

57 Hamilton Ave, Hopewell - Smith / Rockwell / Kooltronic (1900)

Rev. 5/13/2021 x - D. Dixon

The Smith/ Rockwell / Kooltronic manufacturing facility at 57 Hamilton Ave. in Hopewell Borough began as the Smith Novelty Co. and then H. A. Smith Manufacturing Co. (1900 - 1945), but is best remembered under the name of Rockwell (1945 - 1974), which was a major employer in Hopewell. The site was then used by Kooltronic (1975 - 1999), and since has been used for office space and storage.

The manufacturing facility is bounded from the north to south by Somerset and Lafayette Streets, and west to east by Hamilton Avenue and a tributary of Beden Brook. The property then extends to the north side of Somerset Street to the railroad tracks, which is currently used as a parking lot.

1900 - **Smith Novelty Co.** - machine shop, 3 people

Hugh A. Smith & father Alfred B. Smith

c1903 - First factory (north side Somerset)

- 4,000 sq. ft., 1913 employ 40+

1915 - **H.A. Smith Manufacturing Co., Inc.**

1919 - Business passed to son, **Alfred H. Smith**

1927 - First facility at current site on Hamilton

1929 - Sold to **Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Co.**

Reorg as **H. A. Smith Machine Co.**

Herbert S. Rockwell, superintendent

- 11,000 sq. ft., 50 employees

1935 - Annex addition (towards Lafayette)

- ~20,000 sq. ft., 100 employees

1945 - Parent renamed Rockwell Manufacturing

- Hopewell -> **Rockwell Machine Co.**

-> **Hopewell Div. of Rockwell Manuf. Co.**

1950s - 3 additions, Quonset Hut -> 72,000 sq. ft.

1960 - Lafayette addn. -> 100,000 sq. ft., 219 emp.

1963 - Becomes Rockwell Taximeter operation

1971 - Hurricane Doria flooding

1973 - Parent merger into Rockwell International

1973/74 - Rockwell closing plant, 400 / 120 empl.

A. Merlin Smith, acting general manager

1975 - **Kooltronic** - Gerald H. Freedman

1984 - Expansion east, remove Quonset bldgs.

1990s - Site contamination, remediation

1999 - Kooltronic moves, end manufacturing

2000s - Used for office space and storage



Smith Factory 1910s/20s [Hw 1909]



Smith Factory 1920s/30s [THM]



Smith Addition 1935 [THM]



Rockwell 1946 [THM]



Rockwell 1962 [THM]

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The Story of Smith Novelty / Rockwell Machine / Kooltronic

The story of Smith Novelty / Rockwell Machine / Kooltronic in Hopewell begins with Hugh A. Smith, who came to Hopewell in 1900 with his father, Alfred B. Smith, and founded the Smith Novelty Company

Hugh A. Smith (1834-1917) served on the Hopewell borough council, and was twice elected mayor of Hopewell. Later he offered and sold his residence at 28 East Broad Street for the use of the Hopewell Public Library and Museum, which continues to be the home of The Hopewell Museum.

Smith Novelty first focused on metal mechanical novelties powered by spring wound motors, and then expanded into special clock movements, water, gas and electric meter registers, and other metal manufacturing.

The company originally was based in a machine shop on the north side of Somerset Street east of the stream, and then moved to a building that was located in what is now a parking lot across Somerset Street from the current facility. In 1915, Smith Novelty incorporated as the H. A. Smith Manufacturing Company. Around 1919, Smith turned the business over to his son, Alfred H. Smith, and moved to Belmar, N. J.

In 1927, Smith Manufacturing moved across the street and built the first part of the current facility, on the south side of Somerset Street at the corner of Hamilton Avenue.

In 1929, Smith Manufacturing was sold to the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company, and then operated as the H. A. Smith Machine Company. It was run by Herbert S. Rockwell, who was the long-time general manager and president from 1929 until his retirement in 1975. (His brother, Col. Willard F. Rockwell, was the long-time president and chairman of the board of the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company, which became Rockwell.)

Herbert S. Rockwell (c1894 - 1976) also served as a director of the Hopewell National Bank, and then became director emeritus of Princeton Bank when he reached age 70.

In 1945, when the parent company changed its name to the Rockwell Manufacturing Company, Smith Machine was renamed as the Rockwell Machine Company. A few years later, it became the Hopewell Division of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company.

In 1963, the Rockwell Taximeter operation was transferred to the Hopewell Division, consolidating sales, service, engineering and production.

