I ran across an online book on the History of Shelby County, Ohio. This book was written in 1913 by A.B.C. Hitchcock. In the book there is a very nice write-up on the Wagner Hallow-Ware Company. It explains the layout of the plant and some of the Wagner family early history. I thought it was a very good and interesting read.

Wagner Hollow-Ware Company

Three quarters of a century or more ago several stalwart Germans, brothers and sisters, emigrated from the fatherland and settled in this part of Ohio. Large, dark and swarthy, they were all splendid physical specimens and being full of pluck and energy they were such people for whom a new country calls to subdue the stubborn features of nature, make them blossom as the rose and achieve a lofty destiny. They all rolled up their sleeves and with a determination that knew no such word as fail, encountered their life work.

The branch of the family with which this article has to deal is that of the scions of Mathias Wagner, one of the brothers. He was a strong, powerful man with a rare fund of common sense and unbounded ambition. At first he worked a while on the Miami and Erie Canal, than being built, but did not continue long as the tedious and not very lucrative work, for, as soon as he had accumulated enough to buy an outfit, he commenced killing beeves and hogs in sufficient numbers to supply meat to the laborers and their families. This proved a fortunate venture and with his gains he bought property, which was cheap in and around Sidney, never selling any real estate but holding on until he became Sidney's wealthiest citizen. He continued to butcher and sell meat as long as his age and health would permit.

In the meantime he married Miss Mary Rauth, vigorous, large and strong, who seconded every effort of her energetic husband giving him sound advice, for she had sterling business acumen and was a helpmeet in every particular. Twelve children, of whom eight are living, were born in their household and were reared with the utmost care and educated. It was an ideal home, where happiness flavored the atmosphere. In time, Mr. Wagner passed away, but the large estate was not divided among the children and is intact to this day. Mrs. Wagner died only a few years ago and as long as she lived was the head of the vast interests.

Perfect harmony existed among the children, for there was no black sheep in the flock and today they work together like parts of a flawless machine. It is the business of the Wagner brothers, consisting of William, Milton, Bernard and Louis, that this article is written.

For many years the Sidney people have been justly proud of the factory on the fairground hill but few have known that here is a made a great part of the hallow-ware used in the world and that from this factory is shipped daily goods to all parts of the civilized globe.

To just view the Wagner plant from the outside is scarcely sufficient to give an accurate impression of its immensity and up-to-dateness. A trip through the shop several times only reveals new wonders in manufacturing science, and to one new to the factory, such a trip serves to rather bewilder with its extent and the various process and numerous kinds of goods made.

Just finished is the extensive addition made this year to the factory to accommodate the increasing business of the firm. The office has been extended and enlarged. The second story newly built adds to the storage rooms for hallow-ware. The polishing department has been greatly enlarged and new store rooms for the factory supplies have been added. The cost of these improvements has been very great and when one realizes that since the founding of the plant in 1881 that only two years have passed in which additions have not been made the growth of the plant is of far more significance.

In 1881 the Wagner brothers founded this plant for the manufacture of hollow-ware on the hill next to

the C.H. & D. railway where shipping facilities were good. The shop was small then and only two buildings were built. Only twenty men were employed. R.O. Bingham, the present superintendent, was the manager in charge and built the factory on lines of his design. He had been a moulder and practical machinist by trade and had spent some time as superintendent of foundries. The start was small but the growth has been rapid. In the thirty-one years of its existence the Wagner Manufacturing Company had increased its capacity twenty-nine times allowing two years to pass in which improvements and enlargements have not been made to accommodate their ever-increasing business. Their original superintendent has been with them continually since the founding of the plant. Also remaining in their employ are several men who started to work when the shop was founded.

The office of the factory has been made and remade several times but the complete refitting and remodeling this time will make it the largest it has ever been and thoroughly up to this time. Eight rooms and a hall comprise the working rooms of the business end of the plant. Upon entering the large and commodious general offices are seen. A separate room opens from this room which will be used as a stenographer's room where all the typewriting will be done. Adjoining this will be the private office of the purchasing agent of the factory and last on that side of hall is the private office of the president of the company. Another private office adjoins this to the rear. These private offices are specially constructed for the purpose. The office supply room opens off the hall to the rear and here also the secretary of the company has his office. A long hall connects all these rooms.

In the same building fronting on Fair avenue in which the office section forms but a small part of the ware rooms of the factory in which are kept the finished product. On the first floor the heavy iron goods are stored ready for shipment. On the second floor the gray iron hollow-ware is kept. Here also is located the large shipping department of the factory. In the packing room several men are constantly employed packing the goods ready for loading on the box cars. These inspectors go over the product before they are packed and see that no imperfect pieces are sent out of the factory. Here the pieces are also counted, billed and loaded. On the third floor is placed the cleaning room for aluminum. Here is kept the aluminum products ready for packing and shipment. The entire size of the building is one hundred and forty feed long by thirty feet wide and is three story brick. A heavy freight elevator connects the three floors.

The second story is two hundred and ten feet long by ninety-six wide and three stories. In this is located the finishing department for the entire factory and is connected by overhead bridges with the warehouses and offices.

On the first floor on this building in one large room the grinding room is situated. Here the rough hallow-ware is ground and edged, before the polishing is commenced. In another section of the first floor the store rooms for the factory are located. Here handles for waffle irons and other supplies for the use of the workmen will be kept when the new addition is completed.

