold in 1924 to a Chicago contractor thinking to make a miller of his son. It burned to the ground before it had really gotten into operation under the new owners.

The over expansion of the milling industry during the war, with the resulting scramble for business at unprofitable prices combined with the general commodity price collapse in the early twenties was disastrous for Shane Bros. & Wilson Co. in their over-expanded position. They were obliged to relinquish their interests in the two Globe Mills and reorganization of the Globe Milling Co. became imperative. It was at this time that New York and Milwaukee capital made substantial investments and together with the interest held by mill personnel, ownership remains much the same today as then.

Since World War No. 1 we have been the largest exclusive rye mill in the United States—not an entirely happy distinction under the exigencies of war.

The present minimum weight for car loads of 60,000 lbs. for grain products combined with the abnormally high price of rye flour has driven many buyers to mills able to supply both wheat and rye flour as well as other grain products in

exact amounts wanted in the same car load. This has posed serious problems for us of sales and production.

The mills business as it has developed particularly in the past ten years, calls for special emphasis on its retail trade.

We are located in one of the finest dairying sections in the United States. Progressive farmers no longer feed their herds and flocks on a hit or miss program. The State Agricultural College at Madison, backed by trained representatives of nationally known feed manufacturers, have driven home the advantages of scientific feeding, offering a profitable field in supplying a steadily growing demand for properly blended feeds, as well as concentrates to be mixed with their home grown ground grain. We are catering to this expanding type of business.

We are active in helping to promote and support a Farmers' Institute held in Watertown each winter. Before the war this was a two day affair, but during the war it has been restricted to one day. Faculty members of the University Farm School, as well as nationally known speakers from industries, discuss farmers' problems of management and feeding. The usual attendance is one thousand farmers and their wives and it is the largest institute of its kind in the state.

We cooperate with the farming community in securing soil analysis through the University laboratories, together with their recommendations for fertilizers, of which we distribute many car loads annually.

We arrange for the planting of small adjacent lots of land for testing different varieties of seeds, recording their development and output.

It may seem a far cry from baby chicks to milling but we sell up to eighty thousand each spring, and these together with countless thousands hatched on the farm consume many tons of

feed in their development to laying hens and roasters. The manufacture and sale of these feeds is strictly within the province of a country mill.

As an additional service we conduct a Poultry Health Clinic where post mortems or postings are held to determine causes for flock epidemics or unsatisfactory progress. Remedies are available on the recommendations of our own men trained for the purpose.

We operate two retail branches within a radius of fifteen miles of the mill, at which are offered all the services and supplies available at our retail headquarters.

In general, it is our policy to do everything in our power to promote a more prosperous farming community, a prosperity in which we share.

We have outlined in a sketchy manner the story of one hundred years of business activity, carried on by this mill, briefly noting changes of ownership, growth and varying financial fortunes. In that time we have developed from a pioneer water driven mill with three run of stones to a moderate sized, well equipped Diesel driven plant of 1,000 cwts. capacity, supplemented by a substantial retail and farm trade. We have played our part in the community's life and progress and have been a factor in the distribution of our flour in the important markets of this country as well as having enjoyed at one period of our history an export trade of considerable importance.

We fully appreciate friendly relations maintained locally as well as with flour buyers in the larger markets. We warm to the good will of our competitors.

The prod of competition, together with our intention of maintaining our place in the milling picture, is assurance of our continued effort.

KENNETH L. BURNS

OFFICERS

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Watertown
WM. G. HOTTENSEN - - - Treasurer
Milwaukee
ROBERT G. BELL - - - Vice President
Milwaukee
LEON E. KAUMHEIMER - - - Secretary
Milwaukee

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New York
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Milwaukee
LEON E. KAUMHEIMER, Ex officio
Milwaukee

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KENNETH L. BURNS - - - General Manager
SIDNEY C. NORTHROP - - Traffic & Asst. Mgr.
RAYMOND H. KAERCHER - - Retail Dept. Mgr.
JOSEPH WIMMER - - - Head Miller

REPRESENTATIVES

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