In 1973, the parent company changed its name to Rockwell International, with the merger of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company with North American Rockwell.

Also in 1973, Rockwell International began to transfer some manufacturing from the Hopewell plant, and in 1974 announced the closure of the Hopewell site. Alfred Merlin Smith, grandson of founder Hugh A. Smith, was a superintendent and then acting general manager of the plant from at least 1950 until its closure in 1974.

In 1974, Kooltronic, Inc. moved its cooling business from Princeton to the facility. In 1999, Kooltronic relocated to Pennington, and the building has since been used for office space and storage.

1900 - Smith Novelty Co. - Machine Shop

Hugh A. Smith and his father, Alfred B. Smith, arrived in Hopewell in 1900 and founded the Smith Novelty Company (sometimes also described as "organized in 1902"). They built a two-story "machine shop" building approximately 200 feet further east of the current parking lot on the north side of Somerset Street (i.e., beyond the stream), as shown in the 1902 map.

In 1900, Hugh A. Smith, the present Mayor, together with his father and brother in law, came here and began manufacturing special clocks, in a small building the factory association put up for them. The three men did all the work, and the only capital was a big debt.

- Hopewell Herald - Progress Edition - 5/1914 [THM]

In 1900 Mr. H. A. Smith, a citizen of Connecticut, purchased a piece of ground in the Borough of Hopewell. Here he erected a two-story building and organized the H. A. Smith Machine Company to manufacture spring motors for phonographs.

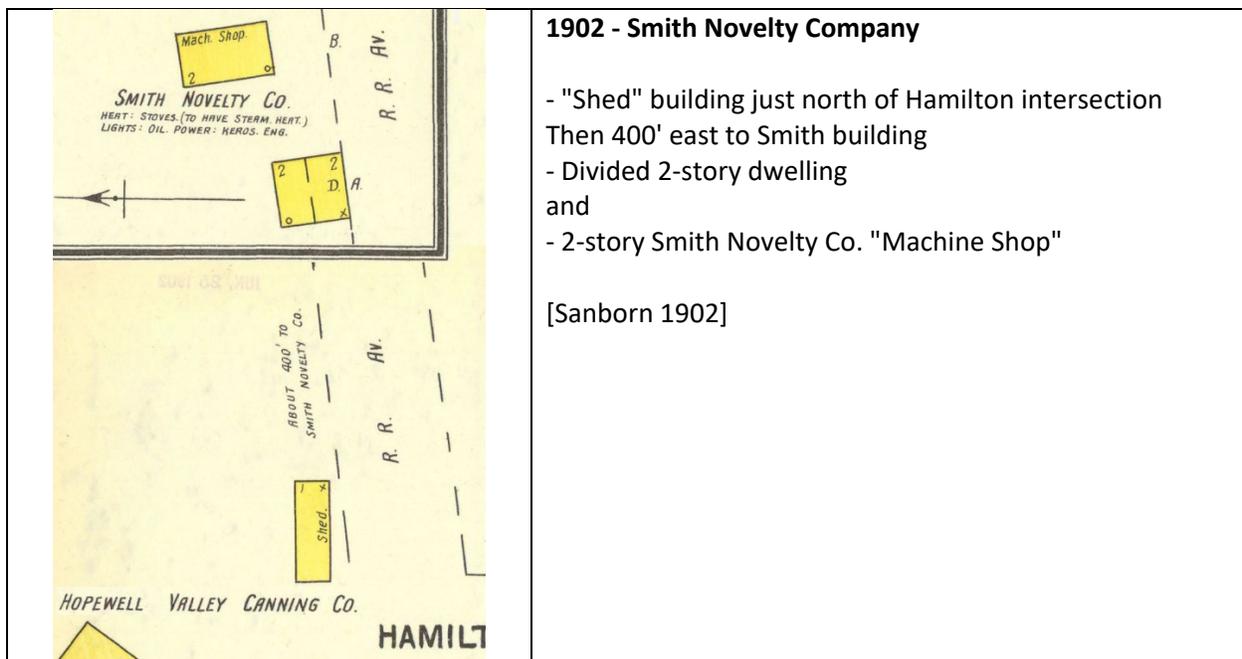
- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1958 [THM]

[The Smith Novelty Co.] principle line of manufacture is metal novelties, special clock movements, water, gas and electric meter registers, but they can make any device which is put to them of a metal substance. They make nearly all their own tools and a number of the machines they are now using in the manufacture of their goods were made by them.

