

# NETTLETON SHOES WIN FAME IN ALL PARTS OF WORLD

## FIRST UNIT OF SYRACUSE PLANT INSTALLED 55 YEARS AGO

(This is the third of a series of articles which will appear weekly in the Saturday edition of The Syracuse Journal, to permit Syracusans to become familiar with the inside story of the great industrial and commercial enterprises which have played important parts in the development of the city.)

By RICHARD E. WELCH

Along the boulevards of Paris, the broad avenues of Rio, the sun-burned trails of South Africa, the icy slopes of Norway, satisfied patrons stride along in "gentlemen's fine shoes," turned out by the A. E. Nettleton Company in Syracuse.

For, since the first Nettleton shoe was made in Syracuse 55 years ago, the fame of this well-made shoe has spread throughout the world until there is scarcely a city of any size where this Syracuse-made product cannot be purchased.

It requires only a tour of inspection through the Nettleton plant and a chat here and there with some of the veteran shoemakers to understand why these shoes are of such uniform high quality and draw customers from all corners of the globe.

Syracuse, as an industrial center, was in its infancy when A. E. Nettleton founded the company. Gathering together a few expert shoe and boot-makers, he secured space on the top floor of the old Kline block, now the Winchester hotel, to start the manufacture of a high-grade shoe.

For the first few months, production was only four or five pairs a day, but it was not long before the trade in Syracuse sought Nettleton shoes and it was necessary to step up production. Soon orders were coming in from other cities and the need for a larger plant was felt by the company officials.

The first unit of the present plant was built and then additions were made as the business increased. Today the plant covers nearly a whole block, bounded by Pearl st., E. Willow st. and N. State st.

In 1904 Henry W. Cook moved here from Whitman, Mass., and became associated with the Nettleton company. He saw the possibilities and value of the good-will and established sales connection and increased his holdings until, in 1916, he purchased the interests in the company and became principal owner.

Mr. Cook today is active as president, with A. A. Webb and M. E. Hilfinger as vice presidents and R. S. Merrill as secretary-treasurer. Robert S. Cook, son of the president, is also active in the company, and now is in charge of sales.

There is most pleasant and helpful co-operation between the workmen and management of the Nettleton plant. Many of the workmen have enviable records of service and take as much personal pride in their work as though they were operating individual bootmaking shops.

