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Chapter V

KANSAS CITY STRUCTURAL STEEL COMPANY

With the exception of the smelter, and perhaps the railroad, no single industry has contributed more to the economic stability of the Argentine community than the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. Founded in 1907, this Argentine steel plant was for many years considered the largest west of the Mississippi River. This company has constructed buildings and bridges throughout the world as well as providing most of the skyline of downtown Kansas City, Missouri.

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thenow/TN29.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/kgghostsquadron/CAF-KC-History.html>

<http://www.umkc.edu/whmckc/Collections/commerce.htm>

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/wyandott/history/1911/volume1/295.html#029907>

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company began as the dream of two young men, Howard A. Fitch and Olaf C. Smith. Howard Fitch was born on March 28, 1868. When he was eighteen, his family moved to Kansas City. There, he took his first job as a rod man for a surveying crew with the Kansas City Cable Railway Company.¹ In 1890, he went to Minnesota and found an opening as a cub draftsman in the structural steel industry. This industry was just beginning to come into prominence. As Mr. Fitch explained it:

Steel beams and shapes had just supplanted iron shapes. The first steel beams were rolled in 1886 although steel rails had been rolled since 1879. Architects and engineers were at first a little wary about substituting steel for iron. However by 1891 mills have been discontinuing the rolling of iron beams and shapes.

Structural steel is thirty-three per cent stronger than iron and is very much cheaper to produce. It would be virtually impossible to supply sufficient iron shapes to meet the construction requirements of today.²

Fitch moved up rapidly in the steel industry. He represented his company on many business trips. On such a trip, in Salt Lake City, he met the woman who was soon to become his wife.³ This is how he related some of his earlier experiences in the steel industry:

In the spring of 1897, I went to Butte, Montana to introduce the use of steel structures for the mining industry. The time was ripe, so that within a year it was almost universally adopted in that industry.

I recalled that about 1900 I had my first inklings of reinforced concrete construction. The engineering facts and information was very meager at that time and such construction that we used was very poorly designed and very crude. WE had a theory but little engineering knowledge as to how to apply it.⁴

Fitch's theory about the strength and durability of steel was soon proved. The construction industry was revolutionized. Kansas City in 1900 was also to witness his engineering genius. The Democratic National Convention was scheduled that year for Kansas City in the newly built Convention Hall.

¹ *Kansas City Times*, November 3, 1953, p. 3

² Howard A. Fitch, "54 Years of Construction Changes in Kansas City," p. 1. This article written in April 1940 by Mr. Fitch was found among the official records of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

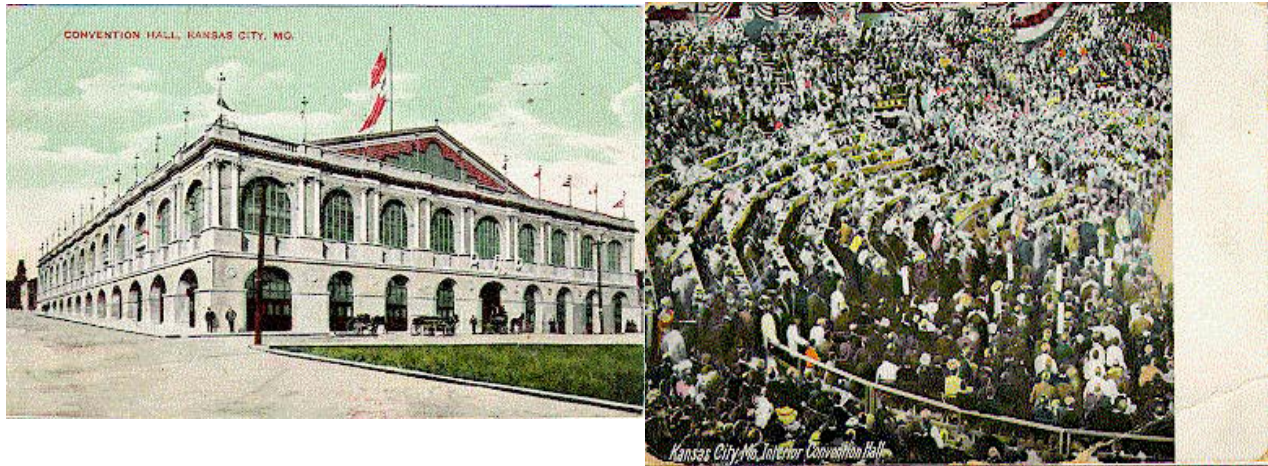
³ *Kansas City Times*, November 3, 1953, p. 3

⁴ Fitch, "54 Years of Construction Changes in Kansas City," p. 1

<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/post/buildings/20000308.htm>

Kansas City's Convention Hall burned April 4, 1900. Within minutes the city rallied around its ashes to rebuild one of the world's largest indoor arenas in 90 days, just in time to host the 1900 Democratic National Convention ...

<http://www.kcstar.com/millennium/part8/stories/mill8.htm>



The Democratic Convention was scheduled that year for Kansas City in the newly built Convention Hall. Just three months before the Convention, however, this structure burned to the ground. A ninety-day engineering feat then took place. A new hall was erected in time for the convention. Fitch's company, the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company, furnished all of the steel for this project. Fitch came to Kansas City and was chief engineer of the project.⁵

O. C. Smith's career closely paralleled that of Fitch. Mr. Smith was born of pioneer parents in Green Bay, Wisconsin, on October 31, 1872. His family moved to St. Ansgar, Iowa, where he received his elementary and secondary education. He attended the University of Minnesota and received a degree in engineering. While at the university, he participated in all sports and was considered an outstanding baseball player.

After leaving college, Smith was employed as superintendent of the Gillette-Hezog Steel Company of Minnesota. In 1900, the American Bridge Company purchased the firm and he was to remain with them until 1904. Then, he accepted a position as the superintendent of the Minnesota Steel and Machinery Company.⁶

While working for this firm, Smith became acquainted with Fitch. They became close friends. Fitch at that time was the chief engineer of the same company. The two men decided to form their own steel company. Their first choice for a location apparently was St. Louis, Missouri. However, the Consolidated Kansas City Refining Company in Argentine had just gone out of business. The land and buildings were for sale at a cheap price.⁷

Furthermore, the smelter grounds were located on the Santa Fe Railroad. This site was a natural crossroads on the south side of the Kaw River about three miles from its mouth. Kansas City Structural Steel was to have frontage of 1,381 feet on the main line of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. The Kansas City Division of this railroad is a focal point onto which twelve major trunk lines coverage.⁸

⁵ *Kansas City Times*, November 3, 1953, p. 3

⁶ *Kansas City Star*, July 4, 1936, p. 1

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁸ Kansas City Structural Steel Company, "Kansas City Structural Steel Procedure Manual," p. 1. This pamphlet was found among the official records of the steel company.

