

John Goodison submission:

Did John Goodison actually grow any crops? No! But he chose to live out his life here, and he did buy the rights to the Canadian Thresher, an innovation that dramatically improved the harvest efficiency of all Lambton grain growers. His products also improved the harvest for Canadian wheat growers all across the western Provinces.

He introduced the wind straw-stacker to the Canadian market, and his establishment of a manufacturing plant in Sarnia ensured the quick-and-ready availability of local parts when needed here in Lambton County, without the need to have them shipped in by rail.

These innovations, the reliability of his machines, and the success of his agricultural manufacturing plant proved to be positive influences for farmers here, and across the Dominion.

RJT

JOHN GOODISON (1849-1915)

Sarah Creswell and Tom Flint, P.Eng.

Goodison was one of Sarnia's most prominent and highly respected citizens. He was also known far and wide throughout the Dominion of Canada as the manufacturer of the Goodison Threshing Machine and Traction Engines.

Goodison was born in Wicklow, Ireland. His parents, five brothers and two sisters and John moved to Canada in 1857, when he was eight years old, to settle on a farm near Toronto. After some time, they moved to Strathroy, where he conducted business for 14 years, building up a good trade. Selling out, he and his wife Ida Marger and two sons, Edwin Francis and William Thomas, moved to Sarnia in 1882. There, he worked for the Sarnia Agricultural Implement Company that operated a factory for manufacturing implements. The company was founded by F. J. Craig of Strathroy in the previous year with the encouragement of the Sarnia city council. They were successful in making reapers, threshers, mowers, plows, cornshellers, etc. and expanded in 1884. However, in 1886, they were forced into liquidation as the result of adverse experimentation and manufacturing difficulties. Goodison, together with George H. Samis, purchased the interest and factory of the insolvent company and operated it successfully. The following season, it was sold to Sawycr-Massey Company of Hamilton. The new firm retained Goodison as the manager.

By the fall of 1889, Goodison again secured sole ownership of the business and renamed it the Tunnel City Thresher Works, but soon changed it to the John Goodison Threshing Company. With a great deal of determination and business sense, he succeeded

in building the most thriving threshing machine industry in Ontario, and arguably the only Canadian firm to successfully penetrate the American market. The factory, located in Sarnia, was situated on Mitton Street between Essex and Maria streets. The frontage covered the entire distance of Mitton Street and occupied three quarters of the block. Part of it was factory, but most was plant yard.

Around this time, John McCloskey of London was becoming famous for the success of his design of threshing machines. In 1892, John Goodison secured the rights to build the machine and persuaded McCloskey to work for him for 10 years, until McCloskey's death in 1902. In 1897, Goodison decided to concentrate on making threshers only. The firm made many improvements in thresher design. Being the first manufacturer to add windstackers, which blew straw from the machine to a storage pile, they added grain elevators to fill grain bins directly. Also, self-feeders conveyed the sheaths into the machine by means of a carrier. Refinements were made as well. The customers appreciated the improvements, and the company flourished.

The Goodison firm built no engines at first, but supplied customers with complete outfits with the Waterous 17-horsepower "Ontario Standard" portable one-cylinder steam engine for Eastern Canada and a heavier double-cylinder version for the West. The boiler was a locomotive type with a high dome. The side crank engines were mounted on the top with the cylinder towards the smoke box. The reverse gear was the Woolf single eccentric and a lever-controlled brake. The clutch was internal expanding, with two large metal shoes. The original design never changed. Formerly, the motive power for the threshers had been various horse treadmills.

In 1902, they built their own engine sets with Waterous boilers. Two years

later, they started manufacturing traction engines. With the portable steam engines, it required three teams of horses to transport the thresher machine, the engine and the water wagon. Using a traction engine for powering the thresher and for hauling reduced the horse teams to one.

These were the times of the opening up of Western Canada. Although Goodison machines were used extensively in Western Canada, the company never established a Western branch. They did establish sales agencies in the U.S. and sold more machines there than any other Canadian threshing machine company. Goodison machines could be found in every state in the U.S., the Canadian northwest, Argentina and South America.

In 1914, the company employed 150 men in different departments of the plant and six travelling salesmen. The company policy of "Good goods and a square deal" helped them to be recognized as one of the most modern single grade of machines on the market.

The greatest setback the company faced was the St. Patrick's Day fire of March 17, 1914, which destroyed storage sheds and 200 newly completed threshers that were ready for shipment. Despite the more than \$200,000 loss, the company was able to survive.

John Goodison was a member of city council from 1906 to 1915, excluding 1912, and he also served on county council. He and his two sons owned a stock farm near the city. One of his other interests was an oil field located in Moore Township. On the 200 acres, there were eight producing wells. He was a member of the Methodist Church. He was a Liberal and wielded considerable influence. Also, he was a member of the Masonic craft and the Beaver Lodge of Strathroy.

On May 5, 1915, Goodison secured a large order of 300 threshers for Western Canada. On the following day, after supervising the loading of the machines on the rail cars, he did not feel well. His son drove John home, where he passed away shortly afterwards. Edwin, his son and former secretary, took over the firm until he died the following year. John's son William, previously the treasurer, assumed the presidency until his death in 1928. Then, C. A. White was appointed general manager.

The firm continued to prosper despite these deaths. Among the improvements made were the change to all-steel construction in frames, which completely replaced wooden frames by 1926, and the gradual adoption of self-aligning, dustproof ball bearings by 1927.

Also, to keep up with the changing times, the company sold Hart-Parr fuel oil tractors beginning in 1921. Hart-Parr merged with Oliver in 1930. Fuel oil was dropped when gasoline was found cheaper to use. Goodison stopped manufacturing steam traction engines in 1927.

The company, despite the depression in the 1930s, built a new factory in 1936 and became one of the largest thresher companies in Canada.

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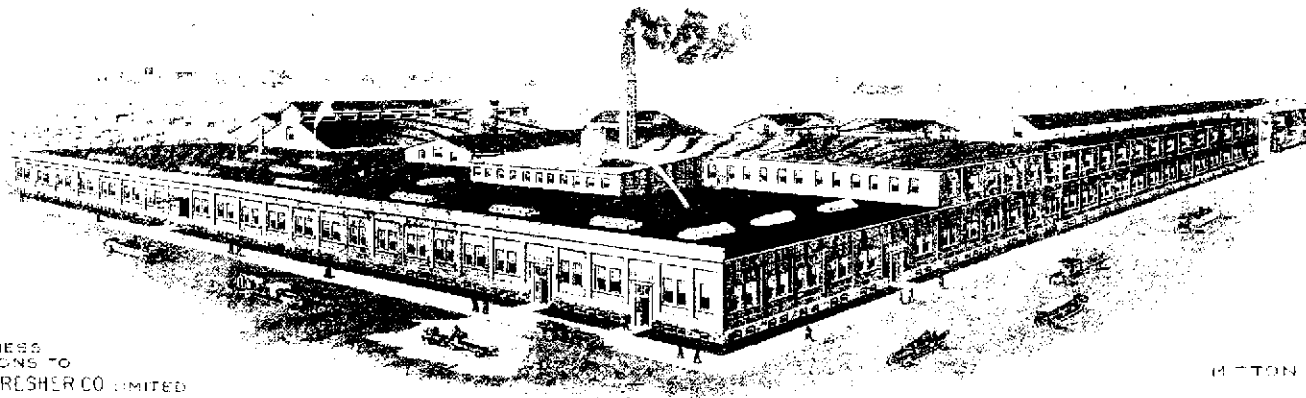
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