

Rowe Motor History: 1908-1925

by Donald J. Summar

CHAPTER I

Samuel J. Rowe

Samuel J. Rowe was born in Montandon, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, on August 3, 1869, to Joseph Rowe, a tinsmith, and Cordelia Landback Rowe. He received his education in the local school. In 1882, after the death of his father, he went to work at the age of thirteen to help support the family. Sam had an older sister and four younger brothers.¹ He tried farming for two years and then went to work in a nail factory.² The following year he moved on to a job in a keg factory. While employed there he used his evenings to take a correspondence course in mechanical engineering. After finishing the course he left Northumberland County for Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where he learned the machinist's trade while working in a machine shop.³

In 1890 Rowe moved to Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, where he found employment with the Frick Company, a large manufacturer of steam traction engines, grain threshers, agricultural machinery, and ice machines.⁴ Although he was not a skilled machinist, Rowe was hired because he led the personnel manager to believe that he was. Fortunately he was a quick learner and carried out successfully the tasks assigned to him.⁵ At first he worked with steam traction engines and then worked in the ice machinery department.

His work with ice machinery was so important until he switched his interest to the automobile industry after 1904. While working at Frick he learned a great deal about the manufacture of machinery that would serve him well in later years.

While working at Frick Sam met Mary Augusta Little, a Waynesboro girl who "caught his eye." After a suitable courtship period they were married in early 1895. At about that same time Rowe decided to strike out on his own. The newlyweds moved to Pottsville, Pennsylvania, where Rowe worked as a machinist and developed a small refrigerating machine.⁶ The machine was so successful that he was hired by C. V. Hill of Trenton, New Jersey, who put the machine into production.⁷ Spending one year in Trenton, the Rowes moved on to New York City when Rowe was hired by the Delaware Refrigeration and Machine Company as chief engineer in the assembly shop. After a few years he accepted a similar position with the Yorkville Independent Hygia Ice Company, New York City. Seeking to become his own boss, Rowe became a partner in the firm of Richmond, Bunton, and Rowe, builders of refrigerating machinery in New York City.⁸ He terminated the partnership in less than a year and took a job with the Loew Supply and Manufacturing Company, New York, as mechanical engineer. This change in employment marked the turning point in his career. After his withdrawal from the refrigeration industry in 1904 Rowe, who was a self-taught automobile engineer, made his first effort to enter the automobile industry in 1905.

Rowe's interest in the "horseless carriage" may date back to his work with the Frick Traction Engine in the early 1890's. In 1905 he was still in touch with a number of his friends at the Frick Company in Waynesboro. With their help he made plans to organize an automobile company. In New York Rowe had met John Day, of Weston-Super-Mare, England, who had designed and patented a two-cycle gasoline engine known as the Paragon Oil Engine. Plans were made to purchase the patent rights to Day's engine and to manufacture it.⁹ Before much information had been given out on the proposed company, a Waynesboro newspaper ran a long speculative article under the headline: "Automobile Factory Here?". The article predicted great success for the company.¹⁰

The company, which was to be called the Valveless Engine Company, was capitalized at \$100,000.¹¹ The Paragon Oil Engine was to be used for stationary or marine work and was also to be used to power a light delivery truck.¹² Rowe secured \$26,000 in subscriptions to the company's stock in the Waynesboro area and prospects for the company's success seemed promising for a brief time.¹³

Despite Rowe's efforts, plans for the Valveless Engine Company ended abruptly in early October of 1905 when, at a meeting of subscribers at which officers had been elected, it was announced that Day had refused to comply with a clause in the contract providing that he would indemnify the company as to the validity of his



Mr. and Mrs. Samuel J. Rowe in New York City in 1901.
(Courtesy Martin L. Rowe)

patent. The subscribers thereupon voted to end negotiations for the purchase of the patents. Rowe's first effort to bring an automobile company to Waynesboro had come to naught.¹⁴

Rowe returned to his position in New York City but continued to seek a job in the automotive industry. In 1906 he and his wife moved to Hope Valley, Rhode Island, where he took a job as gas engine expert with the Nichols & Langworthy Machine Company, manufacturer of boilers and steam engines.¹⁵ The company had

taken up the repairing of automobiles in 1904 as a side-line.¹⁶ Shortly before employing Rowe the company had hired Herman Dock of Philadelphia to be chief engineer. Dock had designed a five-cylinder in-line air-cooled engine which was to be put into production by Nichols & Langworthy.¹⁷ Rowe worked with Dock and Samuel Bates, Dock's experimental machinist. By December 1906 they had one engine assembled and running.¹⁸

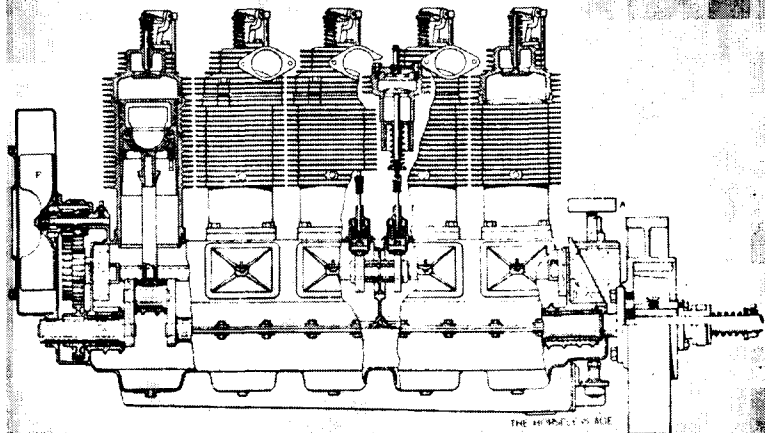
The Dock engine was designed for use as a stationary power plant or as a marine engine. Rowe saw his chance to use the Dock engine in automobiles and start his own company. He drew up an adaptation of the Dock engine so that it could be employed in an automobile of his own design. By early 1907 he had completed his drawings and had secured patent rights to utilize the Dock engine in motor vehicles.¹⁹

Sam Rowe was not the first to use the name "Rowe" in the manufacture of automobiles. In 1906 A. M. Rowe started building automobiles under his own name in Martinsville, Illinois, but apparently had gone out of business soon thereafter. The vehicles A. M. Rowe had built were surely unknown in Pennsylvania in 1907.²⁰

With his drawings and ideas for an automobile, Rowe made a trip to Waynesboro to arouse the interest of several men who had worked with him at the Frick Company. The idea of a motor firm in Waynesboro was still popular despite the Valveless Engine Company fiasco. To many citizens it was a matter of civic pride. The people of Waynesboro had only to look to York, where the York Motor Car Company had turned out 150 touring cars in 1906.²¹ In nearby Hagerstown, Maryland, the Pope-Tribune and Crawford automobiles were being turned out in some numbers.²²

With the help of William H. Manns, arrangements were made to organize a company to build vehicles designed by Rowe. Manns had worked with Rowe in the ice machinery department at Frick's prior to 1895 and was superintendent of that department and assistant secretary of the company in 1907.²³ Rowe resigned from his job at Nichols & Langworthy in September 1907. He and his wife moved back to Waynesboro, where they had met and married, and settled in a rented house at 233 East Main Street.²⁴

Several men who were interested in the proposed company met with Rowe and Manns in an office of a bank building in Waynesboro. Here they worked over the plans for the Rowe automobile and planned production procedures.²⁵ These men included E. H. Oderman, head of Frick's drafting department, who helped with the design of the Rowe automobile; Stephen Middleton, a draftsman at Frick; and Edwin C. Rowe, assembly engineer at Frick and a brother of Sam Rowe.²⁶ It was decided that the company should be organized under the liberal corporation laws of New Jersey. Three lawyers in Camden, New Jersey, agreed to handle the legal formalities of organization. By January 1908 all was in readiness for the birth of the Rowe Motor Company.²⁷



THE ROWE FIVE CYLINDER, AIR COOLED MOTOR

This engine was used in only two vehicles, the touring car built in Waynesboro in 1908 and the touring car built in New York City in 1910 while the company was in Martinsburg. A third engine was lost in the fire in Waynesboro in January 1910. (Courtesy Automobile Manufacturers Association, Inc.)

CHAPTER II

WAYNESBORO AND MARTINSBURG

On January 22, 1908, the Rowe Motor Company was organized as a corporation in Camden under the laws of New Jersey. Incorporators were Samuel Rowe's lawyers, John A. Riggins, M. Leon Berry, and John M. Tobin. The company's authorized capital was \$100,000, divided into 1000 shares of common stock with a par value of \$100 each.¹

In Waynesboro Sam Rowe was elected president of the company and W. H. Manns was elected secretary and treasurer. Known subscribers to Rowe stock during the company's first year included, in addition to the Rowe brothers, Manns, Oderman, and Middleton, such men as U. Grant Bishop, secretary and treasurer of the Victor Tool Company, Waynesboro; Joseph C. Bell, a fruit grower in Waynesboro; Daniel G. Benedict, hardware merchant, Waynesboro; Edward O. Blair, member of the board of the Frick Company who described himself in the Waynesboro directory as a "capitalist"; David Martin, undertaker in the neighboring town of Greencastle; Frank Loucks, Cornwall, Connecticut; Albert B. Jenks, president of the Moorestown Ice and Cold Storage Company, resident of Anglesea, New Jersey; H. L. Jenks, New York City; and Edward J. Jochen, president of the Nichols & Langworthy Machine Company from early 1906, resident of New York City.²

January of 1908 was undoubtedly a very poor time to organize a new company. The country's credit mechanism had suffered an extensive breakdown in the fall of 1907. Many banks suspended cash payments and limitation of payments occurred in towns of every size throughout the country.³ The "Panic of 1907" which temporarily disrupted banking and credit, was to have a long range effect on the Rowe Motor Company. With loans unavailable, Rowe tried to finance production and expansion solely through the sale of stock. Even after the financial situation had improved the Rowe company continued to use only paid-in capital to finance expansion, although short term loans were no doubt used to buy materials for production. It required three attempts to get the Rowe Motor Company running successfully on paid-in capital alone. The first effort, in Waynesboro, was to prove a failure within nine months of the company's organization.⁴

On February 5, 1908, plans for the company's first vehicles were announced. The first car, selling for \$4,000, called the "Rowe 35," was to be powered by a five-cylinder engine. The second car, called the "Rowe 25," was to be powered by a smaller five-cylinder engine and sell for \$2,500.⁵ The company announced that as soon as two cars, one of each model, had been built and tested, castings would be made for the production of a large number of cars.⁶ At the same time the company also stated that plans for trucks, in 1-ton, 2-ton, 3-ton, 4-ton, and 5-ton models, were being drawn up.⁷

The most notable feature of the "Rowe 35" was the five-cylinder engine, which was said to be self-starting. The engine was described in an article in **Horseless Age**, a prominent trade journal, with an explanation of the self-starting feature in the third paragraph. The article commented, in part:

The Rowe Motor Company, Waynesboro, Pa., will shortly put upon the market a five cylinder, air cooled motor, for automobile use. It follows standard practice in a general way, differing, however, in the following details:

The connection between the rod and piston is by a ball and socket joint, and not by gudgeon pin and "small end." This arrangement allows the piston to float or revolve independently of the rod, this tending to insure evenness of wear and removing side strain upon the crank pin. The area of bearing surface is considerably greater than with the gudgeon pin construction, and the weight is also less.

The valve stems are fitted with a "balance piston." The action is to hold the valve upon its seat until raised by the valve cam. When it is desired to start the motor compressed air is forced through the carburetor, delivering an explosive mixture under pressure into the inlet manifold. The inlet valves which open into a chamber at the side of the motor remain seated under pressure, until actuated by the cams. Immediately after the instantaneous impulse imparted to the motor by the compressed air, the compressed air is cut off, the pressure in the manifold drops to atmosphere, and a check valve in the carburetor line opens. The engine then operates in the usual way.

The cylinders are cast singly with integral fins. The exhaust valves are placed on top, where the current of air can cool them to better advantage. There being five cylinders, one is always ready to take the charge, thus facilitating starting, as the cylinder next in se-

quence is under compression, ready to fire. The explosive mixture is supplied by a float feed carburetor of the company's own make.

The circulation of cooling air is arranged thus: A shield is placed horizontally, practically in a horizontal plane with the casing which contains the circulating fan. The air above this shield serves to cool the valves and is passed down at the flywheel end and emerges below the vehicle. The air below the shield is forced by the fan and cools the cylinders, joining the upper stratum near the flywheel and passing out with it.

The crankcase is of aluminum and has large hand holes for inspection. The clutch is of the internal expansion type, and fits into the flywheel. The bore is $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches and the stroke 5, the motor being rated at 28 horsepower. Other sizes are under way.⁸

Another notable feature of the car was its electrical system. The headlights and taillights were "illuminated by electricity." A small dynamo connected to the engine ran the lights, charged the batteries, and supplied power to the ignition system. At that time most cars had acetylene headlights and a hand crank for starting. The Rowe engine was also fitted with an air compressor which could be used to pump up the tires (a valuable item in that day of constant tire trouble) and to crank the engine, should the "self-starting" ability fail. Ball-bearings were used throughout the car and aluminum was used in the cylinders, valves, crankcase, and headers.⁹ Final drive was through a three speed and reverse transmission and propeller shaft to a worm drive rear axle designed by Sam Rowe.¹⁰ The Rowe may have been the first American passenger car to employ worm gear final drive. The car that is usually recognized for this is the 1926 Stutz Vertical Eight.¹¹ Companies which used worm drive prior to 1908 include Dennis Bros., Ltd., Guilford, Surrey, England, which used overhead worm drive as early as 1904;¹² the Mitchell Motor Car Company, Racine, Wisconsin, which introduced a worm drive 1-ton truck in May 1906; and the H. H. Franklin Company, Syracuse, New York, which began the manufacture of worm drive trucks in 1907.¹³

The company rented temporary space in the shop of the Emert Manufacturing Company, on Fifth Street in Waynesboro, until larger quarters could be located.¹⁴ It is probable that the work space for Rowe consisted of no more than some open space for chassis work, a work bench, and a few simple machines such as a drill press. Efforts to assemble the prototype "Rowe 35" went ahead slowly. The York Pattern Company of York, Pennsylvania, was given a contract for making the aluminum and bronze patterns and castings for parts of the engine. On March 10, York Pattern promised to have the work done in less than three weeks.¹⁵ However, four weeks later the Rowe company stated that due to delays at York Pattern the castings were not expected for three more weeks. Arrangements had been made for the Victor Tool Company, Waynesboro, to do the machine work on the castings.¹⁶ Sam Rowe hired James A. Butler, a former employee of the York Motor Car Company, to be in charge of actually assembling the Rowe prototype. Butler brought another man from York to assist him and the two of them formed the entire work force of the Rowe Motor Com-

pany. When he was not otherwise occupied, Sam Rowe also worked on the machine.¹⁷

The delay in receiving the castings, as well as other delays due to lack of parts, put construction of the car far behind the original schedule, which called for completion by May 1. The first car had actually been "sold" in February, before construction had begun, to Herman Dock, designer of the Dock engine. Sam Rowe wisely had refused orders for several additional machines at the time Dock had placed his order and made a cash deposit on the first automobile.¹⁸

By the end of May some Rowe stockholders had become upset and to some extent dissatisfied at the company's failure to complete the prototype and begin production. In an effort to reassure such stockholders, Sam Rowe went to New York City to make an attempt to secure orders and raise additional capital for the company. He was offered orders for several automobiles and given an opportunity to present a bid for fifty Rowe engines. Because of the uncertainty of delivery dates for Rowe vehicles and engines, potential customers were cautious to the extent that little actual business was transacted.

In addition to other problems, there were delays due to factors beyond the Rowe Company's control. In June the Emmert company decided that it needed the space occupied by Rowe. Fortunately, Rowe was able to relocate to the Victor Tool Company's shop with little delay, but completion of the prototype was once again set back. To further delay matters, the body for the car did not arrive until near the end of June.¹⁹

After many delays, the prototype "Rowe 35" was at last completed except for some body work in mid-August, over three months later than originally planned. It was given an initial test run over some of the streets in the western end of Waynesboro. The car, taken from the shops of the Victor Tool Company at two in the afternoon, was driven by Sam Rowe, who had as his passengers V. R. Koontz and U. Grant Bishop of the Victor company, and Daniel G. Benedict. Bishop and Benedict were stockholders. The car was driven about four miles over hills and rough roads on the edge of town. For the benefit of the people who observed the car on its trial run, the hood had been left off so that the engine was exposed. The car ran smoothly during the trip and the car appeared to be a complete success.²⁰

After its brief test run the car was returned to the shop to be made ready for another test. This would seem to indicate that the first test had not been a complete success, contrary to what was reported in the local newspaper. While further work on the car and completion of the body was being carried out, Sam Rowe traveled to Hope Valley, Rhode Island, to work for Nichols & Langworthy for two weeks. He had been hired to engineer the placing of a Dock five-cylinder engine in a Philadelphia-built Brill trolley car. The Brill Company was planning to order 400 Dock engines for their

cars if the experimental Dock-engined car was a complete success.²¹ Rowe had taken the job with his former employer to save money for his own firm, which was critically short of working capital because of the many delays incurred in building the first automobile.

Upon his return to Waynesboro on September 7th, Rowe stated that work on the second automobile, the "Rowe 25," was to be started immediately. He also announced plans to display the "Rowe 35" and a Rowe engine at the New York Automobile Show which was to be held in the Grand Central Palace in New York City in December.²² Little work was actually completed on the "Rowe 35" before the lack of working capital finally caught up with the company. The only accomplishment after Sam Rowe's return from Hope Valley was the delivery of the "Rowe 35" to Herman Dock on October 19, 1908.²³ Dock paid only \$3500 for the car. The price reduction from \$4000 was apparently made to compensate for the delay in completing the vehicle. Dock's automobile survived only sixteen months after delivery. It was destroyed in a big fire in Westerly, Rhode Island, on February 12, 1910, while stored in Welch's stable, one of several buildings destroyed in the blaze.²⁴

Because of a lack of working capital, the Rowe Motor Company had ceased to function as an active concern by mid-October of 1908. Perhaps the last act of the firm was the shipment of the "Rowe 35" to Herman Dock and the use of his payment to clear remaining bills and thus avoid bankruptcy or receivership. Had the company survived until after the New York Automobile Show, it is probable that some arrangement would have been made to "borrow" Dock's automobile and display it in New York. If the car had been displayed, enough orders might have been received to keep the company in business. Instead, the parts for the second automobile were put into storage in the Victor Tool Company's shop. The Rowe Motor Company did not cease to exist, but it did cease to operate.

By the time the "Rowe 35" had been delivered to Herman Dock, Sam Rowe had left Waynesboro and taken a job with the American LaFrance Fire Engine Company of Elmira, New York, as designer of gasoline engines and chassis for fire engines and trucks.²⁵ He was to spend almost fifteen months in Elmira before returning to his own firm. During 1909 Rowe apparently spent his time away from work in seeking to either revitalize the Rowe Motor Company in Waynesboro or move it to a more favorable location. As majority stockholder, he could act on his own initiative to relocate the company. He had apparently made arrangements to move the company to Martinsburg, West Virginia, prior to January 1, 1910,²⁶ on which date he left his position with American LaFrance, where his job was just about done.²⁷ American LaFrance began the manufacture of gasoline-engined fire fighting apparatus in 1910.²⁸

After visiting the automobile show in New York City in early January, Rowe returned to Waynesboro on Saturday, January 15th. He had already made arrangements to have all Rowe Motor equip-

ment and supplies shipped from the Victor Tool Company shop, presumably to Martinsburg. That shipment was not to be made. The shops of the Victor Tool Company, at the corner of Second and Franklin Streets, were destroyed by a fire, presumably caused by burglars, early in the morning of Sunday, January 16th. The Rowe Motor Company's loss in the fire, set at \$1,500 and not covered by insurance, included a complete five-cylinder engine, mahogany patterns, parts for another engine, castings, and parts for one automobile chassis.²⁹

Despite the fire, negotiations between Rowe and the Board of Trade of Martinsburg were continued. On January 21, at a meeting attended by Rowe and the executive committee of the Board of Trade, a tentative agreement to move the Rowe company to Martinsburg was reached. The agreement called for a stock subscription of \$35,000, with ten per cent of the subscription to be paid in and used to build an automobile for demonstration purposes. Three Martinsburg men—Max Robinson, Gray Silver, and S. W. Walker—were delegated to draw up the agreements, contracts, and subscription papers necessary to move the Rowe Motor Company.³⁰ At a meeting held on February 11, the grade and price of car to be manufactured was discussed. Rowe suggested a car selling for about \$5,000 with full equipment. The Martinsburg group wanted a much less expensive motor car. No decision was made at that time.³¹ On February 19 Sam Rowe, Thomas W. Martin, and James F. Thompson were appointed to solicit subscriptions for the \$13,000 worth of stock still available.³²

The company was finally organized in early March. Officers were Sam Rowe, president; J. C. Bell, Waynesboro, secretary; and Frank E. Wilson, Martinsburg, treasurer. Directors, in addition to the officers, were U. Grant Bishop, Waynesboro; T. R. Wilson, Gray Silver, and W. R. Caskey, Martinsburg; and A. B. Jenks, Anglesea, New Jersey.³³

Apparently Sam Rowe's plan for a high-priced automobile was approved by the stockholders, for construction was started immediately on a large touring car similar to the 1908 "Rowe 35." It was not built in Martinsburg but in an automobile factory in New York City, where all of the casting, machine work, and assembling could be done in one shop.³⁴ Rumor has it that the 1910 Rowe prototype was built in the factory of the Simplex Automobile Company. At that time the Simplex was one of the best high-quality cars built in the United States. Four facts suggest some truth to the rumor about the building of the Rowe prototype in the Simplex factory. Sam Rowe was a resident of New York City in 1904 and 1905, when the S & M Simplex was in production, and his interest in the young automobile industry may have led him to the Simplex factory. The Simplex factory was at 614 East 83rd Street, in the Yorkville section of Manhattan.³⁵ Sam Rowe held several jobs in that section of town prior to moving to Hope Valley, Rhode Island, in 1906, and may have lived or worked very near the Simplex factory. Another

important point is that the first American LaFrance gasoline vehicles were patterned after the Simplex.³⁶ This may have been a result of Rowe's familiarity with the Simplex or may have led him to Simplex while an employee of American LaFrance. Finally, but not conclusively, the type of automobile that Sam Rowe sought to manufacture both in Waynesboro and in Martinsburg may have resulted from his knowledge of the Simplex gained in New York City in 1904 and 1905. At this late date nothing can be proved either way

In any event, W. R. Caskey, mayor of Martinsburg, and Gray Silver, a state senator, made a trip to New York City in mid-June to inspect the car, which was said to be nearly completed. Rowe demonstrated the car and said that it would be completed in early July and shipped by railroad to Martinsburg for road testing. The car, which was painted dark green with dark blue running gear, made a very favorable impression on Caskey and Silver.³⁷

At a stockholders meeting on July 1, 1910, it was announced that the \$35,000 worth of Rowe Motor stock had been completely subscribed. It is not known how much Rowe stock was still in the hands of Waynesboro interests or how much was owned by Sam Rowe himself. At that meeting Rowe announced that the company needed to obtain a factory, install machinery, purchase materials, and hire machinists and other workmen, and would not be able to begin manufacture of Rowe automobiles before early 1911. One director said that the company would have 1,000 employees within two years.³⁸ Such a statement was overly optimistic at best and, as it turned out, wholly ludicrous. Sam Rowe had earlier stated that the concern would start work on a small, conservative basis and expand as demand for the automobile increased.³⁹ As a place to initiate production, the Auburn Wagon Company offered a portion of its shops as a temporary location. At the same time the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad offered a building site just outside Martinsburg.⁴⁰

Despite such a promising start, the Rowe Motor Company's affairs in Martinsburg were soon on the decline. Events followed a pattern similar to that of the company's decline in Waynesboro in 1908. The prototype automobile, which was scheduled for completion in July, was not in fact completed until early September. This delay caused many stock subscribers to lose faith in the company's manufacturing plans. In late August one-third of the subscribers were long overdue on their required ten per cent down payment. The company had collected just \$2,300 and had certainly spent more than that in constructing the prototype 1910 Rowe touring car.