Because of such advantages, Fitch and Smith decided to buy the old smelter site. The price was between \$45,000 and \$50,000.⁹ The first shop payroll began on June 20, 1907, with the names of L. Glassford, F. Becker, C. D. Coreham, C. Prebstel, H. Becker, John Fitch, A. J. Anderson, Arthur Reiner, B F Marshall, Dick Keele, William Keele, T. M. Williams, Homer Wise, Charles Robert and Cliff Yeager. These men were employed in putting the property and shop in order.¹⁰

These employees also spent the early months attempting to salvage gold, silver, lead, and other metals from the abandoned smelter deposits. In April 1908, gold, silver, and lead to a value of \$5,000 were found in an abandoned pile near the brick smokestack. Workmen digging around the foundations of an abandoned blast furnace struck a hard substance. A force of fifty men set to work and a twenty-ton deposit of lead ore was uncovered. This lump contained three ounces of gold to the ton, priced at twenty dollars an ounce. Silver totaling 175 ounces valued at fifty dollars an ounce was recovered, as was tons of lead valued at about ten cents a pound. Apparently this metal had leaked through the floor of the old blast furnace, and when a new floor was laid over the old one this metal deposit became buried and forgotten.¹¹

Eventually, the steel company was able to recover enough metal to more than pay for the cost of the original buildings and grounds. In 1912, alone, an estimated \$62,000 was refined from the old ore dumps on the property.¹²

Attempts to salvage these metals were made on several occasions since then. Doubtlessly, many old timers can recollect the efforts of a miner by the name of John E. Hanson. Mr. Hanson was a former Alaskan and Mexican miner who had invented a mechanical prospector. In 1929, he pitched a tent on the steel plant's property. He set up a miniature smelter inside the abandoned smokestack. The tunnels and the older stack were razed. The interior of the bigger smokestack was also scraped clean and the soot was refined for particles of precious metal.¹³

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company officially began operations in the spring of 1907. Howard A. Fitch was named the President, and O. C. Smith the Vice-President of the new company. The first contract was for an addition to the Jones Store Building on Walnut, between 12th and 13th Street, in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. This was a 10,000-ton contract. During the next few months, the Y.M.C.A. building, the Sharp building and the Boley building were constructed in Kansas City, Missouri.¹⁴ Sales for the company's first year of operation totaled \$7,000,000.¹⁵

The company quickly branched out into the mine and smelter fields. Steel was fabricated for the Ray Consolidated Copper Plant of Hayden, Arizona, in 1910. This has been followed by contracts with the American Copper Company, the American Smelting and Refining Company, the Arizona Company Smelter at Clifton, Arizona, the United Verde Copper Company at Clarksdale, Arizona, and the Alaska Gastineau and Alaska Juneau gold mining plants.¹⁶

One man in particular was responsible for Kansas City Structural Steel's growing reputation in the construction and smelting industries. This was Alfred M. Meyers, who was the chief engineer of the company for almost forty years. Mr. Meyers received an engineering degree at the University of Kansas. He began his career work for the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio. Meyers and other engineers of this company were pioneers in highway bridge construction. Meyers worked a short time for the Wisconsin Bridge Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1908, he started working for the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, and he was greatly instrumental in building up the company's reputation in the designing and the fabricating of mine and smelter buildings for the copper mining industry. He also was an expert in the designing of highway and railway bridges and a variety of other industrial structures.¹⁷

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thenow/TN03.htm>

⁹ Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, Kansas Yearbook, 1937-38 (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, 1935), p. 319

¹⁰ Kansas City Structural Steel Credit Union, "Kansas City Structural Steel Company," volume 1, number 9 (Kansas City Structural Steel Employees Credit Union, November, 1945), p. 2. This was a little newsletter that was distributed to the employees.

¹¹ Kansas City Times, April 21, 1908, p. 4

¹² Kansas City Times, February 23, 1951, p. 31

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 9, April, 1945, p. 1

¹⁵ Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, Kansas Yearbook 1937-38, p. 319

¹⁶ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 9, April, 1945, p. 1

¹⁷ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume III, number 3, October, 1945, p. 1

Another man of outstanding merit was Thomas W. McCurnin, manager of the Erection Department. The company has almost always had crews which erect the steel that the company had fabricated. These crews traveled all over the country and in different parts of the world. McCurnin was an early organizer of these erection gangs. He started his career in the steel construction industry with the Standard Oil Company in the late 1890's. In 1902, he became the Superintendent of Construction of the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company. Then, in 1910, he came to the steel plant and was to remain there for almost forty years. Known as "Rusty," because of his flaming red hair, he became a familiar face to iron and steel workers throughout the country.¹⁸

Neil G. Lilley also began his career in the iron and steel industry at about the same time. In 1899 he started as a cost accountant for the Twin City Iron Works of Minneapolis, Minnesota. This company in 1902 merged with the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company, the employer of Howard Fitch and O. C. Smith. Lilley soon met them. He came to Argentine, and in June 1907 started working for them. Lilley soon was named a Vice-President and General Sales Manager and was to remain in that capacity for about fifty years.¹⁹

<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/photos/autochromes/lilley.htm>

On March 29, 1909, John P. Cooper joined the company as the Shop Timekeeper. He later held various jobs in the office and then in 1935 was named the Secretary of the company.²⁰

As the company grew in prominence, the stature of these men also grew in importance. From 1914 through 1917, the company received different kinds of notoriety. A group of steel plant employees decided to organize a semi-pro football team. They realized that colleges would not schedule games against a team of amateurs. Therefore, they decided to call themselves the Argentine School of Engineering. They called themselves a college and sent out a letterhead. Games were scheduled with such schools as Baker, Ottawa and perhaps even the University of Kansas.

The team was mostly made up of brawny steel workers of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, although other players were residents of the Argentine community. Many had played football in college. Two players, the Allen brothers, were the cousins of fames Forrest C. "Phog" Allen, the basketball coach of the University of Kansas.

The Argentine School of Engineering football team was apparently pretty good. They had a big line averaging about 210 pounds each. Since everyone worked days, the team had to practice at night. Emerson Park was used as a practice field. Since there was no lighting at the park, the players, in order to see, had to use a painted white ball.²¹ The football team broke up for good about the time of our entry into the First World War.

During the war, the steel company filled many government orders. Steel railroad tank cars were made, as were the rudders of ships. For most of the war, O. C. Smith was in charge of the production of structural steel for ships at the Hog Island Naval Yard in the east.