- Hopewell Herald - Progress Edition - 5/1914

As the name suggests, the company devoted itself to mechanical novelties for the young that swept the country around the turn of the century. One item was the forerunner of today's electric fan. With an eye on the market, Smith, already a clock-maker, hooked up a spring motor to produce an oscillating shaft and attached an old fashioned palm leaf to produce one of the first mechanical breeze makers. It had quite a vogue, at the time.

- Trenton Evening Times, 1/7/1964



1902 - Smith Novelty Company

- "Shed" building just north of Hamilton intersection
- Then 400' east to Smith building
- Divided 2-story dwelling
- and
- 2-story Smith Novelty Co. "Machine Shop"

[Sanborn 1902]

c1903 - Smith Novelty - Factory on Somerset

Around 1903, the company built a factory building across Somerset Street from the current manufacturing facility (in the area of the current parking lot). This was originally two stories, and then added a third floor in 1910. The facility had 4,000 sq. ft. in 1909.

A few years later [after 1900] the company started to manufacture registers and clock works for water and gas meters, and a new building of two stories was constructed. Soon a third story was added to take care of the increased business.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1958 [THM]

One of the first items young Mr. Smith made was a forerunner of the modern electric fan; he hooked up a spring motor and an old-fashioned palm leaf to produce one of the first breeze makers. Other early products included a spring motor burglar alarm for residence windows, and spring motors for rotating signs.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1958 [THM]

c. 1909 - Smith Novelty Co. - Outside stairs, chimney, railroad poles in background [Hw 1909]

FOR GAS METERS, AXLES, TANGENTS, SPIRALS, RIVETS, WRIST PINS, STUFFING BOX CAPS, ETC.



We make all of our own formers and cutters for gears and can give you a perfect mesh and easy running train.

Over 4000 feet of floor space devoted to the manufacture of Gas, Electric and Water Meter Registers all fitted with our own make special machinery, thereby reducing the cost of production to a minimum. If you use anything in our line give us a trial.

SMITH NOVELTY CO.'S FACTORY

One of the most complete in the United States for the production of small gears of brass, bronze, German silver, steel or other metals.

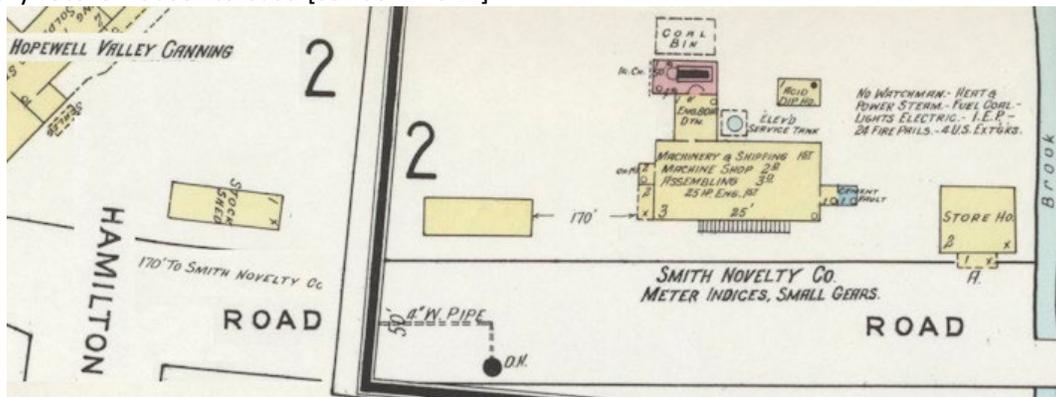
1912 - Smith Novelty Co.

- "Shed" just north of Hamilton intersection,

Then 170' east to Smith building - just west of the stream:

- 3-story main building: 2nd Machine shop, 3rd Assembling, 1st Machinery and Shipping

- 2-story "Store House" to east [Sanborn 1912]



1915 - H. A. Smith Manufacturing Co.

During World War I, Smith Novelty acquired business from importers who no longer had access to European manufacturers.

... securing an order for the manufacture of 100,000 clocks for an American from importers who formerly bought in Germany. The clocks sell for 50 cents each.

[TET 11/22/1914]

The company had 40 to 45 employees in 1913 / 1914.

In 1915, Smith Novelty incorporated under the name of the H. A. Smith Manufacturing Company, Inc., although the Smith Novelty name was also still used (e.g., in the 1927 map).