Without working capital the Rowe Motor Company could not go on. On September 2, 1910, Rowe met with Gray Silver, W. R. Caskey, and T. W. Martin of the Board of Trade to determine the company's future in Martinsburg. He had already met with a stockholders advisory committee earlier that day. An agreement to close out the company's affairs in Martinsburg was made. All stock subscribed without down payment was cancelled. Paid-in stockholders were permitted to sell their stock back to the company if they so

desired. All contracts between the Rowe Motor Company and the Martinsburg Board of Trade were cancelled.⁴¹

Sam Rowe, with the 1910 Rowe touring car and little else, found himself once again seeking a satisfactory location for the Rowe Motor Company. He was to find such a location in just a few months and finally, on his third attempt, establish the Rowe Motor Company as an active producer of motor vehicles.

CHAPTER III

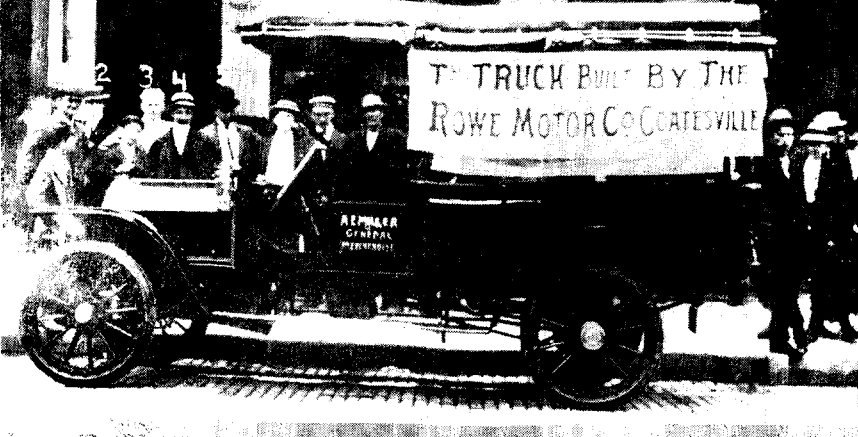
COATESVILLE

Sam Rowe had searched for a new location for the Rowe Motor Company for over a month when, in mid-October of 1910, he found such a location quite by accident. At the time, he was motoring to Philadelphia in the 1910 Rowe touring car to give a demonstration of the car's features to a prospective backer. While driving through the borough of Coatesville, in southeastern Pennsylvania, the car broke down on East Main Street.¹ Rowe hired a team of horses and had the car towed to a nearby machine shop for repairs. The proprietors of the machine shop, Samuel Shrom and J. Cameron Mateer, had been doing quality machine work in their shop at the corner of Buttonwood and Harmony Streets in Coatesville for several years.²

While the car was being repaired its merits were discussed at length by Rowe, Shrom, and Mateer. The discussion soon turned to Rowe's efforts to relocate the Rowe Motor Company. Both Shrom and Mateer suggested that the company establish its factory in the Coatesville area.³ Rowe agreed to give Coatesville his consideration. After an unsuccessful effort to find financial backers in Philadelphia, Rowe returned to Coatesville later in October. With the aid of Shrom and Mateer a four-story mill building in Rock Run, a small industrial community just west of Coatesville, was rented as a factory for Rowe production in early November.⁴ The mill, a part of the "Greenwood Property," had dimensions of 54 x 84 feet, which provided 4,500 square feet of space on each floor.⁵

In order to acquire the machinery necessary for production as quickly as possible, the Rowe Motor Company purchased the tools, fixtures, and good will of the Shrom & Mateer machine shop and had everything moved to the Greenwood building in early December.⁶ Presumably payment was made wholly, or at least partially, in Rowe Motor common stock. By December 10, 1910, Messrs. Shrom and Mateer each owned fourteen shares of Rowe stock, valued at \$100 per share par value. The rent on the Greenwood property may also have been paid initially in stock, for by that same date James Greenwood, owner of the property, owned seven shares of Rowe common stock.⁷ Shrom and Mateer became employees of the Rowe Motor Company, which took over all of their repair work.⁸

HOTEL COATES



The first Rowe truck built in Rock Run, one of two trucks built with the water-cooled five-cylinder engine. Those identified in the photograph are: 1. Sherman L. Pierce. 2. J. Cameron Mateer. 3. Clair Book (no known connection with Rowe company). 4. Amos E. Miller. 5. Samuel J. Rowe. (Courtesy Mrs. Martha Mateer)

On December 10, 1910 the charter of the Rowe Motor Company was amended to increase the capital stock to \$125,000 divided into 12,500 new common stock shares at par value of \$10 each. The increase in the company's capital was necessary to provide for planned production and expansion of the firm. Holders of the old common stock, with par value of \$100 per share, were given ten new shares for each old share. The change in par value was probably done to attract small investors. At the annual stockholders meeting in late December, Sam Rowe was re-elected president of the company and J. C. Bell was re-elected secretary. U. Grant Bishop was elected treasurer. Sam Shrom was elected to the vacant seat on the board of directors, to serve with Rowe, Bishop, Bell, and Jenks.⁹

During December, while the machinery and tools of Shrom & Mateer were being installed in the Rowe factory, the company received a number of inquiries about the Rowe five-cylinder engine. Sam Rowe stated that the engine was to be used in "aeroplanes, automobiles, trucks, marine electric lighting, and general work of all kinds, even farm work." Although no orders had been received, he said that the company had had no less than ten inquiries about the building of "aeroplane" engines. A ten-cylinder "aeroplane"

engine was said to have been on the drawing board. The company also announced a specialty of repairing ice machines, which, with Sam Rowe's background in that industry, assured the company of at least one profitable line.¹⁰

Despite apparent satisfaction with the five-cylinder air-cooled engine and the publicity that it had received, the Rowe Motor Company produced no air-cooled engines in Coatesville. The company made an inexplicable change from air cooling to water cooling while keeping the unusual five-cylinder configuration.¹¹ By early 1911 the entire program of air-cooled engines had been abandoned, as well as plans for the manufacture of automobiles. When production finally began in Coatesville, it consisted of just one product—a light truck powered by a five-cylinder water-cooled engine.¹² The company went to great expense to redesign the molds for castings in the engine to permit water cooling. The cylinders in the air-cooled engine were cast singly. In the water-cooled engine, there were two sets of cylinders cast in pairs and the fifth cylinder was cast separately.¹³

Just why the air-cooled engine was abandoned is not known. On the other hand, reasons can be given for turning from automobile to truck production. By 1911 the market for expensive automobiles had become limited. Because of developments in automotive engineering, it was possible to produce moderate-priced cars which could match the expensive cars in quality and performance. Even well established firms had to adjust to the new conditions to survive.¹⁴ For example, the prestigious Packard Motor Car Company saw its sales decline slightly in 1910 and by about 500 units in 1911 because of the change in the market.¹⁵ If Rowe had introduced as its primary product an automobile similar to those built in 1908 and 1910, the company would have had an extremely difficult time marketing their products and in all likelihood would have failed quickly for the third and last time. Instead, the company chose to enter upon the manufacture of motor trucks. Just whose decision this was is unknown, for Sam Rowe as the largest stockholder had the final word and he was in favor of building automobiles at the time of the company's move to Coatesville.¹⁶ In any event, the decision was made, and this was to mark the start of the Rowe Motor Company's period of successful operation as a producer of motor vehicles.

During January 1911 Sam Rowe, assisted by Shrom and Mateer, made arrangements with companies in the Coatesville area for parts that Rowe Motor could not make itself. Castings and foundry work were to be done at Lukens Iron & Steel Company. While at the Lukens plant in Coatesville, Rowe met Chauncey B. Hatfield, a section superintendent, who became interested in the Rowe Motor Company and later became an investor.¹⁷ Wheels presumably were purchased from Hoopes Bro. & Darlington, a wheel manufactory in nearby West Chester, Pennsylvania.¹⁸

When production of the Rowe truck began in Coatesville it was

under conditions similar to those in Waynesboro in 1908, except that the company owned its machinery and had more employees. In addition to Shrom and Mateer, employees in early 1911 included Charles Wunderlich, a machinist and electrician; Lloyd Adams, a machinist; and Sherman L. Pierce, a draftsman.¹⁹ Sam Rowe, who held the positions of president and general manager, divided his time between the office and the shop. The other employees worked in the shop at various tasks. Much time was spent on repair work. The work force was increased briefly during the summer when three trucks were under construction at one time and again near the end of the year.²⁰

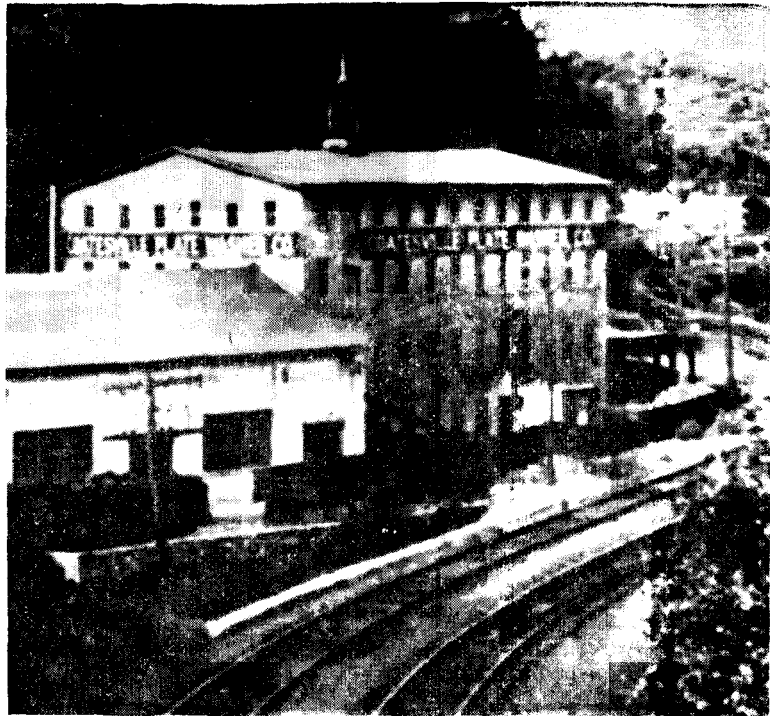
The first Rowe truck was completed in March 1911.²¹ Before being delivered to its purchaser, Amos E. Miller, a merchant in Rock Run, the truck was fitted with a sign proclaiming, "This truck built by the Rowe Motor Company, Coatesville." The sight of the truck on the streets of Coatesville with the sign for all to read helped arouse interest in the company and bring in potential customers. The second truck was completed in April and delivered to John Coles, proprietor of a soft drink business in Coatesville.²²

These trucks had a carrying capacity of 1500 pounds and were priced at \$2,500 each, a rather high price for such a light truck. Specifications included 25 horsepower Rowe engine with 3½ x 5 inch bore and stroke, magneto jump spark ignition, selective sliding gear transmission with direct drive on third gear, disc clutch, worm-drive rear axle (referred to as "spiral gear drive"), pressed steel frame, semi-elliptic springs front and rear, 18 gallon gasoline tank under seat, and 120-inch wheelbase. Equipment included gas headlights, Presto-O-Lite tank, side and tail lamps, horn and jack.²³

Amos E. Miller, who had purchased the first Rowe truck, also bought a small amount of Rowe Motor stock. His store was only half a block from the Rowe factory in Rock Run, and Sam Rowe frequently visited the store. Rowe's visits usually worried Mr. Miller's wife, who assumed, often correctly, that Rowe was there to try to sell more Rowe Motor stock to Miller.²⁴ Rowe's visits were no doubt frequent in 1911 when the company was having difficulty getting trucks produced.

In March of 1911, or perhaps earlier, Mrs. Rowe moved from Waynesboro to Coatesville where the Rowes took up residence in the Hotel Coatesville, no suitable house being available.²⁵ Mrs. Rowe had been living in the house at 233 East Main Street in Waynesboro, which Sam Rowe had purchased from John F. Lindeman on March 3, 1910.²⁶

Following completion of the truck delivered to John Coles in April, a major change was made in the specifications of the Rowe truck. The Rowe-built five-cylinder engine, which must have been expensive to manufacture, was replaced with a four-cylinder engine built by the Wisconsin Motor Manufacturing Company.²⁷ The expense of the manufacturing of the five-cylinder engine probably led



Factory of the Rowe Motor Company in Rock Run as it appeared in 1940. The new building on the left was built in 1939 for the Coatesville Plate Washer Company. (Courtesy Coatesville Plate Washer Company)

to its abandonment, but it is possible that the engine was abandoned simply because it was "different" and met with strong sales resistance on that count. The in-line five-cylinder engine has been proven practical by other companies. It has been used in trucks manufactured by several European firms, including E.R.F. Limited, Cheshire, England, since 1934;²⁸ Automobiles M. Berliet, Lyons, France, since 1949;²⁹ and Karl Kassbohrer Fahrzeugwerke, Ulm, West Germany, since about 1960.³⁰

With the change in engines, new models of the Rowe truck were introduced. The Model A Rowe, with 1500-pound capacity, was priced at \$1,800; the Model B Rowe, with 1-ton capacity, was priced at \$2,250.³¹ Note that the price of the 1500-pound truck dropped \$700 with the change from the Rowe to the Wisconsin engine. Also announced at that time was the Model C Rowe, a 35-horsepower touring car priced at \$4,000.³² From the evidence now available, it would seem that the Rowe company built no touring cars in 1911. Although the company did build a few touring cars on special order in 1912 and 1913, the 1911 Model C Rowe was the last automobile listed as a regular model.

The first two trucks fitted with Wisconsin engines were delivered to customers in July 1911. One of the trucks was the vehicle displayed in Lancaster the previous month. One truck was delivered to Willis R. Knox, of Intercourse, Pennsylvania, a town just seventeen miles west of Coatesville.³³ Knox was president of the Intercourse Bank and secretary and manager of the Intercourse Telephone and Telegraph Company.³⁴ The truck he purchased presumably was used by the telephone company. Knox must have found his Rowe truck satisfactory, for within a few months he had become interested in the Rowe Motor Company as an investor.³⁵ The other truck went to D.W. Miesse, an ice cream manufacturer in Lancaster.³⁶ Apparently production serial numbers had been set back to number one with the start of production in Coatesville, for the Miesse truck had motor vehicle makers number four.³⁷ Earlier attempts at production in Waynesboro and Martinsburg were ignored; in later years 1911 was given as the year of the company's founding.³⁸

At the stockholders meeting held in July 1911, Amos E. Miller was elected a director of the company in place of U. Grant Bishop, who had resigned and returned to his business interests in Waynesboro. Joseph C. Bell, secretary of the Rowe company, took on the duties of treasurer as well.³⁹

On August 11, 1911, D. Coleman Diller, Intercourse, Pennsylvania, took delivery on a Model B Rowe truck which had been fitted



The fourth Rowe truck built in Rock Run. It was used by D. W. Miesse of Lancaster until 1916, when it was replaced with a White truck. Roy Miesse is at the wheel of the truck, which is loaded with tubs of ice cream packed in dry ice. (Courtesy Roy C. Miesse, Jr.)

with a 35-horsepower engine and a special body which could be used either to haul cargo or to carry twelve passengers. The body had folding bench seats along the sides that could be folded out of the way for hauling cargo. These seats were apparently similar to those fitted to the familiar military "deuce-and-a-half" of more recent vintage. The truck had been purchased by Diller to replace the stage he used on his daily run between Intercourse and Lancaster, a distance of eleven miles. It was stated that the Rowe company had wanted to place one of their trucks on a route where severe tests could be given.⁴⁰ The Diller truck, which performed well its assigned task, was featured in Rowe advertising as late as 1920.

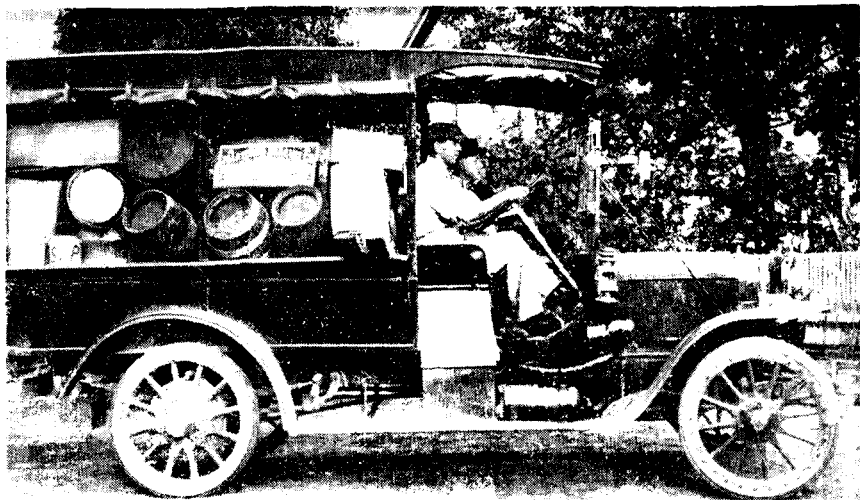
On October 1911 the company received an order for a Rowe-built touring car. The car, designated the "Rowe 4-40," was to be a four-passenger 40-horsepower touring car with four-cylinder engine of $4\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ inch bore and stroke, sliding gear transmission, full floating rear axle, torpedo "fore door" body, mohair top, windshield, and 36×4 inch tires. It was ordered by S. R. Weber, proprietor of the Leopard Hotel in Lancaster, who had been favorably impressed by the Rowe trucks of Diller and Miesse. The car, for which no selling price was given, was scheduled for delivery by April 1, 1912.⁴¹

Total production for 1911 was nine trucks, the last two of which were delivered in early 1912. Despite such a modest total for the year, Sam Rowe was pleased with the company's progress, and stated: "The firm has done considerably more business than I ever expected for the first year and I am satisfied that the business is now on a firm basis."⁴² The company's accomplishment went unnoticed in the automotive industry because, on an absolute basis, such accomplishment was anything but spectacular, but compared to the company's previous attempts at production, it was outstanding. Sam Rowe's pleasure, and surprise, certainly are understandable in the context of his previous experiences.

For 1912 the Rowe Motor Company announced a complete line of trucks (or commercial cars, as they were called then) which included Model A, with 1500 pound capacity, at \$2,250; Model B, with 1-ton capacity, at \$3,000; Model D, with 2-ton capacity, at \$3,300; Model E, with $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton capacity, at \$3,400; Model F, with 3-ton capacity, at \$3,600; and Model G, with 5-ton capacity, at \$4,800.⁴³

The Model A Rowe had a 4-cylinder 29-horsepower Wisconsin engine with pair cast cylinder and $4\frac{1}{4} \times 5$ inch bore and stroke. The engine was fitted with a special Rowe-built carburetor and Remy dual jump-spark ignition by high-tension magneto. The engine was water-cooled with pump circulation and a honeycomb radiator. A multiple disc clutch, selective three speed transmission, and full-floating worm drive rear axle were fitted. The truck had a pressed steel frame and 120 inch wheelbase. Wooden artillery wheels were fitted with solid tires; pneumatic tires were an option available at extra cost. Top speed was 20 miles per hour.⁴⁴

The Model B Rowe was similar to the Model A except for a 144 inch wheelbase. The Model D Rowe had a 4-cylinder 36-horsepower engine with $4 \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ inch bore and stroke. This engine was also used in the Rowe 4-40 touring car. The truck had a tubular radiator, transmission located on the jackshaft, chain drive, solid tires, and a top speed of 15 miles per hour.⁴⁵



The Intercourse Stage, with D. Coleman Diller at the wheel and his son Martin seated next to him. This truck could be converted to seat fifteen passengers. (Courtesy Martin A. Diller)

Specifications for the larger models are not available. However, it is known that Model G was powered by a 60-horsepower six-cylinder engine with bore and stroke of $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7$ inches. The engine was under the driver's seat in cab-over-engine arrangement. All models from Model D to Model G were fitted with chain drive. In these models the transmission and jackshaft formed a unit with the two cases bolted together.⁴⁶

Although chain drive was listed as standard equipment for all models of 2-ton or greater capacity, several trucks built by Rowe in 1912 had worm drive. Photographs of the first Rowe 2-ton truck, delivered to George Lamparter's Sons of Lancaster in December 1911 show no evidence of chain drive. Worm drive was not listed as an option until 1914 but was obviously available from 1911 on. In addition to the 2-ton truck for Lamparter's Sons, a 5-ton 6-cylinder truck built for Jackson's Moving of Atlantic City in 1912 had worm gear final drive.⁴⁷

The Rowe models were modern enough in concept for 1912 and needed only one thing to make them successful: a company large

enough to produce trucks in numbers great enough to win a niche in the expanding truck market. In order to achieve such size the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company was organized under the laws of New Jersey on January 11, 1912. It superseded the Rowe Motor Company and took over all of its assets. The new company had an authorized capital of \$500,000, but for some unknown reason reverted to the old \$100 shares. Plans called for the issuing of 4000 shares of preferred stock and 1000 shares of common stock.⁴⁸ The effort to sell \$100 shares proved to be a failure. On February 14, 1912, the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company filed an amended certificate of incorporation. The capital stock of the company remained the same, but was to be issued in \$10 shares. The issuing plan was further revised to call for 33,333 shares of preferred stock and 16,667 shares of common stock. All stockholders traded old stock for new on an equal basis.⁴⁹

At the first meeting of the stockholders of the new company, Sam Rowe was re-elected president, J. C. Bell was re-elected treasurer, and Alfred B. Jenks, a stockholder since 1908, was elected secretary. The board of directors was expanded to seven: S. J. Rowe, J. C. Bell, A. B. Jenks, A. E. Miller, S. P. Shrom, J. C. Mateer, and Joseph F. Rowe, a nephew of Sam Rowe. Everyone was enthusiastic about the new company. At the time of the meeting the treasurer announced that the total outstanding stock had risen to \$160,200.⁵⁰

While the business of reorganizing the company had been going on the business of selling trucks and getting orders for more had not been delayed. In January 1912 two Rowe trucks were displayed at the National Automobile Show at the New Grand Central Palace in New York City. The trucks displayed were listed incorrectly in a trade journal as being of 1500-pound and 2500-pound capacity.⁵¹ The heavier truck was probably of 2-ton capacity. At the show, thirty-seven makes of commercial vehicles, "many of them never seen before in New York," were exhibited.⁵² One of the Rowe trucks was later driven from New York City to Washington in February to help publicize the company, while the other was displayed at the Philadelphia Automobile Show at the same time.⁵³ It is very likely that these trucks were the two 1911 models, delivery of which had been delayed. If so, one of the trucks was the 2-ton truck built for the John J. Buckley Company of Chester, Pennsylvania. This truck was the eighth or ninth truck built in 1911.⁵⁴

In 1912 the first of three attempts was made to have the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company move to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. This attempt was initiated by Willis R. Knox, a stockholder from Intercourse, Pennsylvania, who had purchased a Rowe truck in 1911 and had been appointed sales representative for the company in Lancaster County in early 1912. At the annual meeting of stockholders in Camden, New Jersey, in late February, Knox began his efforts to have the Rowe company move its plant from Rock Run to Lancaster.⁵⁵ He had already been successful in arousing the inter-

est of a number of prominent Lancastrians. In May, by which time Knox had become a member of the board of directors in place of J. F. Rowe, he had taken Sam Rowe to Lancaster to examine several tracts of land in the northwestern part of town as possible sites for the erection of a factory. Rumors that the Rowe company would soon relocate to Lancaster were in popular circulation.⁵⁶ Despite all efforts by Knox and his associates the Rowe Motor Company's directors decided to remain at the Greenwood property in Rock Run. The probable reason behind the decision was the lack of capital necessary to finance the move, and also the fact that in 1912 the Rock Run factory was still adequate for the company's needs. That the company needed a larger factory was to become evident in 1913, but in 1912 plans for moving were premature.

Knox did his best to sell the Rowe truck in Lancaster County. He may have been responsible for getting Geo. Lamparter's Sons to purchase a Rowe truck in late 1911. Sales he was responsible for in 1912 included a 1-ton truck to Kirk Johnson & Company, Lancaster, in May, and a 2-ton truck to B. Bear Herr, at Hambright's on Columbia Avenue in Lancaster, in August. The Kirk Johnson truck was designed to haul three pianos, while the Herr truck was fitted out for hauling ice in the mornings for Mr. Herr and for hauling seed wheat in the afternoons for A. H. Hoffman.⁵⁷ In addition, Knox ordered a 45-horsepower Rowe touring car, which he took delivery of in early June. His purchase and use of a Rowe touring car did much to help advertise the company in Lancaster County.⁵⁸

As an important step in the company's program to expand sales, an eastern sales branch was opened in April 1912 at 327 Fourth Avenue, New York City. George I. Pound was put in charge of the New York branch. He was also named assistant sales manager of the company.⁵⁹ To build sales in the Chester County area, the company began an advertising campaign in the *Coatesville Record* during July 1912. One ad stated: "Rowe trucks. Built in Coatesville by expert mechanics, of the best materials obtainable, and tested under conditions that insure their absolute dependability."⁶⁰ Most of the advertisements carried a picture of one or another of the Rowe trucks built in 1911 or early 1912.

