

BELLEFONTE INDUSTRIES

Sucker Stick Factory

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VIEW OF THE EAST END OF THE SUCKER STICK FACTORY,
LOOKING WEST.

The building known as the sucker stick factory is a long, narrow, irregularly shaped one-story frame building that stands between South Potter Street and Spring Creek. The building is composed of two adjoining structures. The eastern structure stands on a concrete foundation, has clapboard walls, and an asphalt-shingled gable roof. The west end of this building is supported on wooden piers and its roof, although gabled at the eastern end, is hipped on the west. The building turns and narrows at its west end to accommodate the curve in South Potter Street. Based on the appearance of the building and what is known about the history of the planing mill industry in the area, it seems

that this building was probably constructed between 1898 and 1922 in association with the lumber industry. The building was in use for the production of sucker sticks by 1928, and perhaps earlier.

During the late nineteenth century, two large planing mills that produced vast quantities of lumber were located along Spring Creek in Bellefonte. As the town's population grew and the construction industry expanded, production of specialized wood products increased. In addition to lumber, the planing mills produced window sash, doors, shutters, and other architectural

What is the Historical Resources Series?

Under a local history grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bellefonte conducted research and documentation of the industrial heritage of the Spring Creek waterfront. As part of this project, Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey forms were completed to document each surviving industrial resource and evaluate its significance. The Eagle Silk Mill was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register as a contributing element of the Bellefonte Historic District.

—by Erin Hammerstedt

View of the west end of the sucker stick factory, looking east. This building was probably constructed between 1898 and 1922 in association with the lumber industry, and was in use as the sucker stick factory by 1928. W. R. Shope, who was involved in harvesting second growth timber and operated a planing mill on the Sutton property, retained ownership of this building until 1945.



elements. Other products, including wooden skewers that were shipped to Chicago to serve the meat packing industry, wooden matches, and sucker or lollipop sticks were also produced in Bellefonte.

During the 1890s, F. W. Crider, who operated a planing mill on the southwest side of Spring Creek where the Pennsylvania Match Factory now stands, had a factory that manufactured sticks used for candy. In 1898, two men from the Hanover Match Company inspected Crider's factory and assured him that he could increase his capacity to produce these sucker or lollipop sticks by installing a machine then in use for manufacturing matchsticks. Crider installed the new machine in October of 1898, and was so pleased with it, that he became interested in the manufacture of matches. Crider organized the Pennsylvania Match Company and began construction of a new facility to house the enterprise in 1899.

Although Crider moved into the production of match sticks, production of sucker sticks continued in Bellefonte, apparently under new ownership or management. The Bellefonte Lumber Company, whose facility was located on the south side of Spring Creek near the new match factory, carried out a retail business in lumber and building materials, as well as producing mill products for use in construction. As a special part of this business, Calvin Troup and Clarence Rine operated a factory for making sucker sticks and skewers. When the Bellefonte Lumber Company was sold to Morris and Claster Company in 1928, it was necessary for the sucker stick and skewer business to locate to a new building.

W. R. Shope, who was engaged in the lumber business, harvesting second growth timber throughout the area, and operated a planing mill on the property associated with Sutton Engineering, supplied a building to house the production of sucker sticks. Shope's planing mill

supplied the material needed to make the sucker sticks. Thus, it seems that in 1928, if not before, production of sucker sticks occurred in the building known today as the sucker stick factory, described above. Haupt and Brown, who were also engaged in the lumber business in Bellefonte, acquired the property containing the sucker stick factory building from Thomas A. Shoemaker in 1912. Then in 1928, William Reynolds Shope, purchased this tract of land “having thereon erected two warehouses” from G. Edward Haupt of Haupt & Brown. One of these “warehouses” is the building known as the sucker stick factory.

In this factory, blocks of wood cut to the appropriate length were acquired from Shope’s planing mill. Once the wood was dried, sucker sticks were produced by boring out round cores of wood with a special drill. Just a few men working in the small building produced thousands of sticks in this manner. Snick Ryan was associated with the sucker stick factory for several years.

Shope retained ownership of the sucker stick factory building until 1945, when his properties were transferred to the Bellefonte Trust Company. Less than two months after acquiring the property in 1945, the Bellefonte Trust Company sold Shope’s planing mill and a separate parcel containing two warehouses (one of which was the sucker stick factory) in the vicinity to John G. Love. Love immediately sold the planing mill property to Sutton Engineering Company, and sold the “warehouse” to O. A. and Lillian M. Kline. After owning the building for twelve years, Kline sold the same property to Lewis P. and Ida M. Smith, and in 1961, Smith sold the narrow strip of land and warehouse/former sucker stick factory to John Lewis and Joyce Ann Willar, who reportedly

operated a hardware store, and likely used this building for storage.

William and Mildred Mattern, together with Martin and Dorothy London, purchased this property, along with three other tracts, from the Willars in 1972. On these four tracts of land, Martin London and Bill Mattern started Triangle Building Supplies and Services. To accommodate their business, they utilized the existing brick office of the Atlantic Refining Company and the Sucker Stick Factory, and erected additional buildings along the north side of South Potter Street. After relocating Triangle Building Supplies and Services to East Bishop Street, the owners sold all four tracts along South Potter Street to the Potter Street Associates 1988. In 2002, Potter Street Associates sold the building to Patrick and Patricia McCool, the property’s current owners. The former Sucker Stick Factory currently houses Creekside Millwork, a company specializing in the production of architectural millwork.