

With nearly one hundred employees, the Pennsylvania Match Company of Bellefonte, Centre County, commenced production of its popular "single dip strike-anywhere" and "parlor" matches in February 1900. The company had been organized the year before, at which time it began construction of brick buildings designed by Bellefonte builder and architect Robert Cole (1850-1916), who was responsible for the construction or restyling of numerous buildings in the region. Samuel A. Donachy, a former superintendent of match companies in York, York County, and Hanover, Adams County, relocated to Bellefonte to serve as superintendent. Skilled workers from the Hanover company, which had closed, also moved to the Centre County community and provided an experienced work force and expert management. Because of the plant's location in the Commonwealth's vast lumber region, raw materials were easily obtained.

Before the company's first full year of production, management realized that the operation was inadequate to meet demands, and expanded its capabilities by quickly erecting additional buildings on the site. During the firm's first decade, it operated as a partnership, but in 1911 it was restructured as a corporation and recognized as one of the eight largest match

factories in the United States. At the time of its incorporation, the firm listed assets in raw material alone at nearly five and a



half million feet of match lumber.

The Pennsylvania Match Company remained successful under subsequent owners, eventually emerging as the Universal Match Corporation, but the economic boom accompanying World War II proved to have the greatest positive impact. By January 1947, the facility employed four hundred workers.

But the boom quickly went bust.

Just five months later, on July 1, 1947, Bellefonte's Universal Match Corporation ceased operations, citing plummeting demand for wood matches. Company officials explained that the decline was prompted by the increasing use of book

matches, cigarette lighters, and kitchen stoves that no longer required manual lighting. The complex was purchased by a residential and light construction retail business and was most recently used for the storage of building materials. Bellefonte Borough has recently acquired the historic property to ensure its preservation through adaptive re-use.

The Pennsylvania Match Company is significant in the history of industry for its role in the production of a specialized forest product. The eighteen connected buildings and structures compose the only extant industrial complex in the community associated with the lumber industry.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources—buildings, structures, site, objects, and districts—deemed worthy of preservation. To learn more, write: Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Commonwealth Keystone Building, Second Floor, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-0093; telephone (800) 201-3231; e-mail ra-phmc-webmaster@state.pa.us; or visit www.phmc.state.pa.us on the Web.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Merchant's Exchange Building
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County
August 7, 2001

Springdale Historic District
York, York County
August 30, 2001

Pottstown Landing Historic District
North Coventry, Chester County
August 31, 2001

Harris Building
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County
August 31, 2001

Chestnut Hill
Windsor Township, York County
September 1, 2001

Trexler Historic District
Albany Township, Berks County
September 7, 2001

Pennsylvania Match Company
Bellefonte, Centre County
September 7, 2001

Welkinweir
East Nantmeal Township, Chester County
September 7, 2001

Lancaster City Historic District
Lancaster, Lancaster County
September 7, 2001

Stoystown Historic District
Stoystown, Somerset County
September 7, 2001

New York, Ontario, and Western
Railroad Station
Starlight, Buckingham Township
August 30, 2001



*Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission*

Pennsylvania Match Company

Bellefonte Borough, Centre County

has been entered in the

National Register of Historic Places

under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

The National Register of Historic Places, kept by the United States Department of the Interior, is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation and includes properties significant in American History, Architecture, Archeology, Engineering and Culture. These resources contribute to an understanding of the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation.

Brent D. Hays

State Historic Preservation Officer

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Director, Bureau for Historic Preservation

September 7, 2001

Date entered