As production of Rowe trucks increased in 1912, the company began buying more parts from outside suppliers. The workers became assemblers of components in addition to being machinists and craftsmen of hand-made work. One early example of a component purchased from an outside source was the humble dashboard. The early trucks were fitted with dashboards made in the factory. However, in September of 1911, as production began its rise, the company signed a contract with Noah F. Zook, of Intercourse, Pennsylvania, who agreed to fabricate dashboards to Rowe designs in his shop.⁶¹ As parts made in the Rowe factory were replaced by parts purchased from outside sources, the Rowe truck slowly changed from an individualistic hand-built vehicle to an assembled vehicle similar to others on the market.

The only advertisement which mentioned the Rowe company's use of chain drive as well as worm drive appeared in the news papers in September 1912.⁶² It is not known where the Rowe company purchased their worm drive rear axles at that time. In all likelihood they were not built in the Rowe factory or elsewhere in Coatesville. It is very likely that their source of supply was the firm of Morse & Williams, Philadelphia, which was manufacturing worm gears for trucks built by the Mitchell Motor Car Company, Racine, Wisconsin, as early as 1906.⁶³

In the summer of 1912, Willis R. Knox organized the Rural Transportation Company to reach parts of Lancaster County not serviced by trains or trolleys.⁶⁴ His desire to use motor trucks for such transportation dated from 1908, when he had first investigated such possibilities. He had found the trucks of 1908 to be too unreliable and too expensive to operate over ordinary country roads, and had made no effort to establish a transportation company at that time. However, after he had observed Rowe truck in use in 1911 and 1912 he had decided that the time was at hand for motor truck transportation on Lancaster County's roads.⁶⁵ The first vehicle ordered for the Rural Transportation Company was a Rowe 15-passenger truck, which was put into use on the road between Maytown and Marietta, in the northwestern part of the county, in late October of 1912.⁶⁶ This was another aspect of the influence created by the development of the motor truck.

In December the Rowe company completed and delivered four trucks. Three were shipped to customers in Philadelphia.⁶⁷ The fourth truck was Rowe's first fire fighting apparatus, a chemical engine which was built for the Ventnor City Fire Department, Ventnor City, New Jersey.⁶⁸ When the Rowe chemical engine was tested on the streets of Ventnor City, it proved to be five miles per hour faster than specifications called for. The machine was promptly accepted by the fire department and a resolution was passed by the town council, complimenting the Rowe company on the quality of its product.⁶⁹ The deliveries in December brought production for the year to about 27 units, just about the number Sam Rowe had hoped to sell that year.⁷⁰ The production total included the touring cars sold to S. R. Weber and Willis R. Knox.

The line of Rowe trucks for 1913 was similar to the 1912 line. Trucks offered included Model A, with 1500 pound capacity, at \$1,800; Model B, with 1-ton capacity, at \$2,250; Model C, with 1½-ton capacity, at \$3,000; Model D, with 2-ton capacity, at \$3,300; Model E, with 3-ton capacity, at \$3,600; and Model FI, with 5-ton capacity, at \$4,800. All models were fitted with four-cylinder engines.⁷¹ Apparently the six-cylinder model had not been a success.

Two Rowe trucks were displayed at the New York Commercial Vehicle Exhibition, held in the Grand Central Palace in New York City in January 1913. Trucks displayed were Model B, with 28-horsepower engine, and Model D, with 38-horsepower engine.⁷²

The trucks featured a primitive form of "air bag" suspension. This type of suspension was not perfected until the 1950's, when it was offered as optional equipment on such automobiles as Cadillac and Mercury about 1958.⁷³ As described in a trade journal, the Rowe "air bag" suspension:

"... consists of a pneumatic bag interposed between the axle and springs in such a manner that each moves independent of the other, thus producing a cushioning effect without introducing any wearing parts. One pneumatic cushion is placed at each corner of the car so that the body really rides upon air. The pneumatic bags are made up from 5-ply canvas and rubber of much the same construction as the pneumatic tire."⁷⁴

There is no further mention of Rowe's unorthodox suspension in trade journals or company publications and no evidence that more than two trucks, those shown in New York, were fitted with the suspension.



This 1912 Rowe truck was the company's first five-ton model and possibly the only unit fitted with a six-cylinder engine. (Courtesy John M. Peckham Collection)

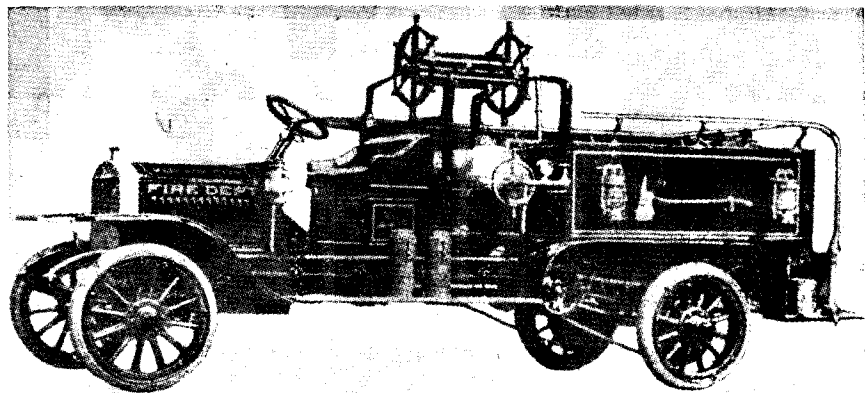
In January 1913 the Rowe company discontinued its advertising campaign in the *Coatesville Record*, and at the same time began placing ads in trade journals such as *Carriage Monthly* and *Commercial Car Journal*, which had nationwide circulation.⁷⁵ Then, in March, the company began a campaign to sell preferred stock and raise capital sufficient to permit the firm to expand its production facilities to meet the growing demand for the Rowe truck. It should be noted that the company did not indulge in such a campaign upon its arrival in Coatesville in 1911, but waited until the company had shown some substantial progress before seeking additional stockholders through a sales campaign. The Rowe Motor

Manufacturing Company described itself as a "safe, sound, conservative" business venture, and went on to say:

This company was organized and commenced operations on January 1, 1911. Since then the company has built and sold up to the capacity of its force and capital involved, having at present almost fifty commercial cars in daily use.

Due to efficient and economical management, the company has met with phenomenal success and established a reputation for its product. Having outgrown its working capital, the company now offers seven per cent preferred stock to enable company to purchase materials in large quantities so that company may be placed in a position to fill orders now contracted for. Demand presently exceeds the company's working capital and force. The company has never had any liabilities, has no Bonds, discounts all bills, and the company's assets are at all times kept above liabilities. We have a magnificent factory, unlimited demand for the cars, and an honest and efficient management.⁷⁶

It should be noted that somewhat less than fifty trucks and automobiles had been completed and sold by that date (March 1st), that the alleged organization date of January 1, 1911, is important to re-



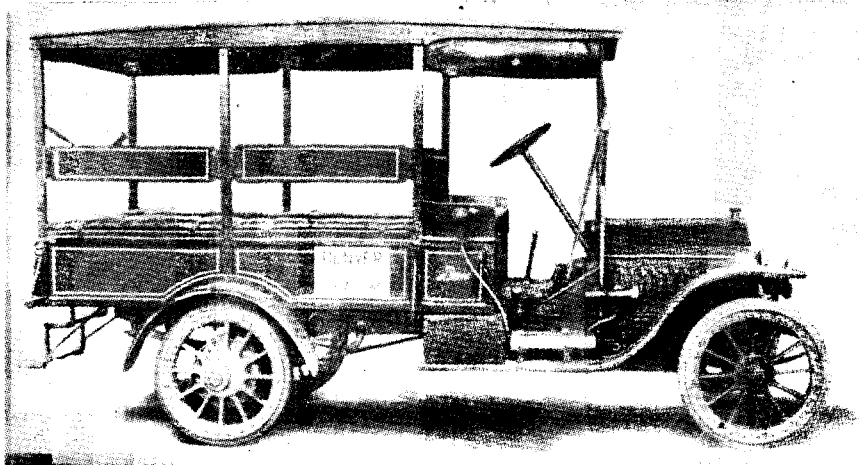
60 gal. Chemical Engine; 800 ft. 2½ in. Hose; Speed 25 miles per hour

The first Rowe fire engine, delivered to the Ventnor City, New Jersey, Fire Department in December 1912. (Courtesy John M. Peckham Collection)

member when the statement concerning liabilities is considered, and that the "magnificent factory" was in fact the first two floors of a stone-walled woolen mill built in 1881.⁷⁷

The campaign was in part an effort to attract outside investors, for the company's advertisements were not placed in the *Coatesville Record*. In eastern Lancaster County the campaign was primarily advanced through advertisements placed in the *Strasburg News* from March 1st to April 12th. The stock was made available to subscribers by two Strasburg residents, Burt McFarland and S. F. Sweigart, who acted as financial agents for the Rowe company.⁷⁸

The company offered a bonus of common stock with the purchase of preferred stock. The bonus amounted to one share of common for each four shares of preferred purchased in amounts totaling less than \$500, and one share of common for each two shares of preferred in amounts totaling over \$500. The company hoped to sell \$10,000 worth of stock in Lancaster County.⁷⁹ The actual total of stock sold through the campaign, in Lancaster County and elsewhere, is not known.



This Rowe went into service in late 1913 as the Denver and Reamstown stage. It is an example of the Rowe "passenger truck" with seats in place. (Courtesy John M. Peckham Collection)

During early 1913 a Philadelphia sales branch was opened at 647 North 42nd Street to promote the Rowe truck in the Philadelphia area.⁸⁰ The company stated that it had signed a contract to deliver 100 trucks to its Philadelphia agency during 1913. Such a grandiose production schedule for the year was completely given the company's production facilities.⁸¹ In spite of this, the company also sought to sell its trucks through wagon manufacturers. The wagon maker was to sell a Rowe chassis and build a body for the chassis.⁸² Such a system was not really satisfactory for the Rowe company because wagon builders could not supply adequate service on the trucks they sold. Wagon builders did supply bodies for Rowe trucks, but the number of trucks actually sold through such firms is not known.

On March 29, 1913, during the stock sale campaign, the Rowe company signed the largest contract in its history, to that date. The contract, with cash deposit, called for the delivery of twenty-five 2-ton "passenger trucks" to the West Penn Traction Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These trucks were fitted with the folding seats in the style of the Diller truck built in 1911.⁸³

With truck production moving ahead rapidly in 1913 and many orders on the books, the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company declared an initial quarterly dividend of $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent on its preferred stock. Dividend checks were mailed on May 4, 1913.⁸⁴ After more than five years of work, Sam Rowe and the others who had remained steadfast in their support of Rowe Motor were thus at last rewarded. The dividend helped the company retain its support in the Coatesville area, although it must be said that the dividend checks mailed in May were probably the only dividends paid by Rowe Motor until sometime in 1915.⁸⁵ At the time of its first distribution of profits to the stockholders, the Rowe company had orders for enough trucks to keep busy until October of that year, and additionally was seeking to bid on an order of fifty trucks for a large Pittsburgh corporation.⁸⁶

The company had completely outgrown its available production facilities and could not have filled the order for fifty trucks if it had been awarded the contract. Because the company had orders for nearly six months' work and could hardly promise delivery before the end of the year, the board of directors decided that it was time to move the company to a larger building. The Greenwood mill had never been considered more than a temporary location at best, which had been put off as premature in 1912, was started in earnest in the summer of 1913.

At a stockholders meeting in June 1913 Amos E. Miller was elected to the new position of vice-president of the company and Chauncey B. Hatfield, who had been at Lukens Iron & Steel, was elected to the seat on the board of directors vacated by Joseph C. Bell and was elected secretary of the company in place of Alfred B. Jenks, who retained his seat on the board.⁸⁷ At that time Hatfield had been serving as assistant secretary and treasurer for over three months and had been in charge of the company's campaign to sell stock during that time.⁸⁸ It is not known when Hatfield became treasurer of the company. Willis R. Knox had been elected treasurer on November 15, 1912, after J. C. Bell had resigned, and had in turn been succeeded in the position by C. B. Hatfield at some date prior to March 1, 1913.⁸⁹

Following the June meeting, Hatfield spent much of his time seeking a suitable place to which the Rowe company could move. The company was seeking a location with buildings where production could be quickly resumed after the relocation and where ample room to enlarge the factory was available. After much investigation, the best sites were found to be in Downingtown and West Grove, both in Chester County.⁹⁰ A group from Lancaster, Pennsylvania once again led by Willis R. Knox, made a bid to have the company relocate there.⁹¹ This was Lancaster's second bid in two years to secure the factory for the Rowe truck. It was no more successful than the first bid had been, probably because the Rowe company was seeking a building which could be quickly occupied for

truck production while the group from Lancaster was once again offering potential sites for construction of a factory.

The Downingtown Board of Trade finally convinced Sam Rowe, C. B. Hatfield, and the other directors that Downingtown was the best location. Papers were drawn up to move there and purchase a part of the Florey's Brick Works property.⁹² Production for 1913 ended in late October with a total of 56 trucks built and sold.⁹³ Then everything was made ready for the move to Downingtown, just five miles away. After less than three years in Coatesville, the Rowe company was moving on to "greener pastures" once again.

CHAPTER IV

DOWNINGTOWN

The Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company acted quickly after agreeing to relocate the factory to Downingtown. On October 23, 1913, company officials signed an agreement with Florey's Brick Works, Downingtown, to purchase thirteen acres and 119 perches of land on Wallace Avenue. The land had several buildings on it and was provided with a siding from the Lancaster & Downingtown branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. On November 3, 1913, the Rowe company made a payment of \$10,000 to conclude the agreement and take possession of the property.¹

Improvements were made to the buildings during November. By the end of the month the Rowe company had started moving machinery from the old factory in Rock Run. Three large Rowe trucks, ready for shipment to customers, were used to transport the machinery.² Truck production was initiated in Downingtown by January 1914. The Rock Run factory was used until the spring of 1914, possibly for the assembly and testing of Wisconsin engines or just for storage. After the Downingtown factory was completely set up for production the Rock Run building cleaned out and turned back to the owner, who leased it to the Patterson Knitting Company of Allentown in April.³

There was a general reduction in prices of all Rowe models for 1914. The Model A, with 1500-pound capacity, was priced at \$1,690, perhaps the lowest price for which a Rowe-built vehicle was ever sold. The Model B, with 1-ton capacity, was priced at \$2,175. The Model C, with 1½-ton capacity, was offered with optional final drive: chain drive at \$2,400 or worm drive at \$2,550. The Model D, with 2-ton capacity, was also offered with optional final drive: chain drive at \$2,800 or worm drive at \$3,000. One of the first trucks built in Downingtown was a Model D worm drive model. The heavier models, which still employed chain drive, were Model E, with 3-ton capacity, at \$3,400, and Model FI, with 5-ton capacity, at \$4,300.⁴

Several sales agencies for the company were opened in 1914 as part of the company's expansion program. In Cincinnati, Ohio, E. E. Titus, proprietor of the Berning Garage at Eighth and Harriet Streets, was appointed agent. Titus sold several Rowe trucks in 1914, including a 1½-ton truck to the Spitzfaden Grocery Company of Mt. Healthy, Ohio, and a 5-ton truck to the Diem & Wing Paper Company, Cincinnati. An agency was opened in Los Angeles, California; at least one truck was sold there in 1914, to the Los Nietos Valley Ice Company of Downey, California.⁵ In Philadelphia, the sales agency was replaced with a factory branch at 421 Chestnut Street in order to make factory service available to the increasing number of Rowe truck owners in the Philadelphia area.⁶

The Rowe company made several efforts to keep itself in the news during the year. In August, two Rowe trucks were used to provide transportation for people attending the Baptist Carnival outside Coatesville. The trucks, providing a needed service, carried signs which extolled the Rowe truck.⁷ In September, a Rowe truck was driven to New York City for delivery. It carried large advertising signs on both sides of the chassis. Because of the condition of the roads and the speed at which the truck could travel on its solid tires, the journey took two days. The truck was not troubled by mechanical breakdowns during the trip, and created much interest along the way.⁸

Another example of Rowe performance was made known in the fall of 1914, when the company received great praise from the Buckley Newhall Company, furniture movers in New York City. The New York firm had purchased one of the first worm drive 2-ton models and put 16,000 miles of use on it in less than a year. It had performed so well that the Buckley Newhall firm ordered two more Rowe trucks in November.⁹

In late 1913 a business recession, which had begun in the steel industry and then widened, was blamed on the new tariff passed that year by the Wilson administration. Headlines read: "STEEL MILLS SLACK" in Coatesville, Steelton, Pittsburgh, and most other manufacturing centers in the east. In the fall of 1914 the recession deepened drastically after the start of the World War in Europe in August temporarily halted the import-export trade.¹⁰ As a result the Rowe company lost many orders. Because of the worsening recession and the company's cautious attitude towards accepting orders for 1914 delivery in late 1913, owing to the possibility of delay in resuming production after the relocation of the factory, production of Rowe trucks in 1914 totaled only about 60 units, a few more than had been built the previous year.

For 1915, the Rowe truck was offered in four models. The two smallest models offered in 1914, having 1500-pound and 1-ton capacities, were dropped from the 1915 line. Models offered were Model CW, with 1½-ton capacity at 32-horsepower engine, at \$2,450; Model DW, with 2-ton capacity and 40-horsepower engine; at \$2,800;

Model EW, at 3-ton capacity and 48-horsepower engine, at \$3,400; and Model GW, with 5-ton capacity and 48-horsepower engine, at \$4,500. For the first time all models were equipped with worm gear final drive, hence the W in model designations.¹¹

The four models of Rowe truck were alike in design and construction and differed only in the size of the weight-carrying parts. The Model CW used a Wisconsin engine of 32 horsepower with 4 x 5 inch bore and stroke, cylinders cast in block, and valves on one side. Model DW used a 40-horsepower Wisconsin engine with 4¼ x 5 inch bore and stroke, cylinders cast in pairs, with T-head valve arrangement. Models EW and GW used a 48-horsepower Wisconsin



A 1914 Rowe truck, photographed in Philadelphia looking from the Rowe factory branch on Cherry Street towards Logan Square. Photograph circa 1922, when work on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway had been started. Note the truck's unusual cab, probably built in a cabinet maker's shop. (From author's collection)

with 4¾ x 5½ inch bore and stroke, cylinders cast in pairs, and T-head valve arrangement. All engines had dual ignition by Bosch Magneto, Rayfield carburetor, cooling by centrifugal pump and vertical honeycomb radiator, disc clutch, and Brown-Lipe three speed and reverse transmission.¹²

By March 1915 two major changes had been made in the line of Rowe trucks. The company introduced a 1500-pound truck, known as Model AW, with a chassis price of \$1,800. Model CW was dropped from the line and Model DW was relettered Model CDW, still with 2-ton capacity but with a \$200 reduction in price to \$2,600.¹³ It is not known why Rowe Motor resumed production of a 1500-pound

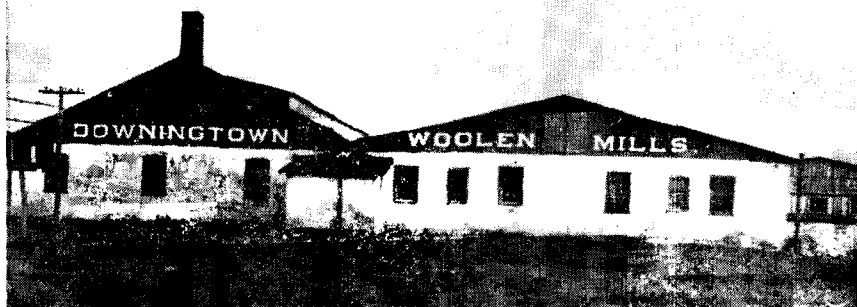
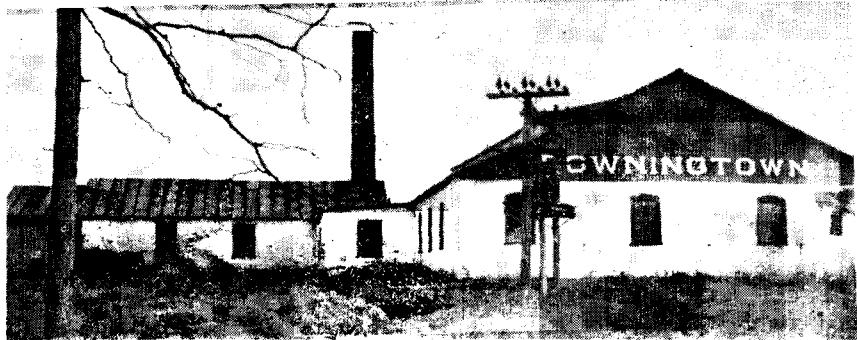
model. With the proliferation of vehicles in the markets, most of which were listed at prices far below the Rowe's \$1,800, it is difficult to believe that Rowe Motor sold many Model AW's in 1915.

Despite the relocation of the Rowe company from Coatesville to Downingtown, Mr. and Mrs. Rowe continued to reside at the Hotel Coatesville and Sam commuted five miles to work each day.¹⁴ In 1915, for the first time since the company had started production in Coatesville, Sam Rowe found little time to work in the assembly rooms. Most of his time was spent in managerial and public relations duties. For example, on April 8th he spoke before the Downingtown Board of Trade at the Alert Fire House. He gave a comprehensive talk on the prospects for the Rowe company and announced that the company was planning to build an extension to its factory.¹⁵

At a meeting of the stockholders the following week, several Downingtown men were elected to the board of directors of Rowe Motor. Amos E. Miller and Chauncey B. Hatfield resigned as officers and directors of the company to devote their time to their own businesses in Coatesville. Willis R. Knox had apparently resigned from the board in 1914. The new officers of the Rowe company were Dr. Edward A. Kerr, Downingtown, vice-president; Joseph H. Johnson, Downingtown, secretary; and J. Cameron Mateer, Coatesville, who had been an employee of the company since 1911, treasurer. The new board of directors was composed of Rowe, Mateer, Kerr, Johnson, and A. B. Jenks, as well as E. F. Brinker of Boston, Massachusetts, and Fred Sotters, Coatesville.¹⁶ Following that meeting the Rowe company purchased an additional three acres and 80 perches of land from Florey's Brick Works on May 11th and completed plans for the construction of an extension to the factory.¹⁷

During the summer the company received its first war-related contract, an order for a number of 5-ton trucks from the Russian government.¹⁸ In August the company began sporadic use of night-shift workers to get the work out, but was hampered by a lack of sufficient working space and a chronic inability to get and keep workmen, who had trouble finding housing in the Downingtown area but had no trouble finding jobs elsewhere.¹⁹

One of Sam Rowe's jobs, which took more and more of his time, was that of locating and hiring new employees for the company. Among those hired in 1915 were Lumen S. Allen, who became sales manager and administrative assistant to Mr. Rowe; Joseph Ryder, who had been employed previously as a machinist at the American Bronze Company, Berwyn, Pennsylvania; Grover C. McCreary, a painter and assembler; and Marie Hannum, hired as secretary to the company's officers.²⁰ In addition, because of the increasing size of the company, Charles Wunderlich was appointed superintendent to take on tasks previously handled by Sam Rowe as general manager. Samuel Shrom was in charge of engine assembly.²¹ During 1915 the steel mills in the Coatesville-Downing-



Factory of the Rowe company in Downingtown as it appeared in 1922. The building with the words "Woolen Mills" on it was the addition built by Rowe in 1915. (Courtesy William M. McFarlan)

town area increased production rapidly to meet the demand for war-torn Europe. The mills paid higher wages than other companies and could therefore recruit employees from other firms.¹⁶ As a result the Rowe company encountered increasing difficulty in getting and keeping trained men. This problem became more serious as each year passed in Downingtown.²²

Efforts to complete the trucks ordered by the Russian Government in record time were hampered by the lack of sufficient manpower and adequate working space. The first truck for the Russians was shipped on August 5th. The second truck truck in the order was completed on August 11th and tested on Lancaster Avenue in Downingtown. It was painted bright blue and attracted much attention. Several more trucks destined for Russia were under construction that that time.²³

On August 7th, Sam Rowe announced that work would be started on the proposed addition to the company's plant. The brick extension was to be 200 feet long by 70 feet wide.²⁴ Foundations were begun on August 11th and materials for construction of the building arrived on August 19th.²⁵

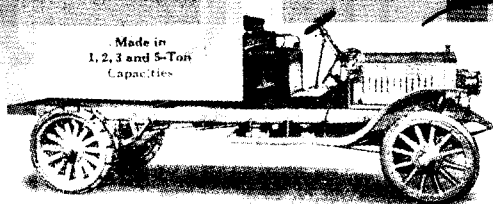
The Russian Government placed another order for trucks with the Rowe company in late August. At the same time the company also received an order for trucks from the United States Government. With these contracts to be filled, the company needed the additional working area then under construction as soon as possible and every employee it could hire. On August 28th Rowe Motor officials announced a pay increase of ten per cent for all Rowe company employees in order to compete for employees with other firms. The announcement also stated that a permanent night shift was to be started at the earliest time possible. However, the company never managed to hire and keep enough men to initiate a night shift except as a temporary emergency measure to complete orders on time. In September, when the company received another sizeable truck order, machinery for the new factory addition was ordered to assure delivery in early 1916.²⁶

The company still faced the ever continuing problem of loss of employees, which was largely due to the higher wages paid by companies involved in war work. Rumors about employment at the Rowe company frequently appeared in the local newspapers, including such items as: "It is said the Rowe Motor Company will double its working force," which appeared in September, and: "The Rowe Motor Company will put on additional men after next week," which appeared in October.²⁷ Joseph Ryder, who had gone to work in the Rowe factory in July, quit his job there in late September and took a job in Philadelphia, from which he returned to work at Rowe Motor in late November of 1915.²⁸ Such was typical of the high turnover and chaotic labor situation of the time. At the time the company began installing machinery in the partially completed factory addition in November, employment had declined from its previous high of perhaps twenty-five men to just nine men in the assembly rooms and two employees, L. S. Allen and Miss Hannum, in the office.²⁹ Despite larger facilities and better economic conditions resulting from the "war boom" in 1915, Rowe production for the year totaled approximately 95 units, well below the capacity of the factory. In addition, private sale of individually ordered trucks had declined because of the company's war-related contracts, which presumably had been completed on time.