In the decade following the war, the steel company did a booming business. By the spring of 1919, 500 men were on the payroll.²² Kansas City Structural Steel was already credited as the largest fabricating steel plant west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 1929, a \$300,000 addition was constructed. A new building, 700 feet long and 200 feet wide was erected, with two big crane runways in it. Each runway was 80 feet wide and 700 feet long. At the end of the building, a small plate shop was built. Officials of the company estimated that this new addition would increase production by almost 50 per cent. They also anticipated having to add an additional 100 men to the payroll.²³

By 1926, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was doing a business of between \$4,000,000 and \$6,000,000 annually. Two million dollars had been invested by the company. The land alone was appraised at more than \$125,000.²⁴ During the 1920-1929 decade, shipments of steel averaged 36,634 tons a year.²⁵

¹⁸ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume II, number 2, September, 1945, p. 1

¹⁹ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number 9, April, 1945, p. 1

²⁰ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume II, number 1, August, 1945, p. 1

²¹ Kansas City Kansas, April 24, 1949, p. 7

²² Kansas City Star, March 19, 1919, p. 1

²³ Kansas City Star, September 11, 1919, p. 1

²⁴ Kansas City Journal Post, February, 1926, p. 40. This is a reprint of an article written in this no longer published magazine. The article can be found in the Argentine file of the Kansas Room Collection of the Kansas City Kansas Public Library at 625 Minnesota Avenue.

The record year of tonnage was also recorded in this decade. This occurred in 1923 when the company produced 58,124 tons of steel.²⁶

One of the most memorable jobs of the decade was the rebuilding of the concentrator mill and storage bins for the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company at McGill, Nevada. The original structures were completely destroyed by a fire on July 7, 1922. The output of concentrates therefore was stopped and work in a plant having a capacity of 12,000 tons of ore daily was suspended. Naturally, the replacement of the destroyed structures was of vital importance. Thus, on July 9, two days after the fire, the management decided to immediately rebuild the mill. Steel was to be used throughout, and the company planned to have the steel frame for the first unit completed no later than October 1.

On July 18, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was awarded this contract requiring 3,000 tons of steel. The steel company agreed to have the first unit completed by August 15, 1922. On August 4, the first shipment of steel and erection equipment was made. By August 12, the complete shipment of the first unit had been finished. The erection of the steel was started on the first unit of the new concentrator mill on August 20. By September 2, the frame for the first unit had been completed. This was done twenty-eight days ahead of schedule.²⁷ This was a remarkable feat of fabricating and engineering, especially when the reader considers the time element involved. The feat greatly enhanced the already nation-wide reputation of the company.

Another extremely productive year for the company was 1929. Four hundred tons of steel were sent to the construction site of a copper smelter at Salaverry, Peru. This steel had to be of a lighter and smaller quality since it had to be transported over the Andes Mountains before the August snows began.²⁸

Also in this year, an order was received from the Soviet government. Three steel towers, each nine feet in diameter and sixty feet high were built for the Russian oil fields.²⁹ Because of these and other contracts, the steel company was doing its busiest work of the decade. The drafting room had both a day and a night shift. Four hundred and fifty men were employed by the company.³⁰

In November 1929, the nation's decade of prosperity was to come to an abrupt end. The depression resulted in thousands of banks and businesses failing throughout the country. The steel industry was particularly distressed. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company went into a financial tailspin that lasted almost a decade.

From 1930 through 1938 the company shipped only an average of 16,319 tons a year compared with 36,634 tons during the period between 1920 and 1929. The average monthly billings for a 120-month period from 1920 through 1929 was \$363,000. During 1932 and 1933 the monthly averages were only \$73,000 and \$97,000. In 1929, the total man hours for the shop was 908,000. But in 1932 it was only 165,000 and 212,000 in 1933.³¹

By September 1932, the company's payroll had decreased to 130 men.³² In the financial year ending December 31, 1935, the company suffered a net loss of \$49,087. Only 10,708 tons of steel were fabricated. This total is the lowest in the company's history. In the first two months of 1936 alone, the company surpassed this figure.³³

Like so many other companies, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company went into a receivership. The company was reorganized by the Securities Service Corporation of Chicago. This reorganization was completed by May of 1935.³⁴ The company was to experience many ups and downs financially during the next few years. However, this was a general trend found in most businesses during the depression. The company was never again to experience another year as financially poor as 1935.

²⁵ This figure came from a newspaper clipping in the Kansas City Structural Steel file of the Kansas City Kansan Newspaper at 901 N 8th, Kansas City, Kansas

²⁶ Kansas City Star, February 18, 1938, p. 18

²⁷ This information was condensed from an advertisement brochure entitled "Rapidity in the Erection of Steel" which was found in the official archives of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

²⁸ Kansas City Star, May 12, 1929, p. 10

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Kansas City Star, September 25, 1932, p. 2d

³¹ These figures came from a newspaper clipping in the Kansas City Structural Steel file of the Kansas City Kansan at 901 North 8th, Kansas City, Kansas

³² Kansas City Star, September 25, 1932, p. 13

³³ Kansas City Times, February 20, 1936, p. 13

³⁴ Kansas City Times, May 14, 1935, p. 4

In 1936, the company suffered a leadership loss that could not be expressed in terms of dollars. On July 3, 1936, O. C. Smith, the Vice-President and co-founder of the company, died at the age of sixty-three. He had always been in good health. In the last week of June, however, he underwent an emergency appendectomy. After steady steady signs of improvement, complications set in, and on Friday afternoon, July 3, he passed away at Providence Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas.³⁵

Smith's death was also a great loss to the Argentine community. A resident of Argentine, he had been involved in many civic activities. In 1922 he was named the President of the Kansas City, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce. He was a vigorous advocate of navigation and flood control projects. Active in youth groups, he was a President of the Wyandotte County Council of Boy Scouts of America. Largely through his efforts, Camp Naish, near Bonner Springs, was built as a camp ground for the scouts. Smith was also a member of the Kansas City, Kansas, Board of Education from April 1927 until August 5, 1929, and from July 7, 1930, until August 1931.³⁶ When asked to serve in this position again, with a humbleness that was characteristic of his entire life, Smith said, "You can find better men than I for the office."³⁷

Smith's funeral rites were held on Monday, July 6, 1936. The steel plant was shut down that day. Memorial services were held in the auditorium of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The church was filled to capacity. Hundreds of people stood in the corridors during the services. It was estimated that 1,500 people were in attendance.

The memorials were long and many. The Reverend Carl W. Nau said,

Mr. Smith's work in every conceivable activity and his contact with men in every walk of life will be perpetuated in the memory of every individual of this community. No man in this community. No man in this community was more beloved in the hearts of men. His record is his great monument.

He loved the humble and the poor. He fraternized with them abiding them in their problems and wants. He was known by his fellow workers for his honesty, sincerity and fairness. Mr. Smith was strong in faith and service to the church.³⁸

O. C. Smith's partner and close friend for as many years, Howard A. Fitch, also gave a warm tribute:

Mr. O. C. Smith and I worked for the same companies at the same time, with a few slight exceptions, during the entire period of his business life.

This associations began the day before Christmas in 1891. He was an assistant to the shop superintendent and later as superintendent of the Gillette-Herzog shop.

And so we continued for five years until the end of 1896, at which time I was sent to Montana as contracting engineer and Mr. Smith continued as assistant superintendent and later as superintendent of the Gillette-Herzog shop.