Down the next two decades [from 1900], many other items pivoted on the spring motor were produced, including a burglar alarm for residence windows, a spring motor for the old-fashioned rotating signs, spring motor photograph units, as well as standard clock movements.

- Trenton Evening Times, 1/1964

Thirteen years have seen a marked change [since its origins in 1900]. Today H. A. Smith is the sole owner, occupies his own commodious three story factory building, is employing about 40 hands, and for the past five years has had an annual payroll of about \$8000. The concern is unique in that it is but one of only two in the state. Its product is special clocks for registers and indexes used in measuring water, gas, electricity, and operating advertising signs and devices of every kind.

- Hopewell Herald - Progress Edition - 5/1914 [THM]

Around 1919, Hugh A. Smith turned the business over to his son, Alfred H. Smith, and moved to Belmar, N. J.

The original factory buildings on the north side of Somerset were leased to other manufacturers in the 1920s, and were later replaced by a parking lot with smaller buildings, which have since been removed.

During a small-pox epidemic in the early 1920s, Mr. Smith's original factory was used as a community hospital.

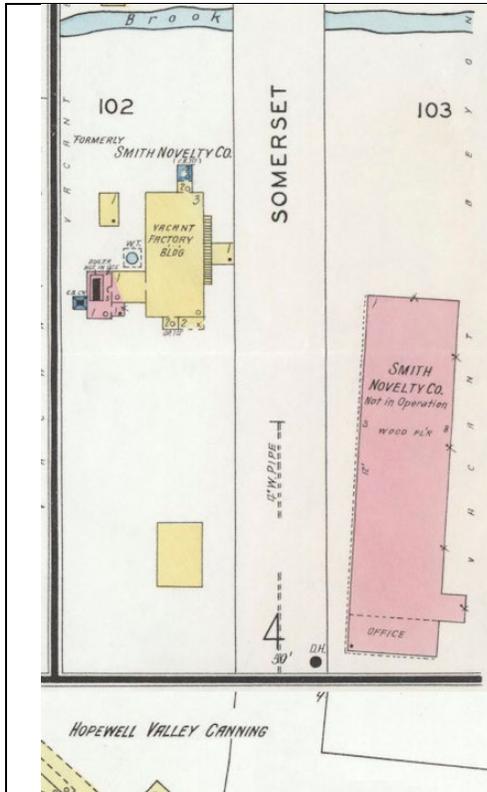
- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1958 [THM]

1927 - Smith Manufacturing - Beginning of Current Facility

In 1927, Smith Manufacturing moved across the street from the original factory and built the first part of the current facility, along the south side of Somerset Street at the corner of Hamilton Avenue. This was a long one-story manufacturing building made of brick and steel that faced the current parking lot.

In the mid-30's, the Hopewell plant produced the first mechanical selective tuners used on Philco radios - during which time the employee list grew to 500 persons.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1958 [THM]



1927 - "Smith Novelty Co." - Old and new

- Original Factory Building north of Somerset now vacant
- New Building south of Somerset (current location) not in operation (yet)

[Sanborn 1927]

1920s-30s - H. A. Smith Machine Company (left Somerset St., right Hamilton Ave.) [THM, n/d]



1929 - Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Co. / H. A. Smith Machine Co.

After World War I, Smith Manufacturing started to make indexes and registers for meter manufacturers. In the 1920s the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company started to use Smith as a source for this equipment.

In 1929, at the start of the Great Depression, Smith Manufacturing was purchased by the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company as the third plant of the new parent company. The company was then reorganized under the new name of the H. A. Smith Machine Company, making metering components.

At the time of the purchase of the Hopewell plant by the then Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Co., there were approximately 50 persons on the payroll. By way of contrast, the 1960 Hopewell Division payroll averages 219 persons, of which 7 were on the payroll in 1929.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1960 [THM]

The H. A. Smith company and its successor Rockwell division were run by Herbert S. Rockwell as general manager and president from 1929 until his retirement in 1975. (His brother, Col. Willard F. Rockwell, founded the Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company in 1925, which then became Rockwell International, and later was run by Willard F. Rockwell, Jr. starting in 1947.)

**1932 Aerial -
Somerset main entrance**
(across from Tomato Factory)



1932 Aerial - New factory, with old factory across the street
(across from Tomato Factory)



[1932 SC2]

1935 - Smith Machine - Annex Addition

In 1935, Smith Machine constructed what was described as a "steel and concrete fireproof addition to its large factory building." This annex was to house \$40,000 of new equipment.

