

Part VI – Boom Businesses

Businesses & Factories during the Boom

*** Boom Period Businesses Started and Closed during the Boom Period**

Name of Company	Opened	Closed
Metcalf Cracker Factory	1888	1891
City Marble Works	1889, 3-1	1893
Kearney Broom Factory	1889	1893, Apr
Grain Meter Manufacturer	1889	1892?
Kearney Planing Mill	1889, July	1890, 2-17
Soap Factory	1889, Nov	1891, July
Paper Mill, Kearney	1889, Dec	1890, 4-8
Harding's Planing Mill	1890, Apr	1890, 8-7
Kearney Foundry & (Levering's)Hinge Factory	1890, 5-10	1891
Kearney Manufacturing (Foundry)	1891	1893
Oat Meal Company, Kearney	1892, 1-23	1893, 2-3
Kearney Shirt Factory	1892, May	1893, Feb
Western Bottling Co.	1892	1893
Plow Manufacturing Co., Kearney	1892, Sept	1893
Kearney Steel Bridge Co.	1892	1893
Paper Mill, Kearney 1889-1890 first time	1893, 2-24	1893, 6-22
Tool Company	Never open	
Kearney Woolen Mill	Never open	

Note opening years

1888 – 1

1889 – 6

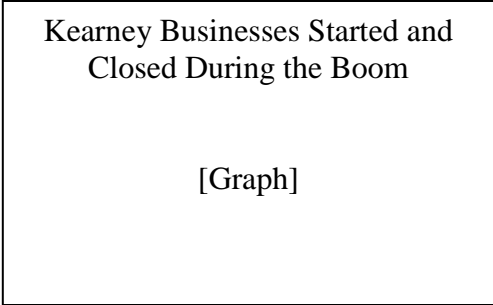
1890 – 3

1891 – 1

1892 – 5

1893 – 1

17 openings (16 businesses)



Two Never Opened

Tool Factory

Location: Built a building, east near coal chutes 3-4 blocks east of Q

Comments: City subscribed \$1,400.

Ready to do business at end of Aug 1889

Financing fell through; never opened,

Left a new, empty building

*West Kearney Woolen Mill Company

Location: North side of railroad at 30th St in West Kearney

Comments: Started building in summer of 1889

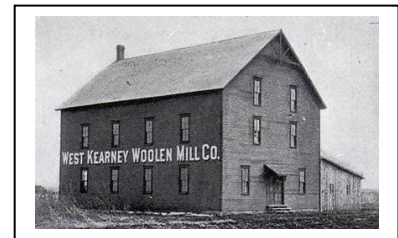
Kept promising to open all fall

Description of how it would operate –

buy wool locally, make flannel for shirts

Planned to open a flannel shirt factory

Nothing happened – sat empty



Proposal in 1893 to make it a mattress factory - nothing

The Rest Opened (16) – Operated 4 mos. To 3 years

* Metcalf Cracker Factory

Location: 2009 1st Ave. The building north of Tollefsen Elliott's

Burned down in 2005 about

Built in 1888 by W. T. Scott.

2-story building with maple floors built

Cost \$5000. He was paid \$500

Years of operation: Opened after Aug 1888

Baked several boxes of hard-tack for the reunion

1890 – Metcalf tried to stay in business without joining the cracker trust

He was \$10,000 in debt.

Group of 25 cracker companies merged as Am. Biscuit & Manuf. Co.

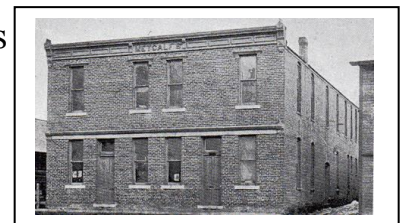
Metcalf sold to them and stayed on as manager. Metcalf Bakery

1891 – This organization became a second trust.

Factory operated a few months, then closed and dismantled.

For the next year Metcalf tried to reopen

Oct 1892 – W. T. Scott foreclosed on a mechanics lien and became owner of building.



