



**January 26, 1886** marks the beginning of the Plainwell Paper Company. It was on that day that 25 local businessmen incorporated their beliefs in commercial enterprise into the Michigan Paper Company. These far-seeing men realized that the town of Plainwell, located on the banks of the Kalamazoo River in southwestern Michigan, was an ideal spot for producing paper. The river, the proximity to Chicago, Detroit and the Great Lakes, and the availability of raw materials gave Plainwell the attributes for growth and stability.

The mill race built from the Kalamazoo River would provide the energy for the proposed paper mill. Constructed in 1856 by the Plainwell Water Power Company, the mill race was the power source for the city, a flour mill, and several other businesses.

There was another paper mill in Plainwell already—the Lyon and Page Mill, which was built in 1872 and manufactured newsprint until it closed in 1887. The Michigan Paper Company would eventually buy this mill's facilities in **1890**.



### Presidents



Hale W. Page  
 H. P. Kauffer  
 J. W. Gilkey  
 J. D. Wagner  
 G. M. Ames  
 George Gilkey  
 Dwight L. Stocker  
 Allan B. Milham  
 L. D. Nicholson

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Samuel J. Taylor

*(No presidents were named between 1956 and 1985, when Taylor became president. Interim officers were vice presidents or general managers named by the parent corporation.)*

### Shareholders as of January 23, 1890

Sarah M. Page	389 shares	\$9,725
Hale M. Page	1 share	25
Sanford H. Carbyn	116 shares	2,900
H. W. Wright	20 shares	500
George H. Anderson	25 shares	625
P. J. Carl	25 shares	625
B. Schoonmaker	40 shares	1,000
J. H. Wagner & Brother	100 shares	2,500
C. O. Gilkey	74 shares	1,850
H. F. Woodhams	37 shares	925
J. W. Hicks	110 shares	2,750
George G. Soule	122 shares	3,050
W. J. Clancey	48 shares	1,200
J. I. Bush	40 shares	1,000
J. B. Hurlburt	80 shares	2,000
W. W. Woodhams	13 shares	325
O. J. Woodard	50 shares	1,250
M. Bailey	119 shares	2,975
M. J. Goss	14 shares	350
N. A. Balch	65 shares	1,625
J. W. Gilkey	70 shares	1,750
Leve Arnold	65 shares	1,625
Lydia W. Woodhams	30 shares	750
William Thomas	240 shares	6,000
W. H. Toats	8 shares	200
R. L. Soule	3 shares	75
L. Toats	10 shares	250
Charlotte Toats	5 shares	125
Soule and Hicks	4 shares	100
James E. Botsford	20 shares	500
Ella A. Thomas	10 shares	250
Cora N. Hill	12 shares	300
F. P. Heath	17 shares	425
J. H. Hitchcock	18 shares	450
Total	2,000 shares	\$50,000

### First Board of Directors



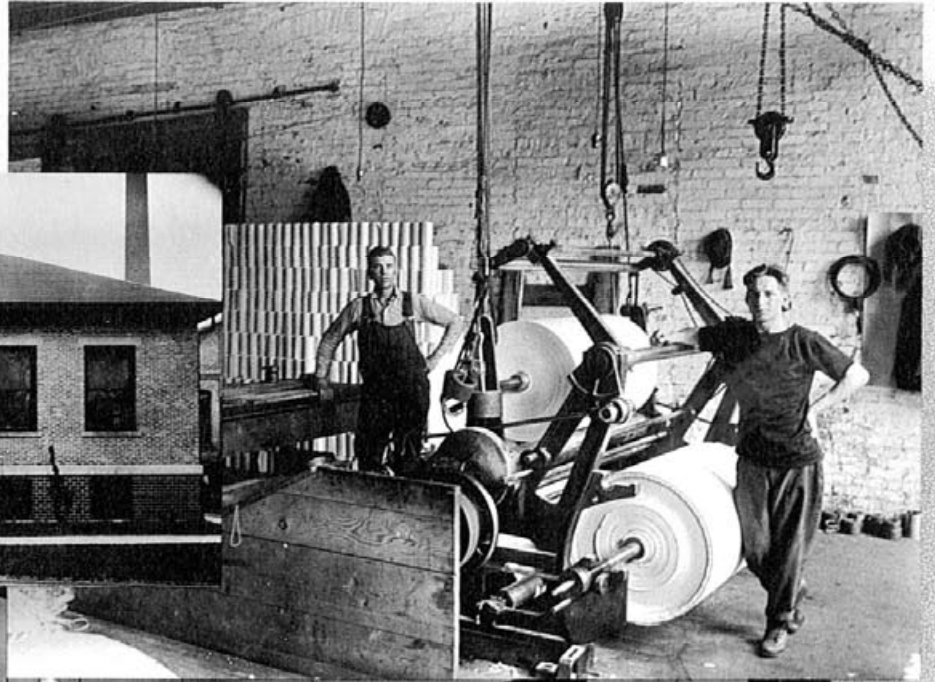
Hale W. Page, president  
 J. W. Hicks, vice president  
 M. Bailey, secretary  
 John W. Gilkey  
 William Thomas  
 George H. Anderson  
 H. P. Kauffer  
 George W. Soule, treasurer

