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Mansel G. Blackford, K. Austin Kerr. *B.F. Goodrich: Tradition and Transformation, 1870-1995.* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996. x + 507 pp. $30.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8142-0696-6.

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This officially sanctioned corporate history, commissioned by company chairman John D. Ong and written by distinguished scholars of the history of business, commemorates the 125th anniversary of the founding of the BFGoodrich Company. Ong–who has a B.A. and an M.A. in history and a J.D.–recognizes the importance of independently written corporate histories. Therefore, he requested that two professors of history at Ohio State University, Mansel Blackford, an author of books on California business and city planning, and K. Austin Kerr, the author of works on railroad politics and prohibition, undertake the task. (Blackford and Kerr are also coauthors of *Business Enterprise in American History*, 2nd ed. [1990]).

From its outset, Ong, who himself wrote a 23-page history of the company for the Newcomen Society series (1995), wanted a scholarly book that would be subject to peer review and be published by his alma mater's university press. The archives of the Goodrich company are located in the University of Akron library, and the authors had complete entree to all materials as well as to current corporate documents (pp. ix-x, 423-424). The authors also note that since the 1960s these archives have been under the supervision of professional archivists, initially in the company archives, and later as a part of the American History Research Center's collections in the University of Akron library. Likewise, they comment that "although [the company] historically, as a matter of policy, does not retain the correspondence of its executives, we were able to piece together our story from a variety of sources, as we have indicated in the notes for each chapter" (p. 423). In sum, Blackford and Kerr remark on "what may be unprecedented access" to corporate records (p. x).

The volume begins with a preface and eight-page introduction, followed by eleven chapters, in the main, in chronological order that document the company's 125-year history and business practices. The detailed, well-documented narrative is supplemented by 47 black-and-white photographs, 22 color images, 18 tables, and four appendices (tabulations of financial data along with lists of the Chairmen of the Board, Presidents, and members of the Board of Directors). The extremely valuable "Notes on Sources" and 1,501 endnotes (pp. 423-489) include materials from a variety of published and unpublished sources–for example, the clip files of the Akron Beacon Journal, handwritten notes made by corporate officials, and personal interviews. This comprehensive volume is supplemented by a seventeen-page double-column conflated index of proper noun names and topics.

In addition to being a history of the corporation, the book also recounts somewhat the histories of several other companies founded in Akron (Diamond Match and Quaker Oats) and Goodrich's local and international competitors in the rubber business–Goodyear, Firestone, Dunlop, and Michelin. Readers may wish to refer to Allen (1949), Neely (1993), Regli (1941), and Rodengen (1997) for additional information on Goodyear; a book on Harvey Firestone written for juveniles by Adrian Paradis (1968); McMillan's (1989) history on multinational Dunlop; and Norbye (1982) for an account of Michelin.

By 1905, Akron, Ohio had become the rubber capital of the United States, serving as headquarters for thirteen companies (of the twenty-seven companies manufacturing rubber in Ohio out of the more than one hundred in the United States). The Goodrich company was a business pioneer and technological innovator in many respects, and the book's authors evaluate the growth of a small firm into a national company and international corporation. The volume's primary focus is an assessment of these transformations and the impacts on the product line, management and labor relations, domestic and international marketing strategies, the problem of overexpansion of the U.S. tire industry, the development of industry in Akron, and the American rubber industry. Goodrich's early management was paternalistic and anti-union while pioneering a strategy of vertical integration (from production backward into developing raw materi-

als and forward into distribution and consumer sales) in the face of vigorous and sometimes vicious "Big Four" competitions for marketing, pricing, and technological advances. (The "four" were U.S. Rubber, later renamed Uniroyal, Goodyear, Firestone, and Goodrich.) This is an analytical history of a leader in the industry, focusing on prosperity, survival, expansion, and transformations–how corporate executives reshaped the company during the period of growing competition from foreign-based multinationals.

Approximately half of Blackford and Kerr's book covers the era from the 1840s through 1945 while the second part encompasses the period from 1946-1995. Three lengthy chapters are devoted to the period since 1970, including John Ong's tenure as CEO. The volume begins with a biography of Benjamin Franklin Goodrich, M.D. (1841-1888), the company's founder, born in Ripley, New York, who studied medicine and served as a Union Army surgeon, set up a practice in northwestern Pennsylvania's oil fields, but abandoned medicine for real estate and oil ventures in New York City. Drawn to Akron in 1870, Goodrich established the first rubber manufactory west of the Appalachians. The limited partnership transformed into a corporation in 1880, remained a closely held company, and moved its corporate headquarters to New York City in 1909. Therefore, Goodrich, Tew & Co. became B. F. Goodrich & Company; in 1974 the corporate name and logo became BFGoodrich Company. Goodrich specialized initially in the manufacture of fire hoses and industrial belting, consciously became an early leader in product diversification (matting, tiles, and footwear), established itself in the bicycle tire business, and moved rapidly into the production of pneumatic automobile tires. Michael French (1990) reports on the American tire industry in more detail, while a recently published book by Love et al. (1998) elucidates the city of Akron and the rubber industry.