City Marble Works – marble & granite tombstones

Location: 2119 Ave A (block south of Odd Fellows Hall)

Years of operation: Mar. 1, 1889 as a branch business of a Mankato, Minn. firm

Oscar Lieberg, manager

Closed sometime in early 1893

James Crawford opened a marble works business about this time

Comments: Feb. 15, 1890 – sold stone to Geo. Meisner of Shelton for his wife.

\$2,500. 4 columns and life sized statue made in Italy

Dec. 8. 1890 – Meisner stone put up

Mar 13-Apr 3, 1893 – John Peterson opened a feed store in Marble Works building

Aug 1903 – Lieberg died, James Crawford was appointed one of the appraisers of his estate which included “a lot of marble headstones.”

Kearney Broom Factory

Location: Don't know where they started out

Years of operation: Open before June 1, 1889 then closed

* 1893 - New start – New broom factory

In an old laundry building on 19th St. south of tracks
just vacated [in Feb.] by the fence factory



March 1, 1893 – first broom made, not all machinery here yet.

Broom corn wired onto a stick [probably not a sophisticated operation]

5 employees, doubled to 10 in two weeks

April - shipped 100 dozen brooms to Grand Island, also selling to Omaha.

Planning to put in machinery for making whisk brooms and brushes

Then nothing more

Grain Meter Manufacturer

P Barker [age 75] granted a patent for the World Grain Weigher and Loader

Manufacture and sold in building on corner of 19th & Central

Also manufactured sash locks

Years of operation: 1889-1892 [3 years]

Two Planing Mills

1. Kearney Planing Mill

Location: south of railroad on tailrace [south of trailer court]

Products: sash, doors, blinds, storm windows, turning and ornamental work, stairs

Years of operation: [4-5 months] Fall 1889 - Feb 17, 1890 – burned
Exterior rebuilt, tried to reopen, didn't

2. Harding's Planing Mill

Location: 15th between Central & A (Near the courthouse)

Years of operation: [2+ months] end of May – Aug. 7, 1890

Harding started building 2 months after the other one burned [mid-April]

Opened end of May - made scroll work, make odd size sash, door, windows.

Aug. 7, 1890 - Burned - someone seen running from the bldg just before fire

Soap Factory

Location: On Platte ½ mile east of bridge [on Central then]

Years of operation: Nov 1889 – mid-1891 – About 1 ½ yrs
Nov. 1889 – built a brick rendering house.

Buy grease, tallow, dead hogs or hides.

Next spring (1890) built soap factory.

Lasted a year [closed in July, 1891]

* Kearney Paper Mill (A run of bad luck)

Location: East of the Woolen Mill in West Kearney, north of tracks

Years of operation: 1889 – 1892

Product: Kraft paper –

12 tons of straw will make 8 tons of paper daily

Timeline:

June 1889 – Building being constructed.

Brick building 190 feet long.

Main machinery room 125 feet wide, one story high.

Remainder holds boiler & digester and is 3 stories high
with corrugated iron roof

Side track from UP runs on north side of building and on to woolen mill.

[these two factory buildings were between the UP main line and the spur]



75 hp electric motor arrived

Aug 23, 1889 – Storm caused \$4,000 damage to the building.

City had promised a \$7,000 subsidy for this business.

Now R. M. Johnston, manager, was trying to raise that promised money

Repaired – Started in Dec. 1889 – In production for 4 months to April 1890

April 8, 1890 – Windstorm blew down the paper mill [again]

- Part of north wall of one-story section down.
- 50,000 lb. iron roof on 3-story section fell into the basement taking down the north and south walls.
- One man tried to brace the walls but decided he could not and left.
- No tornado insurance, just fire insurance
- Machinery not damaged much. Roof fell on it and protected it.

Apr 23 - June 1890 – Rebuilding

Electric motor replaced by 112 hp motor steam powered.

Cheaper than electricity.

[Nothing happened]

Feb 1892 – Appraisal made on mill – Mortgage foreclosure - “sheriff’s sale”

Sept. 1892 – Someone from Beatrice leased the mill.

