

DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY -- FORD MOTOR COMPANY – EMPLOYEE MATTERS & ACCIDENTS

[Compiled and Transcribed by William John Cummings]

EMPLOYEE MATTERS

The Iron Mountain Daily News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 1, Number 65 [Saturday, June 25, 1921], page 1, column 6

SINGLE MEN ARE TO BE RELEASED

Will Be Supplanted at Ford Mill by Men With Families

Single men who have been employed at the Ford plant will be released today, and their places will be filled by married men with dependents who were thrown out of employment by the shut-down [*sic* – *shutdown*] of the Chapin mine here. Between twenty-fiv [*sic* – *twenty-five*] and thirty will be affected, according to E.G. Kingsford.

Since the shutdown, the Ford officials have been besieged with applications for employment, and to relieve the stringency of local conditions it was thought advisable to release the single men and give their places to men with families.

The change might have been carried further, according to Mr. Kingsford, except for the fact that some of the men who would otherwise have been let go constitute skilled labor, and could not easily be replaced.

Slight delays have been experienced in the receipt of material, so the opening of the sawmill will not take place until a few days after July 1. Some motors, starting boxes, and other electrical equipment is still awaited, although most of the machinery is

in, and some of it is already being operated. Shortly after Independence Day is tentatively set for the opening. Nothing further has been heard as to whether Henry Ford will be here for the occasion.

The Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 2, Number 136 [Thursday, September 21, 1922], page 1, columns 7-8

FORD PLANT OPENS TOMORROW

SHUTDOWN IS OVER; MEN GO BACK TO JOBS

Resume Operations On Previous Basis is Word From Detroit

GET COAL SUPPLY

Necessary Arrangements Made, Edsel Ford Announces

The Ford plant will open tomorrow!

Word to resume operations was received this noon at the offices of the Michigan Iron, Land & Lumber company from the Ford Motor company at Detroit. The brief message, according to R.V. Dudley, an official of the Iron Mountain

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concern, merely gave instructions to begin operating tomorrow morning on the same basis as before the shutdown, which occurred at 1 o'clock Sunday morning when the night shift ceased work.

"In addition to being unexpected, we are highly elated by the news," Mr. Dudley declared. "The order puts an end to the tension that has existed since the plant was shut down and makes us feel considerably better."

400 to Return.

About 400 men will return to work here tomorrow. Although 600 were on the payroll when operations were suspended, 200 have been retained at various jobs not connected with the actual production of body parts.

Today was pay day and word of the re-opening was given to the men as they called for their checks. The relief in the faces of the employees *[sic – employees]* was apparent. Those who had not heard the report as it was passed about the city, *[sic]* wore dejected looks as they entered the office to receive what might be their last substantial check for some time. They emerged, however, with smiles that spread from ear to ear and declared themselves eager to get back into the harness.

"This is real good news to the men," Mr. Dudley explained. "The shutdown left them facing a problem of what they should do. Because it was not known how long it would be, the men were unable to decide whether to seek other jobs or wait until the plant was re-opened."

The order also injected a new spirit into the office employees *[sic – employees]*, who were not affected by the closing. They attacked their work with fresh vigor, prepared to get everything in readiness for the resumption.

Mine to Re-Open.

The Imperial mine at Michigamme, part of the holdings of the Michigan Iron, Land &

Lumber company and also closed down by the suspension order, will re-open tomorrow. About 120 men will be put back to work, approximately 160 being employed at the mine and 40 being retained when operations stopped.

Practically every man who was laid off here when the body plant closed will be back at work tomorrow. This does not include the sawmill, which was closed several weeks ago because of the log shortage. The night shift will go on at the same hour tomorrow afternoon as it did before the closing.

The re-opening will automatically cancel plans made by some of the expert wood working employees *[sic – employees]* who were inclined to go to other automobile centers and secure positions which they said were available. It is not believed that the shutdown has been of sufficient length to have materially affected the supply of labor, especially in view of the fact that pay checks were not issued until today.

E.G. Kingsford, vice president of the Millco, left the city the first part of the week for Detroit and no word has been received as to when he will return.

In a dispatch received here this afternoon, executives of the Ford company at Detroit said operations would be resumed at Highland Park, River Rouge and Dearborn, where the three large plants of the concern are located, at midnight tonight. Assembly plants throughout the country that were shut down with the parent plant also will resume as quickly as their men can be recalled.

It is planned to put production immediately on the basis it was at the time of the closing.

The reopening will bring back to work in addition to the Ford employees *[sic – employees]* approximately 120,000 others on the payrolls of accessory companies and

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machine shops, the bulk of whose products go into the Ford automobiles and tractors.

The majority of this class are in the Detroit district. The Ford closing threw between 45 and 50 per cent of the industrial workers in the Detroit district out of employment temporarily.

BOX

DETROIT, Sept. 21. – The plants of the Ford Motor company in the Detroit district, closed last Saturday because of the coal situation, thereby throwing 100,000 Ford workers out of work in different parts of the country, will reopen tomorrow, it was officially announced today.

