



"Toledo, thanks to Peter Gendron, has become prominent throughout the world for its development of the manufacture of metal wheels and for the quantity and quality of its output of that class of products. Mr. Gendron, came to the city at the age of twenty-one and found employment as a pattern maker in the Toledo Novelty Works, then conducted by Russell & Thayer. In 1871 he went to Detroit as a pattern maker for the Detroit Safe Company. As a boy he had worked in his father's wagon shop and while in Detroit he conceived the idea of a wire wheel. In 1875 he returned to Toledo, perfected his invention, first using the wire wheel on children's carriages. In 1877, with three associates he began the manufacture of wheels, but the company lacked sufficient capital to put the product on the market and consequently failed. Mr. Gendron did not lose faith in his invention, however, and after three years of persistent effort established a market for his wheels.

The Gendron Wheel Company was incorporated in 1880 and a small factory was started at 218 Summit Street. Within three years the business increased to such proportions that larger quarters became necessary. A site at the corner of Orange and Superior streets was purchased and a four-story building 100 feet square was erected. In 1890, the capital stock was increased to \$300,000 and a few years later it was increased to \$500,000. This company was not only the originator of the wire wheel, but it has

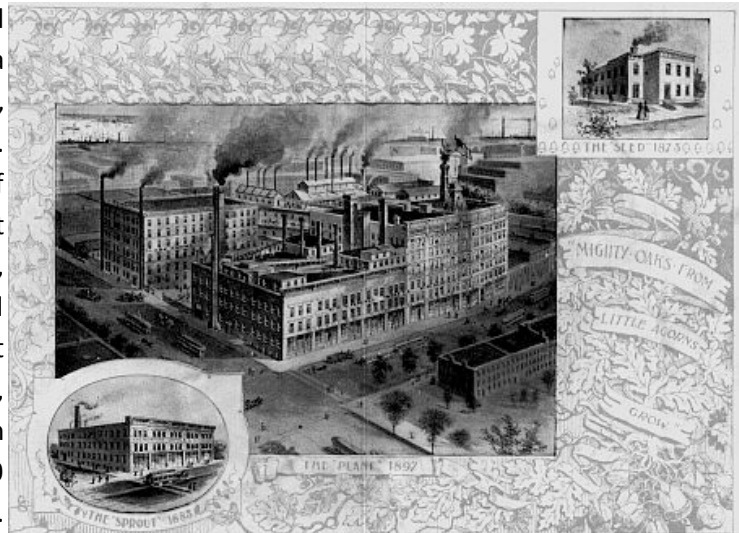


always been the recognized leader in the manufacture of goods of that class. It makes bicycles, tricycles, invalid chairs, go-cars, baby carriages, doll carriages, coaster wagons, toy wheelbarrows, etc." –Source: *Toledo and Lucas County, Ohio, 1623-1923* by John M. Killits, (Chicago, 1923), p. 425

". . .By the year 1890, the company had added 120 feet to their plant on Superior street, employed some 300 men, and was capitalized at \$300,000 - no small concern at that time in the rapidly growing Western town. Additional ground, adjoining the company's plant, was purchased from time to time and buildings were erected thereon until to-day (1910) it owns the greater portion of the block bounded by Orange, Jackson and St. Clair streets, having a floor space of over 250,000 square feet. The plant is modern in every respect, fully equipped with automatic sprinklers and the very latest fire-fighting apparatus. Power is supplied by thirty-five electric motors, having an aggregate of 500 horsepower. The company

was styled the Gendron Iron Wheel Company for several years, but some years ago the name was changed to The Gendron Wheel Company. The company was not only the originator of the wire wheel, but it has been the recognized leader in goods of that class. Many of the machines used in the manufacture of the company's product are the direct invention of Mr. Gendron or his mechanics. As a result of this, the company is the possessor of some for the most perfect electric welding, rim-truing and wheel-making machinery in existence. The concern has a capacity of 2,500,000 steel wheels, annually, all of which are required to equip articles of their own manufacture. The company has long since been recognized as the largest manufacturers of children's vehicles in the world. . .The company is still a large factor in the manufacture of bicycles, having been one of the pioneers in that industry. Years ago, annual sales of the company passed the \$1,000,000 mark, and are now considerably above that figure. The present capital stock of the company is \$500,000, and the officers are: J.F. Vogel, president; Peter Gendron, vice-president; William L. Diemer, secretary, and Charles R. Wilhelm, treasurer." Source: *Memoirs of Lucas County and the City of Toledo* by Harvey Scribner, (Madison, Wisconsin, 1910), v. 1, 552.

". . .In 1925, The American-National Company was established. It became a holding company for Toledo Metal Wheel, National Wheel and American Wheel. Gendron Wheel became a subsidiary of American-National in 1927. For the next eleven years, American-National, Toledo, and Gendron products were manufactured in the Gendron plant which covered about one square block at St. Clair, Superior, Jackson and Adams streets in downtown Toledo, Ohio. At their peak, between 3000 and 4000 people were employed.



American- National, Toledo and Gendron

products were sold under the trade names of Pioneer, Skippy, Express, Reliance, Hi-Speed, Hi-Way, Speed King, Sky King, American, National, Streamline, etc. Each company had their own products and catalogs. In 1941, with the advent of World War II, children's vehicles were discontinued to concentrate on hospital equipment including wheelchairs and wheeled stretchers. All of the company's plants were closed except the Gendron Perrysburg operation. In 1959, Gendron Wheel moved most of its manufacturing to Archbold, Ohio. The Perrysburg plant was closed in 1963. In 1964, the company became a subsidiary of Howmedica, however the Gendron trademark continued. In 1971, Mr. Robert Diemer and Mr. Richard A. Bigelow purchased the company. It became Gendron-Diemer. In 1975, Richard A. Bigelow purchased Mr. Diemer's interest and the company became Gendron, Inc. Recently, Mr. Bigelow sold the company to Steven W. Cotter, Thomas A. Dewire, and Frederic W. Strobel." Excerpt from flyer, "Gendron 1872-1997" (Gendron Inc.: Archbold, Ohio, 1997).