Feb. 24, 1893 – Opened - Ran 4 months –

Operated day & night, using up to 12 tons straw per day.

Took 8 hrs start to finish. 8,000 lbs paper daily, 25 employees

June 21, 1893 – Half their straw burned

June 22, 1893 – Closed - financial trouble

Property was cleaned up, caretaker left in charge, farmed next to mill

Nebraska Fence Company

Location: New 2-story building at unknown location

Years of operation: spring 1890 for a few months – closed

Opened in fall 1891

May have reopened in an old laundry building on corner of 19th & 1st Ave.

Feb 1893 – Moved one building west.

Product: Wire & slat fence.

Hardwood pickets dipped in oil and galvanized wire.

[Presumed closed at end of Boom, but....]

Jan. 1, 1899 – Unidentified account book donated to Archives shows a balance for Nebraska Fence Co. of \$29.20

Oct. 5, 1900 – Homer J. Allen, prominent Kearney businessman, died.

Obit. says he was president of the Nebraska Fence company.

[Can't tell from the wording if "was" means sometime in the past or was at the time of his death.]

EVOLUTION OF A BUSINESS

* **Great Western Hinge Works**
aka Kearney Foundry & Hinge Works
aka Levering's Hinge Factory

B. F. Levering patented a hinge in 1890

Asked city for \$1400.

Location: East of Oatmeal Mill factory east side of Kearney by coal chutes

* Built a 24x50 two-story building, and a 24x50 one-story building,
& ¼ acre of sheds

Purchased tool factory to use for light work and finishing.

Built a large addition built on tool factory

Product: Door hinges, brass castings and heavy cast iron work.

Opened in May 10, 1890 – sort of

Expected to begin work in earnest in March 1891

May 1891 – Owners, Whitaker Bros. & Milligan, sold to a foundry in Fairfield, NE, owned by Gillette & Phillips

* **Kearney Manufacturing Co.** (foundry)

May 1891 - combined to form a new company –
Kearney Manufacturing Co.

Oct. 1891 - Incorporated under new ownership including
Whitaker Bros. & Milligan, Gillette &
Starkey, but not Phillips.

He still worked for the company.

Set up to manufacture Starkey steel buggy wheel

**The Great Western Hinge
Works
aka Kearney Foundry
and Hinge Factory
aka Levering's Hinge
Factory**



**Kearney Manufacturing
Co. (foundry)**
Gillett & Phillips
**Gillett's Foundry &
Machine Shop**
Gillett & Jakeway

Aug. 1892 – Gillette (earlier identified as a skilled mechanic) was working on his invention of steam engine which is small enough to fit in a water bucket.

Year later – he had refined his idea to the size of a stove

[apparently in the depression of 1893 when other business were closing, they did also]

March 1894 – Foundry reopen after being closed for some time

If Gillette and his partners, the Whitaker Bros. (Milligan & Starkey had dropped out) can find financing they will also manufacture the engine and generator

[Probably did not because....]

July 1894 – **Gillett & Phillips** [same as original in Fairfield]

Made a new wagon for Ed Gilmore

propel himself with a crank

Mounted on cushioned bicycle wheels with ball bearings

May 1896 – **Gillette's Foundry & Machine Shop**

[Apparently no partners]

Dec. 1896 – **Gillette & Jakeway** – formed a partnership,

Bought machinery and tools for making bicycles.

Rented Cracker factory building

Build bicycles on 2nd floor

Heavier work downstairs

***Kearney Oat Meal Mill**

Location: East side of Kearney by coal chutes about 25th & R

Years of operation:

Being built in Dec. 1890 –

Jan. 1891 – wind blew engine room walls 20 ft. away,
brick walls blown in leaving only corners standing

Oct 1891 - shell of building complete but not clapboarded,
no machinery yet.

1-story boiler house has to be built.