Orders for reopening of the plant were telegraphed here today by Edsel B. Ford, president of the company, who is in Cincinnati. Mr. Ford said that cancellation of the interstate commerce commission's service order No. 23 had made it possible again to obtain coal.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 22 [Wednesday, May 6, 1925], page 3, columns 3-4

Ford Office Building Offered For \$25,000

No Opposition to City's Proposal to Purchase at That Price

The Ford Motor company has offered to sell its abandoned office building on East Brown street to the city for \$25,000, according to a statement to members of the city council.

The city desires to purchase the property because of claims that the present city hall is cramped for office space and additional quarters are needed.

The council committee appointed to investigate the proposition reported that although no plan of payment was proposed, the price had been set. The committee inspected the building and stated that it was in excellent condition and well suited for city offices.

Too Small For Company

The building was erected at the time the Ford Motor company came to Iron Mountain. It housed the company offices until about a year ago when it became too small and quarters were fixed up in the maintenance building at the plant.

The proposition has been referred to the council finance committee for further investigation and it is probable that some definite plan of action will be recommended at the next regular meeting of the council. No opposition has been expressed to the committee's recommendation that the city purchase the building.

Enlargement of Cemetery

Two propositions have been presented by the von Platen-Fox company for the purchase by the city of the land owned by the company adjacent to the city cemetery. One strip of land with a 50-foot roadway separating it from the cemetery has been offered for \$30,000, while the other section, consisting of five acres and located north of the Wisconsin Michigan railroad, has been offered for \$40,000. A council committee recommended that the five-acre site be purchased inasmuch as it is believed more suitable for use as a cemetery and is practically cleared.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 28 [Wednesday, May 13, 1925], page 1, column 4

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VALUE OF FORD PLANT BOOSTED

\$1,913,000 Added to Valuation by State Tax Body

The valuation of the Ford plant has been increased \$1,913,000, according to figures given out here today by the state tax commission.

The total valuation of the plant and 160 acres upon which it stands is now \$4,000,000 as compared to \$2,596,000 last year. The personal property valuation was increased from \$991,000 to \$1,500,00 [sic - \$1,500,000].

These figures, however, do not take in the Ford dam which is assessed at approximately \$350,000, and the acreage which composes the balance of the plant site. Neither does it include the Ford store.

The increase will give the village of Kingsford a total valuation of between \$6,500,000 and \$7,000,000.

The tax commission went to Crystal Falls this afternoon to hold a mine property hearing and will go to Bessemer tomorrow for the same purpose.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Saturday, June 27, 1925], page 1, columns 2-3

Reports Ford Plant Will Go on Five-Day Schedule Denied by Official Here

Suspension for Day in Body Units Climax to Bearish Rumors.

Reports today that the Iron Mountain Ford plant was going on a five-day-a-week operating schedule for an indefinite period were flatly denied by an official of the company.

Rumors current for several weeks that a reduction in force was contemplated were capped last evening by the five-day-week disturber when body plant workers were told to take today off.

There is nothing unusual in the partial shutdown today, the official stated. Such occurrences are common in big industries, he said, and result from variations in production.

With the exception of the body plants, all other departments were operating full force today. Neither was there any curtailment in Ford operations in other parts of the upper peninsula.

Not Unusual Occurrence.

There is nothing to indicate that the plant will go on a five-day-week basis, it was stated. Such a lay-off as was in effect today might occur at any time not through business depression but because departments exceed each other in comparative output and partial curtailment is necessary in order to again secure a balanced production. This is often found necessary in every industry.

With respect to rumors that a number of men have been laid off, the payroll shows that there are more than 6,000 employed at the plant, an increase of 300 over the latest previously published figures.

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Number _____ [Tuesday, June 30, 1925],
page 2, column 5

SHORT LAY-OFF FOR PLANT MEN

Body Division Workers In Two Units Get 5-day Vacation

Several hundred employes [*sic* – *employees*] of the Ford plant, principally body plant workers, were given a 5-day lay off at noon today. They were told to return to work Monday mning [*sic* – *morning*].

Men employed in body plants No. 2 and No. 3 were most affected by the temporary suspension in operations. Work in the first body unit continued on full schedule. Other departments dependent on the body plants also made a reduction in working forces, it was said.

The temporary suspension, it was stated, was due to some departments in the plant exceeding others in production and the lay-off was necessary in order to restore balanced output. Such lay-offs occur commonly [*in*] industrial units and are a problem of production instead of a result of abnormal business conditions.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Wednesday, July 1, 1925], page 1, column 5

HUGHES LEAVES FORD COMPANY

Becomes Associated With

Manistique Lime and Stone Plant

Gordon Hughes, for the past two years connected with the chemical plant of the Ford Motor company, left last evening for Manistique where he will be associated with the Manistique Lime and Stone company.