After legally incorporating the Michigan Paper Company, the founders' next action was to purchase equipment and construct buildings. It wasn't until a year later, **1887**, that a 76" Harper fourdrinier machine was purchased for the sum of \$12,000. By the time the machine arrived, a new building was ready. Part of that building, the fan room, still stands and serves as the main lobby for the Plainwell Paper Company offices.

From the beginning, The Michigan Paper Company built its reputation on the manufacture of fine white papers. Early products included machine-finished book paper, non-fading poster paper, French folio, colored book paper, and drug-gist rolls. *The Kalamazoo Telegraph* described the products as follows: "Using no wood their paper is easy on type, takes a clear impression and handles well. Their white paper is distinctive from all other white papers made in the United States. It is unusually highly bleached and is, in fact, a strong white." (August 22, 1886)



*Rewinder - early 1900's*



*Michigan Paper Company  
office building around 1912*



*Michigan Paper Company office personnel  
in 1914*

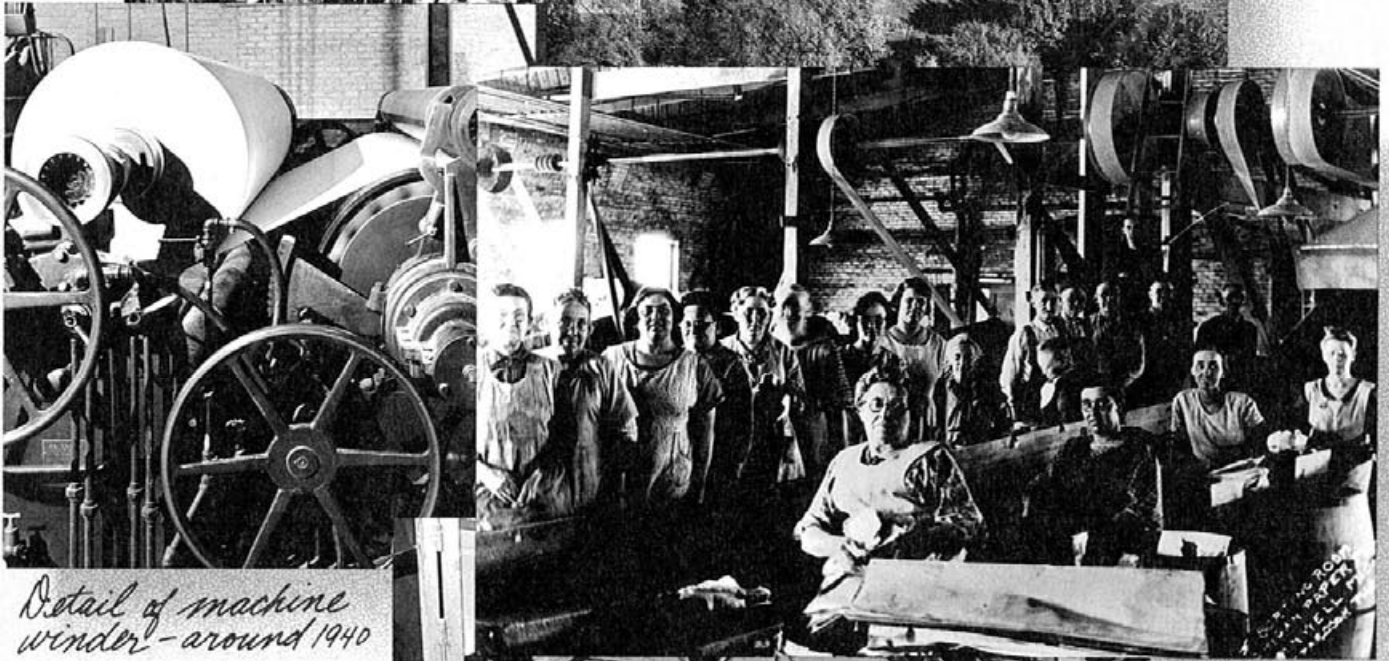
The first paper machine began operation in August **1887**, producing eight tons of paper per day. In the years between **1888** and **1896** the mill added a rail siding and a finishing room. Between **1896** and **1906** the paper machine was rebuilt. The rebuilding increased the capacity of this machine to 15 tons per day.

