

Factory: Kearney Paper Mill

Location: Near the cotton mill; According to 1889 map it's on 33rd Ave where railroad goes through the West Kearney section – Where Brown Church design company built their new building. On 7 acres along Union Pacific in West Kearney, 2 miles west of Central Ave.

Years of operation: 1889 – 1892, Aug 1889 – will be running in a few weeks

June 3, 1889 – Building being constructed. Iron frames were in place

June 22, 1889 – wing of main structure completed

June 29, 1889 – a carload of machinery arrived

July 1, 1889 – two digesters put in place

July 10, 1889 – Poles for electricity were being installed

Aug. 7, 1889 – 75 hp electric motor arrived

Aug 23, 1889 – Storm caused \$4,000 damage to the building. City had promised a \$7,000 subsidy. Now R. M. Johnston, manager, was trying to raise that promised money

Aug 30, 1889 – Production expected to begin Oct. 1. 12 tons of straw will make 8 tons of paper daily

Sept 7, 1889 – Expect to start manufacturing next week

Oct 11, 1889 – Won't be able to start for another month. Large amount of expensive machinery has been received and is being installed by experts

Oct. 21, 1889 – machinery has been started and in good working order

Nov. 8, 1889 – no visitors until production starts, probably beginning of Dec.

April 8, 1890 – Windstorm blew down the paper mill – 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. No one in the building at the time. One man was, tried to brace the walls but decided he could not and left. No tornado insurance, just fire insurance

April 9, 1890 – Machinery not damaged much. Roof fell on it and protected it.

Apr 23, 1890 – work began to rebuild the mill

May 15, 1890 – Still working at rebuilding

June 3, 1890 – walls were up, greatly strengthened, ready for roof

Oct. 2, 1891 – rumor mill manager may form partnership with wool mill proprietor and buy paper mill with objective of getting it running. Wool mill needs \$5000 to get going

Feb 1892 – Appraisal made on mill

Feb 11, 1892 – Mortgage foreclosure notice

Mar 23, 1892 – Notice of “sheriff's sale” of property by court in Omaha

May 26, 1892 – manager says a known paper manufacturer is willing to invest 1/3 of \$50,000 if two more investors are found, otherwise the mill goes to Omaha

Aug 22, 1892 – old paper mill to be refitted and placed in operation

Sept. 22, 1892 – someone from Penn. Considering operating the paper mill was in town

Sept. 27, 1892 – inspecting the premises

Sept. 29, 1892 – R W Barteisel of Beatrice, formerly of Harrisburg, PA, leased the mill. Intends to enlarge it. Straw wanted ad in same issue

Oct 25, 1892 – should be ready for production in 6 weeks

Dec 17, 1892 – there were delays but the machinery was being put in place

Feb. 24, 1893 – First paper done and delivered to Coddington & Sons, wholesale grocers

Apr 5, 1893 – running day & night, using up to 12 tons straw per day. Takes 8 hrs start to finish. 8,000 lbs paper daily, 25 employees

June 23, 1893 – Closed last night (the day after a fire that burned half their straw). In financial trouble because of the paper trust.

June 27, 1893 – now in hands of creditors

June 28, 1893 – Macintosh, attorney for trustee for owners, took possession and ordered a cleanup of the building in preparation for starting again.

July 13, 1893 – Man from Cleveland in town looking after mill. Thinks it can start “as soon as times get better.”

Apr. 8, 1895 – Mr. Fairchild, keeper of the paper mill, married. They will live at the paper mill

July 15, 1898 – ‘Ras Fairchild, farm at paper mill, 3 horses lost or stolen

Comments: Built of brick and stone

Digesters – Iron boilers in which straw is placed and reduced to pulp

Portion blew down in 1889; Aug. 1889 got a 75 horsepower electric motor

Rest Blew down April 10, 1890 – no paper yet – started rebuilding in late April

made strawboard (market for farmers’ straw which they had been burning. Capacity of 8 tons of paper per day

Nov. 8, 1889 – T F Miller hired as foreman

Nov. 11, 1889 - 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.

Owners Peoria, Illinois capitalists. R. M. Johnston superintendent. Will make ordinary wrapping paper used in hardware stores and butcher shops, can make higher grade also. Use straw but can also use fibrous vegetables, old paper and rags.

Straw piled south of the building is placed on a belt, runs through a small building where it is chopped into 3” pieces and lifted to the third story of the main factory. Dumped through holes in floor into digesters which weigh 35 tons each. Pipes run steam through the digesters to make the straw a pulp. 12 tons of straw, steam and a “caustic liquor” are sealed in for several hours. Steam pressure blows pulp out through pipes into a vat 16’ high in the basement. Agitators keep the pulp moving so it wont settle. Pulp pumped into machines on first floor and goes through a couple more until it looks like cornmeal mush. [description gets too involved but the end result is wrapping paper.] A coal fired boiler provides steam for digesters. A well in the basement provides the water. Some cottages will be built nearby for workers

Dec. 8, 1889 – One of the owners from Peoria was in town and wanting the subsidy Kearney had promised. Payments by those who had subscribed were 3 months overdue and being called in

Nov. 13, 1889 – Will hire about 24 workers

March 8, 1890 – All the owners here for stockholders meeting. Will start the factory in the near future as soon as they can get it ready. Decided to get rid of the 75 hp electric motor and get a 112 hp motor steam powered. Cheaper than electricity.

Aug. 1892 supplied paper decorations for a political event
May 1893 paper used for invitations to party given by national guard
June 21, 1893 - one of two stacks of straw, 400 tons, burned. Fire caused by sparks from smoke stack because north wind blew smoke over straw on south side of building.
No fire insurance on straw, just building
June 23, 1893 – Mill has debts, Barnheisel, proprietor, has gone back east, leaving
Creditors
June 24, 1893 – two sons left for the east, frascus a depot with two employees who were owed 5 weeks back pay
Oct. 10, 1900 – reason for failure 1) first owner had new method of manufacturing wrapping paper not practical, 2) next owner a capitalist who did not have any money after all, made some paper, tried to sell out of the trust. Closed and has not been in operation since
Nov 2, 1900 – Paper company has paid a man to look after the paper mill since it has been closed. Closed because of lack of financing, not by trust