



Clayton Business: Celebrating 100 Years

Written by Jeff Radio

Would you believe a business on Atlantic Ave. in Clayton, located in a building originally designed to be a shoe factory, has been the headquarters of Hungerford & Terry, Inc, known for designing and implementing water filtration systems around the world.

Hungerford & Terry, Inc. is proudly celebrating their 100th Anniversary in 2009 by sprucing up their 87 year old facility, though a look around inside shows a glimpse back in time. Their offices are set between low cubicles where the staff or should I say family, who have worked together for many years complete daily tasks. The back kitchen is a throwback to the fifties, where limited changes have taken place since its addition in 1952. The building screams history and a fascination in getting to know the people who have worked there through the years and those who continue to work there today.

The company was started by Churchhill Hungerford of Wenonah and Arthur Terry of Woodbury, both engineers who began discussing a business plan in 1906. Their business was incorporated in May, 1909

Arthur Terry decided in 1918 to sell his portion of the business to Mr. Hungerford, though the partnership name on the building never changed. Their original offices were in Philadelphia and later moved to Clayton on March 23, 1922. A receiver from the defunct William Brown Shoes Co. approached Churchhill Hungerford about purchasing the factory, which was barely half completed; only to include a foundation and four walls, no roof or windows. Though Mr. Churchhill had reservations about buying the building he later saw value in the structure and had it finished from just a shell to a fully operational facility within 10 weeks.

Richard Erskine from Morris & Erskine Architects had supplied a conceptual drawing of the building; most recently found in Hungerford & Terry's attic. In 1921 a contract was signed with Potts Brothers & Cooperson Construction of Philadelphia to complete the building at a cost of \$11,075.

Churchhill Hungerford took great pride in his new facility, even to add apple trees to the grounds, as well as tennis courts. Since Clayton's Academy Street School was a just a block away, the students were glad to have well maintained courts to play on for an added extracurricular activity.

During WWII, a lookout tower was added to the top of the building, which was used to keep an eye out for low flying military aircraft. Quite a few Clayton residents, inclusive of Bea Frazier - a longtime resident, spent many hours in the tower wondering if Clayton would be the next to be bombed, as it was a scary time in those days.

Churchhill Hungerford, who died in 1940, held a number of patents in the field and was considered one of New Jersey's best known amateur paleontologists. He was always fascinated by the continuous dinosaur fossil findings in his sandpits located in Sewell, NJ. Many of the found skeletons and individual bones have been put on display over the years in museums throughout New Jersey and Washington, DC.

It is a wonder to know that such a small business, on a back road in Clayton is so well known around the world for its designs, workmanship and discoveries. The Clayton Historical Preservation congratulates Hungerford & Terry on their great success in building such a profound business within our community. Their museum, at 29 East Ave., is open to view Richard Erskine's conceptual drawing, as well as other recent great attic finds on Wednesdays from 3-5pm and Saturdays from 1-3pm every week except holidays.