

**Visionary Businessmen  
of  
The Borden Plant Property  
Starkville, Mississippi**

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**Oktibbeha County Leadership Forum  
May 3, 2007**

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Gail Borden, Jr., creator and founder of the first commercial process of condensing milk, was born in Norwich, New York on November 9, 1801. He was educated largely at home, but as his family moved to New London, Indiana, Borden obtained his only formal schooling, totaling not more than a year and a half.

In 1822 he is thought to have been captain of the local militia when barely twenty years old where he was a principal figure in rescuing the freedman from rustlers. Shortly afterward he moved to Mississippi in search of a milder climate to cure a persistent cough. In Mississippi Borden taught school for several years. In 1828, he was an official surveyor for Amite County, Mississippi and was also a deputy federal surveyor. While living in Amite County, Mississippi, he married Penelope Mercer, daughter of Eli Mercer.

He moved to Texas in 1829, with his family where he began farming and raising livestock. One of the earliest settlers in the state, he also continued surveying, and is credited with having developed the first topographical map of Texas, as well as platting the towns of Galveston and Houston, Texas.

Borden had a truly entrepreneurial spirit. He was especially interested in ways to safeguard the food supply for humans, through better conservation and preservation of food and by developing concentrated food products. Borden was convinced that boiling off the water from milk in airtight vacuum pans would produce a concentrated product that would not spoil. Gail Borden had spent years on experimentation, which left him penniless and in debt in an effort to come up with a process for preserving milk. The method to make condensed milk; is milk reduced by evaporation, with sugar added. 1 can (14oz) = 1 quart whole milk plus 7oz of sugar.

In 1853, Borden's persistence in inventing finally paid off. He was the first to develop a commercial method of condensing milk and applied for a patent on a process of evaporating milk by vacuum. He had to work hard to convince the U.S. Patent Office to grant him a patent, but he finally obtained one in 1856. His first attempts to market condensed milk ended in business failure, but finally with financial backing from a wholesale grocer, Jeremiah Milbank, Borden was able to secure the financial backing that enabled him to construct a plant and produce his condensed Milk. Milbank managed the company's finances. In 1857, Borden founded the New York Condensed Milk Company.

The Civil War brought a steady and very high demand for condensed milk, and sales grew rapidly, assuring Borden's success. He opened another factory in Connecticut, two in New York, and one in Illinois. He also licensed his technology to

other companies in Pennsylvania and Maine, and invented processes for condensing various fruit juices, for extract of beef, and coffee.

After the war, Borden returned to Texas in 1829, and opened a meat-packing plant in the town of Borden, which he founded in Colorado County. He also established a sawmill and copperware factory.

As the South continued to grow and Starkville had begun to prosper due to the cross country route of the GM&O Rail Road and the Illinois Central Rail Road linking larger cities to towns of the south. This helped in promoting industry into this region. Tragedy struck the town of Starkville on April 25, 1875, as a fire swept through downtown destroying 52 building. The citizens of Starkville were strong and determined to rebuild, as they did.

One of the area's strongest promoters was Colonel W. B. Montgomery who led in the beginning of the dairy industry in Oktibbeha County. Col. Montgomery had imported an exceptional herd of jersey cattle which revolutionized the agricultural base from cotton to dairy farming. It became the backbone of the local economy. Col Montgomery was also instrumental in 1878 in securing for Starkville the location of the new agricultural and mechanical college known as Mississippi A&M, later becoming Mississippi State University.

In 1923, Colonel W. B. Montgomery urged Dr. H. R. Ryder, to come to Starkville and talked to the Chamber of Commerce about

building a dairy condenser in Oktibbeha County. Colonel Montgomery and a group of dairy farmers and local business men joined together to try to recruit the Borden Company to build a milk processing plant in Starkville. Borden's early influence and his love of Mississippi and the company leader's knowledge of the agricultural in the Oktibbeha county region convinced them that a plant would prosper in the area. At this time the farming industry topped the county with 1,250 dairy and Starkville was chosen for the site to place the new plant. The Borden plant opened on March 12, 1926 with a two day city wide celebration that featured parades and visits from state dignitaries. The celebration brought out thousands of people and a parade of more than 60 floats according to historical records.

During the 1940's the Starkville Based Borden Creamery and Condenser produced the majority of the condensed milk consumed during World War II. The federal government ordered condensed milk as a field ration; soldier who was home on leave told their families about milk that stayed fresh indefinitely. Borden's production of it for the Army never caught up with demand. The Borden Starkville Plant was the largest Milk Condenser in the South and the only plant of its kind South of the Mason-Dixon Line for five decades.

