When Maquoketa made parts for machine guns

With an America at war tooling up for the production of its weapons, officials of Army ordinance production loaded one or more rail cars with samples of products they would like to have some manufacturers produce in quantities. Maquoketa lawyer Arthur F. Janssen, then secretary of the Maquoketa Chamber of Commerce learned that the Army ordinance contingent would be in Clinton. Art reasoned that Maquoketans might be able to make some part of their needs. Thus he and several other Chamber members made the trip to Clinton.

At the Clinton meeting, they became acquainted with Art Depue, owner and operator of Clinton's Central Steel Tube Company. Central Steel made much of the tubing for various brands of washing machines and other products. Depue's staff had both the equipment and expertise for making a variety of metal products.

Getting together with Janssen and the other Maquoketans, Depue volunteered to furnish the knowhow and equipment for making machine gun tripods and other components in Maquoketa, if Janssen and his colleagues could find him a location and sufficient workers. With domestic auto production halted for the duration, Huge Riepe had closed his Dodge agency, located east, across South Main Streeet, from what is now the Fareway food store. This location was available.

Janssen recruited a sufficient staff of eager, willing workers. Depue came through with his part of the bargain. In fact, he had had such a pleasant experience dealing with Maquoketa's labor force that he decided to construct a large factory facility here.

With the war over in August, 1945, he quickly began construction on what would be known as the Maquoketa Company plant, complete with office building and foundry. In 1950 Depue consolidated all of his manufacturing back in his Clinton, (Iowa) plant. The Maquoketa plant became the home of Clinton Engines, founded in Clinton, Mich.

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