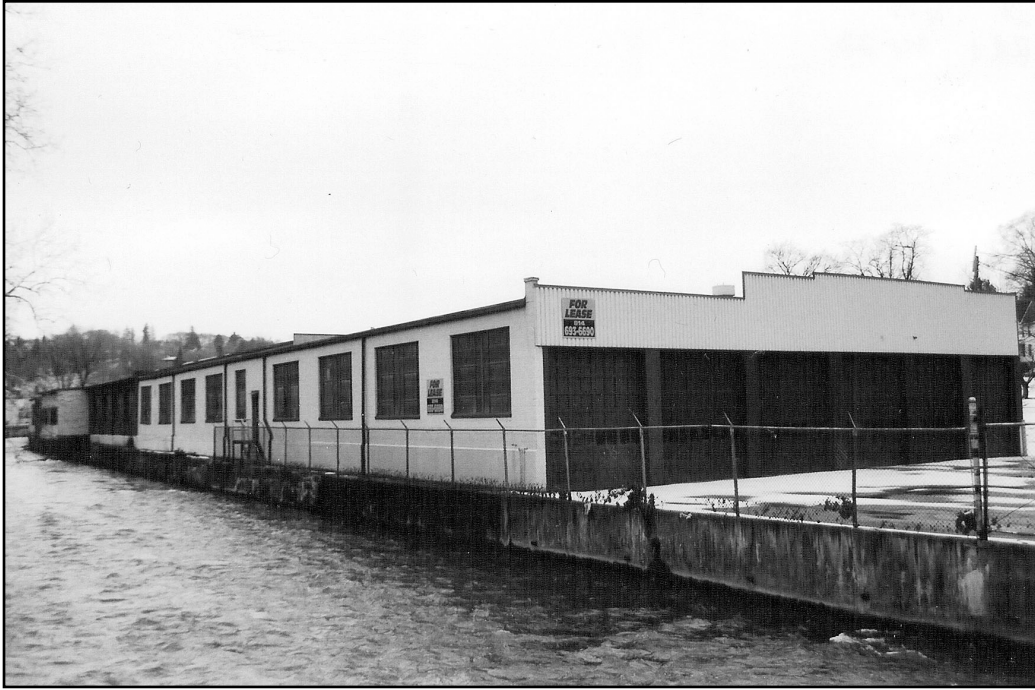


BELLEFONTE INDUSTRIES

Eagle Silk Mill

At Water Street and Lamb's Crossing, Bellefonte, PA

*Published by Bellefonte Borough
236 W. Lamb St., Bellefonte, PA 16823*



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.

J.H. & C.K. EAGLE SILK MILL

This building was originally constructed by the J.H. & C.K. Eagle Textile Company circa 1920 on a site that had long been used for industrial purposes. The building served the textile industry from 1920 through 1938, and was then associated with the metals industry from 1939 through 1997

AFTER MANY UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS TO GROW WHITE MULBERRY TREES AND RAISE

silk worms in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the American silk industry finally became successful in the late nineteenth century after manufacturers decided to rely on imported cocoons from China and Japan. Many of the country's first silk mills were in New Jersey, just outside of New York City. However, as a result of labor strife during the 1910s, among other factors, many manufacturers chose to open facilities in Pennsylvania. Attractors for the silk industry include steady, efficient labor (often women), freedom from labor troubles, cheap and reliable power, and proximity to good

transportation networks for importing raw materials and delivering finished products to market. Bellefonte had all of the factors necessary for success.

Thomas B. Hill of Shamokin, Pennsylvania, purchased approximately two acres of land from George and Amelia Gamble in April of 1920. The J.H. & C.K. Eagle Textile Company was incorporated on July 15, 1920, just 11 days prior to purchasing this property from Hill. By 1922 the original portion of the building had been constructed and was in use as a "throwing mill."