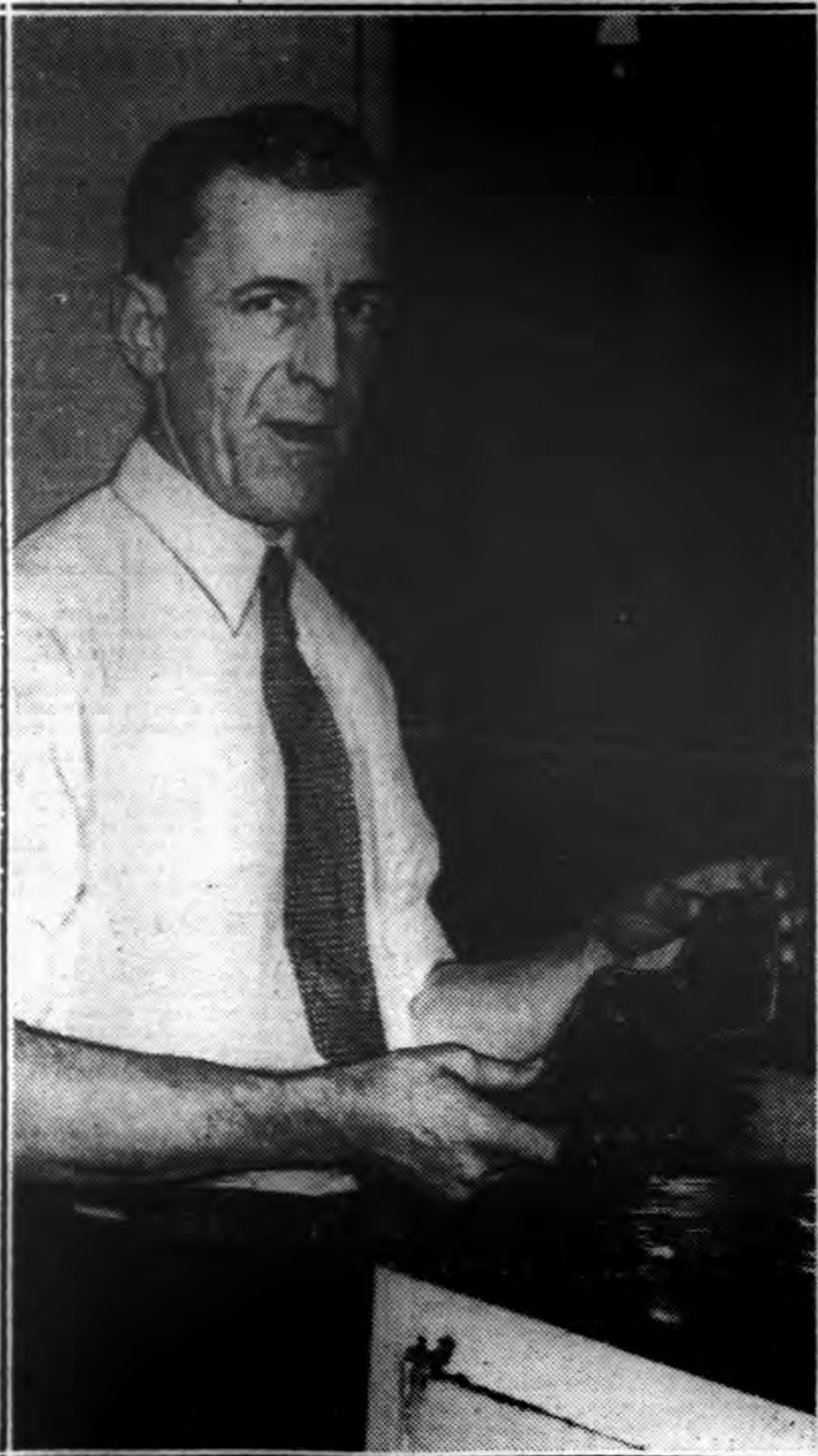
It is not difficult to understand this when one becomes acquainted with the conditions under which these men work. Since 1907 the Nettleton Company employees have been protected by a sick and death benefit and also are provided for in their old age by a pension system. To care for the costs of this protection, the employees contribute a certain percentage of their wages and, for every 10 cents contributed by employees, the company adds five cents.

As did other concerns in Syracuse, the Nettleton Company was hit by the economic conditions of the last few years and production dropped off as many of the export and domestic sales slumped. But long before the federal government advocated spreading out the work to give the maximum number of men employment, the Nettleton Company was operating on this system.

All the regular employees were retained on the payroll, although, to be sure, many of them were forced to work shorter hours during the lean years. But things are looking brighter now and employment and production are well back towards normal.

The Nettleton management is very proud of its personnel

## Dad Retires, Son Gets Job



CLAUDE ESSIG

Five years ago, when his father was ready to retire as head of the cutting department of the A. E. Nettleton Shoe Company, Claude Essig, who had worked under his father for 25 years, was ready to step into his place and now carries on the family tradition.



JOHN ESSIG

CHARLES JOACHIM JR.

CHARLES JOACHIM SR.

More than 130 years of faithful service to the A. E. Nettleton Shoe Company is the proud record of these three men, all of them related. John Essig, who retired on a pension five years ago, after serving 50 years as head of the cutting department, trained every

and the fact that the majority of the workers are veterans. As one officer pointed out, a shoemaker cannot be trained in a day or year and, once a man is trained, the company is reluctant to part with his services.

There are two living Syracusans, one of them still at work, who have rounded out 50 years' service with the Nettleton company and are proud of their diamond-set pins awarded them for their service.

Daddy of all the Nettleton workers is Charles Joachim Sr., 81-year-old youngster, who has been with the Nettleton company for 51 years and is still on the job. He is proud that his son, Charles Joachim Jr., has 30 years service with the shoe company to his credit.

Five years ago, when John Essig decided to take advantage of the Nettleton retirement plan and resigned as foreman of the cutting room, a position he had held since 1879, his son, Claude Essig, was ready to step into the job. John Essig was a 50-year man and Claude's record shows he has been with the company for 31 years. Incidentally, John Essig and Charles Joachim Sr. are brothers-in-law and live next door to each other in Dewitt st.

Another Nettleton employe with a unique record is Benny Sauter of 115 Beecher st., in charge of heels in the factory. Mr. Sauter has been employed by the company for 44 years and, except for two weeks when he was confined to his bed as a result of an automobile accident, has never missed a day at his work.