Mr. Hughes came to the Ford Motor company from the Eastman Kodak company. He was formerly with the Cleveland Cliffs Iron company at Marquette, and has a wide business and social acquaintance throughout the upper peninsula.

Mr. Hughes came here when the chemical plant was built. He was in charge of this unit and supervised its development. The Ford chemical plant has only one duplicate in the country in the process used, employing a radical departure from the customary methods of wood carbonization and distillation.

The Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 153 [Friday, October 9, 1925], page 1, columns 4-5

More Than 7,000 Now On Ford Plant Payroll

New High Mark Reached; Company is Far Behind In Deliveries

The public's response to the new model Ford cars is reflected here in the employment of more than 7,000 men in the Ford plant.

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This is an increase of approximately 1,300 men in the last six weeks and establishes a new high mark for the Iron Mountain division.

It is estimated that the Ford payroll in Iron Mountain is now approximately \$1,000,000 a month.

The flood of orders that came in following *[the]* announcement of the new models has placed the Ford company weeks behind in deliveries. Production has been speeded up all along the line in an effort to make deliveries as soon as possible but orders have been far exceeding the daily production capacity, which is now in the neighborhood of 8,000 cars per day.

Although the new cars have been announced as all-steel, it has resulted in the cancellation of but few operations here. It has also meant the establishment of new operations, as where steel meets steel wood fillers are used to act as a cushion and eliminate squeaking.

In addition, several weeks ago more operations were moved here from the River Rouge plant.

Important Part In Wheel.

The Iron Mountain plant is now an important cog in the gigantic Ford industrial wheel. The parent plant in Detroit is dependent upon the Iron Mountain division for the major share of the wooden parts used in the cars.

The Iron Mountain plant is running well up with the Detroit plant, keeping abreast and even exceeding it in production. The rapid rise in employment figures from 5,700 six weeks ago to 7,027 this morning is indicative of the manner in which production is being pushed for all it is worth.

Hiring of men is still going on and a new high employment peak is in prospect. All employing is done through a card system, interviews with the employment agent being

set on cards sent out after applications are received.

Production in the chemical plant is also said to have gained during the last few months. Because it is a new type of plant, handling all wood refuse, it has been a laborious and slow job working it into production. The various problems that have come up in connection with its operation, however, are being solved and the output increased.

Total employment by the Ford company in the upper peninsula is now 8,700.

EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 20 [Monday, May 4, 1925], page 1, columns 6-7

Eight Men Are Injured In Charcoal Dust Blast At Ford Chemical Plant

None Reported in Serious Condition; Explosion Caused by Pulley Sparks

Eight men were injured, none seriously, in a charcoal explosion at the Ford plant at 8:45 o'clock this morning, the accident occurring in the extreme end of the carbonization building of the chemical plant. In an investigation that followed, officials of the plant determined that the explosion was caused by sparks from a magnetic pulley that ignited an accumulation of charcoal dust.

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Seven of the eight men, all of whom were burned about the hands and face, suffered first degree burns. The eighth, Willis Keenan, was more seriously injured, his burns being described as of a second degree nature. Six of the men were taken care of at the Ford hospital where their wounds were treated and dressed. The other two, who were not so seriously burned, were treated at the first aid station at the plant.

The Injured.

The men injured were Harold Anderson, Thomas Gleason, Matt Haman, Stanley Brown, A. Johnson, Stanley Staneck, Giacinto Formola [*sic – Formolo -?*] and Willis Keenan. Relatives of all were notified of the accident by Ford officials immediately after it occurred.

One of the men became panic stricken following the explosion, running from the plant with his clothes afire, until fellow workmen stopped him. Old clothes were wrapped about the workman to extinguish the fire and he was then rushed to the Ford hospital.

Although a portion of the side of the building was blown out by the explosion, the damage was not sufficient to stop production and officials stated there will be no interruption in the plant's operation.

Wives of men employed in the chemical plant became alarmed when rumors of the explosion began to spread and they flocked to the plant gates. They were assured, however, that the explosion was not as serious as had been reported and none of the injured was in a serious condition.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 23 [Thursday, May 7, 1925], page 9, column 6

ARE RECOVERING

Eyesight of None Impaired by Charcoal Dust Explosion

Men injured in the charcoal explosion at the Ford plant on Monday are rapidly recovering, according to information given out at the Ford plant today. Of the eight injured two were cared for at the first aid station, being discharged immediately, and six were removed to the Ford hospital. One of the six was discharged this morning and it is expected that all of the men will be released within another week.

Preventive measures taken in having the injured men's eyes bandaged to prevent possible blindness from the glare of the explosion proved worthwhile. The bandages of the men whose cases were doubtful were removed yesterday and the sight of none has been impaired. It was also stated today that no scars would result from the burns.

The men were injured when the end of a metal cylinder about 100 feet long and several feet in diameter blew out. The cylinder contained charcoal dust and the explosion was believed to have been caused by a spark from a magnetic pulley.

BLAST VICTIMS