

An Update History of the Wire Cloth Company Location in Mount Wolf PA.

The Pennsylvania Wire Cloth Company of Mt. Wolf (incorporated in 1904), ceased operations amid labor unrest in the late 1950's. The plant and equipment were purchased by a major competitor, the New York Wire Cloth Company of York, PA.

A retiree, who worked for New York Wire and traveled to Mt Wolf to help liquidate, assimilate and dispose of its contents stated, "It appeared as if tractor was backed up to the doors and a tow chain was attached to the looms that were still bolted to the floor. These looms then appeared to have been ripped from their moorings and drug across the floor and out the door into the parking lot where they were rendered unusable and later sold as scrap."

In an effort to diversify, Louis D. Root Jr. (former New York Wire Cloth Company president), setup Root Industries in the Mt Wolf location. In 1961, they began manufacturing crutches, insect sprayers, fire extinguishers, and commercial dishwashers for restaurants. Apparently, this proved less than successful and it was closed by 1965. It is generally believed by senior employees that the Root's then sold the property. In the ensuing eleven or so years following the closure of Root Industry, the facility hosted several other business ventures, including York Astro and Packless Metal Hose.

During this same time (1961), Owens Corning Fiberglass approached a weaver by the name of J.P. Stevens of Walterboro, SC, with an idea to weave their fiberglass yarn into window screen. By 1965, fiberglass screening was making serious inroads into the market place. In response to demands for this new product, the New York Wire Cloth Company opened Oxford Mills in Los Angeles, in 1971. By 1978, plans were under way to move this textile operation closer to the York area. No doubt, because of their familiarity with the old American Wire Fabrics plant, the decision was made to utilize the Mt. Wolf factory for that purpose.

A rather humorous story was shared with me concerning the repurchase of the Mt. Wolf facility. One day, after picking up the

plant manager from the York Market Street plant, Mr. Root proceeded to Mount Wolf to examine the building that he intended to repurchase. Chestnut Street, one of the streets bordering the Mount Wolf plant, drops slightly before climbing up to a railroad crossing and then drops off again rather quickly on the other side. Unfortunately, as Mr. Root's rather longish limousine attempted to cross these frequently used tracks, it became stuck, the center resting on the tracks, while the front and rear wheels were suspended in the air. Fortunately, no trains passed through during the time the limousine teetered on the tracks and a tow truck soon arrived to pull it free.

According to a time line, produced by former New York Wire president Todd Root, Hanover Wire Cloth Company (of Hanover PA), began manufacturing fiberglass screening in Covington, GA, in 1975. In 1989, Hanover Company purchased the J.P. Steven's plant in Walterboro, SC, where fiberglass screening was first developed. In turn, New York Wire Cloth purchased the Hanover Wire Cloth Company including the Walterboro plant on July 1, 2005.

During the mid 2000's, the Mt Wolf plant experienced a phenomenal demand for its' product. Operating twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, with three regular shifts and a weekend shift, it seemed they would never catch up. Unfortunately, in 2008, a nation wide housing slowdown caused a drastic reduction in orders. This reduction followed closely by the economic crises of '08 and '09, which made two fiberglass weaving facilities unnecessary. (The one was the Mount Wolf location and the other being the Walterboro plant.) Several weeks before Christmas in 2008, it was announced that the Mt. Wolf facility would be closed down by the end of February 2009. Management announced that the remaining business would be sent south. At present, the plant has been mothballed while the corporate offices continue to operate from this location.

By Robert D. Horn, New York Wire employee