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Texas firm hiring for foundry

By Jeff Amy

Star Business Writer

Dallas-based Trinity Industries, which has bought the former United Defense foundry, is hiring 50 workers to reopen the plant that was closed in March.

Trinity, which makes parts for railroad cars, bought the west Anniston property Nov. 17. No sales price was disclosed.

"The foundry is going to be making rail car parts to serve our other facilities and others — outside customers other than Trinity," said the company's Linda Sickles.

Trinity has just entered the foundry business with the October purchase of a Pittsburgh company, McConway & Torley. That company was originally looking at the West 10th Street foundry, according to Elmer Wheatley, the executive director of the Calhoun County Economic Development Commission.

Trinity buys lots of castings for

rail cars, and owning foundries could allow it to cut those costs. About 25 percent of McConway & Torley's business came from Trinity, according to a Trinity stock filing. Controlling those costs directly might help the company to cut costs.

Cindy Garrison, a spokeswoman for United Defense, said her company had agreed not to comment on the sale.

Trinity's main lines of business are railroad car manufacturing, concrete, highway safety products, propane storage tanks, and other heavy industrial containers. The publicly held company had sales of \$2.47 billion and profits of \$103.7 million.

Trinity has been trying to boost a sagging stock price in recent months, an aim aided by 23 percent jump in profits in the most recent quarter, plus a plan to buy back up to 10 per-

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cent of its stock. The company has been consistently upbeat about demand for rail cars.

"The company continues to receive orders faster than current shipping rates and has expanded its production lines," said an October Trinity quarterly report.

Trinity has a 650-employee plant that builds rail cars in Bessemer, plus other facilities in Birmingham, Montgomery and Cedartown, Ga.

United Defense decided to get rid of the foundry last December, saying that it was no longer profitable and didn't fit with the company's main business of defense contracting. At that point, the foundry had 103 workers. Initial efforts to find a buyer faltered, leading to the layoff of the foundry's last 30 workers in March.

The current foundry was built by Kilby Steel in the 1950s. In recent years, it had cast products such as valves from steel and nickel.

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