CHAPTER VII.

THE CHAIR FACTORY.

But it was its woodworking industries that was to give the settlement its permanency and make it known from one end of the land to the other and for that matter throughout the civilized world in time. It was the timber and saw mills that paved the way for the first woodworking manufacturers and it was these early beginnings on which the foundation of the city of today was gradually built.

But before we proceed it might be well to make the point that long before ever white man set his foot on these grounds, Two Rivers had been a manufacturing site. On the French or east side the piles of flint chips broken or chipped from flint rocks as they were being shaped into arrows and other stone implements are abundant evidence that here was the site of an ancient industry. Mingled with the piles of chips of all sizes and colors, arrow heads, some perfect, some broken in the course of manufacture can be found. Besides this, fragments of pottery and the bones of the dead give mute evidence that a permanent site of abode existed here for years before the advent of the white man. But it is with the modern settlement that we are dealing. Up to this time, viz.: 1850, there were no manufacturing industries here except that in a sense saw mills might come under that classification. But no finished goods were made here and the saw mills would only foreshadow the end unless manufacturing institutions located here.

Through the assistance of Mr. C. H. Albers who was the first superintendent of the pail factory here, we were enabled to obtain a great deal of information relative to the first woodworking industry here, this being the manufacture of chairs by the New England Mfg. Co.
The following items relative to the chair factory were obtained from Mrs. Elizabeth A. Jennison, of Omaha, Neb., a daughter of the first superintendent, William Honey. This Wm. Honey was murdered at Fond du Lac, Wis., in the Winter of 1868, where he was then engaged in the poultry business. His widow is now living in Omaha at the age of 95 years, and in the enjoyment of fair health and all of her faculties, excepting being nearly blind.

The chair factory was built in the Summer of 1856 by the New England Mfg. Co. The company was composed of Aldrich Smith & Co. of Two Rivers, Wm. Honey, Thomas Burns, Charles Jennison, and probably Alanson Hall of Massachusetts. Mr. Honey was superintendent of the sawing out of the stock and the preparation of the stock for use, Charles Jennison of the chair and furniture making, and Thomas Burns of the painting and finishing of the manufactured articles, and Mr. Hall worked at painting in the factory. Mr. Jennison gave up the superintendency of the chair making department in 1858 or 59 and was succeeded by Wm. Johnson. The hard times of 1857 and 58 were disastrous to the New England Mfg. Co. and the property came into the hands of Aldrich, Smith & Co. and their successors. In 1859 John N. Burns (a son of Thomas Burns), rented the property and assumed the operation of the factory. Mr. Geo. Simonds of Newbury, Ohio, succeeded Mr. Johnson as superintendent of the chair making department. John H. Burns operated the works until after 1862 and it was operated by Joseph Mann soon after he came to Two Rivers.

Mr. Honey remained with the factory until about 1864. Mr. J. B. Lord of Gardner, Mass., writes as follows: "I arrived in Two Rivers in the month of September, 1856, the chair factory buildings being built and most of the machinery installed. The engine was made in Fitchburg, Mass., and was shipped to Two Rivers by propeller from Buffalo late
in the Fall of 1856, but was caught at Mackinaw in the ice and did not arrive at its destination until early in the Spring of 1857.

When part of the machinery was in running order, Geo. W. Honey (a son of Wm. Honey), and myself made, partly by hand, the first chairs, some office chairs for the Lake House."

Geo. W. Honey is now holding some U. S. Government position in Washington, D. C., and Mr. Lord is employed in one of the large chair factories in Gardner, Mass., to which city he went immediately after the close of the war, he having been a member of the 27th Wis. Regiment, in which he enlisted in 1862.