This continued for another five years. Then in the spring of 1902 the Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company organized. I was engaged as chief engineer of the structural department and in May, 1905, Mr. Smith was engaged as superintendent of the shop.

Then at the end of 1906 we both resigned and came to Kansas City and organized our present company.

Many of you know the rest of the story. We ran square into money panic of 1907. Those who had promised financial support could not come across. Those who had promised financial support could not come across. However, the die was cast and within a few months we had raised sufficient funds to purchase this property.

Mr. Smith had the rare faculty of understanding and managing men. Perhaps it was because of his sympathetic nature, reaching far beyond the eight or ten hours of shop labor.

He knew the problems, economic and social, of all the employees. He knew the weaknesses of many of them and attempted to guide them to a more rational understanding.

³⁵ Kansas City Kansan, July 4, 1936, p. 1

³⁶ Ibid, p. 2

³⁷ Kansas City Times, July 4, 1936, p. 4

³⁸³⁸ Kansas City Kansan, July 6, 1936, p. 2

Mr. Smith's sudden and untimely death on July 3, 1936, was a shock and great loss to his family and to all his many friends and acquaintances. His memory and influence are not erased. During the future years of the operation of this company there will always be a memory and a reverence for his high personal character.³⁹

There are many stories that the author has heard about Mr. Smith's character. One of the most popular stories is about the time he won a radio in a contest, and even though it was better than the one he had at home, he gave it away to a man who did not have one.

O. Co. Smith was always held in the highest esteem by his employees. A plaque was dedicated to his memory, and for many years it was hung below his picture in the shop office. The inscription on it read:

IN MEMORIAM
O. C. SMITH
October 31, 1872 – July 3, 1936

He shall live long because he lived well;
His life was a true example of unselfishness.
Manifested by his deep concern always for the
Welfare and happiness of his fellowmen.

Shop Employees

After the reorganization, the company's fortunes slowly improved. The year 1937 was successful. The profit was \$204,643 against \$133,360 in 1936 and the net loss of \$19,087 in 1935. The tonnage in 1937 was 17,142 as against 18,580 in 1936 but this discrepancy did not reflect in the company's profits.⁴⁰

Another good year was 1938, although there were some erratic performances. Tonnage was down to 15,628 tons. The net profit had fallen off to \$45,271. However, the billings for work completed total \$2,369,641. This was compared to the 1937 figure of \$2,161,317 and the 1936 figure of \$2,127,496. The employment figure was 150 as against 210 in 1937.⁴¹

Howard A. Fitch, the company's president, was optimistic about the future:

The work in our shop fell off decidedly during the last four months of 1938 and the price situation was quite demoralizing. The indications for future business are indefinite, but we believe that the present upward trend in structural steel will be maintained during the next few months and that the price situation will gradually improve.⁴²

Fitch's prediction was accurate. Production in the decade of the 1940s was to average 22,800 tons yearly. This was substantial improvement over the 1930s.⁴³ It is true, however, that much of this output was the result of government war contracts. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company built LST's (landing ship tanks) and LSM's (landing ships mechanized) for the United States Navy. Four hundred and seven landing crafts were built from 1942 until the end of the war by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.⁴⁴ The Darby Steel Corporation of Kansas City, Kansas, built about 450 ships and the Missouri Valley Steel Company of Leavenworth, Kansas, about 150. These amphibious landing craft were used in invasions in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of operations. Supposedly, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company launched the very first LCT's (landing crafts tanks) built in the country.⁴⁵ The steel company had some 260 men in the armed

³⁹ "Kansas City Structural Steel News," volume I, number II, June, 1945, p. 1

⁴⁰ Kansas City Star, February 18, 1938, p. 14

⁴¹ Kansas City Star, February 21, 1939, p. 12

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ "Kansas City Structural Steel Procedure Manual."

⁴⁴ Kansas City Star, Aug 4, 1946, p. 8D

⁴⁵ This information came from a newspaper clipping in the Kansas City Structural Steel file of the Kansas City Kansas at 901 N 8th, Kansas City, Kansas.

forces and many of these men would proudly write back that they had seen ships bearing the markings of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.⁴⁶

Large numbers of boats built by the steel plant were used in the Allied invasion of Sicily. The United States Navy was so pleased with the performance of the company's boats that a personal letter was written to the company's President, H. A. Fitch. The letter read as follows:

It will be a matter of personal pride to each of you to know that LCT's of your construction were part of the spearhead in the successful invasion of Sicily. The fact that the landing operations on a scale unparalleled in history, were effected with the utmost precision and a minimum of casualties was in no small measure due to the efficient performance of the landing craft such as you are providing for our amphibious forces. Many more of your LCT's will be needed for the bigger job ahead when our fighting boys establish the beachheads which will ultimately lead to Berlin and to Tokyo. They are counting on your best effort to supply these vital crafts on time.⁴⁷

Cordially yours,
Rear Admiral E. L. Cochran
Chief of the Bureau of Ships

The author was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to interview two retired employees of the company who had some part in the construction of these boats. C. T. Campbell had these recollections:

Frank Schafer, a pattern and templates maker, was probably the genius behind their construction. "Whitey" Hufferd⁴⁸ and Leonard Cramer were the foremen over the construction. For most of the war, the plant was run on two shifts of ten hours. Security was very tight. There were guards posted at the gates. Naval personnel supervised the construction. All employees had to wear badges with their pictures on them which they had to show whenever they entered and left the plant.⁴⁹

Glen L. Culp, a retired area foreman remembered the following about the war years:

The shop was divided up into a north and a south end. Small boats were built in the north end and the larger boats were built in the south end. The boats were fabricated in the plant. Then they were hauled over to the boatyards on the Missouri River west of the Fairfax Airport. The smaller landing crafts were hauled from the steel plant to the boat dock on large trailer trucks. The larger boats, I believe, were floated down the river to the boat dock. There, the boats were outfitted with plumbing, electrical and mechanical equipment and then launched. Some of the boats were launched at Fairfax and were floated down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. Other oats were loaded onto railroad cars. Almost one boat was turned out every three days. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company received many Army and Navy awards for its accomplishments.⁵⁰

During the war, a bridge in China fabricated by the company gave the Kansas City Structural Steel Company another kind of publicity. This three-span bridge over the Pei Ho River near Tienstin, China, was considered an engineering feat when it was constructed. The Japanese claimed to have destroyed it several times. However, a former employee of the company, in the service as a Navy Lieutenant, sent Mr. Fitch a photograph of the bridge, showing troops crossing it well after the Japanese reports of its destruction.⁵¹ This picture hung in his office for many years. The bridge apparently survived the war.

⁴⁶ Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D

⁴⁷ Kansas City, Kansas, August 20, 1944, p. 3

⁴⁸ Manuel W. Hufferd gave over fifty years of service to the company. He was the author's great uncle.

⁴⁹ Cornelius T. Campbell, personal interview held in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 12, 1974.

⁵⁰ Glen L. Culp, personal interview held in his home at 2514 S. 49 Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas on February 25, 1974.