His Borden Milk Company would eventually become the Borden Family of Companies, including Borden Foods Corp., Borden Chemicals Inc., and the creation of the marketing brand for Borden Condensed Milk. "Elsie".

Elsie the cow was the most recognized and beloved advertising symbol in the world at that time. During the 1939 World's Fair in New York, Borden staged a topnotch dairy exhibit. They built a Rotolactor; "a giant, glass enclosed turntable on which the cows were milked by automated machines. It was very futuristic and a hit with the fairgoers. Borden's ad agency scanned a list of questions asked by visitors. They were amazed to find that most of the questions were, "Which cow is Elsie?" She was an animal that existed only in a series of cartoon magazine ads for Borden products. The agency searched the Borden's heard of 150 Fair cows and quickly settled on a good-natured, big-eyed Jersey named "you'll do Lobella." She was rechristened Elsie, and a celebrity was born. By the time the Fair closed in 1940, "Elsie" had become the #one attraction.

In the 40's the Starkville Borden Plant economically revived the city almost overnight with new agricultural and industrial development faster than any other north Mississippi town. For the next 50 years it was the cornerstone of Starkville's Commerce. At the height of operation the Borden plant employed about eighty people and over 1,250 farms supplied the milk, each morning, the farmers delivered their milk to the factory where it was carefully tested. After passing inspection, the milk was poured into huge vacuum pans where the water was boiled off at a low heat. Men and women worked in the factory as sealers, machinist, inspectors, loaders, supervisors, cleaners, fillers, and tin workers. From 1926-1976 Elsie's portrait on the entrance greeted guest and employee to the plant

as the Borden steam whistle summoned the employee that signaled the start and stop time of the work day and could be heard all over Starkville.

As the area saw the agricultural and industrial change in the 1970s, the Borden plant began trucking milk from out of state and the remaining Mississippi dairy farms suffered. In 1998 Eagle Family Foods was formed. GE Assets Management purchased the portfolio of food brands from Borden and things took on a change in production. The Starkville Eagle Plant operated only 6 month out of the year due to the inability to acquire Class IV milk needed to produce condensed milk. By this time, the Starkville facilities were trucking milk from the Sulpher Spring, Texas plant.

On June 29, 2005, the Company announced that its plans to close its sweetened condensed milk plant located in Starkville, Mississippi (the "MS Plant") by October 2005 (the "Starkville Plant Closure"). Future production was to be shifted to the Company's manufacturing plant in El Paso, Texas. The Company recorded an impairment charge of \$0.4 million in fiscal year 2005 for the production assets at the MS Plant. The employee costs, including benefits and severance for the 29 employees, and would be expensed ratably over the future service period. In July 2005, the Eagle Family Food Company closed the Starkville Plant and moved the production to El Paso, TX.

In March 2006, another visionary business man saw an opportunity in the prosperous town of Starkville. John Arnold of TAG Investments met with owners of the Eagle Family Food Company site and purchased the property to create a new urbanism development in Starkville. The development was a dream of John's and TAG Investments, so they purchased the 4.63 acres of land where the Borden Eagle Physical Plant was built 79 years ago. They will now create a new look while developing nearly 2 whole city blocks on the Borden site. The development will feature 32 patio homes, 40 loft units, 174 parking spaces and 28,600 square feet of retail property. It will surround from East Lampkin Street, South Montgomery, Hogan Street and South Jackson Street. It is located only one block from the city library and 2 blocks from the old Main District downtown area. This plan is just another vision of the Starkville area's strong promoters who see a promising development in a thriving community.

"As we watch the demolition taking down outdoor metal buildings and selling off the existing milk equipment, the property is taking form of a new vision for the area", Mr. Arnold says. The Tag Investment group wants to maintain the architectural integrity of the Borden property. We are planning to maintain much of the existing building with part of it used as climate controlled storage lease space as well as retail and condominium spaces. The whole new urbanism is what we're doing, said Arnold, We're targeting empty nesters, and young professionals.

Borden Crossing continues to take shape as we watch the buildings transforming into a storage, retail and office facility with residential along side. We are encouraged in the growth of Starkville's economy and the look of downtown.

Starkville area has always had great strength in leaders with a vision of the future from the 1800 to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Great business leaders have seen this area as a place to succeed in an agricultural and industrial thriving community.

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