

*Smith Cattleguard Company's*

**Search for Supplemental Farm Income**

**Turns Into Concrete Products Industry**

David G. Smith, 59, who farms 95 acres at Midland, likes farming. He gets satisfaction from seeing the seed he plants in late fall coming up green in the springtime. But like most "small" farmers he had a lot of trouble making a living out of the work he prefers to do.

So about four years ago he and his son Rodney I. Smith, 25, sought a way to supplement the farm income.

"I had tried raising poultry and got out of that business just in time," Mr. Smith recalls.

Father and son made a concrete cattle guard for Mr. Smith's father-in-law Edgar Messick.

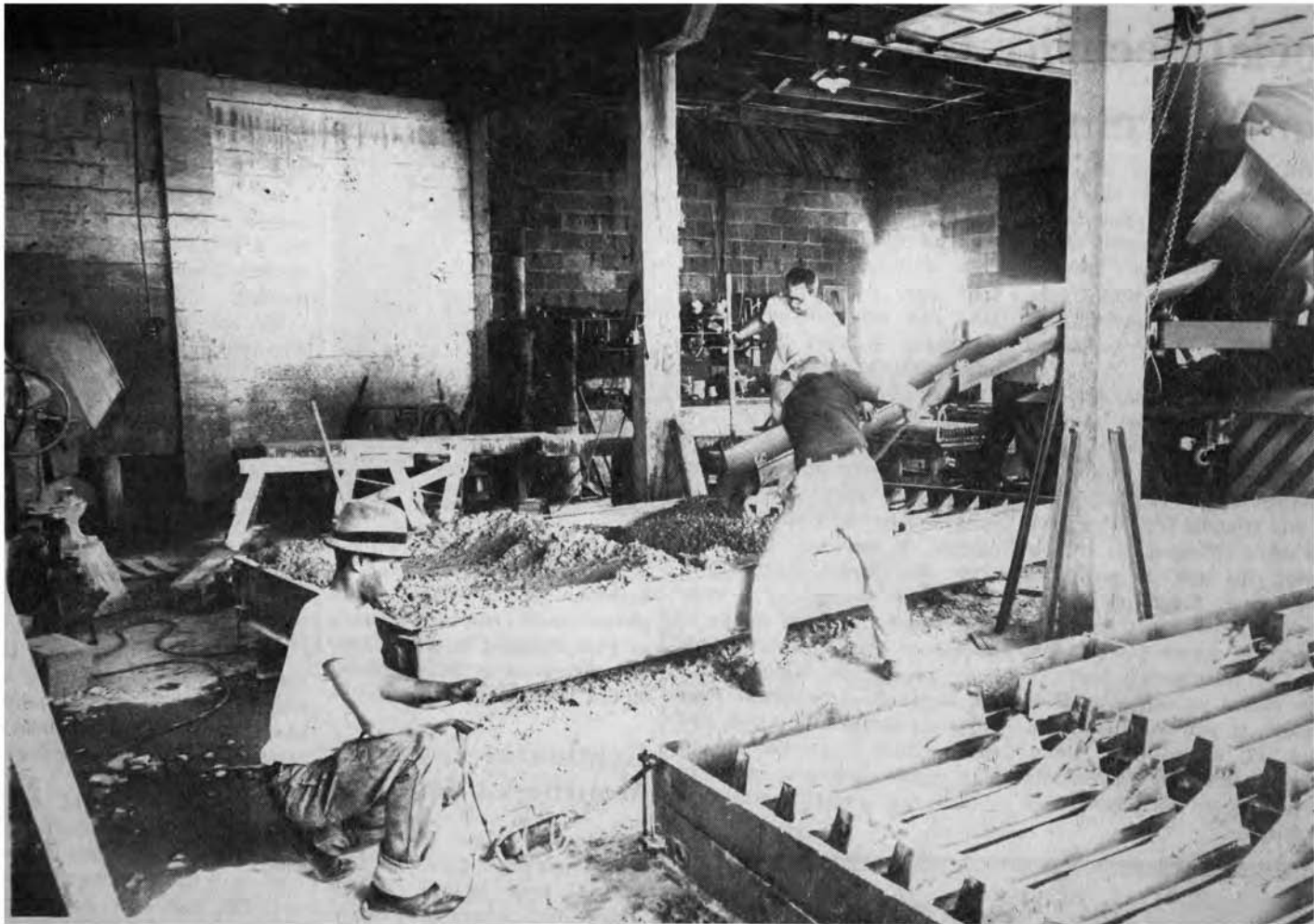
Ground-level guards for entrance gates, and to separate one field from another, are usually made of wood or iron pipe. Farmers often make them in their farm shops in slack season.

### **Combined Experience**

The Smiths from their own experience, and the experience of their neighbors, knew there was a demand for a simply built, durable guard, and using wooden molds they were soon producing concrete guards for sale.

Mr. Smith is a carpenter as well as a farmer, and he had worked with contractors. Son Rodney had about three years' experience selling farm machinery.

They pooled their skills. Last year what had started as an experiment flourished into a manufacturing enterprise doing business in seven states — as far west as Michigan, north into New York and south into North Carolina.



WHEN THE READY-MIX CONCRETE truck backs up to the pouring shed at Smith Cattle-guard Co., David G. Smith, center, lends a strong back and a shovel to Henry Washington,

left, and Buddy Andes, background, to spread the concrete evenly over one of the metal cattle-guard molds. It takes about 20 minutes to "pour" a concrete cattleguard.

—Democrat Staff photo

They sold 98 of the concrete guards, 195 concrete stock waterers and about one mile of lifetime concrete panel fencing.

A comparatively new item to come from the Smith company, the electrically heated and completely automatic concrete cattle waterer "took off faster" in sales than either the reinforced concrete fencing or the cattle guards, Rodney Smith says. Forty-four of the thermostatically controlled waterers have been sold to Dave Canning's Court Manor Plantation at New Market.

A half mile of the Smith-

made concrete fence was bought by an estate owner in Winston-Salem, N.C.

#### **Slow Month Turns Busy**

At first each product seemed to have its own sale and manufacturing season — cattle guards in the spring and fall, waterers in the summer and fencing in the winter. But each year of the past three, the Smiths found themselves trying to fill twice as many orders as the year before, and the month of June which in prior years was a slack month this year is the busiest of any so far.

Using wooden molds, it used

to take the Smiths eight hours to produce one steel-reinforced concrete guard. Now, using metal molds which Rodney designed and welded himself, it takes four hours. The finished guards sell from \$160 to \$170 apiece, and take only about two hours to install.

#### **Two Full-time Employees**

As the Smiths' manufacturing business grows, they are doing more business with other industries. They buy their ready-mix concrete from Sanders Quarry Inc. of Warrenton, their steel from Bethlehem in Richmond, electrical units for the cattle waterers in Farm-

ington, Conn., and "lots" of miscellaneous" from the Warrenton Supply Co.

The company has two full-time employees, Buddy Andes of Remington and Henry Washington of Midland, and it also hires part time employees when orders peak.

What started out as an attempt to produce supplement income for David Smith's farming is turning into an operation which makes the farming incidental. But one hoped-for result has been achieved: With the sale of Smith concrete products increasing, David Smith can afford to farm.