For 1916 the Rowe company continued to offer four models, once again with a change in the smallest model. The Model AW was abandoned as Rowe Motor once more left the 1500-pound truck competition. The new truck to replace the Model AW was the Model CW, with 1-ton capacity, a 28-horsepower engine, and a list price of \$2,450. The price of Model CDW was increased to \$2,800, its price prior to the reduction of March, 1915. Model EW at \$3,400 and Model GW at \$4,500 were continued as before. There were minor engine changes in the 2-ton and 3-ton models, and all models were fitted with left hand drive and center control in place of the old right hand drive and control system previously used.³⁰

In January 1916 the Rowe company was the low bidder on a

contract to build a combined pumper and chemical truck for the West End Fire Company of Coatesville. The Rowe bid was between \$6,000 and \$6,500. The only bid near that of Rowe Motor was made by the Martin Carriage Works, York, Pennsylvania. All other bids



A Suggestion for Wagon Builders

Show the trade of your town
you're a live wire. Put on
the street a

ROWE MOTOR TRUCK

body of which you can build to your own liking. Hang a sign on each side of the truck, something like this:

"This truck is saving me money. I can furnish you with the same kind or with one, having a body specially designed to meet your individual requirements."
(Name and Address)

This will set people talking and will greatly aid you in getting the business men of your town interested in motor delivery.

Write for the Rowe Catalog and proposition to wagon builders

Rowe Motor Mfg. Company, Downingtown, Pa.

A Rowe advertisement of 1916 from *Vehicle Monthly*.

were above \$8,000.³¹ The fire engine for West End may have been powered by a six-cylinder engine, for the finished vehicle had a very large engine compartment and a vast expanse of polished hood. It is known that a special Hele-Shaw clutch was used in the vehicle. This is the only known use of that make of clutch by Rowe and may indicate the use of an engine larger than that commonly fitted in Rowe vehicles.³²

The firefighting apparatus for the West End Fire Company was the sixth built by the Rowe company. After building a fire engine for Ventnor City, New Jersey, in late 1912, the company had built machines for Millbourne, Pennsylvania; Burlington, New Jersey; and Darby, Pennsylvania. In January 1916 a machine was under construction for the fire department of Cheltenham, Pennsylvania.³³ In March the company announced that the machine for the West End Fire Company would be delivered by the end of May. That goal seemed within reach, for in early April installation of the machinery in the new addition was completed and employment had taken an upward surge. In the week of April 17 to April 22 the company turned out six trucks, a new one-week production record.³⁴ However, the company had taken on too many orders and was still troubled by a frequent loss of employees, which caused many production delays.³⁵

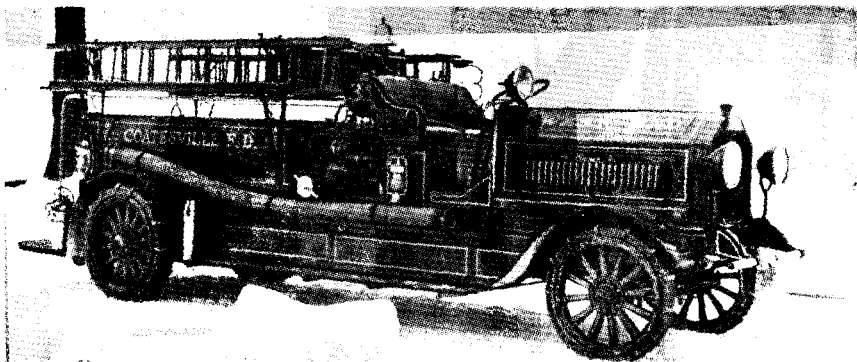
According to the Rowe company's annual report issued in April 1916, the company had sold a total of \$204,000 of its stock, which had helped finance the company's expansion. Optimistically, the company continued to accept new orders during May, and announced plans for the construction of another addition to the factory and the hiring of fifty additional employees. This was at a time when total employment in the shop was no more than thirty to thirty-five men.³⁶

During 1916 the Rowe factory branch in Philadelphia was moved to larger quarters at 2121 Vine Street and E. A. Holmes was hired as sales and service manager.³⁷ Throughout the summer Rowe Motor concentrated its efforts on the production of the larger models, building primarily 3-ton and 5-ton trucks. Production never again reached the six truck per week record set in April. In mid-June only two trucks were turned out in five working days.³⁸

As Rowe Motor continued its expansion program and increased production each year, the problem of supplying bodies for the trucks became more and more serious. Large companies such as White, Autocar, and Republic had body-building departments so that a customer could take delivery of a completed vehicle, rather than acquiring a chassis and then going to another concern for the body. In 1916 the Rowe company was one of 34 companies which built only the truck chassis. There were 81 companies which provided bodies at extra cost right in the factory and 15 companies which offered models fitted with bodies, usually delivery wagons, as standard equipment.³⁹ This situation placed the Rowe company at a competitive disadvantage. Although Rowe had made arrangements to have suitable bodies supplied by local wagon makers, no completely satisfactory solution to the problem was achieved until 1919, when company officials organized a body-building firm.⁴⁰

An example of the problems created by the lack of body-building facilities at Rowe involved the fire engine ordered by the West End Fire Company. Although promised for May 30, delivery of the machine was not made until December 23 of that year. The delay of almost seven months was the result of body construction problems. The work was done in the Rowe factory, which had neither an area set up for body construction nor skilled body workers to do the work. The truck, when nearly completed, had to be driven to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for the painting of the body. When it returned to Downingtown on December 20, it created quite a lot of interest. It had no muffler, and as it plowed its way from Lancaster through the snow it startled many residents in the villages along the way. The problems of building fire apparatus, particularly special-bodied machines, convinced Rowe officials that they should abandon their efforts in that field. Owing to the long delay in delivery of their machine, the West End Fire Company paid Rowe only \$5,750 on the contract.⁴¹ Despite this fiasco, production in 1916 built on war orders and factory expansion rose to a satisfactory total of 145 units, still below the enlarged factory's capacity.⁴²

For 1917 the Rowe company's line of trucks was changed again. Model CDW, with 2-ton capacity, at \$2,800, and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity, at \$4,500, remained in production. Model CW, with 1-ton capacity, and Model EW, with 3-ton capacity, were discontinued and replaced by Model CDW, with 2½-ton capacity,



1916 Rowe fire engine built for the West End Fire Company of Coatesville. Delays in the construction of this vehicle caused the Rowe company to abandon the fire apparatus field. (Courtesy John B. Montville Collection)

at \$3,000, and Model DEW, with 3½-ton capacity at \$3,400.⁴³ For the first time in its history Rowe Motor failed to offer a model of less than 2-ton capacity. With this new line of trucks the company appeared to be concentrating on the heavy truck market, where the Rowe truck could more successfully compete. In spite of all efforts, 1917 was to become the year that the employment situation, which had thwarted company development since early 1915, became impossible and forced the relocation of the factory once again, after a stay in Downingtown that was barely a year longer than the company's stay in Coatesville.

CHAPTER V

LANCASTER

The United States went to war against Germany and the other Central Powers on April 6, 1917. In Downingtown, as in every part of the country, men flocked to enlist in the armed forces or to work for large firms engaged in war work. The employment situation at Rowe, which had been difficult since the steel mills in the area had started war work for the Allies in 1915, became impossible. Men needed to increase the working force or replace those who had left for other jobs were simply not to be found.¹ One young man who had agreed to go to work at Rowe Motor in June 1917 after graduation from Coatesville High School went instead to the Sun Ship-

yard in Chester where the starting pay was twenty dollars a week, eight dollars more than Rowe offered to start.² The Rowe company had planned to increase employment in 1917, but employment instead actually decreased.³ In order to help get orders out on time, Sam Rowe put on coveralls and worked beside his employees in the shop for perhaps the first time since the company's first year in Downingtown.⁴ Rowe Motor did its best to turn out trucks on schedule, and stated proudly: "The Rowe Company was the first to file a pledge with the War Industries Board in accordance with the instructions contained in their circular No. 11 assuring them of our absolute co-operation in restricting the use of steel to war essentials only."⁵ To improve service in Philadelphia, the factory branch was relocated to a large building at 1726 Cherry Street, and James Florey was hired as manager.⁶ By 1917 the company had agencies in Birdsboro, Phillipsburg, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Atlantic City, New Jersey, in addition to the agencies which had previously been established in New York City, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati.⁷

At the annual meeting of stockholders on April 16, 1917, one of the main topics of discussion was that of the employment situation. Relocation of the firm was discussed seriously. At the meeting J. C. Mateer was elected secretary in place of J. H. Johnson and L. S. Allen was elected treasurer. New members of the board of directors were Frank O. Martin, who Sam Rowe had known in Hope Valley, Rhode Island; L. S. Allen; and Charles Wunderlich, company superintendent. Johnson, Brinker, and Sotters left the board after brief terms as directors.⁸

When Rowe's employment difficulties became known, the board of directors was sought out for the third time by a group from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, led by the Chamber of Commerce. In addition to the ever present Willis R. Knox, who had become second vice-president of the Agricultural Trust Company of Lancaster in 1915, leaders of the group included Stanley R. Still, prominent stock broker in Lancaster; J. G. Forney, chairman of the New Industries Committee of the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, and S. R. Slaymaker.⁹ The Rowe directors were invited to visit Lancaster, where they were shown numerous sites for a factory, introduced to potential investors, and assured that Lancaster had many skilled men available for employment. A number of Lancastrians went to Downingtown to determine for themselves that the Rowe company was a going firm. After a decision had been made to build a factory rather than occupy an existing building, a plot of land near the New Holland Pike on Fountain Avenue was selected as the site for Rowe's Lancaster factory. On November 2, 1917, a meeting was held in Lancaster to make the relocation of the Rowe company official.¹⁰ At this meeting the Rowe directors signed a contract to purchase the Fountain Avenue property of 3.85 acres from S. R. Slaymaker for \$9,598.¹¹ On Monday, November 5th, ground was broken for the factory and construction began immediately, with completion set for March 1, 1918.¹² The first building constructed was the

large assembly shop, 100 x 200 feet in size. Much had to be accomplished before the Lancaster plant could be completed and opened. During the company's last year in Downingtown, only 150 Rowe trucks were turned out, barely more than had been turned out in 1916. The move to Lancaster held great promise for the company in 1918.¹³

At a special meeting of stockholders held in December, Dr. Kerr submitted his resignation as vice-president because he didn't wish to leave his practice in Downingtown. L. S. Allen was elected vice-president, Willis R. Knox was elected treasurer for the second time, and Elias Groff, Jr., was elected second vice president to assist Allen with details of the company's move from Downingtown to Lancaster. After Dr. Kerr and F. O. Martin had resigned from the board of directors, twelve new directors were elected to serve with Rowe, Allen, Mateer, Jenks, and Wunderlich. New directors, who were with few exceptions residents of Lancaster County, included Willis R. Knox, who had previously served as a director from 1912 to 1914; Landis B. Herr, Lancaster, a director of the Lancaster County National Bank and of the Steinman Hardware Company; Elias Groff, Jr., Strasburg, vice-president of the Steinman Hardware Company and a director of the Strasburg Electric Company; E. L. Roseboro, New Holland, president of the Farmers National Bank of New Holland and the owner of a carriage works and garage; Benjamin L. Nolt, Bareville, a director of the New Holland National Bank; Amos E. Hess, owner of the Hess Roller Mills near White Horse; Elmer E. Good, Gap, a butcher; D. Coleman Diller, Intercourse, operator of the Intercourse-Lancaster Stage and owner of a Rowe truck since 1911; Jacob K. Ressler, Mascot, owner of the mill at Mascot; Joseph C. Bell, Waynesboro, who had been an officer of the company in its early years and a director from 1908 to 1913; and two company foremen, Lloyd E. Adams and I. Price Jackson.¹⁴

While the factory was under construction, S. R. Still and J. G. Forney were at work selling Rowe stock to finance the proposed expansion of the company. As it had in the past, the Rowe company continued its policy of financing expansion through the sale of stock rather than by the use of bank loans. At that time Rowe's seven per cent preferred stock was selling at ten dollars per share, the par value. On January 10, 1918, Mr. Still gave the stock sale campaign a boost when he announced that the Rowe company was paying a quarterly dividend on its preferred stock.¹⁵

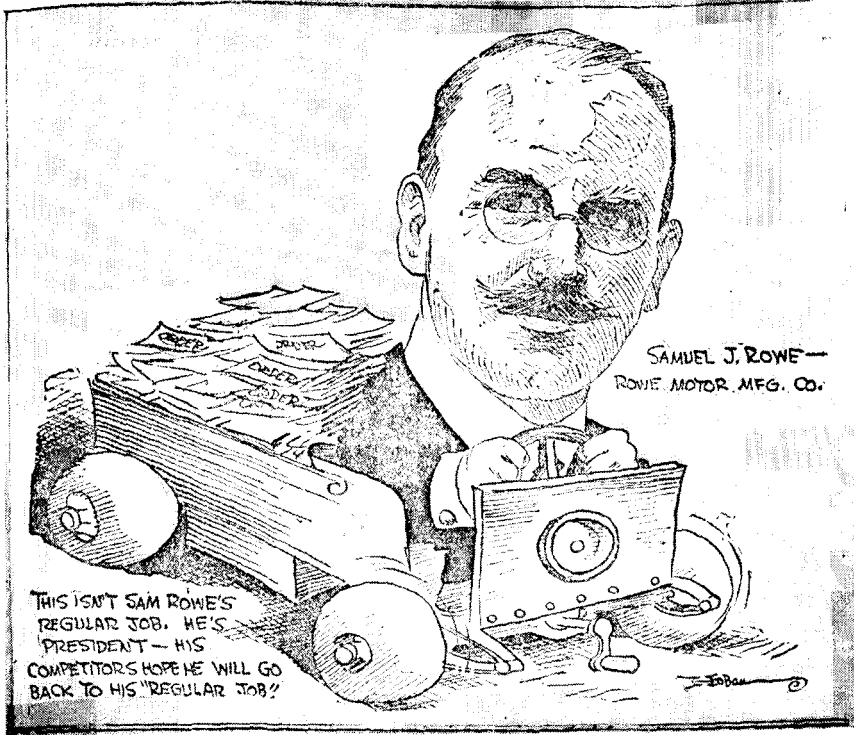
Truck production in Downingtown in early 1918 went very slowly. All factories in the Coatesville - Downingtown area were closed for five days in mid-January owing to a severe shortage of coal. After that all factories were ordered to close each Monday from January 28 to March 25 to help conserve coal.¹⁶ In early February 1918 Rowe announced that their trucks would be displayed at the Lancaster Automobile Show to be held at the new Fidelity Building on North Mulberry Street from February 6th to 9th. The company also stated that its entire factory output for 1918 had been

arranged for with its sales agencies. This assured the company of a profitable year if production quotas could be met in the new factory.¹⁷

For 1918 Rowe Motor expanded its line of trucks to seven models including the reintroduction of a 1-ton model. The Rowe line was made up of Model CW, with 1-ton capacity and a 127-inch wheelbase, at \$2,450; Model CDW, with 2-ton capacity and a 142-inch wheelbase, at \$2,800; Model CDW-Dump with 2-ton capacity and 104 inch wheelbase, at \$2,800; Model CDW, with 2½-ton capacity and 164-inch wheelbase, at \$3,000; Model DEW, with 3½-ton capacity and 156-inch wheelbase, at \$3,400; Model DEW-Dump, with 3½-ton capacity and 104-inch wheelbase, at \$3,400; and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity and 171-inch wheelbase, at \$4,500. Note the addition of two models designed for use with dump body. Dump trucks were to become a valuable line for Rowe Motor, especially after the company had acquired a body-building firm in 1919. All models featured worm drive, four-cylinder Wisconsin engine, pressed steel frame, I-beam front axle, Sheldon or Timken full-floating rear axle, semi-elliptic springs front and rear, solid tires, Ray-Zenith carburetor, pump cooling system, Bosch high tension ignition, multiple disc clutch, Brown-Lipe transmission with four speeds forward and reverse, internal expanding brakes on the rear wheels, and irreversible worm and nut steering gear. All Rowe trucks came equipped with vibrating horn, tool kit, jack, hood wrench, hub wrench, and engine governor.¹⁸

On February 7, 1918, a stockholders meeting was held in the nearly-completed Rowe plant on Fountain Avenue. Over two hundred stockholders were there to hear speeches by S. R. Still, J. G. Forney, company treasurer Willis R. Knox, and Sam Rowe himself. Rowe thanked the investing public, the banks, and the newspapers for their support.¹⁹ The meeting must have been a cold one, for the building lacked a heating plant at that time. Before the stockholders were served lunch and taken to the automobile show, Sam Rowe announced that plans had been made for the construction of a second building, to measure 120 x 200 feet, which would more than double the floor space of the factory.²⁰ A second building certainly was needed, for the first building was not very much larger than the addition that had been built to the Downingtown factory in 1915.

To advertise the quality and dependability of the Rowe truck, a picture of Cole Diller's 1911 Rowe truck was publicized in the local newspapers during the automobile show. By 1918, Diller's truck had covered over 100,000 miles with an upkeep cost of less than \$100. Cole Diller sold his business in early 1918 and went to work for Rowe Motor as an assembler and truck demonstrator. The Diller truck was used by the new owners of the firm until 1923 as the stage between Intercourse and Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It had covered over 135,000 miles by the time it was retired.²¹ Many other Rowe trucks had similar records of success, although none were quite as outstanding as that of Cole Diller's Rowe.



This drawing of Samuel J. Rowe appeared in the *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer* in February 1918, during the Lancaster Automobile Show.

In early March, W. Edgar Sammons, president of the Stellar Motor Company, Pittsburgh, which sold Rowe trucks in western Pennsylvania, came to Lancaster. He made final arrangements for purchasing fifty Model FW Rowe trucks. The trucks were for use on a number of transfer lines in the eastern part of the country. This order was the largest single order for Rowe during 1918.²²

In late March the machinery in the Downingtown factory was moved by truck to Lancaster and there installed. The company would have liked to have transferred the machinery by train; however, the railroads had been ordered to refuse all freight except coal, food, and war supplies after January 23, 1918. The Lancaster plant was opened and production was initiated in early April. Although plans had originally called for the continued use of the Downingtown factory as a branch assembly plant, it was closed after the machinery had been moved to Lancaster and was used only for storage.²³ Just prior to the move, total employment at the Downingtown plant had declined to a total of twenty, with six in the office and fourteen in the shop—hardly enough to properly build trucks on any suitable basis.²⁴

Despite the fact that several employees did not make the move from Downingtown, employment in Lancaster quickly rose to thirty men in the shop. Among those who did not move to Lancaster with the company were Sam Shrom, who had been in charge of the engine shop, and Marie Hannum of the office force. New employees in 1918 included Mary Lee Hook, bookkeeper; Martin A. Diller, engine assembler; and A. W. "Pop" Gardner, night watchman. With the increase in employment during 1918, the assignment of additional supervisors became necessary because shop superintendent Wunderlich could no longer supervise everything in the shops personally, as he had done previously. New supervisors were Lloyd Adams, machine shop foreman; I. Price Jackson, assembly shop foreman; and Cameron Mateer, stock room supervisor. Mr. Mateer was responsible for seeing that all finished trucks had their ordered equipment, that tool boxes were filled and that parts and supplies from the stock room were properly issued and accounted for.²⁵

It was fortunate for the Rowe company that the move to Lancaster had been made by the spring of 1918, for in that year the chaos in the labor market became much worse than it had been just the previous year. Labor scouts from war industries were on the streets of every industrial center, stealing laborers from one another.²⁶ The situation in Lancaster was not very chaotic, compared to other industrial areas such as that of Coatesville and Downingtown. Lancaster had a rural area around it from which to draw a labor supply. Most workers preferred to stay in the Lancaster area with their families, rather than relocating to some other place nearer Philadelphia where wages were higher. The housing situation in Lancaster was satisfactory for both employee and employer. At about the time of the opening of the Lancaster factory, Mr. and Mrs. Rowe moved from Coatesville, where they had resided at the Hotel Coatesville since 1911, and rented a home at 1043 Wheatland Avenue, Lancaster. The house was in Lancaster Township, just west of the city limits but over two miles from the Rowe factory on Fountain Avenue.²⁷ Most of Sam Rowe's employees who moved from Downingtown rented more modest houses much closer to the factory.

At the annual meeting of Rowe stockholders held on June 14, 1918, the only major point of interest was the announcement that stock worth \$98,000 had been sold since the middle of 1917. The sale brought the company's actual capital to \$3.2,000. In the previous year the company had sold only \$9,600 worth of stock because of the employment and production problems in Downingtown.²⁸ On July 2, 1918, the company announced another quarterly dividend on all preferred stock and shortly thereafter offered a bonus of common stock to all who purchased preferred stock.²⁹

Much of Sam Rowe's time and effort in 1918, aside from managing and publicizing the company, had been spent in seeking a government contract to supply standard trucks for the American Expeditionary Force. Finally, on October 5, 1918, his efforts came

to fruition when Rowe Motor received a contract to build five hundred "Class B" heavy-duty trucks. The Rowe factory had been enlarged in anticipation of receiving such a government contract. The 120 x 200 foot addition started in early 1918 had been completed and another addition of 100 x 120 feet was under construction with all steel work up by October. Employment had risen to about 40 men in the shop after the completion of the addition to the factory during the summer; about 100 more men were to be hired to help complete the truck contract.³⁰ Orders were placed for parts and the assembly rooms were made ready for "Class B" truck production. However, by the time the crates of parts had begun to arrive and were unpacked, the "War to end Wars" ceased with the armistice of November 11, 1918.³¹

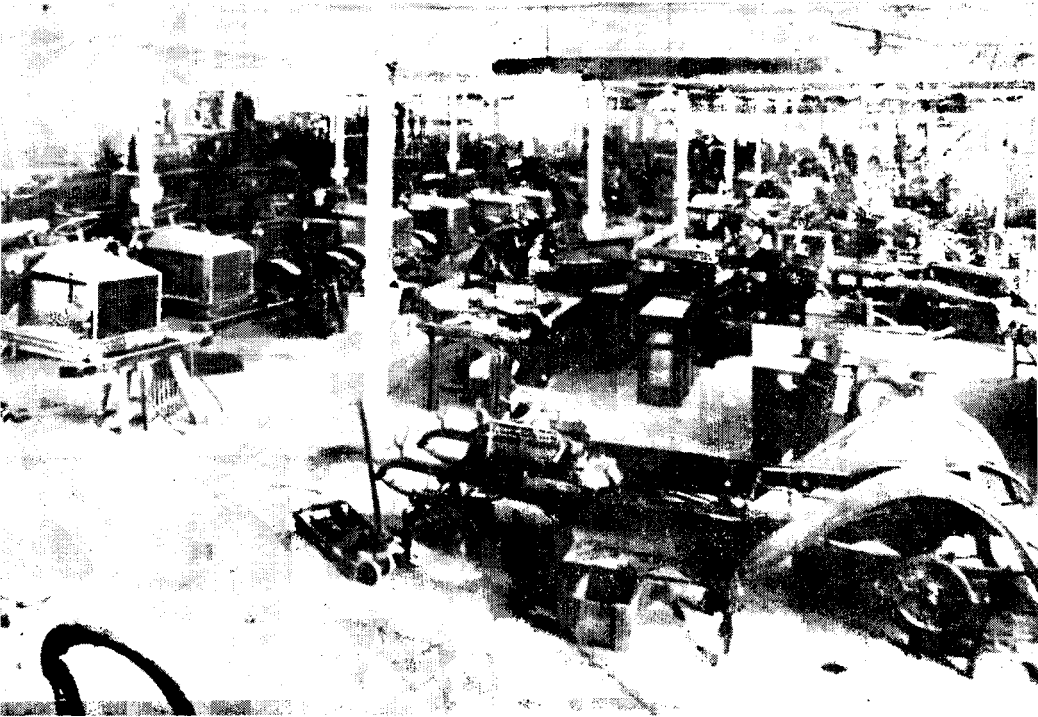
Amid the tumult of joy that marked the armistice, many factories, including that of Rowe Motor, were closed by the cancellation of government contracts. Rowe had turned out about 300 trucks during 1918. The majority of the trucks had been built in the four months of June through September, between the opening of the first addition to the factory and the clearing of the assembly department to make way for conversion to "Class B" production. Although the company had several problems to resolve before civilian truck production could be resumed, it was to find that the years immediately after the war were to be its most productive.