In **1906**, President J. D. Wagner furthered the capacity of the mill by installing a second paper machine, a 112" fourdrinier machine from Smith & Winchester. The purchase price for the machine was \$23,000.

Business for the paper mill continued to increase, prompting the purchase of two more machines between **1910** and **1912**. These machines were both 130" units. Capacity was now 50 tons per day. During the same period, a de-inking system was built.

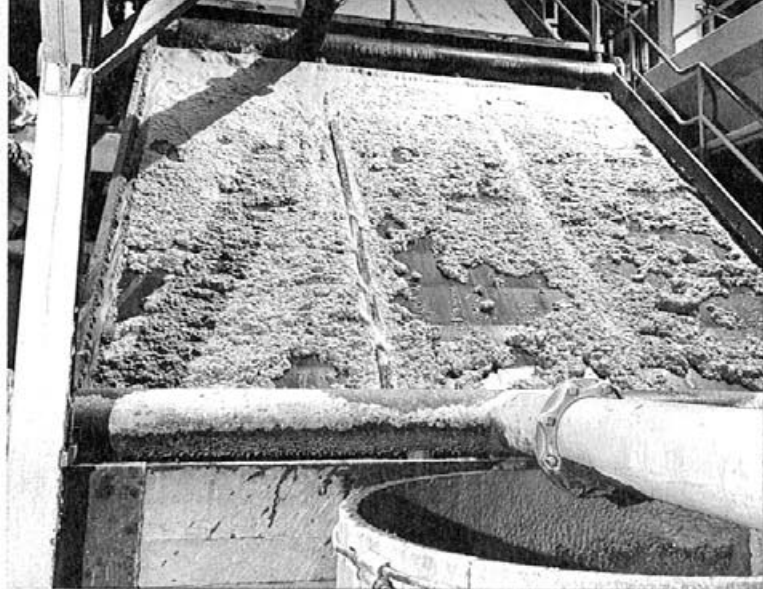


1948 aerial view of the mill



Detail of machine winder - around 1940

Sorting room staff



Inclined washers were installed in 1951 to improve the color of the paper stock.

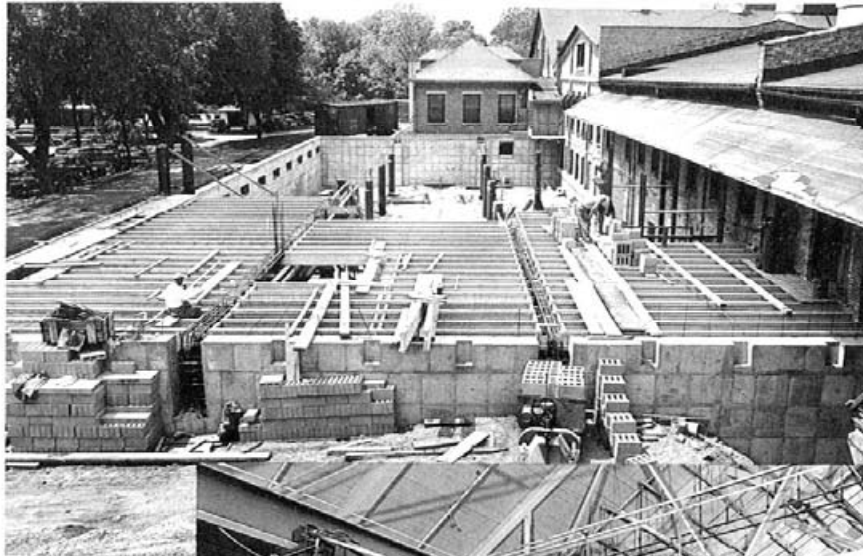
In **1927**, the Bradford Paper Company of Kalamazoo, a coating mill and longstanding customer, experienced severe difficulties. Rather than let the floundering company go under, the Michigan Paper Company bought the firm, signaling the mill's entry into the coated paper business. The Michigan Paper Company's coating operations remained at the Kalamazoo location until **1940**. In **1940** the operation was moved to Plainwell. High operating costs and increased competition caused suspension of coated paper production in **1948**. Coating operations resumed in 1960 and now make up a major portion of the mill's business.