In 1938, modern offices and an air-conditioned assembly room were added to the main building.

In 1935, Smith Machine was employing about 100 people, and running three shifts, 24 hours a day.

Late 1930s? - H. A. Smith - "New Addition"
(view from Hamilton Ave.) [THM, n/d]



During World War II, Smith Machine manufactured airplane turn-and-bank indicators with radium dials under an Army contract with Bendix Aviation Corporation.

"Your Town's War Plant" [HH 7/1/1943]

Your Town's War Plant

is helping to win this war.

IF NOT NOW EMPLOYED IN A

DEFENSE PLANT

. . . JOIN . . .

"The H. A. Smith Machine Co. Forces"

We need your help to lick the Axis.

Pleasant working conditions. Age is no barrier.

See or call Mr. Veeffkind at the factory.

During World War Two, the plant turned out 100,000 turn-and-bank aircraft flight instruments under contract for Bendix Aviation. Over 200,000 parachute quick releases also were made for the Air Corps, as well as thousands of screw parts, and parts for bomb fuses.
- Trenton Evening Times Tuesday, 1/7/1964

The H. A. Smith Machine Company figured in the national news on the war production front Sunday night when Washington radio commentator, Drew Pearson, revealed that the local plant had been awarded an important contract for Parachute Quick Releases which are critically needed for all soldiers and air-borne troops.
- Hopewell Herald, 3/22/1944

Already many of the sixty-four of the local company's employees who have been serving in the armed forces have returned to their jobs with no loss of seniority.
- Trenton Evening Times Friday, 12/7/1945

1945 - Rockwell Manufacturing Company

In 1945, the parent Pittsburgh Equitable Meter Company changed its name to the Rockwell Manufacturing Company, and the H. A. Smith Machine Company became the Rockwell Machine Company. Soon thereafter the plant became the Hopewell Division of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company.

In 1946, the Rockwell Hopewell Division opened a branch plant in Flemington, on Route 12, formerly a bowling alley, with plans to employ 180 people.

In 1948, the Rockwell Hopewell Division donated a new \$15,000 fire engine to the Borough of Hopewell, an American LaFrance 750-gallon pumper and hose car and booster system. The celebration parade included 1,500 people, 40 pieces of apparatus, and an Air Corps fly over.

1946 - Rockwell Aerial [THM] - Quonset hut



**1955 - Rockwell Plant Entrance [REL 1955]
with Rockwell logo (facing Hamilton Ave.)**



1950s - Rockwell Hopewell - Additions

By the late 1950s, the Rockwell Manufacturing Hopewell Division had added multiple additions with approximately 50,000 sq. ft., and the 4,000 sq. ft. Quonset hut on the east side, for a total area of 72,000 sq. ft.

Hopewell Division now [1958] operates on 73,000 sq. ft. of floor space, and has an employee capacity of 500 persons. At present, Hopewell Division serves as a feeder plant for other Rockwell Divisions, as well as manufacturing certain end products, such as liquid meters, valves, and lube fittings, which are shipped direct to customers.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1958 [THM]

In 1929, the total plant area was approximately 19,000 sq. ft. The acquisition of Bldg. #4 added approximately 11,000 sq. ft., and 4 additions to the original plant increased the working area by another 38,000 sq. ft. The most recent construction, the 4,000 sq. ft. Quonset hut, brings the present total plant area to 72,000 sq. ft.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1960 [THM]