Mr. Sauter said he was struck by an automobile on the way home from work and was so anxious to get back to the factory that he disobeyed doctors' orders and appeared at the plant ahead of schedule.

"But they chased me home," Mr. Sauter declared, "until the doctor said I was ready to work. I haven't missed a day since."

In the employment records, the name of Williams appears many times. There have been 11 members of this family on the payroll, six of them girls, and five men.

There are now three Williams brothers in the shoe factory. Michael Williams, with a record of 39 years, is a foreman; Andrew Williams has been with Nettleton's 44 years and August Williams, 27 years. The brothers are of an old German family of shoemakers which goes back generations and they are proud of their craftsmanship.

Although the Nettleton company now uses many machines in the manufacturing of its shoes, it is still primarily a hand-made product. There are a number of hand workers who give each shoe the same personal attention as was given the first

shoes turned out under the name of Nettleton. Among the hand workers was found 79-year-old Louis Henn, who has spent 34 years at his last.

The Nettleton company employs a number of women in its various departments and many of these have been with the company for years, but they are sensitive about their ages and years of service and their modesty was respected.

But, in the consideration of experience in the shoe business, Mr. Cook and his family can match them all. He has the heritage of a family which has been engaged in the industry for years.

His knowledge was recognized strikingly during the war when he was called to Washington to serve as a member of the shoe and leather division of the war board. He designed and wrote specifications for boots, shoes and leggings for officers of the army and air corps.

When the federal government started preparation of national recovery act codes for the various industries, Mr. Cook was picked to represent the entire shoe industry of the Nation in the drafting of a code for this unit. He represented the industry, and Dr. Stanley King, president of Amherst, represented the public. Mr. Cook also is a member of the committee on fair practices which administers the code.

Mr. Cook's family history in America dates back to 1620 when Francis Cook and his son, John, crossed the Atlantic on the "Mayflower." Francis Cook's wife and other children crossed on the "Ann" in 1623. His name is on the earliest records in 1633 as a freeman.

Henry Webster Cook, son of Miller and Martha Isabel (Sharpe) Cook, was born at Whitman, Mass. He prepared for college at Thayer Academy, South Braintree, and later entered Amherst.

After college he was associated for a time with his father and then came to Syracuse to join the staff of the Nettleton company. For years he has been an active worker in the National Boot and Shoe Manufacturers' Association, served as president, and has been a vice president and director for years.

In civic affairs, Mr. Cook also has been active since he made Syracuse his home. One of his greatest activities has been the Syracuse Boys' Club. He served as president for the early days of its existence through to the campaign to raise funds for the new building and its occupancy. The club is now a model for similar organizations throughout the country. Mr. Cook is now serving his twenty-second term as president of the Boys' Club.

His other pet is to assure pleasing working conditions for his men and only the most pleasant of relations between the factory and the office. In addition to the benefit association,