⁵¹ Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D

Business was good for the company in the post-war years. In 1946, the company had 500 employees on the payroll. Two sales offices were maintained in Denver and Tulsa. All departments were capable of greater capacity than in 1941. Over \$100,000 was spent in 1946 alone for new equipment. Since steel was in shortage for a while, there was almost a five-year period of time before the demand caught up with the supply.⁵²

On June 23, 1947, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company was fifty years old. The company could boast of a \$7,000,000 annual industry and a payroll of 500 employees.⁵³ Three great losses were to affect the company during the decade of the 1950's.

The first of these was the great flood of 1951. Water was thirty feet deep in some parts of the plant. However, the company did not face as devastating a financial loss as other flooded industries. After the water receded, the company quickly got back into limited operation. Within about a month the company was back to full production.⁵⁴

The second loss was the death of Howard A. Fitch, the founder of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. He died at his home at 4601 Holmes Street, Kansas City, Missouri, on November 2, 1953, at the age of eighty-five. He was born on March 28, 1868, in Warrensburg, Missouri. He studied surveying and engineering at the old Normal School there.

Fitch is considered one of the pioneers of the structural steel industry. Starting with only \$75,000, he and O C Smith built the Kansas City Structural Steel Company into a firm that was known world-wide. Fitch had retired from active participation in the company about six years earlier, but had remained the chairman of the Board of Directors. He suffered a heart attack a few days prior to his death.⁵⁵

Fitch was a founder of the Central Fabrications Association. He helped to consolidate the handbooks of the steel mills and the structural steel manufacturers into one handbook. This enabled a contractor to readily locate the type of steel he needed.

In 1917, he began to advocate the formation of a national association of structural steel fabricators. Largely through his efforts, the American Institute of Steel Construction was founded in 1923. Fitch remained a vice-president of this organization until his death.

Fitch, like O C Smith, was very active in civic affairs. In 1913, he was elected the President of the Kansas City Commercial Club, which was the forerunner of the Kansas City, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce. He was also elected the President of the Kansas City Industrial Corporation in 1917.⁵⁶

An extremely religious man, he often preached the lay sermon at the Westminster Congregational Church. His interests were mostly his family and the steel business. He was always an avid reader. He was a Shakespearean scholar and had hundreds of books in his library on literature, history, and probably every book written on the steel business.

Fitch was loved and respected by all the employees of the company. A close associate of his said,

He lived and thought steel but somehow he found time to take an active part in any community betterment program and he was deeply religious. He was an avid reader and found relaxation in crossword puzzles.⁵⁷

The author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., an employee of Kansas City Structural Steel Company, came to know Mr. Fitch quite well.

I personally knew Mr. Fitch for about six years before his death. Part of my duties as a young employee in the office was to chauffeur him to work each morning. Even though he was getting along in years, he came to work almost every day on a part time basis. He was a very distinguished and outstanding gentleman. It is a great pleasure for me to be able to say that I knew him.

⁵² Ibid., p. 8D

⁵³ These figures came from a newspaper clipping in the Argentine file of the Kansas City Kansan newspaper at 901 N. 8 St., Kansas City, Kansas.

⁵⁴ Joseph L. "Pete" Larson, personal interview held in his home at 1208 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas, on March 1, 1974.

⁵⁵ Kansas Construction Magazine, December, 1953, p. 45. An obituary was found in this issue of the magazine at the Kansas State Historical Society, 10th and Jackson, Topeka, Kansas.

⁵⁶ Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3

⁵⁷ Ibid.

To me, the most outstanding characteristic of our company is its open door policy. This policy was initiated in the early days of the company by O C Smith and H A Fitch. If an employee ever had a problem, he could always talk it over with the company officials. This open door policy was later carried on by Howard Fitch, Jr. and Glen Smith and is now carried on by the present officials of the company. The company has thus always had a warm relationship with its employees.

Mr. Fitch told me many stories about the founding of the company. One story I remember particularly is the one about the presenting of turkeys. Since the founding of the company, turkeys have been presented to all active and retired employees on Christmas.

Mr. Fitch related to me the origin of this practice. He recalled that times were hard for his family when he was just starting his career. Just before Christmas one year, he found employment with a new company. Prior to that, he had not worked very much and it appeared that his family was going to face a bleak Christmas. However, this company gave out free turkeys to all its employees at Christmas. He told me that he believed that this was a wonderful gesture. Consequently, this practice was initiated. Even though the company has experienced many lean years, turkeys have always been presented to all present and retired employees of the company on Christmas Eve.⁵⁸

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company was to experience a final great loss in the 1950's. This happened in 1956. The preceding year had been a prosperous one for the company. Bills on completed contracts in 1955 totaled \$7,334,542 compared with \$6,803,221 of the preceding year. Tonnage was also up. The company had fabricated 26,569 tons in 1954.⁵⁹

The year 1956 started in a prosperous way, with many steel orders received for bridges and smelters. Profits looked like they were going to be high. In the early morning hours of the last day of the year, however, a devastating fire swept through the office building of the company. This blaze was considered one of the most troublesome and spectacular fires ever fought by the local fire department. Seven companies answered this two-alarm fire.

Glenn A. Smith, Work's Manager, estimated that the loss would total \$100,000. This figure included the cost of repairing the west wing of the building damage to office equipment, and the cost of reproducing engineering plans destroyed by the fire. The west wing of the building, sixty feet by eighty feet, was constructed in 1930. This part of the building included the engineering department, the purchasing department, and the offices of Howard A. Fitch, Jr., President; John P. Cooper and Neil G. Lilley, Vice-Presidents; and J. A. Vance, Secretary of the company. By containing the fire to the west wing and preventing damage to the drafting rooms in the east wing, a far greater loss was prevented. The cause of the fire was never actually determined.⁶⁰

The main plant, about a half block northwest of the office building, was not touched by the fire. Production was not halted at the plant. However, as J. A. Vance, Secretary of the company, observed: "The most disturbing part of this is the loss of records that are going to be difficult to replace."⁶¹

Also, John C. Fast, Chief Draftsman for the company, sad that many drawings had to be done over. The cost of redoing these plans was about \$100 a sheet. Many drawings that had to be redone included those of the Table Rock bridge near Branson, Missouri, a \$2,000,000 project; a building for the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, and drawings for several turnpike bridges.⁶²

Until plans for renovation were completed, temporary quarters were found in the adjoining three story brick structure that housed the accounting department. Though the losses were great, the company's finances suffered no permanent damage and the company was able to continue its previous level of excellence.

The author would like to devote the next part of this chapter to a description of some of the steel fabrication job for which the company is noted. A complete listing would be impossible for it would

⁵⁸ Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., interview in his home at 2428 S. 47 Street, Kansas City, Kansas on November 18, 1973.