1947 - School Trip to Rockwell [HH 5/21/1947]	1950 - Rockwell Skating Pond [HH 12/27/1950]
<p>Our Trip to Rockwell Machine Co.</p> <p>On Monday we took a trip to Rockwell Machine Co. Mr. Bellis was our guide. First he directed us to their new cafeteria where he had a display of water meters, liquid meters, and gas meters. After he had talked to us and explained how they worked, we were divided into three groups, which were led by three men, Mr. Bellis, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Jolly.</p> <p>First we went to the warehouse and then to the place where they kept their manufactured goods. After that we went into the shop, where there were many machines. We toured the first floor and then up a flight of stairs and on to the second floor where we saw some more machines. On the second floor we moved into the assembly room where we saw many meters of different kinds.</p> <p>After we had been through the shop we were taken back to the cafeteria and were given refreshments provided by Mr. Rockwell.</p> <p>After we were finished Mr. Rockwell said he had a question to ask us and would offer anyone a dollar who could answer it. But no one could answer.</p> <p>Many of us got samples of meter parts.</p> <p>I had a very interesting time, and a very nice trip.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOIS E. SNYDER.</p>	<p>Public Skating Pond Furnished by Rockwell</p> <p>The pond in back of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company plant, between Somerset street and the railroad, has been flooded for skating.</p> <p>The Woman's Club suggested to the Youth Recreation Commission that there ought to be some place in the borough where the younger children could ice skate. The Rev. John E. Ginter, chairman of the Commission and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, took the problem to Mayor William Williamson and to Herbert Rockwell.</p> <p>Some years ago this area was used for skating, but the pond was drained because of landslides the factory property. Mr. Rockwell was willing to try again. He had the dam put in operation and the area flooded. The sudden cold weather froze the pond before the water covered the tall weeds that were growing there. The Fire Department has been spraying the frozen surface and gradually building it up so that there is now quite a large place on which to skate.</p> <p>The new pond was created particularly for the younger children. The older children may use it but they must look out for the safety of the smaller ones. Ice hockey will not be permitted at any time because the pond is so close to the road and the factory.</p> <p>The parents of the children who use the pond are always welcome to join them in enjoying the skating. The parents of all the children should stress to them the importance of not abusing the privilege that Mr. Rockwell has provided for them. If there should be any damage to the Rockwell factory property or the sign on the pond, the pond will be closed to skating and drained.</p>

1960 - Rockwell Hopewell - Lafayette St. Addition

In 1960, the Rockwell Manufacturing Hopewell Division broke ground for a new \$500,000 addition on the Lafayette Street side, using the area of the former plant parking yard there. This expanded the facility from 73,000 to 100,000 sq. ft. A new blacktop parking area was made across Somerset Street on the north side of building, and the employees entrance was moved to the new side.

1960 - Rockwell Plant Additions - Rockwell News, 9/1960 [THM]



[The] addition is shown on the right with "Rockwell - Hopewell Division" and the Rockwell emblem. This addition will consist of two stories with 36,000 sq. ft. of floor space. A portion of the basement floor will be used for warehousing of ... stock. The warehouse operations will be moved from its present location in the building on the north side of Somerset St. to the new area... This warehouse area will be serviced by enclosed dock facilities large enough to accommodate two trailer units. The ground level will contain a new shipping and receiving area, also to be serviced with enclosed dock space large enough for two trailer units. Adjacent to the shipping room will be storage area for parts and finished products. Some of the secondary and assembly operations currently performed in the present plant will be moved to this area. The two floors will be serviced by an elevator ...
- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1960 [THM]

c. 1962 - Rockwell Aerial [THM, n/d] (dated by autos in photo)



1963 - Rockwell Taximeter

In January 1963, the entire Rockwell Taximeter operation was transferred to the Hopewell Division, consolidating sales, service, engineering and production.

There are five models of the Rockwell Taximeter and over nine hundred parts are needed in their assembly. Most of the machined parts are made at Hopewell, with most of the stamping being made in DuBois. These parts are fitted together during three sub-assembly operations and six line assembly operations. There is also a checking operation, and a packing and testing operation.

- Rockwell News - Hopewell Division, 1963 [THM]

1960s - Checking taxi meters in Rockwell parking lot [THM, n/d]

(Note building in background in parking lot on north side of Somerset St., also visible in c. 1962 aerial)

"Asst. General Manager. K. L. Williamson, Works Manager A. Merlin Smith, and Taximeter sales manager Ralph Urlich"



1971 - Hurricane Doria Flooding

In 1971, Valley Oil, which had acquired the fuel oil business of J. B. Hill and Sons, purchased the north side of Somerset Street east of the stream from Rockwell.

The Hopewell Rockwell plant suffered severe flooding from Hurricane Doria during the evening of Friday, August 29, 1971.

The entire basement or lower floor of the plant, where much of the most important and most expensive equipment is housed, was under water at least three feet deep.

More than 100 electric motors had to be removed and sent away for repair or replaced and many electric control panels had to be dried and repaired.

One month after the storm, Hopewell was 97% back in operation.

