



Franklin County businesses have multitude of ties to Wisconsin

By JIM HOOK Senior writer

Article Launched: 06/09/2008 02:00:00 AM EDT

Wisconsin industry has a second home in Franklin County, Pennsylvania.

More than 5,500 people work in factories whose parent companies are based in the Badger State.

"I'm not sure what the connection is, if it's coincidental or what," said L. Michael Ross, president of the Franklin County Area Development Corp. "For whatever reason, an unusually high concentration of firms are coming from Wisconsin and matriculating to Franklin County:"

- Grove Worldwide, part of Manitowoc Co. in Manitowoc, makes hydraulic cranes.
- JLG Industries and Jerr-Dan, part of Oshkosh Corp. in Oshkosh, manufacture aerial lifts and roll-back trucks, respectively.
- Frick Co., part of Johnson Controls Inc. in Milwaukee, makes parts for industrial refrigeration systems.
- Bentley Packaging, also based in Milwaukee, boxes and ships industrial equipment.

So what's the attraction?

"I wish I understood," Ross said. "I don't know."

Badgers are not native to Franklin County or Pennsylvania, the Keystone State.

Is there a religious connection? Lots of Lutherans?

Probably not. Pennsylvanians are just 8 percent Lutheran while Wisconsin is 22 percent, according to the 2001 American Religious Identity Survey.

Weather? Wisconsin gets 45 inches of snow in winter, 10 inches more than south central Pennsylvania.

"To me it's an unusual connection," Ross said. "I may be the only person who's thought about it, and it may mean absolutely nothing."

There are loose connections:

- The state fossil in both states is named trilobite. Both look like giant, underwater pill bugs, but the Pennsylvania species was bigger.
- In both Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, the state drink is milk. Wisconsin has the most cow herds in the United States. Pennsylvania ranks second.
- You also might consider beer as the unofficial state drinks. Wisconsin ranks sixth in the number of breweries, Pennsylvania seventh. A Wisconsin adult drinks an average of 38 gallons a year

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



(seventh in the nation.) Pennsylvanians however jump off the beer truck with just 31 gallons per adult (32nd).

- The Wisconsin Tourism Department's pride campaign -- "If you want the job done right, give it to someone from Wisconsin" -- sounds remarkably similar to the Letterkenny Army Depot motto -- "When the first shot has to count, count on Letterkenny."

Ross suspects Wisconsinism first invaded south central Pennsylvania in 1973 when Milwaukee-based Harley-Davidson opened a motorcycle assembly plant in nearby York County.

The Pennsylvania legislature kicked off the modern wave in 2002 with the adoption of the polka as the state dance. Until then, it was the state dance of Wisconsin and no other state.

It was in 2002 that Manitowoc acquired Grove Worldwide. Jerr-Dan went Wisconsin in 2004, Frick in 2005 and JLG in 2006. Bentley opened its local shop in 2006. The new owners have kept the local plants running at full speed.

Tony Hozeny of the Wisconsin Department of Commerce said his office was not involved in any of the mergers.

"We didn't fund any of the projects," Hozeny said. "I don't know anything about them."

Edward Steckel, a Chambersburg attorney and graduate of the University of Wisconsin, suspects there may be a political reason behind the arrival

of Wisconsin industry in south central Pennsylvania. The labor and business climate is more favorable here than in a progressive state known 40 years ago for its bus lanes and bike paths.

"They look at Franklin County like going overseas," Steckel said. "They could go to Korea or to Franklin County."

"Is there a concentration of aliens in Wisconsin conspiring to take over a county in Pennsylvania?" Ross asked. "It'll be on the History Channel."

"It's quite a coincidence," said John Casper, president of the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce. "I've had no reason to think about it. Oshkosh Corp. is phenomenal as far as corporate leadership goes. If I was from another community, that's the type of ownership I'd want."

"It's pretty odd, though," said Casper, a Manitowoc native who knows how to polka. "I don't think there is a conspiracy. You can put the conspiracy theory to rest."

Ross is talking about taking a closer look.

"We're going to open up a satellite office in Appleton, Wisconsin, and become a cheesehead" Ross said. "The Chambersburg Cardinals are going to become a feeder to the Green Bay Packers."

And what's in store for local farmers when

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



Wisconsinites discover Franklin County's dairy industry is the second largest in Pennsylvania?

Jim Hook can be reached at 262-4759 or jhook@publicopinionnews.com .

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

The advertisement banner features a yellow lightbulb icon on the left. To its right is the text 'A bright idea in online advertising.' Below this is 'PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.' On the far right is the FormatDynamics logo, which consists of a stylized 'F' and 'D' in orange and grey, with the text 'FormatDynamics®' underneath.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™