

PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA

By Scot H. Dahms

If trap collectors were asked where the center of early trap manufacture was located, most would say Oneida, New York because of the Oneida Community and Newhouse traps. If I was asked the same question, I would also say Oneida, New York, not because of the OC but because the Triumph Trap Company was located there. Although not manufactured as early or in the same numbers as the Newhouse traps, the Triumph Trap Factory was definitely a center, or Mecca, of trap manufacturing from 1913 to 1935.

After doing a little research, I found that the Triumph Trap Factory was still standing. I live in Indiana, so I decided to make a pilgrimage to my Mecca. I coordinated this with a trip to the Eastern Regional NATCA meet in Orwell, Pennsylvania this May.

Many people I have talked to have brought up the frustration of collecting Triumph traps because of the many variations of their traps that exist. An ironic twist to this is also the number of addresses that the Triumph Trap Company used on its advertisements. The only reason I noticed this was because I was typing the address into the TomTom and it said that the address did not exist. So I thought that maybe a mistake had been made in the ad, so I looked at a different ad and tried a different address which again the TomTom said did not exist.

From 1913 to 1935, I found that four different addresses had been used for that one building as the Triumph Trap Company never moved locations and only had one factory location. In a 1919 Fur News and February 1921 Fur News and Outdoor World, Triumph used an address of 66 West Elm Street. In a December 1925 Hunter Trapper Trader, the address was 54 West Elm Street. In a 1920, 1921, 1922 and 1924 Fur News and Outdoor World plus 1930 and 1932 Fur Fish Game; the address was 46 West Elm Street. In a 1920, 1922, 1926, 1928 and 1930 Hunter Trader Trapper, the address was 36 West Elm Street. One consistent mailing address was P.O. Box 403 and in some instances the address was just West Elm Street. I should not be surprised that there were so many

variations with the addresses since it is Triumph.

After the Orwell meet, I traveled to Oneida. Although the TomTom said every address for the factory that I entered did not exist, I put in the lowest numbers on Elm Street that the TomTom would accept. I figured since Oneida was not that big, I would just stay on Elm Street and would find it sooner or later.

When I did find the factory, there were no markers there to give any indication that it was ever the Triumph Trap Factory. The original brick color had long since been painted over. There were now three companies in the building including a roofing company, a motorsports company and a recycling center. The recycling center was open, so I went in to talk to the employees as I was curious to see the inside of the building looked like. I knew that everything that had been involved with the making of traps was long gone but still hoped to pick up on a little history.

I should not have been surprised that none of the employees had any idea that the building had ever been a trap factory. I asked if I could look in the build-

ing just to see where the traps were made. They said sure. The old factory was a simply made and sturdy structure with a brick exterior and huge timbers providing support on the inside. My mind wondered to all of the trap manufacturing equipment and activities that would have occurred in the rudimentary structure but at the same time was saddened that it was just an empty shell housing miscellaneous companies when I visited. I thanked the recycling staff for letting me look around and hoped that they did not think that I was too crazy.

Since I was in Oneida, I also visited the Mansion House and the Oneida Community Trap Factory. I was not able to go into either of these buildings, but was somewhat saddened to see that trap factory sitting idle as well. A company that was using it had recently gone bankrupt.

Both factories were trap manufacturing Meccas in their day. Both buildings were now empty shells used for other purposes. This brings up why we are important as antique trap collectors. We have a duty to remember the history that everyone else has forgotten.

Oh, for the record, the address is 116 West Elm Street.



Triumph Trap Factory

< May 1, 2014

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