CHAPTER VI

EXPANSION

After World War I ended, Rowe Motor had a brief period of adjustment before production of civilian trucks was resumed. The contract for the Class B trucks was cancelled by the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps in late November. Because production on the trucks had not been started, cancellation was desirable for both the government and the company.¹ Sam Rowe personally supervised the reloading of the crates and boxes of Class B truck parts into railroad cars on the siding next to the factory in early December of 1918. Company vice-president Allen had by that time already started on a trip to the company's sales agencies in the West to create interest in the post-war line of Rowe trucks, which were to go into production in January 1919.²

Within ten days after the armistice the War Industries Board removed all restrictions on truck manufacturers so far as priorities and pledges to sell only to essential users were concerned. Manufacturers were allowed to place orders and secure deliveries of materials and parts for production after January 1, 1919, with no governmental restrictions. Because of shortages of materials and the war-inflated prices prevailing at that time, the government did not expect truck production to resume completely until at least the spring of 1919.³



Interior view of Rowe assembly shop shortly after reconversion to civilian production in early 1919. Note the chassis in the foreground with V-8 engine. This is one of two automobiles built by the firm in the 1919-1920 period. The cluttered, apparently disorganized assembly set-up was typical of Rowe up to that time. (Courtesy E. S. Wilkins, III)

Rowe Motor planned to meet post-war competition with a completely new truck which would capture public attention and increase sales throughout the entire line of Rowe trucks. Sam Rowe had for years wanted a truck that combined power and speed with sizable carrying capacity. During the war Rowe company draftsmen had designed such a truck, designated Model GW, which had 3-ton capacity and featured a V-8 engine and pneumatic tires. In company literature it was generally referred to as the Rowe "Speed Truck."⁴

The use of pneumatic tires as standard equipment on a truck as heavy as the Rowe "Speed Truck" was an innovation on the part of Rowe engineers. Prior to that time only light delivery trucks which weighed little more than automobiles could use pneumatic tires. Heavier trucks had to use solid tires because the pneumatic tires of the day could not support such heavy weight. Solid-tired trucks required reinforced construction to survive undamaged while running on the poor roads of the day. The heavier chassis and body caused the solid tires to cut up the roads, making them even worse than they already were. In addition, the unpaved roads forced trucks to proceed at a speed of fifteen miles or less. A Rowe catalog advised that the maximum speed of their 5-ton model, fitted with solid-tires, was to be no more than ten miles per hour.⁵

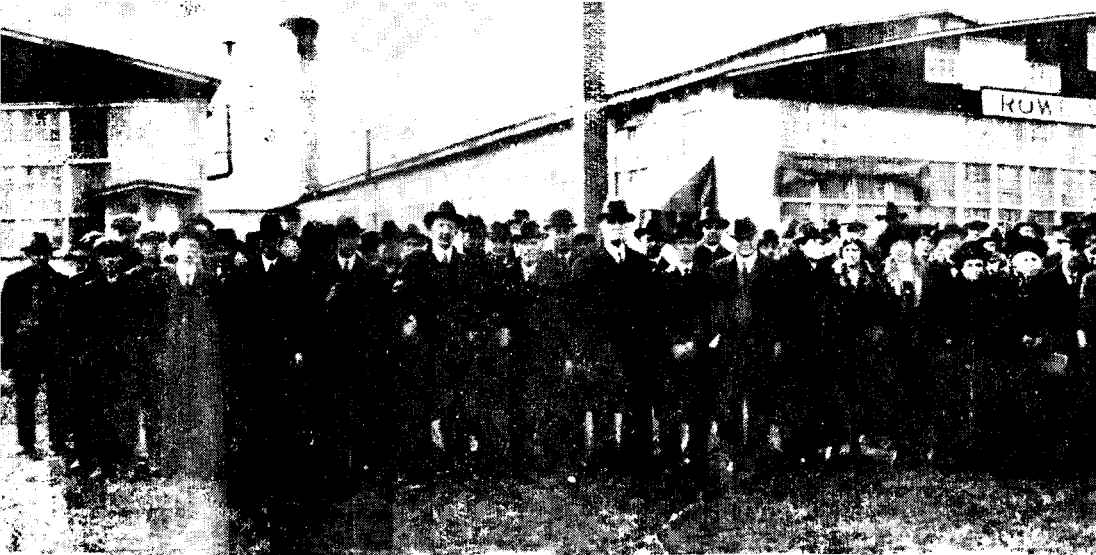
The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company had developed a suc-

cessful pneumatic tire for heavy trucks in the summer of 1918. Rowe Motor was quick to make use of the new tire for Model GW, which was still being designed at that time. The value of the pneumatic tire had been demonstrated in Lancaster in 1918 when an Autocar truck, fitted with pneumatic tires, made a trip from Lancaster to New York City, covering the 180 miles in less than ten hours. The Autocar's successful trip was one of the factors which led the Rowe company to introduce its "Speed Truck."⁶

The engine of the "Speed Truck" was the Herschell-Spillman V-8, manufactured by the Herschell-Spillman Company of North Tonawanda, New York. Several automobile manufacturers, including the Daniels Motor Car Company, the Douglas Motors Corporation, the Murray Motor Car Company, the Ross Automobile Company, and the Standard Steel Car Company, had used the engine prior to its adoption by Rowe. The use of a V-8 engine in a truck chassis was another innovation by Rowe engineers. The Herschell-Spillman V-8 was an L-head engine with bore and stroke of $3\frac{1}{4} \times 5$ inches. It was rated at 33.8 horsepower on the N.A.C.C. system but was generally advertised as being a 50-horsepower unit.⁷

The truck featured Zenith carburetor; Atwater-Kent distributor; Willard storage battery; Westinghouse starting and lighting; Ross worm and nut steering; cooling by pump and radiator "of unusually large capacity"; multiple disc clutch; Brown-Lipe transmission with four speeds forward and reverse; and David Brown worm gear rear axle. The truck had wood-spoke front wheels with 38 x 7 inch tires and cast steel rear wheels with 42 x 9 inch tires. Measurements included a 170-inch wheelbase, 144-inch cargo bed, 60 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch tread, and an overall length of 18 feet, 8 inches. The gasoline was supplied by vacuum feed from a tank under the seat. The truck came equipped with two electric headlights, one electric taillight, two oil sidelamps, vibrating horn, tool kit, jack, hood wrench, and hub wrench. It sold for \$4,500 f.o.b. Lancaster.⁸ The Rowe company stated that the truck was "equipped with a fifty horsepower engine for a speed as great as the highway regulations will permit." Actual top speed, although limited by a Simplex governor to just thirty-two miles per hour, was almost twice the top speed of a 3-ton truck with solid tires.⁹

The Rowe "Speed Truck" was publicly announced in early 1919. A prototype had been built in the fall of 1918 and sold to Lester S. Fortnum of Bridgeboro, New Jersey. Fortnum had put a large bus body on the chassis and used the vehicle to transport munition workers from Mount Holly to Riverside, New Jersey. The success of this prototype had led Rowe to begin production after the war. The "Speed Truck" was first shown at the New York Truck Show in January 1919. It apparently did not create the interest that had been expected and was not mentioned in the New York press. In spite of this, a Rowe advertisement in a Lancaster newspaper stated: "See the eight cylinder, three ton, pneumatic tired Rowe truck, which was the talk of the New York truck show."¹⁰

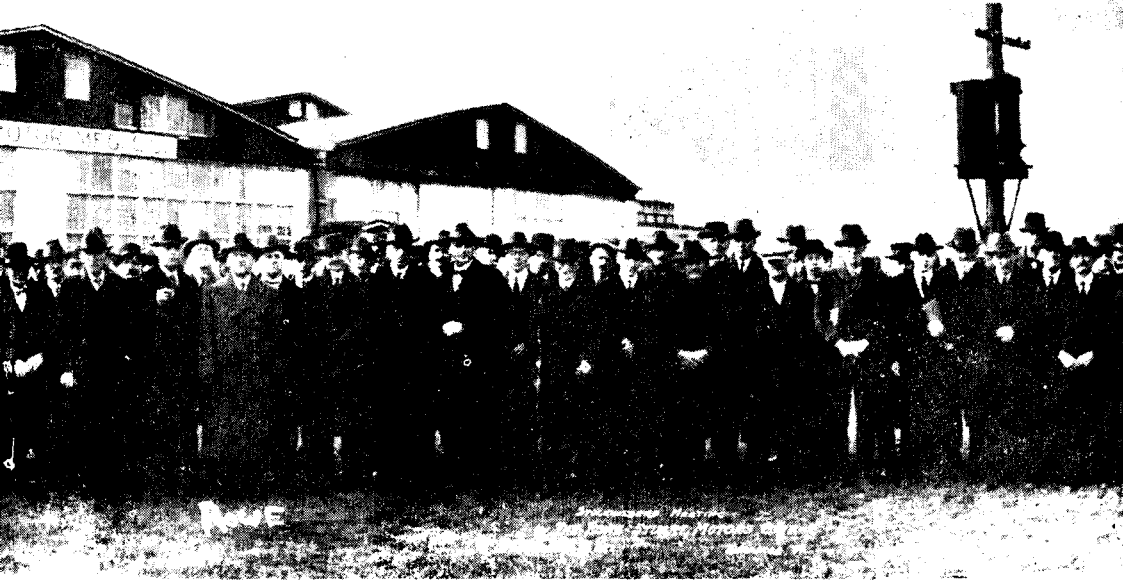


The Rowe factory in November 1922, when officers, employees, and stockholders met for the ground breaking ceremony for Rowe-Stuart's Anderson tire factory. The building on the extreme left is the Lancaster Body Com-

In addition to the "Speed Truck," the Rowe line for 1919 included Model CDW, with 2-ton capacity, at \$3,000; Model CDW, with 2½-ton capacity, at \$3,250; Model DEW, with 3½-ton capacity, for \$3,800; and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity, for \$4,900.¹¹ Model CW, with 1-ton capacity, was discontinued as the company once again concentrated on the heavier models. With its line of trucks—the "Speed Truck" particularly—the Rowe company hoped to meet the demands of post-war competition and improve the company's reputation as a builder of quality trucks while increasing sales.

Production in 1919 began very slowly after the reconversion of the plant to civilian production. Many employees were released in December 1918. Production was so slow that only four trucks were turned out in the first eighteen days of January. A rate of six trucks or more per week had been achieved by spring.¹² A Rowe advertisement in April stated: "The increased capacity of our plant, made necessary by war orders placed with us, makes it possible for us to make prompt delivery on all models."¹³

Prior to 1919 the company had relied on Wisconsin engines to power its vehicles. Perhaps because of difficulties in supply, the company began using other makes of engine in that year. In addition to the use of the Herschell-Spillman V-8 for the "Speed Truck," many Hercules and Waukesha engines and a few Buda and Continental engines were used. Martin A. Diller, who was put in charge of engine assembly and testing, had the machine shop make up kits for each type of engine. The kits were put in the stock room and used by Diller in the preparation of engines for installation in the chassis, so that all engines were standardized for Rowe's purposes, in spite of the variety of companies that supplied them.¹⁴ This effort on Diller's part certainly helped avoid confusion that might have occurred throughout the use of so many different makes of engine.



pany. The tire factory (used for truck production 1923-1925) was built to the right of the Rowe factory. Sam Rowe is in the center of the photograph, wearing a gray top coat. (Courtesy Mrs. Martha Mateer)

On January 30, 1919, it was announced that the Fifth Annual Lancaster Automobile Show was to be held in Building No. 1 of the Rowe factory from March 1 to 15. The building, which was 100 x120 feet with a cement floor, had been rushed to completion for the Class B truck contract. The company did not put it to use for production purposes until April.¹⁵ During the same two week period that the Lancaster Automobile Show took place the Philadelphia Automobile Show was being held. The Rowe "Speed Truck" was very popular and attracted much attention at both shows. The Rowe company exhibited a complete line of trucks at each show to advertise that a Rowe truck suitable for every hauling purpose was available.¹⁶

During the Lancaster Automobile Show the Rowe company signed as an agent the Kelly-Springfield Tire Sales Company, 28 East Chestnut Street, Lancaster, to sell Rowe trucks in Lancaster County and take care of sales that had previously been made directly from the factory. The Kelly-Springfield company sold Marmion, Liberty, and Chevrolet automobiles and Kelly-Springfield tires, in addition to the Rowe truck. Willis R. Knox resigned as treasurer of the Rowe company to join the Kelly-Springfield company as a proprietor, in partnership with A. A. Woodrig, who previously had been sole proprietor.¹⁷

Despite its increased production and its handful of distributors in other parts of the country, the Rowe company remained a "regional manufacturer," in that most of its trucks were sold within a few hundred miles of the factory. An advertisement for the company, but in the local newspapers by the Kelly-Springfield agency, stated:

Have you fully considered the importance of buying trucks manufactured in your own county? It's an easy matter to buy any kind of

truck, but no dealer can furnish repair parts more quickly than we can, because we go right to the factory and get them.¹⁸

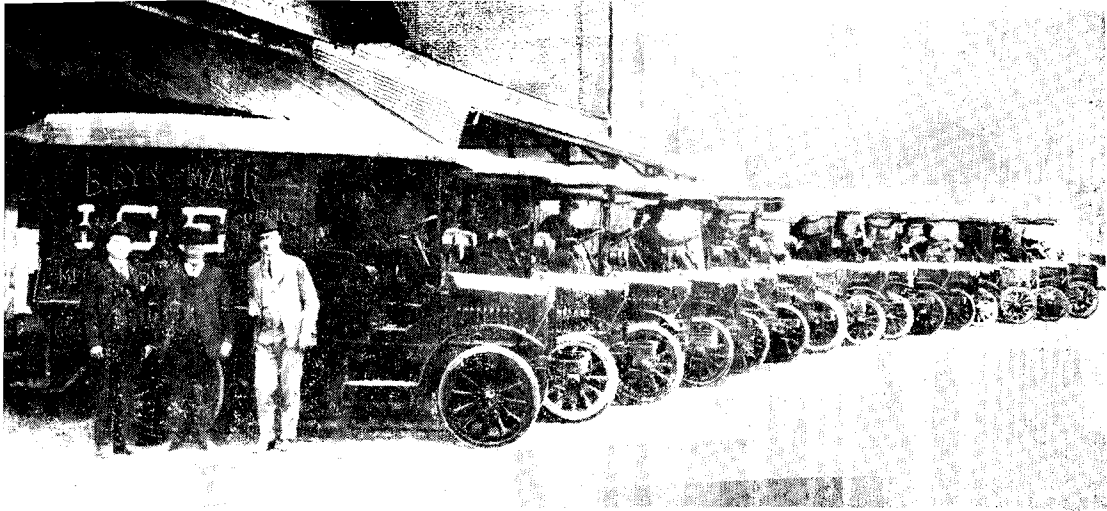
Such an attitude on the part of the Kelly-Springfield agency is perhaps understandable; it did little to help Rowe's overall sales picture. If followed to its logical conclusion, the advertisement implied that York Countians should own Atlas trucks, that Berks Countians should own Schwartz trucks, and that Montgomery Countians should own Autocar trucks. In spite of such provincialism, the Rowe company successfully marketed its trucks throughout eastern Pennsylvania. The company was particularly successful in the city of Philadelphia, where more than 200 Rowe trucks were in use by early 1919. That was almost one-fourth of the total production of Rowe trucks for the years 1911 to 1918.¹⁹

At the annual stockholders meeting in June 1919, Jacob K. Ressler was elected treasurer, a post to which he had been appointed when Willis R. Knox resigned to become a proprietor of the Kelly-Springfield agency. Elmer E. Good was elected second vice-president in place of Elias Groff, Jr. The board of directors was reduced from seventeen to eleven to make it a more workable policy-making body. The six who left the board were Messrs. Adams, Bell, Diller, Knox, Nolt, and Roseboro. At that time the company had sold \$458,000 worth of stock and was only \$42,000 below its maximum authorized capital. Preferred stock worth \$298,800 and common stock worth \$159,200 had been sold as of May 30, 1919.²⁰

In May 1919 a monthly house organ titled **The Rowe Runs Right** was established to keep company employees and stockholders informed about new models and expansion plans. It also carried articles on Rowe trucks in the hands of satisfied customers. This house organ may not have lasted very long, for all extant issues were published in 1919.²¹

In July 1919 the officers and directors of the Rowe company moved to solve the long standing problem of securing an adequate supply of bodies for Rowe trucks. They organized the Lancaster Body Company, officers of which were Sam Rowe, president; Amos S. Hess, vice-president; L. S. Allen, treasurer; Elias Groff, Jr., assistant treasurer; J. Cameron Mateer, secretary; and Elmer E. Good, assistant secretary. All of the men were either officers or directors of the Rowe company. For all practical purposes the Lancaster Body Company was a subsidiary of the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company.

The Lancaster Body Company was established in Building No. 3 of the Rowe plant. Because the building was only 120 x 100 feet in size, an addition to it was immediately started. Lancaster Body signed a contract to manufacture all the bodies for Rowe Motor, under the condition that prices, materials, and workmanship would be mutually satisfactory. According to a Rowe spokesman, the body company would "facilitate business and insure prompt delivery of trucks." He additionally stated that the body company would em-



A fleet of fifteen Rowe trucks operated by the Bryn Mawr Ice Mfg. Company, circa 1919. Sam Rowe is the man on the left standing in front of the first truck. (From author's collection)

ploy a large number of men as quickly as they could be hired.²²

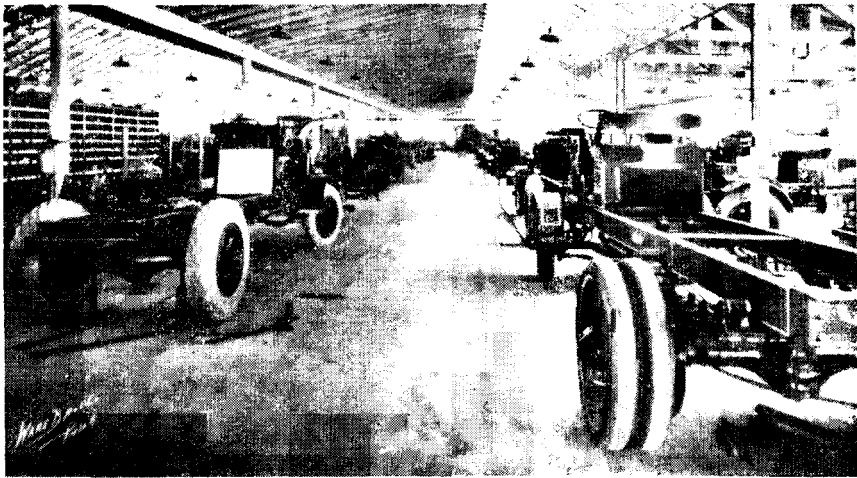
On July 3, 1919, Stanley R. Still & Company, investment brokers, offered for sale seven per cent preferred stock of the Lancaster Body Company at \$100 per share. The company was capitalized at \$500,000. The stock issue consisted of 3,333 shares of seven per cent preferred stock and 1,667 shares of common stock. Once again the Rowe company financed expansion by the sale of stock rather than by the use of bank loans.²³

The Lancaster Body Company made progress slowly because of an insufficient number of skilled bodyworkers. To increase production and secure more workmen, Lancaster Body purchased the assets of the Mack Body Company, 432 North Queen Street, Lancaster, in the latter part of 1919. The Mack company had been building some bodies for Rowe Motor since early 1918. Preparations were made for moving the machinery of the Mack company to the body factory on Fountain Avenue.

Before that move had been made, the building which housed the Mack Body Company and the Queen Motor Company, a Ford dealer, was destroyed by a spectacular fire on the evening of November 14, 1919. The fire started in the paint room of the body works, on the third floor of the four-story building, and quickly broke through the floor above to the finishing room where there were oils and varnishes. The cause of the fire was attributed to spontaneous combustion. The four-story building, 64 x 245 feet in size, was completely destroyed. The Mack company, which had occupied half of the second floor and the entire third and fourth floors, lost about \$30,000 worth of trucks, machinery, and supplies; only \$7,300 of the loss was covered by insurance.²⁴ Despite the loss, the Mack company's one remaining asset was its skilled team of body builders, who were quickly given employment in the plant of the Lancaster Body Company, where they soon would have been working anyway. In late November, Lancaster Body announced

that it was equipped to manufacture a complete line of commercial truck and pleasure car bodies.²⁵

During 1919 the Rowe company turned out about 350 trucks, a modest improvement over 1918 production; however, far more than half of the trucks had been turned out in the latter half of the year. The addition of the body factory next to the truck factory gave promise of improved production and sales in 1920. In late November of 1919 construction was started on an addition of 120 x 100 feet to the truck factory, and in late December construction was started on a similar addition to the body factory. When completed, the additions gave the truck and body factories complex a total of 80,000 square feet of working area and a production capacity of approximately one thousand vehicles per year.²⁶



Rowe assembly shop in May 1919 after the establishment of a crude assembly line. Trucks nearest the camera are nearly completed; they were pushed from one assembly station to the next by hand. The truck on the left is a 3-ton "Speed Truck"; the one on the right is a 5-ton truck. (From author's collection)

In January 1920 the Kelly-Springfield Tire Sales Company was reorganized as the Wheatland Auto Company to avoid confusion with a new dealership in Lancaster which sold the Kelly-Springfield truck. The Wheatland agency put Charles W. Passmore in charge of pushing sales of the Rowe truck. The agency retained its provincial outlook. An advertisement placed in the local newspapers stated: "Buy at home where you can get a truck like the Rowe."²⁷ Unfortunately for the company, there were many other makes of trucks that were as well-built as the Rowe. Robert Karolevitz, a truck historian, has stated:

In the post-war struggle for survival, many trucks took on similar appearances and often they were comparable in terms of capability.

Consequently, the failure of one and the success of another was due in a large measure to advertising, salesmanship, and business management rather than a truck's features, good or bad.²⁸

A Rowe truck was again displayed at the New York Motor Truck Show, held in 1920 in the Eighth Coast Artillery Armory in The Bronx, New York, from January 3 to 10.²⁹ A Rowe advertisement for the show stated: "1920 finds us well equipped for rendering prompt service and in position to offer Rowe agencies for some very choice territory." The only new agency which the company actually secured after the war was in Chicago, and that agency was apparently opened during the fall of 1919.³⁰ The increase in sales for the Rowe truck during 1920 was accomplished by the building of sales in areas where an agency already existed, rather than by the addition of new agencies.