⁵⁹ Kansas City Times, March 14, 1956, p. 26

⁶⁰ Kansas City Star, December 31, 1956, p. 1

⁶¹ Kansas City Kansas, December 31, 1956, p. 1

⁶² Kansas City Star,

involve many pages. Nevertheless, this partial list will give further understanding of the company's important work.

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company has fabricated the steel for most of the major buildings constructed in the greater Kansas City area. The earliest was the Jones Store building, give stories high requiring 1,100 tons of steel. The following is a chart listing some of these buildings.⁶³

Year	Name of Building	# of Stories	Tons
1909	Livestock Exchange Building	10	1500
1910	Kansas City Star Bldg	4	1040
1910	Grand Avenue Temple	13	1100
1910	Rialto Building	14	1100
1911	Waldheim Bldg	17	1185
1913	Sears Roebuck Bldg	10	741
1914	John Taylor Bldg	7	1504
1914	Graves Bldg	12	907
1914	Muehlebach Hotel	10	1713
1917	Oppenstein Bldg	9	722
1919	K C Club Bldg	14	1844
1920	K C A C Bldg	22	2809
1924	Board of Trade Bldg	14	1034
1926	Wyandotte County Court House, KCKs	1	85
1929	Professional Building	17	1219
1929	University Building	11	432
1930	Phillips Hotel	21	1210
1930	K C Power & Light, KCMO	32	7000
1930	Nelson Art Gallery	1	1100
1933	Courthouse, KCMO	32	4881
1934	Auditorium, KCMO	1	4560
1936	City Hall, KCMO	32	5952
1938	Federal Courts Bldg, KCMO	10	3010
1938	Montgomery Ward Bldg, KCKs	4	364

<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/architecture/Profiles/default.htm>

The company also fabricated the steel for many outstanding bridges. Some of these bridges were also built by the company's erection crews. The author has already mentioned the bridge in Tienstin, China. Another outstanding job was the fabrication of twelve large tresses for the two 300-foot spans and the four 400-foot spans for a bridge at Del Rio, Texas. This took 6,000 tons of steel. Some of the girders weighed as much as thirty tons.⁶⁴

The Grand Canyon bridge at Lee's Ferry, Arizona, was built in 1929 and is still considered an engineering marvel. This bridge stands 475 feet above the Colorado River, is 616 feet long, and took 1,200 tons to complete.⁶⁵ Under the guidance of A. M. Meyers, Chief Engineer, this bridge was erected by the company's erection crews. The Colorado River has also been spanned by a 600 feet long arch bridge at Needles, California.⁶⁶

The Topeka Avenue Bridge, carrying traffic in a four-lane roadway forty-four feet wide on US Highway 75 over the Kansas River, was built in the late 1930's. Steel over the bridge was fabricated by the steel company. This bridge is of the continuous girder type 893 feet long, comprised of one 217 foot center span, two 152 foot end spans and two 186 foot intermediate spans. The total width of the bridge is fifty-seven feet. For many years, the center span was said to be the longest plate girder span in the United States.⁶⁷

⁶³ This information came from a listing of buildings constructed from 1907 to 1938 in the greater KC area, courtesy of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

⁶⁴ Kansas City Star, September 22, 1963, p. 97. This edition of the paper had a section devoted to the numerous steel companies of the metropolitan Kansas City area.

⁶⁵ Kansas City Star, August 4, 1946, p. 8D

⁶⁶ Kansas City Times, November 3, 1953, p. 3

⁶⁷ This information was found on an advertisement brochure in the archives of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

A bridge of a more recent construction is one over the Kaw River at Bonner Springs. In the 1950's, steel was provided for many of the bridges of the Kansas Turnpike System. The company provided some of the steel for the building of the 18th Street Expressway and numerous other bridges in the greater Kansas City area.

The American Institute of Steel Construction has presented the company with many awards for bridge construction. At least five bridges with steel fabricated by the company have won the annual "Most Beautiful Bridge Award."⁶⁸ The company's 1955 winning entry was for the Missouri River Bridge at Leavenworth, Kansas. The double arch of the bridge was fabricated by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company and the approach spans were fabricated by Missouri Valley Steel Incorporated. The jury selected this bridge for the top award in its I class,⁶⁹ because ". . . the clean, simple repetitive design gives feelings of gracefulness to the double arch."⁷⁰

Another citation for beauty in the designing and erection of steel was in the class III award in 1954. This was for the Garrison School Pedestrian Bridge built over the Paseo-6th Street Trafficway Connection in Kansas City, Missouri.⁷¹

The Kansas City Structural Steel Company has also erected most or all of the facilities for many of the country's mining companies. Here is a partial list of the companies served by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.⁷²

Alaska Juneau Gold Mining Co.	Sullivan Mining Co.
American Smelting and Ref. Co.	Anaconda Copper Mining Co.
Bagdad Copper Corp.	Braden Copper Co.
Bunker-Hill & Sullivan Mining & Conliding Co.	Cananea Consolidated Copper Co.
Castle Dome Copper Co.	Chile Exploration Co.
Climax Molybdenum Co.	Eagle Picher Co.
Consolidated Copper Mines Cop.	Inspection Smelting & Ref. Co.
International Smelting & Ref. Co.	Kennecott Copper Co.
Magna Copper Co.	Miami Copper Co.
Minnesota Mining & Mfg. Co.	National Zinc Co.
Ozark Smelting & Refining Co.	Pacific Foundary Co.
Phelps Dodge Corp.	San Manuel Copper Corp.
San Francisco Mines of Mexico Ltd.	Shattuck Denn Mining Corp.
Stearns-Roger Mfg. Co.	U S Smelting, Ref. & Mining Co.
US Vanadium Co.	Utah Construction Co. ⁷³
Vanadium Corporation of America	

The author wished he had the time to interview many of the people connected with the company. However, he was able to interview four people who have been associated with the company for many years.

Glen A. "Butter" Culp was a working foreman for the company for many years. He retired as an area foreman in 1972 at the age of seventy. These were his recollections of the steel plant:

I was born in Argentine in 1902. I have spent my whole life living in the Argentine vicinity. In 1920, I graduated from Argentine High School. Starting in 1918, I worked during the summer for the steel plant in the drafting room. I went to the University of Kansas for a year and then left school and came back to the steel plant and went to work full time.

I worked as a marker, puncher, and on the riveting gangs. During one summer, when I was about fifteen years old, I worked in what was called the rod shop.

I believe that I started out at about thirty-five cents an hour. By 1926, I was fifty-eight cents an hour. During one summer, when I was about fifteen years old, I worked in what was called the rod shop.

⁶⁸ Kansas City Star, September 22, 1963, p. 97

⁶⁹ This classification refers to bridges with spans over 400 feet long.

⁷⁰ Kansas City Structural Steel Company "News Digest," Volume I, number 3, November 27, 1956, p. 1. This was a digest formally published by the Kansas City Structural Steel Management Club.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 3

⁷² This was compiled from a brochure in the company's archives, p. 3

⁷³ Ibid.

