

100 YEARS OF COOLERS IN WINFIELD, KANSAS: A HISTORY OF GOTT by Shelley Harris

Henry Pierce Gott was a traveling salesman for the Townley Metal and Hardware Company of Kansas City which distributed products for area wholesale dealers. He found his way to Ponca City, Oklahoma, in the 1900s and put his knowledge of metal and business to use in his hardware store. He moved to Winfield, Kansas, in 1911, having fallen in love with and married a local girl, Margaret Hendrickson. Gott built, owned, and operated a small one story sheet metal shop at 520 Manning. He came to be regarded as a craftsman in this area, and developed several exclusive lines.

In 1916, an oil field worker requested a more durable drinking water container, one that would keep their drinks cooler than the wooden kegs they were using. The oil fields were a very



H.P. Gott and Secretary

rugged and demanding environment, and they needed something that was just as rugged. Armed with a sheet of metal, a hammer, and a tree stump, Gott set about constructing the world's first galvanized steel water can. The initial order was for one dozen metal coolers for the Jarecki Supply Company; another dozen was made for the Continental Supply Company.

By the following summer, hundreds of orders were being received for the metal cans. H.P.

Gott had revolutionized the way water was kept cool, and had laid the groundwork for a product that would one day be shipped all over the world. In its infancy, the Gott firm was reportedly the first outside of Wichita to receive a shipment of packing cartons from Love Box Company in Wichita.

1920s and 1930s

By 1926, Gott's small one story building could no longer efficiently handle the number of orders coming in. On December 29, 1926, *The Winfield Daily Courier* reported the construction of a second story, and said that



Distribution around 1919