The engine room occupies a large section of the first floor through the center of the shop. In the first room is located the old steam plant with its battery of boilers and one hundred and forty horse power engine which is used only to run the aluminum polishing department on the third floor and to operate the blasts for the cupolas. The large two hundred horse power tandem gas engine is placed in another larger engine room connecting with the steam room. This engine furnishes power for the rest of the plant. A smaller gas engine is required to crank start this engine. Two engineers are in charge of the engine rooms who are experts in their departments.

The second floor of the finishing building is devoted to polishing of iron goods. The nickel-plating rooms and the present pattern and machine shop are located in separate rooms in the east end of this floor.

The present sote room for the factory and the carpenter shop is in this large room.

In the new addition will be placed a large machine shop where expert machinists will be constantly at work under the supervision of the superintendent constructing the special machinery in the manufacture of high grade hallo-ware. At the far southwest end of this room the pattern room will later be moved and the superintendent will have his office or the direction of the work in the shop. The machine shop will be 66 x 46, the pattern room 18 x 30 and the superintendent's office 14 x 18.

In the office of the superintendent may be noticed the following motto which expresses the spirit of the man and the idea on which the shop is run, ***"Life without industry is guilt, industry without art is brutality"***. Leaving the second floor the aluminum finishing department on the third floor is visited. Here the aluminum is taken from the foundry and ground and polished in preparation for shipment to the merchants. In the new section of the aluminum polishing department twenty new polishing machines will be run by individual motors each of five horse power. A powerful fan system sucks all the dust form the grinding rooms and polishing rooms into a large tower where it is collected and disposed of. Five fans are required to do this work.

Retuning to the first floor visitors are shown the large milling rooms in which thirty-two milling machines commonly known as rattlers break the rough edges off the product as it comes from the foundry and before it is taken to the finishing department.

In another room opening off the gas engine room is placed a large five hundred light dynamo which furnishes fight for the factory.

The blacksmith shop must not be neglected. This is at present a very small affair located back of the warehouse. Later a larger shop 20 x 30 will be constructed for this department.

The foundry is the next place of interest. Here eight-three moulders are at work and here every afternoon as the last thing of the day the poring off is done. The aluminum foundry is located at the extreme west end of this building and is separated by a high partition. The aluminum process is secret and no one was allowed to visit this part of the shop. The foundry building is 110 x 450 feet in size and is well lighted. Job work for various factories about town is also done here.

The cupola room is located in the extreme east end of the foundry department. Here two cupolas are placed. The smaller is used only in emergencies, having outlived its present usefulness. Its capacity is eight tons. The big twenty ton cupola is now used daily to melt up the iron used in moulding. Three different kinds of pigs are used to secure the proper composition. The fire lighted the blast will melt the iron ready for pouring off in two hours. Five men are required to operate this cupola.

The iron mine so called is the next visited. In a deep hallow which has been scooped out form the cinders reclaimed by this process is located a small frame shed in which an electric cinder mill daily reclaims a great quantity of iron from cinders which have been dumped here in the past years of refuse.

This has only been in operation in the past few years and more than
pays for itself. Another cinder mill reclaims the iron from the cinders each day that are dumped from the cupola. After the iron has been reclaimed the waste product is dumped as before. This reclamation process has been recently discovered and in this place alone reclaims about four dollars worth of iron daily. This is one of the many methods used in the big shop to cut down the costs of production and utilize the waste products through scientific management.

The kettle and flask store room is to the north of the foundry. It is two stories in height and sized 32 x 80. On the ground floor the heavy sugar kettles are stored and in the second story the flasks are placed for the use of the moulders.

A fire proof building, 36x18 sets a good distance from the rest of the shop in which the patterns are stored when not in use. The originals are all kept here. The patterns are most valuable, many of them being patented.

Fire protection for this factory is furnished by plugs and fire hose located in convenient places around the shop. Plenty of hose and several stand pipes have been provided and are supplies with water form a six-inch main surrounding the shop completely and drawing water from the city supply.

The water for use in the factory is supplied by an artesian well near the engine room from which a special pump draws twenty thousand gallons per day for factory use. This well is two hundred and thirty-nine feet deep.

When running at its full capacity the shop will employ three hundred men. The time record of these men is kept by two automatic registering clocks.

At every place possible the superintendent has introduced modern methods to save in the costs of production by reclaiming waste products. The cinder mill is a great factory in itself. There all the aluminum buffing is collected and sold to a firm where a special process is used to reclaim aluminum from them. It is understood that later a new machine and process will be installed to do this work at the plant. All the waste paper of the factory is baled and sold. Wherever a dollar can be saved in costs the proper utensils have been introduced to aid in this work. This is one of the greatest proofs that the Wagner Manufacturing plant is up-to-date factory. A complete telephone system connecting the various parts of the factory with the general offices and the superintendent's office will soon be installed and will doubtless prove a great time saver.

The Wagner brothers have surely been progressive and have built a factory which is a great credit to Sidney and an honor to their enterprise and ability. Those who have the direct management of the firm in charge are W.H. Wagner, Milton Wagner, B.P. Wagner, Louis R. Wagner and L. Cable Wagner. As superintendent of the plant R.O. Bingham served since the founding of the company and has piloted the manufacturing end through all these years.