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## Commander to the Gulf

Third largest of U. S. flour milling companies, Commander-Larabee Corp. (headquarters: Minneapolis) last week became a little bigger by a strategic purchase. It acquired, for an undisclosed price, G. B. R. Smith Milling Co. of Sherman, Tex., which has a 2,000-bbl. daily flour production and a million bushels storage capacity for wheat. Its location assures Commander-Larabee of a supply of Gulf grain and cheap water transportation to the Atlantic Seaboard. With the addition. Commander-Larabee has 14 flour mills with a 40,000-bbl. capacity and storage space for 30,000,000 bu. Commander-Larabee plans to double the Sherman mill's storage capacity and is building a 1,000,000-bu. terminal at Wellington, Kan. It also plans a new 2,500-bu. flour mill at either Sherman or Fort Worth. Largest company in the U. S. is General Mills with an 81,850-bbl. daily capacity; second is Pillsbury Flour with 45,000 bbl.

Commander-Larabee was formed in 1926 by a merger of the Larabee mills of Kansas with the Commander group in Minneapolis. The Larabee mills were started by Fred and Frank Larabee in their home town of Hutchinson, Kan. The Commander mills were originated by Banker Benjamin Belcher Sheffield, now head of Minneapolis Civic & Commerce Association, W. H. Sudduth, a farmer, and W. D. Gregory. Messrs. Sheffield & Sudduth sold out to a group which included Shreve McLaren Archer, 40, head of Archer-Daniels-Midland Co., one of the biggest linseed crushing companies in the World. In 1930 his company bought control of Commander-Larabee of which he now serves as president. Chairman of the company is Guy A. Thomas who is 57, looks 20 years less. He started work at 14 as an office boy in Washburn Crosby Co., three years later became its youngest salesman. He was sales manager and a director of the company when he left to go with Commander-Larabee. He is credited with having sold more flour than any man in the U. S. A staunch Democrat, he recently offered to wager \$1,000 he could name every plank to be adopted at the convention.

Both Chairman Thomas and President Archer have many outside interests. The real bosses of

Commander-Larabee have been its three vice presidents: Clarence M. Hardenbergh in charge of operations, Robert W. Goodell (formerly with King Midas Mill Co.), executive vice president, and Martin Luther, in charge of sales. A new vice president, to be in charge of Texas business, will be J. Paul Smith of the newly acquired company.

Commander-Larabee has suffered with the decline in flour from about \$7 per bbl. in 1929 to around \$4 now. Its bond interest has been defaulted and a financial reorganization is being worked out. One of its best known brands is Airy Fairy cake flour, a competitor of General Foods' Swans Down. A new product is ready-to-bake Airy Fairy Kwik Biskit, over which General Mills and Washburn Crosby filed a suit charging infringement of its Bisquick trade mark. Commander-Larabee promptly filed a \$1,000,000 counter suit.

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