I believe that I started out at about thirty-five cents an hour. By 1926, I was making fifty-eight cents an hour. During the depression, my salary was cut from seventy-five cents an hour to fifty cents an hour. I was laid off for some periods of the depression. Sometimes I worked over at the Darby Steel Corporation for awhile.

One steel contract that I can vividly recall was the one for the Navajo Railroad Bridge over the Grand Canyon at Lee's Ferry, Arizona. Half of the bridge was built out over the canyon. Then cables were strung out to the other side and building materials were hauled over. The erection work was extremely dangerous. One man fell off the bridge and died. Finally, when the two sections of the bridge came together, a pin was inserted to temporarily hold the bridge in place. Due to atmospheric conditions, this pin could only be inserted certain times of the day. When the pin was finally lined up in the hold, plates were bolted down over it. When the final rivet was driven, one worker, overcome with joy, took and unhooked his riveting gun and threw it over into the canyon. Then he had a picture taken of himself doing a handstand on the bridge.

I personally knew John P. Cooper, Neill Lilley, H. A. Fitch, O. C. Smith and their sons H. A. Fitch, Jr. and Glen Smith. For many years my parents lived on Woodland. O. C. Smith lived only two doors from us. His son, Glenn, and I were about the same age and we played together as kids.

It was tragic that O. C. Smith had to die in his prime. He was very dignified yet had a common touch. He knew just about everyone in Argentine. His son, Glenn, who later moved up to the Vice-Presidency of the company, inherited many of the good traits of his father.⁷⁴

Many families have had two or three generations of its members work at the steel plant, of whom Cornelius T. "Con" Campbell is one example. Con Campbell worked at the plant from April, 1916, until his retirement in 1965. Mr. Campbell's father also worked for the company from 1912 until 1942. Previous to this, his father had worked for the Kansas City Consolidated Smelting and Refining Company's smelters in Mexico and Argentine. Twice his father contacted lead poisoning, as a result of his hazardous occupation which was a lead burner.

"Con" Campbell was born in 1898 and was eighteen years old when he started working for the company.

I started out as a rivet heater and then worked in the blacksmith shop. I worked in the office the last year before my retirement. While employed at the plant I was a working foreman and at my retirement was the supervisor of stocks materials.

I cannot recall what I started out making but I do recall that pay raises were usually only about two cents an hour. I probably was making about fifty or sixty cents an hour in the early 1920's.

Times were especially hard for many employees of the company during the depression. The company had no seniority listings as such for the laying off of employees. The company tried to keep as many on the payroll as they could. If they needed your skills, you stayed; if they didn't, you went. I was pretty fortunate and lost only about a week or two of work during the whole period of the depression.⁷⁵

Joseph L. "Pete" Larson was a valuable interview for the author. He has worked more than twenty-eight years at the Kansas City Structural Steel Company and is a life-long resident of Argentine and a graduate of Argentine High School.

I was born in Argentine and have lived in the east end all of my life. I was born at 1213 Ruby, just across the street from where I live now. My father, Henry "Rube" Larson, was of Danish descent and may have worked for the Argentine smelter. He lived in the smelter colony which was located near the present site of the 18th Street Expressway.

⁷⁴ Glen A. "Butter" Culp, personal interview in his home at 2514 S 49 Terrace, Kansas City, Kansas on February 24, 1974.

⁷⁵ Cornelius T. Campbell, personal interview in his home at 1501 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 21, 1974.

He began working for the Kansas City Structural Steel Company in 1921 and worked for over forty years as a machine tool operator. He was working the night of the 1951 flood and he always had a saying about predicting floods. He said that he always watched the rats and possums in the plant. When they headed for higher ground, so did he.

I came to the steel plant on June 19, 1946 as a permanent employee. During the summers of 1944 and 1945, I worked as the plant mailman. Briefly, in 1945, I made bumpers for some of the landing craft. I worked in the Credit Union Office for awhile. Then in 1954, I became the company storekeeper and remained in this job for nine years. Since 1963, I have moved to the office and have been in charge of materials.

The steel company stocks all types and shapes of angles, channels, bars, plates, and several different type of standard A-36 steel. A-36 is the steel that most buildings and bridges are made out of. Another kind of steel stocked is A-588 steel. This is a corrosive steel that does not have to be painted. We just let it rust and then it turns into a bronze color. Much of our A-572 steel is used to build snowplow and bulldozer blades.

I would estimate that the company's inventory in steel runs about 7500 tons, and each day this figure keeps growing as the company gets more steel in. The total area of the plans consists of about twenty-six acres. The steel storage yard is about 300 feet long and 75 feet wide. Tons and tons of material are brought and stored here until it is ready for fabrication. From there, the steel goes into the shop and is cut, bent, welded and reformed into usable shapes. There is also a separate inventory in the storeroom.

I have noticed many changes since I started to work at the steel plant. The type of work is different. Smelting work is still done if the company can get the bid. However riveting has been replaced by welding. Fifty years ago there was probably at times as many as 750 people on the payroll. Four or five men were in a riveting gang. There were about five or six of these crews. However, welding has eliminated the use of rivets. Therefore, riveted bridges have been replaced by welded or bolted bridges. The 18th Street Expressway Bridge is an example of this. The river span was riveted with box girders but the connections were all made with high strength bolts.

The plant has also become more modernized since I came. One machine operator might now be able to do the work of five men. At one time, we were considered the largest plant west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In later years we were still considered the largest plant west of the Mississippi River. I believe that we received this ranking on a basis of our yearly tonnage. Present, we probably do not hold this high a ranking. Kaiser Steel or some other company on the west coast is probably larger than us in output or in the physical size of its plant.

Currently, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company operates a warehouse in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona, and a warehouse and fabrication plant in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Although these plants might not be directly affiliated with our company, they are under the same ownership.⁷⁶

The author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr., has been employed by the Kansas City Structural Steel Company for twenty-eight years. These are his recollections:

I was first employed as a laborer in the fabrication shop. I started in October of 1945. I worked for several months and was laid off in the first part of 1946 due to slack work in our shop. In those days, we did have temporary layoffs. I returned in 1946, however, and started in the shop office. I have been employed in the office ever since.

I have worked in most phases of the shop office and for about the last fifteen years I have been the Chief Clerk of the Shop Office. During the last fifteen years, I also have handled most of the personnel work for the fabrication shop.

When I started with the company in 1946, with the exception of O. C. Smith, almost all of the original founders of the organization were still living and active in the company. Howard A. Fitch, Sr., was the company President and General Manager. Shortly thereafter, he retired and

⁷⁶ Joseph L. "Pete" Larson, personal interview in his home at 1208 Ruby, Kansas City, Kansas on March 1, 1974

relinquished the Presidency to his son Howard A. Fitch, Jr. Glenn A. Smith was General Manager of the shop and later became a Vice-President.