- Rockwell News - Gas Products Division, 10/1971 [THM]

1971 Flood - SW corner near Lafayette, facing corner of Somerset & Hamilton [THM]



1971 Flood - Factory [THM]



1972 - Rockwell Aerial - Quonset hut
Across street - Building in parking lot, Pond and sign [1972 DHS]



1973-74 - Rockwell International / Closure

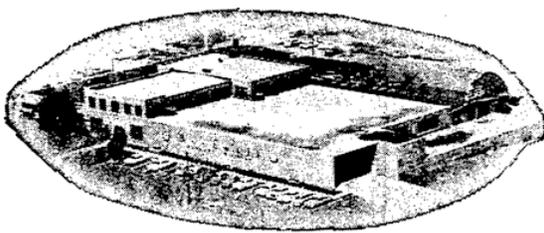
In 1973, the parent company changed its name to Rockwell International with the merger of the Rockwell Manufacturing Company with North American Rockwell.

Also in 1973, Rockwell International transferred the chart drive and water and gas meter assembly operations from Hopewell to plants in Pennsylvania. About 30 employees were affected, of the approximately 400 people working at the plant.

In August 1974, Rockwell International announced its plans to close the Hopewell plant, affecting some 120 employees. Most workers were expected to have jobs until the middle of October, and some possibly to the end of the year. Some employees were offered transfers to other Rockwell plants.

1970 - Rockwell - Hopewell Plant

[TET 1/7/1970]



Most people think of us as a taximeter maker—which we are. Here in Hopewell, we make over half of the taximeters sold in the United States.

At Hopewell, we also make chart drives . . . a gas measuring instrument used by pipelines and industry.

And, we shipped several million individual parts to many of the 33 other Rockwell plants in the U.S. and overseas. We're helping make the thousands of products in the 27 basic product lines of Rockwell.

These include water meters, gas meters, petroleum meters and systems, power tools (Rockwell is the second largest power tool manufacturer in the world in the lines we produce), valves, small engines, plumbing fittings, parking meters and large castings for the rail industry.



Rockwell
MANUFACTURING COMPANY
HOPEWELL PLANT

1975 - Rockwell - Machinery Auction Sale

[NSL 6/8/1975]



AUTOMATIC SCREW MACHINES, TOOLROOM,
PRODUCTION & STAMPING EQUIPMENT
AUCTION SALE LOCATED AT

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL
HOPEWELL PLANT, HAMILTON AVENUE,
HOPEWELL, NEW JERSEY

SALE DATE: Tues., June 17, 1975

Starting At 10:30 A.M.-Inspection

Mon., June 16 & Day Of Sale

THIS SALE FEATURES:

- (6) SCREW MACHINES- (3) B & S #0G, double chain, vert slides, slotting; s. n's 542-0-1420, 542-0-1087, 14701. (3) B & S #00, double chain, vert slides, slotting, s/n's 542-00-3569, 542-00-4284, 542-00-4277
 - (5) PRESS-V & O #6 OBI, 88 ton s/n 605-22, NIAGARA #6 OBI s/n 14062, ZEH & HAHNEMANN 25 ton OBI, PERKINS 28 ton OBI, etc.
 - (4) LATHES-MARTIN Mod KM 46 16"x77", s/n 18023, HARDINGE DVS9, ROCKWELL 11" cabinet base, HABEGEAR speed lathe
 - (5) MILLER WALTER Model 24 HRF production miller, INDEX #55 vert; CINCINNATI Mod 718 horiz., etc.
 - (8) SAWS-DELTAS, 16" radial arm, 20" vert wood bandsaw, cut-off, table saw, PEERLESS hacksaw, JOHNSON Mod. B horiz. bandsaw
 - (5) GRINDERS-B & S 6x18 surface, #13 cyl., COVEL tool and cutter, GRAND RAPIDS Mod. 12W, etc.
 - (30) DRILL PRESSES-DELTA, ROCKWELL, single spindle, 2-spindle, 4-spindle, 6-spindle, 8-spindle
- PIPE THREADERS, BOX STITCHERS, BELT SANDERS, DRILL SHARPENERS, AIR COMPRESSORS, SCALES, HOISTS, HARDNESS TESTERS, & LARGE QUANTITIES OF MISCELLANEOUS MACHINERY TOO NUMEROUS TO LIST

ANOTHER SALE UNDER MANAGEMENT OF

THOMAS MACHINERY LIQUIDATING CO. INC.

LIQUIDATORS - APPRAISERS - AUCTIONEERS

1920 DIXWELL AVE (HAMDEN) NEW HAVEN, CONN. 06514

Telephones, 203 - 298-3311 - 288-3312

1975 - Kooltronic, Inc.