In **1932** the original Harper machine was retired, reducing the number of paper machines to three. Nevertheless, the mill retained its production capacity of 50 tons daily. In **1946**, number 4 machine (one of the 130" units) was rebuilt, boosting mill capacity to 90 tons per day.

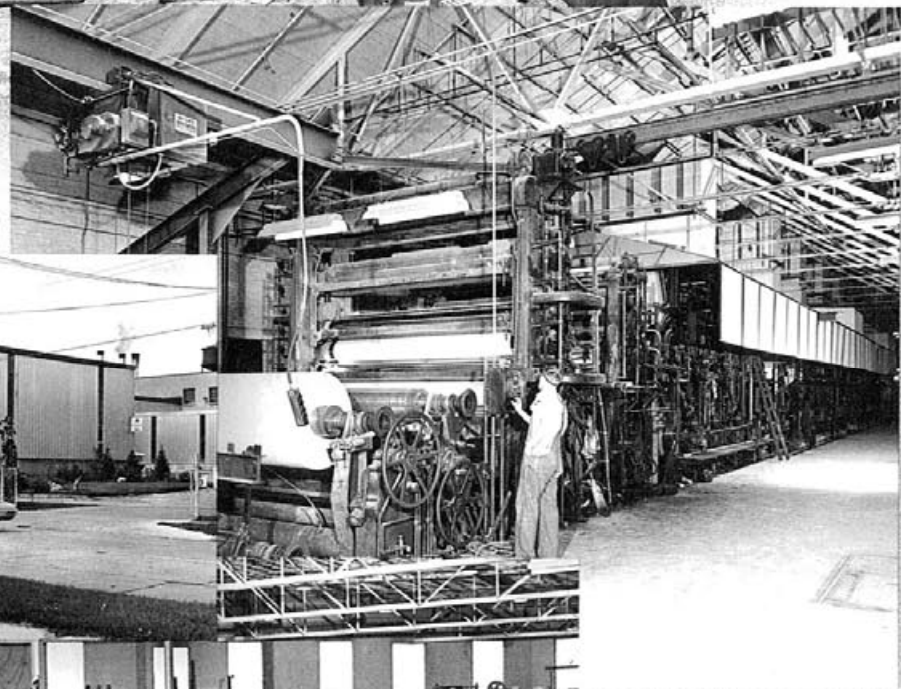




*In 1952 the warehouse was expanded.*



*When Weyerhaeuser  
owned the mill  
in 1970, the offices  
were in this building.*



*Number 2 paper machine  
around 1950*



*Finished rolls of printing paper  
awaiting shipment - 1960's*

Also in **1946**, the nation was experiencing a post-war newsprint shortage. Detroit-based Booth Newspapers and The Evening News Association of Detroit received control of the mill through the purchase of outstanding shares, providing them with a backup supply of paper.

In **1954** the owners sold their interest in the company to W. C. Hamilton & Sons, later known as Hamilton Paper Co. A year later, number 2 paper machine was rebuilt. Mill capacity rose to 100 tons per day.