As a result of the post-war inflation, prices on all Rowe models were increased for 1920. The Rowe line in that year included Model CDW, with 2-ton capacity, at \$3,300; Model CDW, with 2½-ton capacity, at \$3,575; Model DEW, with 3-ton capacity, at \$3,900; Model DGW, the 3-ton "Speed Truck," at \$4,950; and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity, at \$5,390.³¹ Although the company listed a 6-ton model and the first 1½-ton model since 1915, no specifications for these models were published and it is possible that none were built.³²

In 1920 the Rowe company manufactured automobiles for the first time since the touring car for the Rural Transportation Company had been completed in the summer of 1913. At least two automobiles were built, one of which had been under construction in the spring of 1919. One of the cars was a large sedan built for Stanley R. Still, who had helped bring the Rowe company to Lancaster. The other was a club coupe built for Sam Rowe himself. Both vehicles were powered by the Herschell-Spillman V-8 engine and had bodies made by the Lancaster Body Company. Although the cars may have been prototypes for planned production and the possibility exists that more than two were built during this period, the company made no further effort to resume the production of automobiles. The two automobiles actually built received no publicity in the newspapers or trade journals. In that same year two fire engine chassis were also built but no effort to develop a line of fire apparatus was made.³³ After brief ventures into the automobile and fire apparatus fields, the Rowe company decided to continue with its tried and proven product, the Rowe truck.

Despite the higher prices of Rowe trucks, sales increased dramatically in 1920. In March the company announced that production was being increased from ten to twenty trucks per week. By early April the company could announce that it had booked three times as many orders as in any previous year.³⁴ This sales success and the need for maximum production may have been the reason for the company's failure to return to the production of automobiles or fire apparatus, where it had previously met with failure. The

company continued to manufacture its line of Rowe trucks, where sales were assured.

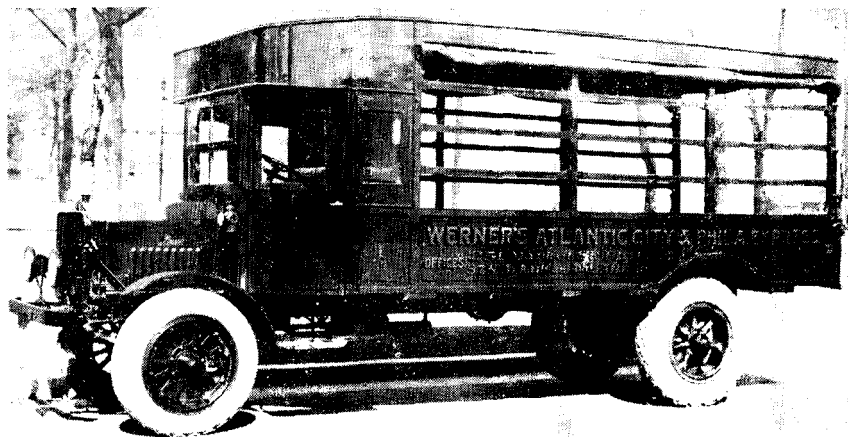
The Rowe company, with 75 employees in the shops, was able to increase production to keep pace with demand in 1920 because a rudimentary assembly line had been installed in the factory in the spring of 1919. With the assembly line, trucks were put on their wheels as quickly as possible and pushed down the length of the factory while the chassis was completed and the engine and other parts were assembled. Prior to 1919 each chassis had been put on frame bucks and all parts carried to it for assembly. Although the assembly line was an important step in increasing production, other steps that could have been taken to further improve and increase production had not been carried out. Many production techniques had not been changed at all. Jigs were not used for the assembly of units or parts and consequently there was little standardization in the assembly of the Rowe truck chassis except for the use of engine kits. Cowls, seats, fenders, radiator guards, and other parts were put together and attached to the chassis in the way thought to be best by the workman doing the job. For example, holes were drilled in each fender for the bolts which attached it to its brackets. If the holes could not be aligned, they were filled with metal putty and another set of holes was drilled. Such a lack of standardization pushed production costs higher and higher as production increased and caused many problems when repairs had to be made.³⁵ Thus the Rowe company entered the rugged post-war competition with production techniques dating, in many cases, from 1911. This was one of the company's serious problems which was never corrected.

At the annual stockholders meeting in June it was announced that outstanding stock totaled \$489,700, just \$10,300 below the company's maximum authorized capital.³⁶ A new campaign to sell the remaining Rowe company preferred stock had been launched in April by Stanley R. Still & Company.³⁷ The success of that campaign and the company's need for additional capital led the Rowe directors to seek reorganization under the laws of Delaware. On July 16, 1920, the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company of Delaware was organized to supercede the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company of New Jersey. Authorized capital consisted of 200,000 shares of preferred stock at par value of ten dollars per share for an aggregate total of \$2,000,000, along with 80,000 shares of Class A common stock and 20,000 shares of Class B common stock. The common stock had neither nominal nor par value; the Class B stock was the controlling stock of the company.³⁸

Rowe Motor was doing well enough at that time that inquiries were made by several individuals and companies seeking to buy control of the company or to buy out the stockholders. One inquiry came from O. F. Clifford of Philadelphia, who had interests in three companies and wanted to buy control of the Rowe company and form an amalgamated concern which would manufacture trucks, tires, and hydraulic devices.³⁹ In late 1920 a rumor went around the

factory to the effect that Rowe Motor was to be purchased by the Brockway Motor Truck Company, Cortland, New York. No change of ownership took place in 1920, for Clifford temporarily delayed his efforts to buy control and nothing came of Brockway's interest in the company.⁴⁰

As an example of the business methods and sales problems of that era, the sale of one 3½-ton Rowe truck might be examined. In the fall of 1920 two Rowe employees, Martin Diller and Dick Blake, were assigned to drive the truck to New York City for de-



Rowe "Speed Truck," circa 1920. Werner's used several Rowe trucks in addition to this V-8 model. (From author's collection)

livery to an agent. Sam Rowe sent the truck to Hanover, Pennsylvania, forty-two miles west of Lancaster. There Diller and Blake picked up a lathe-making machine, which was to be taken to New York City for further shipment to the Composite Metal Lathe Company. An officer of that company was a personal friend of Rowe. The lathe-making machine was strapped to the chassis and Diller and Blake set off for Philadelphia, where they spent the night. The truck was left in the Rowe garage at 1726 Cherry Street overnight. The following day the men drove across New Jersey, arriving in Jersey City in a heavy rain storm that evening. The truck had no weather protection; the men were completely soaked. They crossed to New York City by ferry but could not locate the sales agent that evening. The next morning they delivered the lathe-making machine to a Hudson River pier. Diller and Blake remained in New York City until their expense money ran low. When the agent still did not put in an appearance, they drove the truck back to the Rowe garage in Philadelphia and returned to the factory in Lancaster.⁴¹

In spite of such incidents, 1920 was a very good year for the Rowe company. An estimated 850 trucks were built and sold. This was the last year in which factory expansion was carried out and the last year in which the company paid dividends. The company reached its production zenith in 1922, but that year was one of recovery after the depression of 1921. For Rowe Motor, 1920 was the last year of success, although the company survived until 1925.

CHAPTER VII

DEPRESSION AND RECOVERY

By 1921 the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company was no longer a small company struggling to build trucks to meet the constantly growing demand. With the enlargement of the factory after the World War, the company ventured whole-heartedly upon the "new" marketing techniques of the automotive industry for the first time in that year. The Rowe company abandoned its conservative policy of buying parts and materials as they were needed. Instead, the company made up an ambitious production schedule and placed advance orders for parts and materials to meet the schedule. This system was widely used in the automobile industry. It was satisfactory in a period of rising prices and a steady demand for trucks, but depended on a continuation of the post-war boom.¹ The Rowe company entered 1921 without apparent notice of the business decline which had begun late in 1920. In January 1921 the company announced that one million dollars of Rowe Motor preferred stock was to be underwritten by the Mark Harris Investment Company of Buffalo, New York. At the same time, a new expansion program was made public. The program called for an increase in plant equipment, the construction of new factory buildings, and the enlargement of the sales force. The most important part of the program to be instituted at that time was the scheduled production of more than 1,000 trucks during 1921.² As events of the year were to show, the company could not have chosen a less opportune time to abandon the hand-to-mouth buying policy which had given the company steady, although modest, growth for ten years.

In 1921 the company offered a complete line of trucks in capacities from $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton to 6-tons. Prices of the larger models continued to rise. The Rowe line included Model HSW, with $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton capacity, at \$2,400; Model CW, with $1\frac{1}{2}$ -ton capacity, at \$3,000; Model CDW, with 2-ton capacity, at \$3,300; Model CDW, with $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton capacity, at \$3,575; Model CDW, with $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton capacity, at \$5,385 fitted with bus body; Model GSW, with 3-ton capacity, at \$4,150; Model GPW, the "speed truck," at \$5,250; Model HW, with 4-ton capacity, at \$4,500; and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity, at \$5,500. The price of the model with 6-ton capacity was never given on specification sheets.³

With this full line of trucks, Rowe Motor certainly had over-extended itself. All of the materials for 1921 production had been contracted for prior to the general price deflation which had occurred late in 1920. After having risen sharply when war-time restrictions were lifted in early 1919, prices had begun to fall slightly in May 1920 and then more sharply after August, bringing on a short but severe depression.⁴ This decline left the Rowe company with an inventory of high-priced materials just when the bottom dropped out of the truck market. Rowe's inventory situation was further complicated by the company's use of six makes of engine, other multiple brands for the same part, and the wide variety of similar parts needed to market a complete line of trucks.

The decline in truck sales had been preceded by a similar decline in automobile sales. That decline, already under way in September 1921, had become worse after Ford lowered the price of the



1921 Rowe CW 1½-ton truck with company vice-president L. S. Allen at the wheel. (From author's collection)

Model T. At that time many buyers delayed buying cars in hopes that other automobile manufacturers would lower prices. As sales declined, dealers cancelled orders with factories, factories cancelled orders with parts suppliers, and for a while the retail market stagnated.⁵ The chain of events, which lasted only a few weeks, caused a great deal of confusion and doubt within the industry just as the post-war depression was beginning, and helped cause a severe decline in both automobile and truck sales in 1921. The truck industry has sold 321,789 vehicles in 1920; in 1921 sales declined over fifty per cent to just 148,052 units.⁶

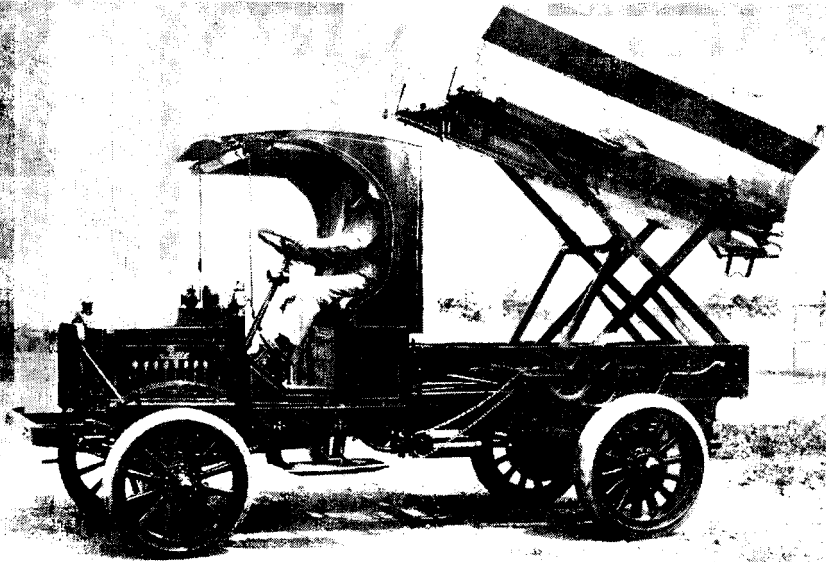
After having delayed much too long in making a decision, Rowe Motor reduced its production schedule drastically to keep production near actual sales in the summer of 1921. Production of Model

HSW was discontinued and the 6-ton model was dropped from the company's line of trucks.⁷ It is possible that no 6-ton trucks were built in any event, for no specifications for that model were ever listed. With the reduction in the rate of production, the only part of the company's ambitious expansion program for 1921 which had been initiated was scrapped. No additions were made to either the factory or its equipment. The only change in the sales force was the appointment of J. Milton Zimmerman, manager of the Philadelphia factory branch, as general sales manager of the company, with offices in the Philadelphia branch.⁸

In the late spring of 1921, as the company's problems were increasing, O. F. Clifford returned to Lancaster and made another offer to buy Sam Rowe's controlling interest in the Rowe company. Clifford held options on the Anderson Tire Manufacturing Company, which made automatic pneumatic cushion tires; the Hydraulic Devices Corporation, which manufactured the Farrell Hydraulic transmission; and the Hydraulic Clutch Drive Company, which owned patents on the Farrell transmission. Clifford explained to Rowe that the companies were to be amalgamated into one company and that the truck company was needed to complete the proposed amalgamation, which was to be called the Rowe-Stuart Motors Corporation. At that time the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company was the only firm which was in active business. The other three companies had transacted substantially no commercial business prior to that time.⁹

Sam Rowe had acquired by allotment and by purchase a total of 11,146-2/10 shares of Rowe Motor Class B common stock, which gave him effective control of the company. Clifford, who wanted to purchase Rowe's Class B stock, introduced Rowe to other men interested in the proposed new company, including Samuel E. D. Stuart, of Baltimore; Senator Robert L. Owen, of Oklahoma; and Joseph E. Farrell, Jr., of Washington, D.C. A number of meetings of the five men took place in Lancaster, Baltimore, and Washington during the late spring and early summer of 1921.¹⁰

Plans for Clifford's amalgamation were finally completed and the Rowe-Stuart Motors Corporation organized under the laws of Delaware on August 19, 1921. Capital stock of the company had no fixed par value; it consisted of 500,000 shares of Class A common stock and 25,000 shares of Class B common stock. Prior to the organization of Rowe-Stuart Motors, Clifford had concluded an agreement with Rowe for the purchase of his stock. Clifford then assigned the agreement to the Rowe-Stuart Motors, which gave Rowe-Stuart control of the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company. Sam Rowe soon cancelled the agreement but reinstated it on November 2, 1921, and agreed to sell his Class B Rowe Motor stock at ten dollars per share plus 4,000 shares of Class B voting stock of the Rowe-Stuart firm. The Rowe Motor stock was placed in escrow at that time. Rowe was paid \$15,000 cash and was given two judgment notes for \$25,000 and \$42,845 bearing six per cent interest



Rowe coal truck of 1921-1922 vintage. The driver is D. Coleman Diller, operator of the Intercourse Stage prior to 1918 and Rowe company employee 1918-1925. (From author's collection)

from December 2, 1921. Instead of Class B voting stock, he was given 2,862 shares of Class A Rowe-Stuart stock and therefore had no vote in the new firm. The purchase price had been determined on the basis of a valuation of \$750,000 for the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company's property, buildings, materials, machinery, and good will. This valuation was later to cause a serious disagreement between Sam Rowe and his new associates.¹¹

The organization of Rowe-Stuart Motors was publically announced in Lancaster on December 15, 1921. Sam Rowe was named president of the company and S. E. D. Stuart was named vice-president. Because he had no Class B voting stock, Sam Rowe's title of President of Rowe-Stuart had little meaning. Despite this, the local newspaper stated:

The deal just announced is the culmination of negotiations which have been on since last August and President Rowe safeguarded the interests of the stockholders in the Rowe Motor Company by stipulating that the old stockholders can exchange their stock for that of the new concern without loss and with bright prospects for the future.¹²

The apparent purpose of the organization of Rowe-Stuart Motors was to acquire all of the capital stock of the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company, the Anderson Tire Manufacturing Company, the Hydraulic Devices Corporation, and the Hydraulic Clutch Drive

Company; to carry on the business of the Rowe-Stuart firm purely as a holding company; and to permit the subsidiary firm purely as a holding company; and to permit the subsidiary firms to carry on the ordinary manufacturing and commercial operations.¹³

Officers of Rowe Motor remained unchanged with Sam Rowe, president; L. S. Allen, vice-president; J. C. Mateer, secretary; and J. K. Ressler, treasurer. Sam Rowe retained the presidency of Rowe Motor because his controlling stock was in escrow and could not be used by the Rowe-Stuart interests. The board of directors at Rowe Motor remained unchanged. At the stockholders meeting in late December 1921 it was announced that the company's outstanding stock totaled \$675,940. Apparently the Mark Harris Investment Company has not been successful in selling Rowe preferred stock. At that time the company had 71 employees, with 58 men in the shop and 13 office workers. This was a mild decline from an employment of 75 men in the shop and about 15 office workers during 1920. A Rowe-Stuart spokesman announced that employment in the Rowe Motor factory was to be increased to 500 men as soon as possible and that truck production would be increased greatly.¹⁴

Through the efforts of O. F. Clifford, a Farrell hydraulic transmission had been installed in a Rowe truck chassis for testing in the summer of 1921. The transmission was manufactured in Washington, D.C., by the Hydraulic Devices Corporation, one of the firms which came under the control of Rowe-Stuart Motors later that year. Martin Diller, Rowe engine shop foreman, was assigned to drive the test truck on a number of trial runs in the Lancaster area. The truck, weighted down with large concrete blocks strapped to the chassis, was driven up and down numerous hills to test the smoothness and reliability of the transmission. Operation of the transmission was simple, with control by one lever which was pushed forward or pulled back. There were no foot pedals. The hydraulic transmission replaced the clutch and transmission of the standard Rowe truck. Joseph E. Farrell, Jr., designer of the transmission, often accompanied Diller on the test trips to see first hand how the transmission was performing. Many Rowe company employees felt that the design of the transmission was good and that it would replace the standard manual transmission within a few years.¹⁵ Publicity for the transmission stated: "The invention is based upon a radical new principle in hydraulic engineering which permits the transmission of the motion of one unit to another through the medium of a static fluid body."¹⁶ The transmission may have worked something like the modern torque converter; it is impossible to determine this because of the lack of technical data on the Farrell transmission.

The use of a hydraulic transmission in a motor truck was not unknown prior to 1921. In January 1907 the Manly Drive Company had fitted a truck with a hydraulic transmission of their own design and in 1912 had sold hydraulic transmissions for installation in trucks manufactured by the Hydraulic Truck Sales Company.¹⁷ In

the absence of full descriptions of the Manly and Farrell transmissions they can not be compared mechanically. The Farrell transmission failed, as the Manly had before it, for reasons that had little to do with the transmission itself. The failure of Rowe-Stuart Motors to manufacture and market the Farrell transmission was due to the company's chronic lack of working capital, which was never corrected. Whether a well capitalized company could have made the transmission a success cannot be determined from the evidence now available.

Because of the business depression, production of the Rowe truck for 1921 totaled much less than had been planned; an estimated 600 units were built. That total included some 70 machines which had been built and stored in the factory when they could not be sold.¹⁸ For the first time in company history, production exceeded sales. Rowe Motor encountered serious financial difficulty as a result, because the unused inventory of materials had been purchased on contracts signed in late 1920; wholesale prices had by mid-1921 fallen to 56 per cent of their level in mid-1920, with most of the drop having occurred in early 1921.¹⁹ The Rowe plant's fixed costs were based upon the production of 1,000 or more trucks. With just 530 trucks actually sold that year fixed costs per unit were virtually doubled. The combination of high inventory and low sales in 1921 put the Rowe company in the red permanently; there is no evidence that dividends were paid after 1920.²⁰

During 1922 the company's financial position brightened as economic conditions improved to the point that the factory was working near capacity to meet the rapidly increasing demand for new trucks. Employment at the Rowe factory increased to about 75 men in the shop early in the year so that the truck production schedule would not be delayed.²¹ Employment at Rowe Motor was not further increased; the tremendous expansion envisioned by Rowe-Stuart Motors never came about.

Models for 1922 included Model HSW, with 1-ton capacity, at \$2,400; Model CW, with 1½-ton capacity, at \$3,000; Model CDW, with 2-ton capacity, at \$3,300; Model GSW, with 3-ton capacity, at \$4,150; Model GPW, the "speed truck," at \$5,250; Model HW, with 4-ton capacity, at \$4,500; and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity, at \$4,850.²² Most companies had lowered prices at some point in 1921 or when their 1922 models were introduced. In contrast, the Rowe line for 1922 was unchanged in price except for Model FW, which took a much needed \$650 cut. Many potential sales that year must have gone to lower priced trucks of comparable quality. Considering the price disadvantage, the increased sale of Rowe trucks in 1922 demonstrated the quality of the truck itself, in that it could compete at all against lower priced trucks.

The Rowe "speed truck" had never been a popular model; fewer than twenty-five units had been sold by the end of 1921. Although the truck was listed until early 1923, it is probable that very

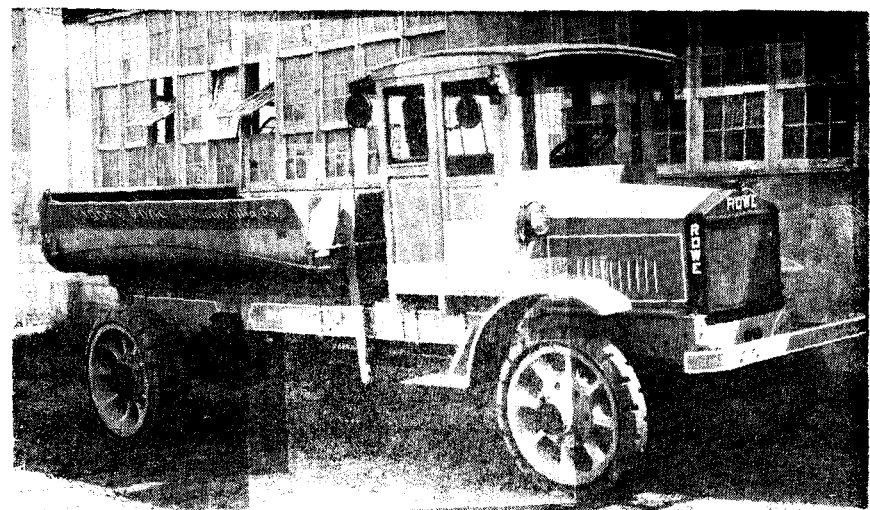
few additional units were sold. One of the last "speed trucks" sold went to the Honey Brook Supply Company, Honey Brook, Pennsylvania. The truck was sold by that firm in October 1924 after being "used very little."²³ The truck's failure in the marketplace may be traced to two sources. First, other truck manufacturers had introduced pneumatic-tired models with four-cylinder engines at much lower prices than that of the Rowe "speed truck," which could not be manufactured and sold rapidly enough to lower costs and the purchase price of \$5,250. Second, the Rowe company may actually have helped assure the failure of the "speed truck" in the year it was introduced by offering pneumatic tires on its standard 2-ton model for just \$400 extra. In offering pneumatic tires on one standard model while claiming that it was necessary to design pneumatic-tired trucks on the drafting board, the company created confusion and cast doubt on the reasoning behind the introduction of the "speed truck."

The company enjoyed record sales in 1922 despite a continued dearth of advertising. The Rowe name appeared in a few advertisements in trade journals and in the advertisements of firms such as Willard Battery and Kelly-Springfield Tire, who supplied parts that were fitted as standard equipment on most Rowe models. The export of Rowe trucks to Europe underwent a vast expansion during the year. The European market had not been exploited to any extent after the shipments to Russia in 1915 and 1916, except for a few trucks exported to Holland in 1920. Over two hundred trucks were sold in Europe in 1922. These trucks were assembled and tested at the factory, then disassembled, crated, and shipped to an export company in New York City for further shipment to England, France, Holland, and a few other countries. A great many of the trucks sold in 1922 went to firms and individuals who already operated trucks. Trade-ins were frequently taken to complete such deals. In June the Rowe company offered a number of used trucks for sale directly from the factory, including models of Riker, Pierce-Arrow, Mack, Bethlehem, and Autocar. Rowe trucks returned to the factory on trade-in were rebuilt and sold at prices much higher than those of the other used trucks.²⁴

During 1922, while the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company made full use of its facilities, Rowe-Stuart Motors began its much discussed expansion program. The program called for the construction of additions to the Rowe Motor factory and the construction of factories for the manufacture of the Anderson tire and the Farrell transmission in Lancaster. As the only part of this expansion program which was ever carried out, Rowe-Stuart Motors purchased 4½ acres of land on Fountain Avenue between the factories of Rowe Motor and the Merchant & Evans Company in September 1922, and announced in early November that a factory would be built there for the manufacture of Anderson tires. The factory building, which was to be 327 x 120 feet in size, was to be built and equipped at a cost of \$100,000. Construction was started with a ground-breaking ceremony on November 22nd with occu-

pany scheduled for January of 1923. The building was not completed until late March, just in time for Rowe-Stuart to rent it to Rowe Motor.²⁵

An estimated 900 units were produced in 1922. Sales reached an all-time high of 970 units, a total which included the 70 unsold 1921 trucks which had been sold in the early months of 1922. Rowe's sales record was achieved through a combination of circumstances: the improved economic climate, the exporting of trucks



1922 Rowe FW 5-ton dump truck fresh from the Lancaster Body Company's shop. (From author's collection)

to Europe, and the reorders of satisfied customers, particularly fleet owners. Companies which are known to have operated fleets of Rowe trucks include Weiland Packing Company, Phoenixville; and Florey's Brick Works, Bryn Mawr; with more than twenty-five trucks each; Bryn Mawr Ice Manufacturing Company, Bryn Mawr; with fifteen trucks; the Lifter Ice Cream Company, Philadelphia; with ten trucks; and moving and storage firms such as Dunlevay Brothers, Philadelphia; Ryan & Christie, Bryn Mawr; Casper Werner's Wildwood Express, Philadelphia; E. F. Espenship, Norristown; George Goelz, Philadelphia; and George B. Smith, West Chester.²⁶

Following the record sales of 1922, the Rowe company kept its line of trucks nearly intact for 1923. The only changes were the elimination of Model HSW, with 1-ton capacity, and the addition of Model CDW, with 2½-ton capacity, at \$3,575, the same price it had carried when a part of Rowe's 1921 line. All other models remained unchanged in capacity and price.²⁷ The company hoped that sales in 1923 would equal or surpass the record set in 1922 so

that the resumption of dividends could be considered. The prospect of a successful year for the company seemed probable in late 1922 but was soon to prove impossible to achieve because of circumstances beyond company control.