HENRY W. COOK

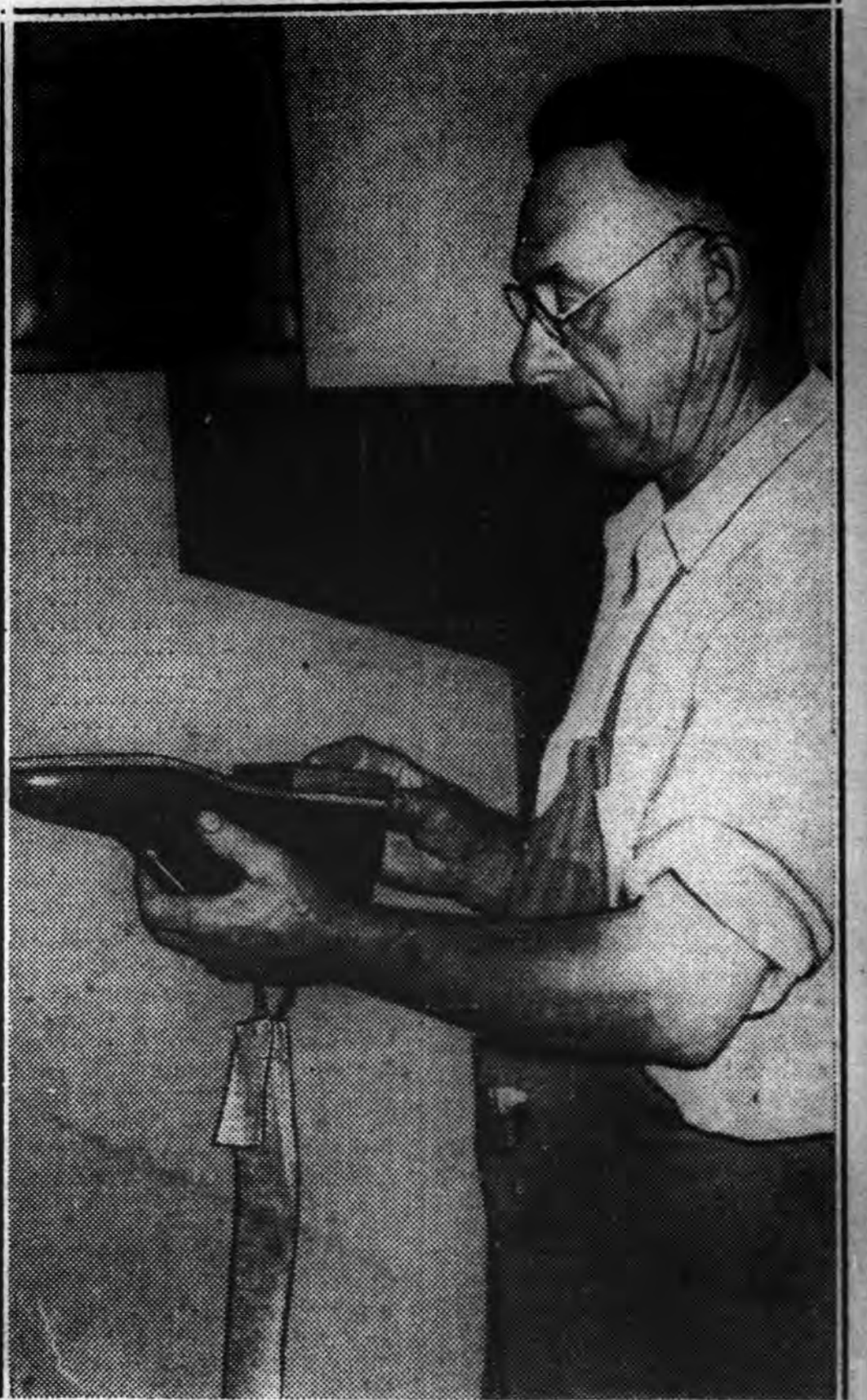
President of the A. E. Nettleton Company and a nationally known figure in the shoe industry is Henry W. Cook. Mr. Cook recently represented the industry in drawing up its NRA code and now serves on the committee of fair practices to administer the code.

he also instituted a plan of selling participating stock to the workers, whereby they might share in the profits, the stock carrying dividends on practically the same basis as common stock held by executives.

The plant itself has been modernized continually to give the workers the safest, most modern and cleanest equipment possible. The working floors are kept freshly painted and ventilation and light are the best possible.

Mr. Cook is very active in fraternal circles. He is a member of Masonic orders, Sons of the American Revolution, Onondaga Golf and Country Club, Century Club, Citizens Club, Syracuse Automobile Club, the Oswelegois Club of Redfield, the Duxbury Yacht Club of Massachusetts, Plymouth Golf and Country Club, Westchester-Biltmore Country Club, Triton Fish and Game Club of Canada, the Mad River Club of New York, Sedgwick Farm Club, Lake Placid Club, Chamber of Commerce, Syracuse Liederkreis and the Young Men's Christian Association. The Cook family home is at 915 James st. and they maintain a summer home at Duxbury, Mass.

## Off 2 Weeks in 44 Years



BENNY SAUTER

A real record has been compiled by Benny Sauter, who is in charge of heels at the Nettleton plant. He has worked at the plant for 44 years and except for two weeks when he was laid up as a result of an automobile accident, he has never missed a day from work.

## Three Brothers Among Veteran Employees of Factory



AUGUST WILLIAMS

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

ANDREW WILLIAMS

The Nettleton plant is a great place for families. Here is a picture of three brothers who have all become veterans of the plant. Andrew Williams has been in the plant 44 years, Michael Williams has a record of 39 years, and the third brother, August Williams,

27 years. Since the Nettleton plant opened there have been 11 members of the family on the payroll, six of them girls and five men. The Williams family is proud of its history of shoemakers, being able to trace back more than three generations. Pictures by journal staff photographer.