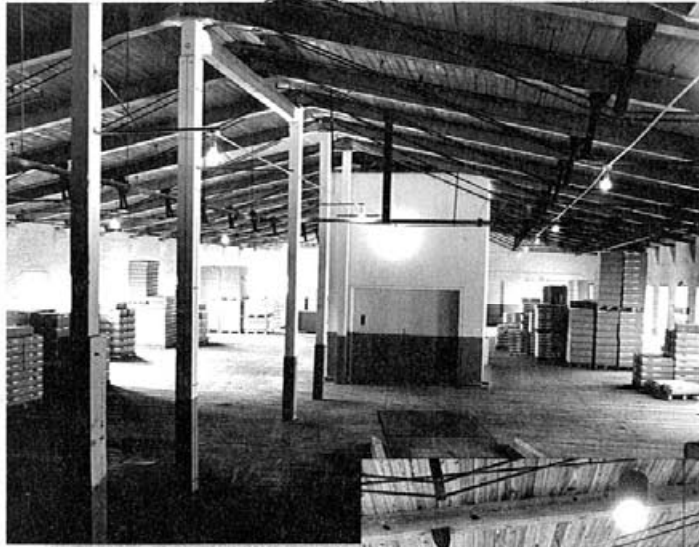
In **1961**, Weyerhaeuser Corporation acquired the assets of Hamilton Paper. By this time, the mill had resumed making premium printing papers specializing in coated stock. It also had developed its technical paper grades.

During the 1960's, production jumped to 170 tons per day, due to new finishing equipment and the rebuilding of number 3 paper machine.

In **1970** Weyerhaeuser sold the mill to Philip Morris Incorporated. Under PMI leadership, the mill acquired its current title--Plainwell Paper Co., Inc.



1930's view of the mill shows a wider,  
higher mill race and evidence of  
heavier rail traffic



Interior of the  
finished products  
warehouse in 1974.



Landscaping on the east  
side of the remodeled  
office building, circa 1980.



The same area remodeled as the  
present offices of Plainwell  
Paper Company. Remodeling was

PMI developed Plainwell Paper's facilities in order to keep up with national environmental and energy concerns. These developments included a wastewater treatment facility and heat conservation system. In **1977**, PMI rebuilt paper machine #2, expanding the mill's production capacity to 200 tons. A major rebuild and partial replacement of paper machine #4 brought the mill to its current production of 240 tons per day in late **1980**.

From **1974** through **1976** Plainwell Paper witnessed the remodeling of several of its old buildings into unique attractive offices. These contiguous buildings, which now provide most of the mill's office space, were the East Stock House, built in 1906; the Fan Room from the original mill, built in 1887; and the Old Cooker Room, built in 1887.



Philip Morris decided to sell Plainwell Paper in January **1985**. On **July 1, 1985**, Chesapeake Corporation purchased the mill. Chesapeake is an integrated forest products company with diverse product lines such as lumber, pulp, linerboard, fine paper, and tissue. Plainwell Paper is now an integral part of this corporation headquartered in West Point, Virginia.

Plainwell and Chesapeake believe the union of the two companies will give Plainwell Paper Company the strength to grow and prosper throughout Plainwell's second century of papermaking.

Today Plainwell papers are used by some of the largest corporations in America to carry their messages to the public, and by numerous technical paper producers in the pressure sensitive industry and other fields.



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PLAINWELL PAPER  
PRODUCTS MADE 1986

Printing Papers

*Kashmir*  
*Kashmir Natural*  
*Solitaire*  
*Michigan Matte*  
*Plainwell Enamel*  
*Satin-Kote Opaque*

*(These brand names are trademarks of Plainwell Paper Company.)*


Technical and Specialty Papers

*Release Line (for pressure sensitive market)*  
*Face Stock (for pressure sensitive market)*  
*Mouthpiece Stock (for cigarette producers)*  
*Specialty Offset Paper*  
*File Folder Stock*

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Plainwell Paper



a  Chesapeake company

**Title:** 100th ANNIVERSARY BOOK  
**Paper:** Kashmir Natural 100# Text and  
80# Cover  
Needlepoint Embossed One-Side  
**Press:** Komori Six-Color  
**Speed:** 10,000 I.P.H.  
**Ink & Sequence:** Sinclair & Valentine Inks;  
Black, Brown, Green, Grey, Gloss  
Varnish  
**Printing:** Superior Printing  
**Design:** The Schlatter Group  
**Remarks:** Blind embossed on Kluge 14 x 22

Plainwell Paper



a  Chesapeake company