Blackford and Kerr relate the development of a rubber research laboratory in 1895 by Charles Goodrich, the founder's son, and the creation of competing Akron, Ohio companies–the Goodyear Rubber Company by the Seiberling brothers in 1898 and Harvey Firestone's firm in 1900. During the early part of this century, Goodrich became the leader in American rubber production, slipping to fourth among the "Big Four" by 1970. The growth of the tire industry (1908-1918) documents the acquisition in 1912 of a Akron competitor located just across the street–Diamond Rubber, a "world leader in rubber chemistry" founded by the Sherbondy brothers in 1894. This expansion gave Goodrich access to Diamond's research expertise in reclaiming scrap rubber. World War I brought little change in the company's production and product line, but tires, gas masks, raincoats, and footwear were manufactured for the military.

The period from 1919-1939 was one of an initial decline in tire making, but was an era of rubber company acquisitions–Brunswick Tire and the Philadelphia, Hood, and Miller companies–and the formation of the Rubber Association of America. Domestic (Oklahoma and Alabama) and overseas (France, Japan, and Canada) expansion, the commercialization of the rubber chemical industry, and the invention in 1926 of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) by a Goodrich chemist, Waldo Semon, preceded the Great Depression. Goodrich faced unprecedented problems (deficits, shrinking overseas sales, domestic price wars, and unionization) leading to retrenchment and a realigned corporate structure. During World War II, John Collyer served as company president and emphasized research, manufacturing, and public relations. World War II revolutionized the company's operations. The birth of Goodrich Chemical in 1931 and its move to Cleveland in 1944 occurred as the company pioneered the petrochemical-based synthetic rubber process during World War II. Airplane de-icers and B-29 tires were among the more than 35,000 products being made, and, by 1945, the company had 55,500 employees and already planned for the postwar domestic economic boom.

The company began concentrating on chemicals, resins, and the very profitable production of PVC, and built a new corporate research facility at Brecksville, Ohio in 1946. Debt retirement, stock splits, decentralization, strained labor relations, and natural rubber supplies were major corporate concerns into the 1950s. Goodrich established a plantation in Liberia in 1954, partnered with Pittsburgh's Gulf Oil, and developed the tubeless tire. The company's misfortunes in the footwear market, failure to win the Apollo contract, and beginnings of divestitures–both the selling or closing of domestic and foreign plants and the rubber plantation–are recounted. By 1976 Goodrich no longer made automobile tires in its now-antiquated Akron plant and a backward vertical integration began. The Goodrich-Bechtel and Goodrich-Cosden joint ventures in PVC production are noted but were exacerbated by PVC-induced angiosarcoma among some workers and environmental pollution problems. Goodrich acquired Tremco, a Cleveland-based coatings and sealants company, and created BFGoodrich Specialty Chemicals emphasizing synthetic rubber and the commercialization of research.

Under John Ong's leadership in the 1980s, BF-

Goodrich faced the U.S. economic recession, foreign PVC competition, takeover attempts (Gulf & Western Industries and Carl Icahn), and the divestiture of the tire-making business–the latter sold to Michelin by 1988. Specialty Chemicals continued to thrive. Likewise, BF-Goodrich Aerospace emphasized research and the production of mechanical and electrical components and in 1988 acquired Tramco in Everett, Washington, a commercial aircraft overhaul and repair company. By 1993, the PVC business had been sold and the company continued to concentrate on niche markets in specialty chemicals and aerospace, the latter acquiring Cleveland Pneumatic and the Minnesota-based Rosemount Aerospace. The reorganized and refocused business had become a "unique institution, a product of its own history" (p. 387) and "was traditional; [but] it was also a dynamic, changing institution responding to business opportunities" (p. 408) in an era of NAFTA and international competition.

The authors document the company's history during good times and bad, and they present pro and con critiques of business practices and the industry. The former range from Goodrich's manufacture of airplane tires for Lindberg's Spirit of St. Louis and John Glenn's original spacesuit to protracted strikes by United Rubber workers, aloof executives "lacking in empathy and warmth" (p. 294), to the decentralization of management, price collusion and illegal political payments (p. 308), and Goodrich's failure to invest in modern tire factories and expand traditional marketing networks. Although stable profitability remained illusive, John Ong, who began as an assistant counsel in 1946 and became CEO and Chairman in 1979, is given credit for transforming the business from rubber tire producer to a specialty chemical manufacturer and an aerospace supplier and service provider.

The authors present an excellent account of the history of a major company and the personalities that shaped it over 125 years. Your reviewer found the volume to be a well written, fascinating account that is much more than a business history or the recounting of the rise and transformation of an industry (see also Roy 1997). Having been born and raised in the southern Lake Erie region and having grown up with family members as managers in the steel and electrical industries, I believe that the authors have written a remarkable account useful to scholars in history, urban studies, business and industry, economics, management, labor relations, and political science. Yet they have fashioned a story that will hold the interest of members of the public as well as business managers. I noted one minor typographical error: Tidioute rather than "Tideout" was the Pennsylvania town that attracted Dr. Goodrich in 1865 (p. 12).

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