When I started working for the company, the payroll in the fabrication shop averaged around 375 to 400 employees. However, due to the present nature of our business and the modernization of the plant, this figure has decreased. Presently, we have 250 men on the shop payroll. About forty of these work on the night shift. This figure includes such classifications as painters, crane operators, electricians, machinists, welders, checkers, machine operators, maintenance employees, burners, inspectors and leadmen. Approximately eighty-four employees comprise the office payroll. This figure includes company officials, managers, engineers, technicians, draftsmen, and sales office and clerical employees.

Women have always worked in the shop office. However, due to the physical nature of the work in our fabrication shop, few women ever applied for work out there. In July of 1973, our first women applied and was accepted for employment in our fabrication shop. Presently, there are seven women on the payroll.

For many years, the fabrication shop employees have been represented by Shopmen's Local Union No. 582 of the International Association of Bridges, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers (affiliated with the A.F.L.-C.I.O.). While company employee relations have always been good, we have had two labor disputes since 1946. The first occurred from September 1, until September 20 in 1965. The latter one was from July 1, 1973 until October 10, 1973.⁷⁷

For several years, a company practice has been to hire summer employees. These employees work from the month of June until the first of September. Many of these are students who have been able to continue their college educations because of the financial assistance they received by working for the company. Some of these students, upon graduation, have returned to work for the company. Others have gone on to become lawyers, doctors, school teachers, and businessmen in our community.

Until recent years, most of the company's labor force was comprised of men from the Argentine, Turner, and Armourdale areas. Many of these employees are closely related. They often represent second or third generations from the same family. Many times an applicant would come to the company and say that his father, grandfather, uncle, or some other relatives had worked for the company many years before.

In fact, second and third generations have even come from outside of the United States. Many of these have been displaced persons who came from countries in Central Europe. One man, Tony Gasparovic, came from Yugoslavia and started working for the company as a custodian in the late 1940's. He worked for about twenty years until his retirement. He in turn sent for his son and grandson in the old country and found employment for them at the plant.

The author has a second company who has worked for the company about twenty-eight years. He also had an uncle who worked there as a welder for over twenty-five years, until his death. The author's great uncle, Manuel "Whitey" W. Hufferd, worked at the steel plant for fifty-four years.

Whitey Hufferd was born on August 9, 1889. He lived for over fifty years at 3907 Strong Avenue in Argentine. Mr. Hufferd started working for the steel plant on November 6, 1907. He thus started only about one-half year after the plant begin operations. He was the Chief Inspector for the plant. His job was to see that all material leaving the plant was properly fabricated. Several times he went out to the construction sites whenever there were assembly problems. During the war he and L. L. Cramer were in charge of the construction of the boats. He retired on October 31, 1961 at the age of seventy-two and died on November 30, 1962.⁷⁸ His death occurred when the author was only twelve years old. The author wishes he could recall some of the amusing anecdotes that he told him about the company.

The main purpose of this chapter had been to describe the formative years of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company. However, before concluding, the author would like to briefly bring the history of the company up to date.

H. A. Fitch, Jr., son of the founder, succeeded his father as the President of the Company. He remained in this position until his death on July 29, 1962. Glenn A. Smith, the son of O. C. Smith, was the Vice-President of the company for many years until his retirement in 1970. Mr. Smith passed away on February 4, 1971.

⁷⁷ Edwin Dale Dhutt, Sr. interview in his home at 2428 South 47 Street, Kansas City, Kansas on November 18, 1973.

⁷⁸ This information from the company records of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company.

John S. "Jack" Harrow is the current President of the company. He was a brother-in-law of Howard Fitch, Jr. Thomas M. Fitch, the son of Howard A. Fitch, Jr. and the grandson of Howard A. Fitch, Sr., is the Executive Vice-President of the company; V. R. Bartley is Vice-President of Erection; R. H. Dill is the Vice-President of Sales; C. A. Baker is the Vice-President of Operations; L. C. Crawford is the Plant Manager; and James Harrow is the Assistant Plant Manager.

The company has experienced both some good and some lean years financially in the decade of the 1960's. In the decade of the 70's, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company is carrying on in its sixty-year old tradition. The following is a financial report of the 1973 fiscal year:

Kansas City Structural Steel Company reported the steel service centers in Albuquerque, Phoenix and Tucson operated at a profit and continued to show an improvement but that the Kansas City plant turned in a "disappointing" performance.

Because of competitive conditions at the time jobs were taken here there was a cost over run in shop operations, according to John S. Harrow, president. Also contributing to the loss here was a strike at the Kansas City, Kansas plant.

For the year, however, the earnings were ahead of 1972 amounting to \$223,317, or \$1.57 a common share, compared with \$184,197, or \$1.30 a share in the previous year. Sales and billings on completed contracts amounted to \$20,057,609 compared with \$20,122,217.

Competitive conditions in the market have tended to ease somewhat in recent months and shop operations are more profitable. The company is under tonnage allotments from the mills which limit jobs that can be bid and which also tend to stabilize market conditions, Harrow said.

A major problem, he said, is the determination of prices to use in estimating job costs in light of the rapid changes taking place in price lists by the mills.

Bank debt and long-term borrowing were increased because of the larger investments (\$4.5 million against \$2.9 million) and receivables (\$4.4 million against \$2.6 million). Additions to fixed assets totaled \$742,575 against \$516,000.⁷⁹

Two of the company's recent contracts of distinction were those for the B.M.A. Building in Kansas City, Missouri, and the R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. American Royal Arena.

The fabrication of the steel for the new arena is the most important contract that the company is presently filling. The company is fabricating the steel for the "Space Frame" roof and wall structures. The space frame concept is a unique building design. Instead of having wall columns to support the roof framing there are three "space frames" and the roof structure is hung from them. More than 2,000 tons of steel will go into this building.

The arena will be located just north of the present American Royal Building. It will seat 16,000 when completed in the fall of 1974. This building is to be the home of the American Royal Livestock and Horse Show, the Kansas City Scouts Hockey Team, and the Kansas City Kings Basketball Team.⁸⁰

http://www.kcconvention.com/3_facility/3b1_kemper.htm

<http://www.americanroyal.com/>

<http://home.att.net/~kchokey/scouts.htm>

http://www.sportkc.org/goin_to_kc/sports_venues.htm

Since 1903, the Kansas City Structural Steel Company has served the Kansas City area. From small beginnings, the company has acquired a world-wide reputation. Quality in the fabrication and erection of steel has become a motto. Tank cars, boats, bridges, and buildings are the company's monuments. The Kansas City Structural Steel Company will continue to hold a position of importance in the steel industry.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Kansas City Star, April 2, 1974, p. 16

⁸⁰ This information came from company correspondence written by Loyd Crawford, Plant Manager of the Kansas City Structural Steel Company, December 11, 1973.

⁸¹ The author is deeply indebted to the following employees for the information that they gave him: Hewitt and George McCamish, Tom Yearsley, Joseph Larson, Loyd Crawford, Clarence Baker and the author's father, Edwin Dale Shutt, Sr.