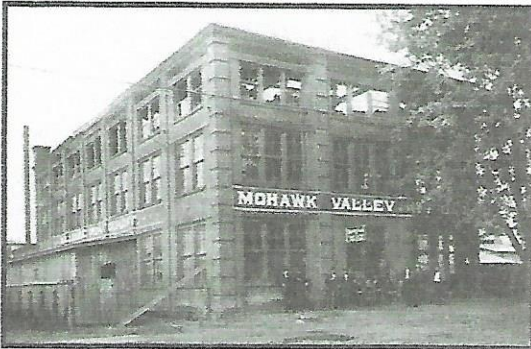


Return to Mecca

By Scot H. Dahms

Oneida Game Trap Co



In the August 2014 issue of the TRAPS magazine, I wrote an article about my trip to the Triumph Trap Factory in Oneida, New York called "Pilgrimage to Mecca". With the 2015 NTA Convention in Hamburg, New York, I thought it would be a perfect time to make another visit with a more thorough exploration of the factory. On my first visit, I only went in the first floor as I did not make contact with the landowner first. A renter allowed me to look at their area.

I contacted the property owner. He was a very nice man who said access was no problem. I promised him a photo of the factory after the fire of September 22, 1914. The fire destroyed the roof and third floor of the factory. According to the Oneida Democratic Union newspaper dated September 24, 1914, the night watchman started an electrical motor on the third floor and then left. A short circuit with the electrical motor started the fire. When he returned, he found the fire and tried to put it out. He phoned the fire department and the fire was out in one hour. The lower two floors were not damaged by fire but did experience some water damage. The damage to the Triumph Trap Company (Oneida Game Trap Company at the time) was estimated at \$20,000.

The Mohawk Valley Manufacturing Company occupied a part of the first floor. They were in the process of building a new factory at a different location in Oneida at this time. They incurred \$5,000 in water damage according to the Oneida Daily Dispatch newspaper dated September 25, 1914.

When I arrived, the landowner grabbed the keys and took me into an area on the first floor which I had not seen on my previous visit. The most impressive thing here was a large vault completely built out of concrete except for the metal door which had been removed long ago. The amazing thing was that this vault was two stories tall on the inside. In the photo of the second floor, you can see the concrete vault in the background.

I will come back to this structure later on.

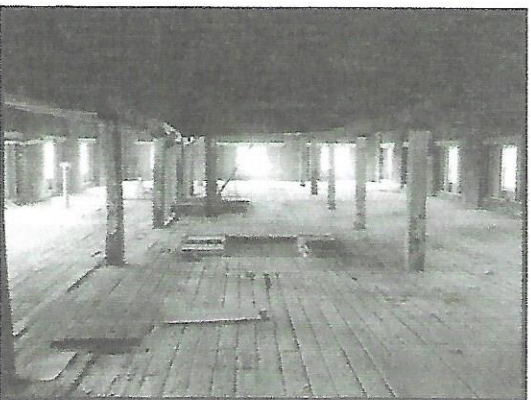
Second Floor, Vault in Background



Parts of the first floor had been remodeled with sheet rock walls. The stairs going to the second floor were also remodeled. The owner said he had some business to do, but that I could continue to look around. On the second floor, the brick interior had been painted and insulation had been put in the rafters. Remarkably, I found a #1 Easy Set trap which did not have jaws or a chain. It was just lying on a window sill. I also found some chain.

As I climbed the stairs to the third floor, I could tell that this floor had had minimal done to it and was the roughest of the three floors. It was also the one with the most information and history. I do not think that it had been touched since the trap factory went out of business, except for the installation of new windows and some new lumber supports.

Third Floor



The first thing that caught my attention was the heavily charred timbers. The main beams and the timbers going from the floor to the ceiling were one foot by one foot. They were charred with cracks up to one inch deep. A few had been replaced or reinforced, but most had not. Some had received a coating of white paint. The floor was blackened in some spots and the deep charring on the timbers went to the floor in some locations.

Drag in rafter



As I walked around looking at the area, I happened to notice that a Triumph drag was hanging from the rafters. It was one of the later Triumph drags as it was a half a wrap drag compared to the earlier drags which are a complete wrap. It had an S hook on it which showed marks from it being removed from some trap chain. It was hooked on a welded trap ring with a tree spike and the ring was stapled to the rafter. I continued to look around and found several tree spikes hammered into the walls in the southwest corner.

Top of Vault



Holdridge G. Greene



In the center towards the south side of the building, I found the top of the concrete vault. It had the initials "H.G.G." and the year "1917" scratched in the top. I believe this stands for Holdridge G. Greene, an employee of Triumph. They went to a lot of work to put this concrete vault in especially since it was a two story vault with thick concrete walls.

Elevator



This building does not have an operating mechanical elevator. It has holes in the third and second floors with doors that can be closed and walked upon. It has a wooden "House Elevator" but there are no mechanical or structural clues as to how it was raised or lowered. There is a garage door on the west side of the first floor where the traps were loaded for delivery.

I went to find the owner to ask if I could buy the items I had found and how much he wanted for them. He said that those items had been there for so long that they were of no value to him and that they meant much more to me, so I could have them. I asked if he wanted to see the items and get information about them. He said he would just read about them in the article I wrote about my second visit. I had already promised to send him the original and the follow-up articles. He said to be sure to send him copies of both and that was all he wanted. I have to say that this man is one of the nicest men I have ever met. It was refreshing.

As I look back on this visit, the one thing that I find amazing is the number of traps that were put out by Triumph in the years they were in business especially with the size and logistical restrictions of the building. The factory had to be cramped for trap manufacture with minimal room for all the equipment needed. No matter the mechanical or structural items needed to operate the elevator, it was a very basic logistical tool which would have made moving items from floor to floor a tedious and challenging venture. The manufacturing process would have been quite labor intensive figuring in the building's logistical limitations.

I encourage members who have information contrary to what I have discussed to email me, phone me or respond in the magazine.

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