CHAPTER VIII

DECLINE

By the early 1920's the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company, along with other small manufacturers, suffered from a serious competitive handicap in the truck-building industry. A large-scale operation, such as that of Mack or White, was required for successful mass production and steady profits. High production and nation-wide distribution gave the big companies a competitive edge that became more pronounced as each year passed. Since unit cost declined as volume increased, the big companies could offer their vehicles at prices much lower than those of companies such as Rowe, which also suffered from uncompetitively high production costs because of the crude assembly system used. After the depression of 1921, selling had replaced production as the most important factor necessary for success in the industry. Big companies maintained large sales organizations with numerous dealers that reached customers throughout the nation.¹ In 1922 Rowe Motor had a total of just ten sales and service agencies. The company was at a serious disadvantage in both production and in sales, a situation which could not continue indefinitely.

Rowe Motor would have had difficulty surviving the inherent disadvantage of its size without other problems. However, serious problems could not be avoided; the first of several arose in December 1922, when the management group brought together by Sam Rowe suffered its first serious loss. In December 1922, Sam Rowe completed his fifteenth year as president of the Rowe company and his twelfth year as head of an active producer of motor vehicles. What success the company had enjoyed over the years had been a result of his leadership. He had never wavered in the belief that the Rowe company had a future, and his persistence had started the company moving in 1911 and had kept it moving through the trying days in Downingtown and during the depression of 1921. To be sure, it was his overconfidence that resulted in the fiasco in 1921. However, because he had not burdened the company with a funded debt, survival had been possible when sudden losses had occurred during the depression.

Sam Rowe, a conservative businessman and forceful executive, was ably assisted by men such as company secretary and stock room supervisor Cameron Mateer, vice-president Lumen S. Allen, purchasing agent Robert Leiter, and superintendent Charles Wunderlich. Rowe generally left shop discipline to Wunderlich, but when

he occasionally "called down" an employee, he told the man what he had done wrong and never brought up the subject again. This fairness in dealing with employees off-set a violent temper which he often displayed. Rowe's temper was in sharp contrast to that of his even tempered vice-president, L. S. Allen. Their markedly different personalities seemingly made it possible for them to work together successfully. Sam Rowe had moved from Wheatland Avenue to a home at 309 North Lime Street in 1921, only a few blocks from the factory and even closer to the home Allen had built on New Holland Avenue. Rowe frequently picked Allen up on the trip from Lime Street to Fountain Avenue so that the work for that day could be discussed.

By the fall of 1922 Sam Rowe had given most of the day-to-day duties of operating the company to Allen. There is some doubt that Allen was being groomed by Rowe as his successor, but by 1922, Allen's fifth year as vice-president, he was as important to the company's continued success as was Sam Rowe. In December of that year he contracted pneumonia and after a brief illness, complicated by a long-standing liver condition, he died on December 27. He was only thirty-six years old. His loss was immediately felt at Rowe Motor. It was not that he was irreplaceable, but that he had worked with Sam Rowe for five years and was more familiar with the management of the company than was anyone who could take his place. Allen's loss to the firm, by itself, would not have been so serious had it not been followed in April 1923 by a fire which destroyed the Rowe factory. The loss of the factory by fire, preceded by the loss of a competent officer such as Allen, severely crippled the Rowe company and was ultimately responsible for the firm's demise.²

The fire which destroyed the Rowe factory broke out early on the morning of April 2, 1923. Two employees were in the factory at the time: A. J. "Pop" Gardner, night-watchman since the factory was opened in 1918, and Monroe Geist, an assembler. Geist, who had been married only a few weeks, was at the factory to borrow a truck which he planned to use to move his household goods into a cottage near Millersville later that day. He had gone to the factory on the last trolley the previous evening so that he could get an early start in the morning.³

At about 3:30 a.m. an explosion occurred in the factory's electrical switchboard. Coming from the boiler room in the southwestern end of the building, Gardner and Geist found the main plant filled with smoke and fire. They tried to get out through the front door but were stopped by flames. Gardner told Geist to go back and get out by the back door. The watchman, who was very familiar with the factory, managed to get out past the fire to the front door. He turned in the fire alarm from the box in front of the factory and called company officials from the nearby State Police barracks.

Four fire companies responded to the alarm. When they arrived at the Rowe plant, it was already a seething mass of flames. The fire had spread rapidly within the building because many of the trucks on the assembly line had had gasoline in their fuel tanks.⁴ Firemen soon exhausted the water supply in a spring one hundred yards from the burning building. Because the nearest fire hydrant was along the New Holland Avenue just east of the railroad bridge, almost fifteen hundred feet of hose were required to reach the Rowe factory and a great delay in getting water on the fire occurred. Firemen used chemicals to keep the fire from spreading and managed to save the Lancaster Body and Anderson Tire buildings only because the wind was blowing from the rear of the factory and the flames were not fanned from the truck factory towards either of the other buildings.

It was at the height of the fire that Gardner became aware that Geist was not in the crowd of spectators that had quickly formed. After rejecting someone's suggestion that Geist had run away, Gardner began to "fear for his companion's life" and an unsuccessful attempt was made to enter the burning building. Firemen and policemen were not able to enter the ruins of the truck factory until after dawn. They found Geist's body lying face down next to a truck, about sixty-five feet from the rear of the building. He had evidently lost his way while groping around in the darkness of the smoke-filled factory. He had not been burned to death but had died from a fractured skull which he suffered when he either tripped or was overcome by smoke and fell, hitting his head on the end of a truck axle.⁵ The tragedy of Monroe Geist's death and the destruction by fire of the Rowe factory weighed heavily on the last few years of the company's history.

Property damage to the main factory was estimated at \$300,000 by the *Lancaster New Era*, \$400,000 by the *Lancaster News Journal*, and \$600,000 by the *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer*. Based on the company's annual reports, the \$400,000 figure was probably closest to the actual figure. Fifty truck chassis, many nearly finished, were lost in the fire, as was a large stock of parts.⁶ Among the trucks destroyed were five nearly completed sight-seeing buses that were to have been shipped to New York City on April 6 and one truck built for the street department of the City of Lancaster.⁷

On April 3, Sam Rowe announced that the company was already preparing to resume manufacture of standing orders lost in the fire. The Lancaster Body factory was to be used for as much work as could be done with the limited equipment and machinery available. A small supply of parts and materials had been stored in the vacant tire factory building. Fortunately, a few finished trucks had been awaiting the fitting of bodies in the body company building. These trucks were quickly finished and shipped to customers.⁸

In an effort to avoid throwing his employees out of work, Sam Rowe gave them the tasks of preparing the body plant for truck pro-



The ruins of the Rowe factory a few days after the fire of April 2, 1923. The second vehicle on the left appears to be a Rowe V-8 automobile; Martin A. Diller thought that the radiator shell, lights, and fenders resembled those of the cars completed in 1920. (Courtesy Mrs. Martha Mateer)

duction and clearing the site of the burned truck factory. Many workmen were concerned about keeping their jobs because they had lost their tools in the fire. One employee, named Harverson, lost \$300 worth of tools in the fire. Other employees had similar losses; few had their tools insured.⁹ Until the fire a relatively stable work force had been kept at work from the time of the opening of the Lancaster factory. Although some men had come and gone during 1918 and others had been employed in the peak production periods of 1920 and 1922, a number of men had been full time employees of the company for five years. Sam Rowe hired good employees and kept them. Only one man had been fired outright in the five years in Lancaster and he had been caught stealing from other employees. Generally the worst that could be said of the Rowe shop men was that some were rather "rough spoken." The stable labor force of that period did not survive long after the fire because of the unsettled state of company affairs.¹⁰

Despite all fond hopes and careful plans, the company struggled for several agonizing months before achieving production on a satisfactory scale. While many customers simply reordered to replace trucks lost in the fire and waited patiently for delivery, others cancelled their orders and purchased trucks from other firms. The records of parts in stock and on order had been lost in the fire. Much time was lost while this paperwork was replaced and new orders were made.¹¹ A new boiler room and a two-story office block were

added to the Lancaster Body factory. It was apparently at that time that the Lancaster Body Company was consolidated into the Rowe Motor organization to simplify operations. Actual production of Rowe trucks was soon moved into the Anderson Tire building, which was rented from Rowe-Stuart Motors. The manufacture of Anderson tires was never carried out in Lancaster. The Rowe factory was not rebuilt because of the company's weak financial condition after the fire.¹²

The selection of Rowe models was cut to five to reduce the supply of parts required for production. Models discontinued were Model CD, with 1½-ton capacity, and Model GPW3, the "speed truck." No Herschell-Spillman engines were ordered after the fire and no more eight-cylinder trucks were built.¹³ With production temporarily at a standstill because of the fire, the company lost many potential sales. By the time Rowe trucks were again available, customers had in many cases purchased other makes of trucks. With over one hundred companies manufacturing trucks, there were many excellent alternatives to the Rowe. The major truck-building firms had agencies in every city that Rowe was represented in, and most of these cities also sheltered "regional producers" of their own. Despite the many problems created by the fire, the Rowe company struggled through the rest of 1923 without further incident. Production for the year, which included a number of trucks built and sold prior to the fire, totaled approximately 290 units. The year ended with the departure of Sam Rowe as company president amid the first of a series of internal upheavals in the company's management.

After an unsuccessful attempt to cancel the agreement he had signed in 1921, Sam Rowe transferred his Class B Rowe Motor stock to Rowe-Stuart Motors on November 2, 1923, and in return received two judgment notes totaling \$67,845. With the agreement finally concluded, he continued to serve as president of the Rowe company at the pleasure of the Rowe-Stuart directors, headed by Stuart and Farrell. Clifford had died during 1923. On November 30, 1923, Rowe was asked to tender his resignation, which he did on December 7.¹⁴ S. E. D. Stuart was named president of Rowe Motor and Sam Rowe became general manager. This arrangement lasted until December 21, when Rowe company stockholders met and elected new officers: Elmer E. Good, president; Elias Groff, Jr., vice-president; Cameron Mateer, secretary; J. K. Ressler, treasurer; J. E. Farrell, Jr., chief engineer, and George R. Bidwell, general manager. The new company president, who had been a butcher in Gap, Pennsylvania, had previously served as second vice-president of the Rowe company in 1919 and 1920.

The Rowe factory had been closed for inventory at the time of Sam Rowe's resignation and was still closed when the new officers were elected. When Good and two directors, who had been appointed as an auditing committee, went to the factory on Monday, December 24, they were refused admittance by the watchman acting

on orders from the previous management. Good, after appealing to the State Police without success, hired two constables and sent them to the factory to keep the old officers from entering as well.¹⁵ The directors met several times that Christmas week and the constables were withdrawn by December 28. The differences which had separated the two factions were resolved at a meeting on December 31 when Charles J. Lebzelter was elected president of the company and Elmer Good was elected treasurer in place of Jacob K. Ressler, who had been company treasurer for five years. It was at about that time that Charles Wunderlich resigned as superintendent and left the company after working for Rowe for thirteen years. The new president was a partner in the Philip Lebzelter & Son's Eagle Wheel and Bending Works, Lancaster, and had not previously served in any position with Rowe Motor.¹⁶

The new management's first action was to announce: "An aggressive sales policy will be inaugurated at once and more than one hundred men will be employed at the local plant in near future."¹⁷ An effort was made to hire new men, for the number of men in the shop had declined in the summer and fall of 1923 as a result of the difficulties of resuming production after the fire, and because of the uncertain future of the Rowe company. Employees left their jobs at Rowe to find more secure positions with firms such as Armstrong Cork Company and Hamilton Watch Company. In one case, G. E. Langford of Anderson Tire Company told Mary Ruth, secretary of purchasing agent Leiter: "You had better find another job because this one won't last too much longer."¹⁸ Because the company did not have sufficient working capital to keep up with the orders which were received, it lost several sales outlets during 1924 and both employment and production declined dramatically. Employment had declined to fewer than thirty men in the shop by the spring of 1924 and few trucks were being produced. Because parts for new trucks were not always available, the workmen were kept busy with the rebuilding of trucks which the company had taken in trade. Five such trucks were offered for sale in May 1924. The sales and service of Rowe trucks in the Lancaster area had been taken up at the factory after the Wheatland Auto Company had withdrawn as agent for the company in 1923.¹⁹

In the spring of 1924 fresh capital was needed to pay overdue bills and keep the factory running. Bank loans were out of the question because of the company's poor financial condition. Rowe company directors authorized Lebzelter to borrow not more than \$75,000 from the Farmers Trust Company of Lancaster against a first mortgage on the Rowe Motor property. Rowe-Stuart directors agreed to execute a mortgage jointed with Rowe Motor for \$65,000 to "provide funds for working capital." In turn, Rowe Motor agreed to advance Rowe-Stuart \$5,000 of the mortgage money for Rowe-Stuart's "immediate financial requirements."²⁰

In order that the mortgage might be approved, S. E. D. Stuart asked Sam Rowe to postpone the lien of his judgments for \$67,845

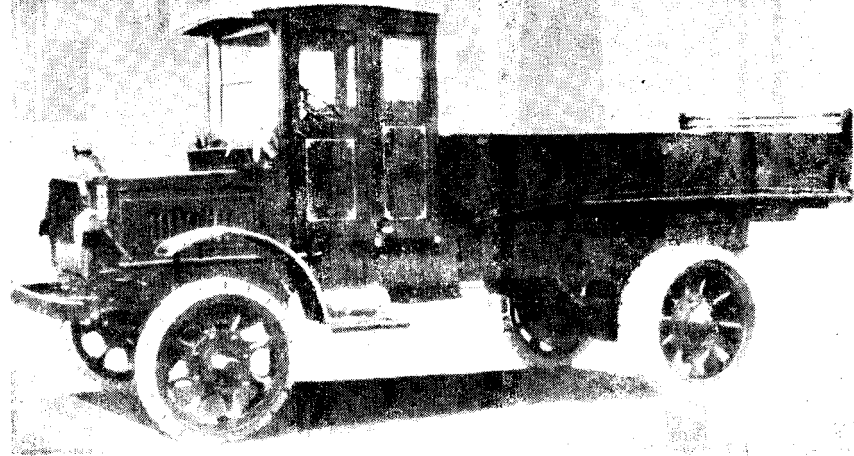
against Rowe-Stuart Motors. Payment of the judgment notes had not been made on February 2, 1924, and Rowe had gone to county court to secure the money owed him. Rowe agreed to postpone the judgments in the interest of helping Rowe Motor receive the mortgage and did not resume his efforts to receive payment of the judgment notes until early 1925.²¹

With the suit by Sam Rowe out of the way, the mortgage was approved by Rowe Motor stockholders on May 15 and by Rowe-Stuart stockholders on June 2. On June 5, 1924, the Farmers Trust Company received the first mortgage on the Rowe Motor property and deposited \$65,000 in the checking account of the Rowe company.²² With the completion of mortgage arrangements, working capital was available to finance and increase in production. No changes had been made in the Rowe line for 1924 because money had not been available for modifications or improvements. Publicity dwindled to occasional advertisements in trade journals and brief advertisements in the classified columns of Lancaster Newspapers. One local advertisement asserted:

Rowe Reliable Trucks
Powerful — Durable — Economical
The experienced truck user's first choice
Built right here at home
The only real service is factory service

From early 1924 on, all Rowe advertising placed an emphasis on reliability and referred to the company's product as the Rowe Reliable Truck. Slogans used in the classified advertisements included "Sturdy Simplicity for Severe Service" and "The truck you will eventually buy."²³ Such slogans belied the fact that Rowe trucks were not selling well because of fears of the firm's imminent failure. In June 1924 the Rowe Highway Special, a 2½-ton dump truck for State Highway work, was announced with absolutely no fanfare and failed to create even a ripple of interest.²⁴ Even in August, when the brief prosperity provided by the mortgage money had barely passed its zenith, the company was forced to sell four express bodies and several stake bodies at bargain prices to raise some ready cash.²⁵ By September 1, 1924, all of the mortgage money had gone to pay outstanding bills and to finance production; none had been paid to Rowe-Stuart, as had been agreed upon.²⁶ With the disbursement of the mortgage money, Rowe Motor went back into its briefly interrupted decline. Not more than 125 trucks were built and sold in 1924.

Conditions within the company had declined to such an extent that a Stockholders' Protective Committee, headed by Stanley R. Still, was organized in December 1924 to protect the interests of



1925 Rowe dump truck fitted with Kelly-Springfield Caterpillar tires. From Kelly-Springfield's *Motor Chat* for July 1925. (Courtesy Wheatland Auto Company)

some six hundred stockholders in Lancaster and Chester counties.²⁷ In early January of 1925 Charles J. Lebzelter resigned as president and general manager amid a disagreement over his salary. When he had been elected president a salary of \$10,000 for 1924 had been discussed but had not been recorded in the company's minutes book; the matter of salary had been deferred to the end of the year to see how the company had progressed. When Lebzelter was paid \$3,000 at the close of the year, he tendered his resignation within a few days.²⁸

At the time of Lebzelter's resignation, other changes took place in the staff of the company as the organization put together by Sam Rowe continued to break up. Cameron Mateer resigned as company secretary after serving in that office for seven years.²⁹ Mary Lee Hook resigned as bookkeeper after a similar period of service.³⁰ During the change in management, J. E. Farrell, Jr., who had been elected vice-president in mid-1924, served briefly as acting president of the company in January.³¹ On February 1, 1925, Stephen J. Brown was elected president after investing \$50,000 in the company to keep it operating. Brown had been a director of the Anderson Tire Manufacturing Company from 1916 to 1919, at which time his address was Troy, New York.³² Other officers were Farrell as vice-president and secretary and Harry P. Kready of Millersville as treasurer. Directors, in addition to the officers, were Elias Groff, Jr., Strasburg; E. H. Spence, Intercourse; J. C. Valentine, Coatesville; Landis B. Herr, Lancaster; Amos S. Hess, Gap; S. E. D. Stuart, Baltimore; and Sam Rowe, Waynesboro.³³

With S. J. Brown's investment in the company, truck production was, in late February, put on a schedule which called for the

manufacture of about forty trucks per month. A factory branch was organized to replace the sales agency in New York City. It is possible that the Philadelphia and New York branches were the only agencies of the Rowe company that were still in operation. Knud Flamand, who had been superintendent of the Merchant & Evans Company plant in Lancaster, was hired as superintendent of the Rowe Motor shops. New equipment was installed in the factory to standardize production of the "Superfine" Rowe truck, which had been redesigned.³⁴ Employment at the plant rose to sixty men in the shop and prospects for the company's continued survival seemed brighter than at any time since the fire.³⁵ For 1925 the Rowe line was reduced to four models, which were Model CDW, with 2½-ton capacity, at \$3,575; Model GSW3, with 3-ton capacity, at \$4,150; Model HW, with 4-ton capacity, at \$4,500; and Model FW, with 5-ton capacity, at \$4,800.³⁶ With the exception of Model FW, all models were priced just as high as they had been in 1921.

As production was just getting under way after Brown became company president, a crisis arose and threatened to force the closing of the factory. Sam Rowe, who had continued to seek payment of the \$67,845 due him in February 1924, had a levy for that sum put on the Rowe-Stuart factory, which was occupied by the assembly facilities of Rowe Motor. The closing of the factory was averted when the Rowe-Stuart directors were granted a continuance of the case, the levy was rescinded, and the case was moved to the April term of county court.³⁷ The basis of the disagreement between Sam Rowe and the Rowe-Stuart directors concerned the valuation placed on the Rowe Motor property in 1921. Rowe-Stuart, through its lawyers, claimed that Rowe had misrepresented the company's value to be \$750,000 when it was actually worth about \$500,000. Rowe, through his lawyers, contended that the valuation of \$750,000 was correct, based on the 1921 audit of the condition of the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company, which had been prepared by a certified accountant and examined and discussed by all parties before the agreement to purchase had been signed. Sam Rowe's position was eventually upheld by the court, in April 1926.³⁸

Despite the improved condition of the Rowe company in early 1925, Stephen Brown's tenure as president was brief. By April 1, 1925, he had been replaced by Farrell, who became the sixth president of Rowe Motor less than sixteen months after the resignation of the first president, Sam Rowe.³⁹ Farrell, who had been associated with Rowe Motor since 1921, had been in the marine engine business from 1904 to 1914, served as vice-president of the International Munitions Corporation, New York City, for four years, and been chief engineer of the Hydraulic Devices Corporation at the time of the Rowe-Stuart Motors organization.⁴⁰ Brown continued to serve as president of Rowe-Stuart Motors after stepping down as Rowe Motor president. He had taken both presidencies at the same time.

An encouraging report of the company's revival under the new management was published in July 1925 in a local newspaper. Man-

agement at that time consisted of J. E. Farrell, Jr., president; Harry P. Kready, vice-president; and Robert T. Norment, secretary and treasurer. The company appeared to be in good condition and had been operated at a profit in each month from March to June. The article stated:

This company, after many trials and tribulations, has risen from the ashes of debt and internal strife to an enviable position of solidity in the automobile industry. The last statement of the company, as of June 1, 1925, reflects great credit on the present Management, who, representing the Stockholders' Protective Committee, took charge of the business when it was in a deplorable condition, and in spite of the obstacles existing and in spite of a great deal of antagonistic propaganda, have succeeded in paying off the old indebtedness of the company and established an enviable credit position for the concern.⁴¹

It is interesting to note that on the same day that this report was published, six brand-new trucks built in 1924 were offered for sale at bargain prices. These trucks had apparently remained unsold during the company's "prosperity period" in early 1925 and were being disposed of to remove them from the inventory and provide a little cash for the company's treasury.⁴²

Despite the optimism of the published report, the company's condition was not sound; no mortgage payments had been made although the first payment had been due in April 1925. The company had unwisely invested large sums in a final quixotic effort to market a 1½-ton truck. The truck never reached production; only one prototype was started and that was unfinished at the time of the company's receivership. The Rowe company's most serious weakness was its method of financing sales. The company, which had been selling trucks on a time-payment plan since at least 1922, had instituted a new plan in 1925 which called for the financing of all sales with the assistance of a finance company. In addition, at least forty trucks had been leased out on very liberal terms.⁴³

As working capital was continually tied-up in finished trucks sold on the time-payment plan, the company's ability to continue was rapidly reduced. In August 1925, Ralph LaBonte was brought in as secretary and treasurer of the company. He had worked for several automobile firms in the Detroit area, but arrived at Rowe Motor far too late to have been able to alter the situation.⁴⁴ By mid-September several firms, including the Dixie Manufacturing Company and Hoopes Bro. & Darlington, had filed claims in county court for unpaid bills.⁴⁵ At that time production had dwindled to practically nothing and no sources of fresh capital were available. No more than 260 trucks were built and sold in 1925. The last public appearance of a new Rowe truck was at the Lancaster County Fair in early October.⁴⁶ Shortly after that the decline of Rowe Motor came to its inevitable end.