In 1975, Kooltronic, Inc. moved from its 5,000 sq. ft. facility in Princeton, N. J. to the 100,000 sq. ft. former Rockwell facility in Hopewell, N. J., where the company manufactured air conditioners, blowers, and heat exchangers.

The move was funded by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority through a \$400,000 loan to Freeman Properties, Ltd. for purchase of the buildings owned by Rockwell International for lease to Kooltronic. The total cost of the project was listed as \$475,000. The property included buildings totaling 94,000 sq. ft. on four acres of land (presumably both sides of Somerset Street).

In 1999, Kooltronic left Hopewell and moved into its current 170,000 square foot facility on Pennington-Hopewell Rd (Route 654) near Route 31.

Kooltronic currently specializes in thermal management products including air conditioners, heat exchangers, fans and blowers, that are designed specifically to cool the interior of electrical/electronic enclosures containing heat sensitive components.

Gerald H. Freedman (c1929 - 2012) started his own accounting firm in Princeton in 1965. He later left public accounting to operate Kooltronic, Inc. with his wife.

c. 1975 - 1984 - Kooltronic in Hopewell [Kooltronic, Inc.]



1984 - Kooltronic - East Side Expansion

In 1984, the N. J. Economic Development Authority provided \$2.5 million of financing for expansion at the Kooltronic site. The company was awarded \$1.75 million for purchasing new equipment, and Freeman Properties of Princeton (the owner of the factory) received \$750,000 to expand the site.

This apparently included removing and replacing the Quonset hut and other structures (oil house) on the east side of the facility and replacing them with a single structure. A new facade also was added to the building in renovating it to office use.

c. 1962 - Rockwell Aerial - Quonset hut [THM, n/d]
(dated by cars in photo)



Current-day - East Expansion [Google 2021]



Current-day - New Facade - Somerset (left) and Hamilton (right) [2020]



1990s - Rockwell - Site Remediation

Beginning around 1991, site sampling by the N. J. Department of Environmental Protection found issues requiring investigation of contamination and remedial activities.

A Preliminary Assessment in 1995 identified 21 potential AOCs (Areas of Concern) at the site.

Further site inspections and testing found that the soils on the site were impacted with volatile organic compounds (VOC), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), Chlorinated VOC (CVOC), metals including copper, lead and zinc, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and radium.

In February 1999, Rockwell International agreed to conduct investigation and remediation activities at the former manufacturing facility in an Administrative Consent Order (ACO) with the NJDEP.

In 1999 / 2000, Rockwell International implemented a remedial action consisting of removal and offsite disposal of approximately 12,300 tons of contaminated soil (or also described as 5,000 cubic yards).

Further testing identified ground water contamination by TCE and tetrachloroethylene, also known as perchloroethylene or PCE, a volatile organic compound used to degrease metals.

Around 2006, a "pump-and-treat" system was installed in a building on the south side of Somerset Street (replacing two residential lots) to extract the groundwater, treat it to remove contaminants, and discharge the decontaminated water into the tributary of the Beden Brook. This process is expected to continue for many years.

Later, the remaining houses on the south side of Somerset, then vacant, also were demolished.

Monitoring and reporting on the site, and adjacent properties, continues to the present day.

1999 - Office Space & Storage

In 1999, Kooltronic moved to its current facility on Pennington-Hopewell Rd (Route 654) near Route 31.

The site has since been used for storage and office space.

References

Information extracted and summarized from sources including books, reports, maps, newspapers, and photos. Many of the original materials (documents, maps, aerials, and photos) come from contributors to the Hopewell Valley History Project, and are shared on the site (HopewellHistoryProject.org).

Rockwell newsletters and photos courtesy of The Hopewell Museum [THM].

Thanks to families and principals who provided information, including:

- Dave Bregenzer, Jr. - Valley Oil

Books

[1909 Hw] - *1909 Hopewell New Jersey* (1909), Fry & Whitehead

[HAHG] - *Hopewell: A Historical Geography*, Richard Hunter and Richard Porter (1990)

Maps

[Sanborn 19xx] - Sanborn Fire Maps of Hopewell Borough (1902, 1912, 1927)

Newspapers

[HH] - Hopewell Herald newspaper (ends 1955, has multiple gaps)

[TET] - Trenton Evening Times newspaper

[NSL] - Newark Star Ledger