Brothers J. H. and C. K. Eagle built and operated several silk mills in Pennsylvania. The company's main office was located in New York City, and they had manufacturing facilities in Shamokin, Kulpmont, Phoenixville, Gettysburg, Mechanicsburg, and Bellefonte. The company hired a buyer who went to Asia, where he purchased raw silk that was packed in large hanks and shipped to Shamokin. Work orders indicating the colors and types of thread needed were made in Shamokin, and then company trucks delivered the orders and hanks of silk to the various mills throughout the state. In the Bellefonte mill, the fibers were dyed and soaked, and then several fibers were spun together to make thread. The thread was then returned to the mill at Shamokin, where all of the weaving was done.

Henry Reed was the plant's first superintendent. After several years in Bellefonte, Reed was transferred to the Mechanicsburg facility, and Danny Heim took over as superintendent. In 1923, Marlin Rumberger became assistant superintendent, and he later became manager of the Bellefonte silk mill. At its peak, the Bellefonte mill employed about two hundred people, many of whom were females. Females were preferred for many jobs because they had smaller hands and greater dexterity. However, men were employed in the dyeing room, did the heavy work, and worked the night shift.

The silk industry suffered as a result of the Great Depression, and the industry declined during the 1930s. Like many other companies, the J.H. and C.K. Eagle Textile Company struggled in the years following the Great Depression. In 1934, the J.H. and C.K. Eagle Textile Company sold its Bellefonte mill and other properties to C.K. Eagle and Company, Incorporated. Insurance records indicate that C. K. Eagle & Co.'s Plant No. 3 in Shamokin, Pennsylvania was closed in

approximately 1936, and their mill in Gettysburg closed in approximately 1938. In 1938, C.K. Eagle and Company, Inc. was forced into bankruptcy, selling their Bellefonte mill to Reconstruction Finance Company. This transaction included "all lands, buildings, fixtures, machinery, and equipment covered by mortgages," including all patents, trademarks, etc. After holding the property for a year, Reconstruction Finance Corporation sold the property to Titan Metal Manufacturing Company in 1939.

The Titan Metal Company Years

Titan Metal Company began as the Alpha Metal Company in 1915. The company purchased the former McCoy Linn Iron Company between Bellefonte and Milesburg, where they developed an improved bronze rod known as Titan Bronze. Operation of this outdated rolling mill was very expensive, so the company decided to begin extruding its products: rather than being rolled, bars of various shapes were made by forcing billets of hot brass through dies to give the bars the desired shape. This change required a new forging plant, so the Titan Metal Company established a new facility on the site of the former Valentine iron works along Logan Branch southeast of Bellefonte Borough.

In 1925 Titan Metal Company reorganized as Titan Metal Manufacturing Company, which employed approximately 150 men and women. Business boomed in 1928 and 1929, but prices began to fall then, requiring lower manufacturing costs. The company modernized and expanded its facility in order to be more competitive in the changing market. With their expanded facilities, forging, casting, stamping, and machining operations were all conducted in addition to extrusion. Plant No. 2, which housed the company's shipping and receiving department, occupied the former Eagle Silk Mill. In 1964, Cerro Copper and Brass Company, which had taken over Titan, purchased additional land

adjacent to the former silk mill. Following acquisition of this additional land area, Cerro expanded the facility between 1964 and 1968, with large additions on the north and south ends of the brick silk mill.

In 1968, over 1,300 people were employed at Cerro, with an annual payroll of \$9.6 million. By 1975 the company's sales exceeded \$75 million per year. Cerro Corporation continued to function as such until 1976, when the company became Cerro-Marmon Corporation by merger. In 1977 the company changed its name to The Marmon Group, Inc., who then became The Marmon Corporation in 1986. Headquarters of the Cerro division of the Marmon Corporation is still in Bellefonte, but the company has divisions in major metalworking areas throughout the country. Marmon Corporation retained ownership of the property until 1997, when the 3-acre tract was sold to BellJay Corporation, the property's current owner.