CHAPTER IX

RECEIVERSHIP

The failure of Rowe Motor, which affected many people in the Lancaster area, became fact on October 13, 1925, when Elias Groff,

Jr., and Harry P. Kready applied to Lancaster County Court for the appointment of a temporary receiver. At the same time, Kready and Landis B. Herr applied for the appointment of a temporary receiver for Rowe-Stuart Motors. Judge A. B. Hassler appointed William J. Neuhauser of the Farmers Trust Company as temporary receiver of both companies.¹ The Bill of Complaint against the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company stated in part:

That said corporation defendant is solvent, but has no ready money with which to pay its debts, matured or about to mature, and cannot obtain the same. The business of said corporation is now being conducted at a loss and a further continuance thereof will result in a very large loss to its creditors and stockholders.

That the liabilities of said corporation are approximately \$85,000, and consist of a mortgage for \$65,000 . . . of which only \$50,000 is the debt of the corporation defendant, and of various notes, trade acceptances, and accounts payable, to the approximate amount of \$25,000.²

The largest claim against the company which had been filed in court prior to the receivership was that of H. Clay Miller, electrical contractor, for \$671. In addition, bills from a number of parts suppliers were due.

A temporary injunction was issued restraining the officers, employees, or others connected with the company from disposing of any of the goods of either company. The officers of Rowe Motor and Rowe-Stuart admitted the facts as stated in the Bill of Complaints and joined in asking for a receiver. At the time of the receivership Rowe Motor's total cash assets amounted to just \$167.44.³ According to a local newspaper:

The move did not come entirely as a surprise to a number of persons who are familiar with the affairs of the concern, and it is believed that some such action has been under consideration for some time.

A statement credited to Joseph E. Farrell declares that the bills receivable were considerably in excess to the bills payable and that the tangible assets are greater than the total liabilities. But as all motor trucks are sold on lenient terms generally, it is thought that the company did too much business for its working capital and thereby "froze its assets."

Stanley R. Still, secretary of the Stockholders' Protective Committee, issued the following statement last night: "I am pleased at the appointment of Mr. Neuhauser as receiver, as it assures everybody of a square deal and places the business in competent hands. I still believe thoroughly in the proposition and hope for an early reorganization of the firm."⁴

On October 29, 1925, the court appointed William J. Brown and H. M. Vondersmith to appraise all assets of Rowe Motor. Neuhauser was made permanent receiver on November 14 and ordered to make a report to the court within sixty days. The report was to cover the character and extent of the property of Rowe Motor, the factory's income-producing capacity, and the best method of realizing its value for the benefit of both creditors and stockholders.⁵

Ralph LaBonte, who had been secretary and treasurer of Rowe Motor, was named agent for receiver Neuhauser to aid in the consolidation of Rowe's assets, with the assistance of company purchasing agent Leiter. LaBonte and Leiter directed the moving of all

Rowe equipment from the Philadelphia and New York branches to the Lancaster factory. The value of the Philadelphia assets was thought to be about \$25,000, but it was discovered that tools and other materials had been stolen by burglars sometime between October 13 and November 30.⁶

The report of the appraisers was filed in court on February 5, 1926. Rowe Motor real estate was valued at \$100,000 and the equipment and materials in the factory at \$72,100. Rowe-Stuart real estate was valued at \$78,000. The building constructed in 1922 and used by Rowe Motor for truck manufacturing after the fire was Rowe-Stuart's only asset at the time of the receivership. The Rowe Motor inventory included ten completed new trucks, eight rebuilt trucks, eight partially finished trucks, and fourteen frames, some with construction under way. In addition there were twenty-three bodies of various types and twenty-two truck cabs. The inventory was rather unbalanced, with just three Wisconsin engines, odd lots of wheels, over thirty carburetors, and virtually no electrical equipment in stock. Such figures emphasize the decline which the company had undergone prior to receivership. Newhauser made his report to the court on February 13, at which time the decision was made to sell the assets of Rowe Motor and Rowe-Stuart as the best way to benefit the creditors. No way to return the company to business on a profitable basis could be worked out. The court ordered a public sale to be held on March 25 and 26.⁷

On the first day of the sale the buildings and land of Rowe-Stuart Motors were purchased by Sam Rowe, who bid \$70,000. Rowe said that he had purchased the property as an investment. Samuel T. Freeman & Company, auctioneers, withdrew the Rowe Motor property from bidding when the bids failed to rise above \$65,000. About two hundred persons attended the sale. Prices were generally poor: a 2½-ton dump truck valued at \$3,500 went for \$500; solid truck wheels which retailed at \$80 each were sold for as little as \$2.50 each; the Wisconsin engines, which were valued at over \$500 each, went for \$155 each; and a Rowe truck frame with parts missing brought \$75.⁸ The total income to the receiver for the sale of Rowe Motor personal property was \$53,993. The matter of the sale of Rowe Motor's real estate was left open that that time.⁹

The right to manufacture the Rowe truck and to use the name had been sold to Howard F. Grow of Philadelphia for \$2,750. Grow had purchased most of the unfinished trucks and the equipment in the factory. He announced that he had no intention of reviving the manufacture of the Rowe truck at that time.¹⁰ Cam Mateer, former Rowe Motor secretary, took an inventory of Rowe parts for Grow after the sale. Mateer and his wife then spent several weeks at their home in Bareville, Lancaster County, pricing the inventory for Grow, who set up a parts service in Philadelphia for Rowe truck owners.¹¹

The major problem that confronted the receiver in early 1926 concerned the disposition of the mortgage that had been executed

in June 1924. The common creditors of Rowe Motor declared that half of the mortgage should be paid by each company because it had been negotiated jointly by Rowe Motor and Rowe-Stuart. Sam Rowe, through his attorney, declared that all of the mortgage should be paid by Rowe Motor since no portion of the \$65,000 received had been paid to Rowe-Stuart. The court declared for Rowe-Stuart and ordered the complete mortgage payment to be taken out of the real estate assets of Rowe Motor.¹² With that decision made, the receiver's final account for Rowe-Stuart Motors was filed on December 8, 1926. On February 12, 1927, Sam Rowe as preferred creditor was paid \$58,854, all of the asset which remained after legal fees had been paid. Rowe was preferred creditor because of the judgment notes given by Rowe-Stuart in 1923 and never paid.

Arrangements for the sale of the Rowe Motor real estate were made in October 1926. Mary A. Rowe, Sam's wife, made a petition to the court to purchase most of the real estate at private sale for \$75,000, with the rest to be sold to the Edcele Realty Company for \$15,000. After a public hearing the sale was approved by the court in November.

On December 8, 1926, receiver Neuhauser filed his accounts with the court. The ten largest creditors of the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company were:

Sheldon Axle & Spring Company	\$11,183.71
Farmers Trust Company	\$5,500.00
Pennsylvania Company for Insurances on Lives and Granting Annuities	\$3,314.60
Stephen J. Brown	\$3,271.18
Brown-Lipe Gear Company	\$3,267.43
Fulton National Bank	\$2,500.00
Chilton Company	\$2,399.95
Kelly-Springfield Tire Company	\$1,816.20
Hydraulic Hoist Manufacturing Company	\$1,659.88
Wisconsin Motor Manufacturing Company	\$1,324.10

Note the two bank loans and the relatively modest amounts owed to Rowe's suppliers of engines, tires, and transmissions. Only Sheldon Axle & Spring Company was a big loser among Rowe's suppliers. Joseph E. Farrell, Jr., filed a claim for \$700, which was allowed. Claims which were not allowed included Elmer E. Good's claim for \$500 and Charles J. Lebzelter's claim for \$7,000. In what must have been one of the smallest claims ever filed, the Berrodin Auto Supply Company made a claim for sixty-three cents! It was not allowed because proof was not filed.

Distribution of the assets was made on February 12, 1927. The Farmers Trust Company was paid \$71,403 for its mortgage with accumulated interest. After all other preferred creditors had been paid, the receiver had \$39,833.64 with which to pay the company's 187 common creditors, who were paid at the rate of sixty-one cents on the dollar. The final sale of Rowe items, consisting of five trucks, filing cases, and office equipment, was made on May 21, 1927, and the final payment to creditors was made on July 18, 1928.¹³ With that settlement the long history of the Rowe Motor Manufacturing Company was finally brought to an end.

EPILOGUE

During its truck-building days the Rowe company had built a reputation as a manufacturer of quality motor trucks despite the crude assembly procedures which often made repair work difficult. To determine how good the Rowe truck was, I interviewed Charles A. Lentz, who drove a Rowe 3½-ton dump truck from 1921 to 1929. At that time Lentz was employed as a chauffeur by Elias H. Eshleman's Independent Taxi Service, which included a fleet of Bessemer and Macks in addition to the Rowe. Lentz reported that the Rowe was never back in the shop for more than routine maintenance except for repairs necessary to repair cracking of the frame just behind the cab. The cracking was evidently the result of frequent and severe overloading of the truck. The Rowe was used regularly to haul coal, pig iron, or anything else which could be loaded on it, regardless of weight. The only problem Lentz had with the truck was a little clutch trouble, possibly a result of the overloading. He found the Rowe to be more reliable than the Mack trucks used by Eshleman's firm. The Macks displayed a predilection for breaking the drag link of the steering assembly and suffered from frequent brake trouble, which was corrected by neither the Mack dealer in Lancaster nor Mack mechanics in Harrisburg and Philadelphia but by the Rowe company's former superintendent, Charles Wunderlich. Lentz felt that the Rowe was a satisfactory truck with good pulling power, and noted that throughout the 1920's he saw Rowe trucks on the roads of the Lancaster and Philadelphia area.¹

Of the 4,218 Rowe vehicles built in the state just one is known to have survived, a 1921 Model CDW Rowe 2½-ton truck, serial number 3105R. This truck was in the Rowe factory at the time of the receivership and was priced at \$75 by the appraisers, although it was no doubt sold for much less at the receiver's sale.² The truck was used for a few years by a man in Chester County and then parked in a farm field about 1932 and abandoned. The owner of the truck died in the early 1960's and his estate was put up for public sale. The 2½-ton truck was purchased by a junk dealer. A 5-ton Rowe which had been abandoned in the same field was purchased by Harry Jacobs of Wagontown, Pennsylvania. Jacobs made a deal to trade the 5-ton Rowe for the 2½-ton Rowe because the smaller truck was in somewhat better condition and the 5-ton truck would provide more scrap for the junk dealer.³

Jacobs put off restoring the Rowe and finally put it up for sale, listing it in *Hemmings Motor News* priced at "rough, \$75," curiously enough the same valuation given it in 1925. The truck was purchased in 1964 by Warren Richardson, a fourteen-year-old high school freshman from Stratford, Connecticut. A complete restoration of the vehicle was started in 1965 by Warren and his father, Donald Richardson.⁴ The restoration, which was carried out during summers only, had progressed by the summer of 1973 to the point that the chassis, engine, and running gear were completely restored and reassembled. The truck was given a successful test

run on Manor Hill Road in Stratford in August 1973. All that remained to be done was the making of fenders, hood, and cab, using the old parts for patterns.⁵ When these last parts are fitted to the chassis the Rowe truck will be as nearly "new" as possible and will be exhibited to show the craftsmanship of the Rowe employees and the dedicated work of the Richardsons.

The survival rate of the various factory buildings occupied over the years by the Rowe company is no better than the survival rate of the Rowe truck. The only remaining building is the Rowe-Stuart building in Lancaster, which was used for the manufacture of Rowe trucks from 1923 to 1925. All of the others have been destroyed by fire.

The Coatesville factory was taken over by the Coatesville Plate Washer Company in 1923 and used by them for nineteen years. It was destroyed by fire on March 9, 1942, while the company was engaged in war work.⁶ The building was later rebuilt as a one-story building having a height equal to the first two floors of the old mill building. The east side of the building, facing Rock Run, is still of the original stone, but larger windows have been cut in the walls and altogether there is little left of the building which housed the Rowe Motor Company from 1911 to 1913.⁷

The Downingtown factory on Wallace Avenue, while occupied by the Downingtown Woolen Mills, was greatly altered in 1923 when the old stone buildings from the brick works period were razed and replaced with brick buildings.⁸ The woolen mill went out of business during the depression and the factory was used as a tobacco warehouse. While in such use they were destroyed by fire in the late 1930's.⁹

The Lancaster Body Company building, built in early 1919 and added to in 1920, survived until April 1, 1939, when it was destroyed by a fire caused by either spontaneous combustion or a short circuit. At the time of the fire the building was occupied by the York Motor Express Company's terminal and the garage of Charles Wunderlich. York Motor Express lost 16 trucks, 2 trailers, and 2 automobiles, while Wunderlich lost 13 trucks which were in his shop awaiting repairs. The building, which was not rebuilt, was still owned by Sam Rowe at the time of the fire.¹⁰

The Rowe-Stuart building, constructed in 1922, is today the main building of the DeWalt Division of Black & Decker. DeWalt has occupied the building since the late 1920's. Many additions and alterations have been made over the years and only the roof and part of the side walls of the original building are visible to passers-by.

The houses Sam Rowe rented in Lancaster, at 1043 Wheatland Avenue (1918-1921) and at 309 North Lime Street (1921-1924), have survived in relatively good condition. Rowe's home in Waynesboro, which he retired to after leaving the Rowe company, has been converted into two apartments and has been altered exteriorly by the addition of aluminum siding.¹¹ The Hotel Coatesville, where the Rowes resided from 1911 to 1918, was gutted by a fire on De-

ember 2, 1971, and was torn down the following spring.¹² Little remains in Lancaster, Coatesville, or Downingtown to show that the Rowe company or Sam Rowe had once been there.

Sam Rowe himself did not linger in Lancaster very long after resigning as president of the Rowe company in December 1923. He made preparations to move back to Waynesboro, into the home he had purchased in 1910. At about that time he traded his 1920 Rowe Coupe for a brand new Daniels V-8 sedan, perhaps because he wanted to disassociate himself with Rowe Motor.¹³ In May 1924 after the suit against Rowe-Stuart Motors had been postponed, Rowe and his wife moved back to their home at 233 East Main Street, Waynesboro. After the purchase of the former Lancaster Body and Rowe-Stuart buildings as investments, Rowe lived quietly in retirement with his wife until her death in 1949. After that he lived alone in his remaining years.¹⁴

In 1953, Rowe made his only public appearance as an automotive pioneer when he accompanied Clyde Fahrney of Waynesboro on the revival of the Glidden Tour held that year. The two men traveled in Fahrney's 1932 Duesenburg sedan, which had originally been owned by tobacco heiress Doris Duke. The men traveled to Cleveland, Toledo, and Detroit. Rowe still enjoyed relatively good health at that time and enjoyed the tour a great deal. He also enjoyed the praise he received, being referred to as "one of the outstanding automotive engineers of the World War I era."¹⁵

After the Glidden Tour, Rowe returned to his quiet lonely retirement in Waynesboro. His health suffered a sharp decline in 1957. In early 1958 he collapsed at home and was rushed to Waynesboro Hospital, where he died at age 88 on February 19, 1958, after being in a coma for almost a week. Three days later he was buried in Waynesboro's Burns Hill Cemetery, one of the last of Pennsylvania's automotive pioneers to be laid to rest.¹⁶

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Former employees of the Rowe company and relatives of former employees who permitted me to interview them include Mrs.

Mary Bucher, Martin A. Diller, Mrs. Marian Downs (daughter of A. E. Miller), C. Ralston Hatfield (son of Chauncey B. Hatfield), Robert Leiter, Mrs. Beatrice S. Loveland (daughter of S. R. Still), Mrs. Martha Mateer, Marion J. McCreary (son of Grover C. McCreary), Mrs. Walter Somerfield, Sr., and Mrs. Charles F. Weigand. One former employee permitted an interview but requested that his name not be used.

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DONALD J. SUMMAR

December 3, 1974

NOTES

Chapter 1 (pp. 43-47)

- ¹ Interview by telephone with Martin L. Rowe, Los Angeles, California, on September 22, 1973.
- ² H. M. J. Klein (Ed.) *Lancaster County Pennsylvania: A History*. New York, Lewis, 1924. Volume IV, page 287.
- ³ *Waynesboro Record-Herald*, February 20, 1958. Sam Rowe was listed in the 1888 Williamsport City Directory; he boarded at 610 Penn Street and gave his occupation as "apprentice."
- ⁴ Benjamin Matthias Nead. *Waynesboro, 1797-1897*. Harrisburg, Harrisburg Publishing Co., 1900, page 140.
- ⁵ Letter from Martin L. Rowe to the author, dated June 8, 1970.
- ⁶ *Waynesboro Record-Herald*, February 20, 1958.
- ⁷ Klein, *Loc. Cit.*
- ⁸ *Waynesboro Record-Herald*, February 20, 1958.
- ⁹ *Waynesboro Record*, August 9, 1905.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, June 7, 1905.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, August 16, 1905.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, August 9, 1905, and June 7, 1905.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, August 16, 1905.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, October 4, 1905.
- ¹⁵ *Waynesboro Record-Herald*, February 20, 1958.
- ¹⁶ *Hope Valley Advertiser*, March 15, 1906.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, May 24, 1906.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, December 20, 1906.
- ¹⁹ *Waynesboro Record*, February 5, 1908.
- ²⁰ *Horseless Age*, April 18, 1906, page 583.
- ²¹ George R. Powell. *History of York County, Pennsylvania*. Chicago, J. H. Beers, 1907. Volume II, page 613.
- ²² Dick Philippi. "There were other Popes, you know!" *Horseless Carriage Gazette*, Volume 27, Number 2, March-April 1965, page 30. Arthur Lee Homan and Keith Marvin. *The Dagmar and the Moller Motor Car Company, an Automotive Enigma*. Automobilists of the Upper Hudson Valley, 1960, pages 8 and 10. Crawford built 62 automobiles in 1907.
- ²³ *Waynesboro Record*, February 5, 1908.
- ²⁴ *Directory of Waynesboro*, 1908, page 86.
- ²⁵ *Waynesboro Record*, February 5, 1908.
- ²⁶ Interview with D. Norris Benedict on March 25, 1970. Rowe interview, September 22, 1973.
- ²⁷ *Horseless Age*, January 29, 1908, page 132.

Chapter 2 (pp. 47-54)

- ¹ Camden County (New Jersey) Corporation Charter Book 34-212.
- ² Information on early stockholders is from various dates of the *Waynesboro Record* for 1908; partial lists of stockholders dated December 10, 1910, and July 21, 1912; and a brochure of testimonial letters, circa 1915.
- ³ A. Piatt Andres. "Substitutes For Cash In The Panic Of 1907." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, August 1908, page 497.

- 4 Conclusion of the author based on all available information taken from newspapers, receivership proceedings, and interviews with former employees and others knowledgeable on the Rowe company.
- 5 *Waynesboro Record*, February 5, 1908.
- 6 *Ibid.*, June 3, 1908.
- 7 *Ibid.*, February 5, 1908.
- 8 *Horseless Age*, April 8, 1908, page 410.
- 9 *Waynesboro Record*, June 24, 1908.
- 10 Letter from Benjamin K. Nuff to the author, dated March 14, 1971.
- 11 John Bentley. *Great American Automobiles*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1957, page 254.
- 12 G. N. Georgano (Ed.) *The Complete Encyclopedia of Motorcars, 1885-1968*. New York, Dutton, 1968, page 175.
- 13 *Cycle & Automobile Trade Journal*, September 1906, page 175. "Walter Kneip Talks About Trucks." *Air Cooled News*, Volume VIII, Number 3, December 1960, page 5.
- 14 *Waynesboro Record*, April 8, 1908.
- 15 *Ibid.*, March 11, 1908.
- 16 *Ibid.*, April 8, 1908.
- 17 Nuff letter, March 14, 1971.
- 18 *Waynesboro Record*, February 5, 1908.
- 19 *Ibid.*, June 3, 1908.
- 20 *Ibid.*, August 19, 1908.
- 21 *Ibid.*, August 26, 1908.
- 22 *Ibid.*, September 9, 1908.
- 23 *Hope Valley Advertiser*, October 22, 1908. The Rowe Motor Company was not in existence long enough to be listed in the *Directory of Waynesboro* for either 1908 or 1909. The 1908 listing read: "Rowe, S. J., mfg., 233 East Main St." (page 86), while the 1909 listing read: "Rowe, S. J., mechanical engineer, 233 E. Main St." (page 113).
- 24 *Hope Valley Advertiser*, February 17, 1910.
- 25 *Waynesboro Record*, December 29, 1909.
- 26 *Martinsburg Herald*, January 22, 1910.
- 27 *Waynesboro Record*, December 29, 1909.
- 28 Automobile Manufacturers Association. *Automobiles of America*. Detroit, Wayne State, 1962, page 19.
- 29 *Waynesboro Record*, January 19, 1910.
- 30 *Martinsburg Herald*, January 22, 1910.
- 31 *Waynesboro Record*, February 16, 1910.
- 32 *Martinsburg Herald*, February 19, 1910.
- 33 *Ibid.*, July 2, 1910.
- 34 *Ibid.*, June 23, 1910.
- 35 Floyd Clymer. *Motor Scrapbook Number 6*. Los Angeles, Floyd Clymer Publications, 1950, page 97.
- 36 Interview with John B. Montville on October 5, 1973.
- 37 *Martinsburg Herald*, June 23, 1910.
- 38 *Ibid.*, July 2, 1910.
- 39 *Ibid.*, January 22, 1910.
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- 41 *Martinsburg Herald*, September 3, 1910.

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- 3 Mateer interview, May 27, 1970.
- 4 *Coatesville Record*, December 2, 1910.
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 - 25 Hoffman interview, January 25, 1971.
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 - 28 Letter from E. R. F. Limited to the author, dated November 10, 1971.
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 - 31 *List of Automobiles*. New York, Commercial Union Assurance Company, 1915, page 282.
 - 32 *Ibid.*, page 172.
 - 33 Rowe Company, brochure of Testimonial letters, circa 1915.
 - 34 *New Holland Clarion*, January 14, 1911.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, February 24, 1912.
 - 36 *Coatesville Record*, December 18, 1911.
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 - 38 *Coatesville Record*, December 18, 1911. *Strasburg News*, March 1, 1913. Rowe catalog, circa 1920.
 - 39 New Jersey, File G-115. Rowe Motor Company, annual report dated June 27, 1911.
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 - 41 *Coatesville Record*, October 18, 1911.
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 - 43 *List of Automobiles*, page 282.
 - 44 *Cycle & Automobile Trade Journal*, December 1911, pages 185-186.
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- 71 *List of Automobiles*, page 282.
- 72 *Horseless Age*, January 22, 1913, page 186.
- 73 *Automobiles of America*, page 59.
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- 79 *Ibid.*, March 22, 1913.
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- 83 *Strasburg News*, April 5, 1913.
- 84 *Coatesville Record*, May 5, 1913.
- 85 *Lancaster Law Review*, Vol. XL, No. 20, 1926, page 138. It is known that the company paid a total of just sixteen quarterly dividends between 1913 and the annual audit of 1921. In the absence of company records it is impossible to pinpoint just when dividends were paid, except when the fact was published in the newspaper. The author believes, however, that payments were made in 1913 (one dividend), in the 1915-1916 period (perhaps four dividends), and in the 1918-1920 period. In some instances the money was used for expansion or relocation, rather than for dividends. In most quarters when dividends were not paid the company showed a small profit or a small loss. The first large loss occurred in 1921.
- 86 *Coatesville Record*, May 5, 1913.
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- 88 *Strasburg News*, March 22, 1913.
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- 91 *Lancaster New Era*, November 3, 1917.
- 92 *Coatesville Record*, November 12, 1913.
- 93 *Ibid.*, May 5, 1913.

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- 2 *Coatesville Record*, November 12 and November 20, 1913.
- 3 *Farm & Business Directory of Chester County*, 1914, page 249. *Coatesville Record*, April 18, 1914.
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- 19 *Coatesville Record*, July 30 and August 3, 1915.
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- 21 Interview with Martin A. Diller on June 3, 1971.
- 22 *Coatesville Record*, November 8, 1917.
- 23 *Coatesville Record*, August 6, August 11, and August 12, 1915.
- 24 *The Automobile*, August 12, 1915, page 312.
- 25 *Coatesville Record*, August 12 and August 19, 1915.
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- 33 *Lancaster New Era*, November 3, 1917. *Coatesville Record*, January 5, 1916.
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- 6 *Boyd's Philadelphia Directory*, 1917, page 1455.
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- 1 *Lancaster New Era*, October 14, 1925.
- 2 *Lancaster Law Review*, Vol. XL, No. 62, 1927, page 395.
- 3 Equity Docket 7-179, Testimony, page 21, and Report of Receiver, *Lancaster New Era*, October 14, 1925.
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- 9 Interview with William M. McFarlan on December 2, 1969.
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- 11 Visit to Waynesboro on March 26, 1970.
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