Jan. 23, 1892 – The oatmeal mill commenced operations

Feb. 3, 1893 – Closed. Operated one year



Kearney Shirt Factory

Location: 15 W 23rd St

Years of operation: 1892-3

May 13, 1892 – Opened quietly, 10 foot powered machines.

Products include dress shirts, negligee shirts, jumpers, jeans pants and overalls, night gowns and linen dusters.

Aug. switched to electricity

Feb. 3, 1893 – ads suddenly stopped.

Western Bottling Co.

Listed in City Directory in 1891-2

Not in Hub

Kearney Plow Manufacturing Co

Myth – Manufactured one plow

* Location: 14th St., on tailrace. Mile west of courthouse

Years of operation: 1892-3

Dec 1891 – Implement company in Winona, MN, represented by

Walter W. Kuhn.

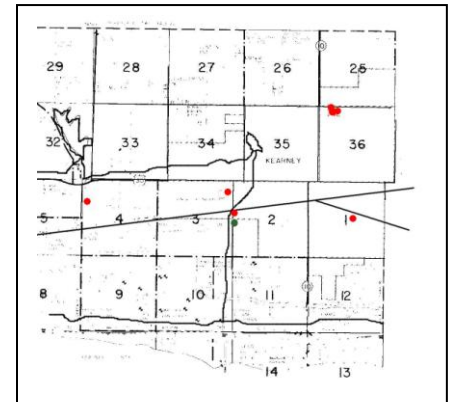
He has a patent on a plow which will be manufactured here.

Brother **Richard W Kuhn**

Will establish branch factories.

Manufacture parts here and send there to be assembled.

- Meeting of 50 Kearney business men.
- Plow factory to have \$100,000 capital.
- Kearney subsidy to be \$12,500 and a building site.
- \$6,330 promised by men attending.
- Additional promised next day to total \$8,500
- Subsidy money raised by Christmas
- Cash or bank notes payable 30 days after production begins.



Apr 1892 –Construction had begun

June – Building completed

Aug – Machinery put in place. “The works are to be run by electricity.”

Opened about September

Oct. 15, 1892 – shipped parts for 32 plows to Stanton. 1000 plows in process.

Nov. 1892 – Display of first plow at Firemen’s Fair at Model rink
Basis of the myth – assembled one plow here

Feb 1893 – two more branch factories established making total of 17.
Closed after May, 1893

***Kearney Steel Bridge Company**

Location: Plow Factory

Years of operation: 1892

Oct 1892 – Month after Plow factory opened –
W. Kuhn was in Omaha

Interested some capitalists in incorporating the Kearney Steel Bridge Company. Parts will be made at the plow factory.

The Kearney Plow Co.
Kearney Steel Bridge Co.

Mar 14, 1893 – Working with city council about steel bridge across the tailrace.
Street & alley committee recommended:

Bridge at 25th St. over tailrace

Steel provided by Kearney Steel Bridge Company

Kearney Canal and Improvement Co. furnish piles and wood work of oak & build the bridge

If the two companies were lowest bidders

But sometime after May the Plow factory closed and the Bridge Co. probably dissolved with it.

***When Did They Close?**

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Paper Mill, Kearney	1889, Dec	1890, 4-8
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Grain Meter Manufacturer	1889	1892?
Oat Meal Company, Kearney	1892, 1-23	1893, 2-3

When Did The Close?
[Graph]

Kearney Shirt Factory	1892, May	1893, Feb	
Kearney Broom Factory	1889	1893, Apr	
Kearney Manufacturing (Foundry)	1891	1893	Morfed into other businesses
Plow Manufacturing Co.	1892, Sept	1893	
City Marble Works	1889, 3-1	1893	
Western Bottling Co.	1892	1893	
Kearney Steel Bridge Co.	1892	1893	
Paper Mill, Kearney	1893	1893	

Opened

1888 – 1

1889 – 6

1890 – 3

1891 – 1

1892 – 5

1893 – 1

17

Closed

1890 – 3

1891 – 3

1892 – 1

1893 – 10

17

Counting the paper mill twice