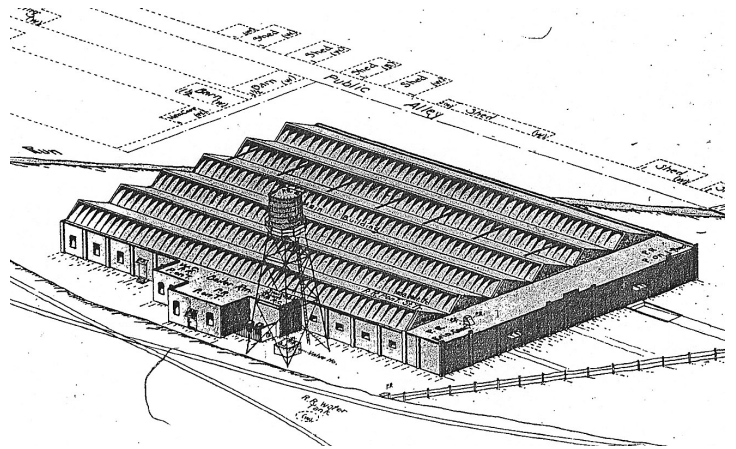


Illustration of the J.H. & C.K. Eagle, Inc. Silk Throwing Mill in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (above) prepared by the Manufacturers Mutual Fire Insurance Company. This facility, which appears to have opened circa 1921 and closed circa 1938, served the same function as the Bellefonte silk mill. Note the building's one-story brick construction with light provided through the saw tooth roof, and its proximity to both the railroad and water.

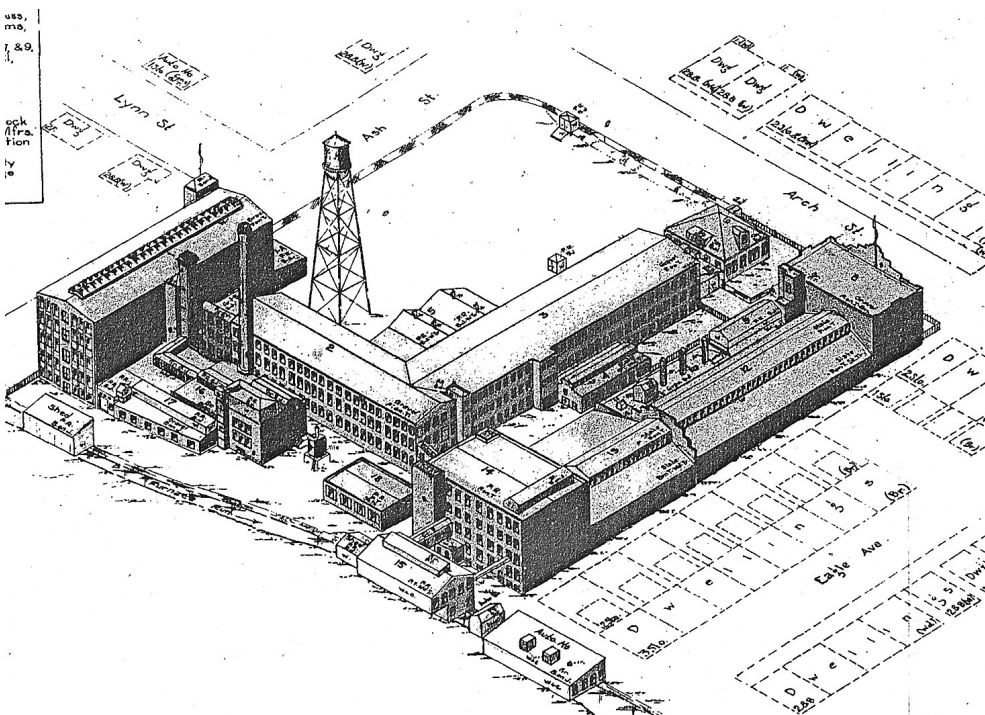


Illustration of the C.K. Eagle & Company Silk Mill in Shamokin, Pennsylvania as prepared by the Manufacturers Mutual Fire Insurance Company in 1926. Unlike the mills in Bellefonte and Gettysburg where raw silk was dyed and spun into thread, this facility was used to weave the threads into fabric.