

Partners in Excellence



Eastern Warehouse Distributors, Inc.—Metamorphosis

By Jon Otto



Steve Thorne's story is both interesting and inspiring. Steve moved to Yardley, PA in 1980 as a store manager and part owner of the NAPA location in Newtown. Two years later he also took over as manager and part owner of NAPA's location in Morrisville. Seven years later Steve realized that in a controlled management structure like NAPA's he could only go so far. So, in 1989, he made a bold decision: he took a second mortgage out on his house and started his own auto parts business — Bucks County Auto Parts.

He rented 3,000 square feet next to the Radio Shack in Langhorne, bought two used trucks and some used shelving and stuffed as much inventory on the shelves as he could afford. Steve started with just three key people and himself. He bought locally and not in large volume. He had no price advantage, so he grew his business on service. A new store was added in Doylestown in 1991 followed by additional stores in

Allentown, Bethlehem and Lansdale. With the additional stores Steve decided to brand his business renaming it Eastern Warehouse Distributors and coining the tag line of "Auto Parts Warehouse".

Why was this local start up able to succeed against the regional and national goliaths who had more inventory and better prices? Steve says "People and service prevailed. We developed relationships with our



Main entrance before construction



ACM paneled entrance tower

customers and took care of their needs. We listened and we earned our customers one at a time". They also worked hard to keep those customers.

In 1996, Steve bought the Gold's Gym facility located at 355 South Flowers Mill Road in Langhorne from Ron Jaworski. It was a beat up twenty-five year old steel



Installation of the reverse angle canopy

building that had previously housed the Middletown Tennis and Racquetball Center. He separated it into offices and warehouse space and added loading docks. He moved into both spaces in 1997. This building became Eastern's primary warehouse and headquarters.

By the winter of 2015-2016 Eastern had grown to 1,200 employees at 37 locations, serviced by 500 vehicles including its signature fleet of green and yellow compact cars. Steve decided it was time to spruce up the building exterior and, as he later confessed to me, "Have some fun". Steve asked his friend John Thompson of the Thompson Organization in Doylestown if he knew a good builder. John, very kindly, gave Steve our name and in January of 2016 Steve reached out to me. We met at the South Flowers Mill location in late January to discuss what Steve wanted to accomplish. The interior of the building had already been refurbished in a first class manner. Steve now wanted to bring the exterior up to an equal standard. He wanted a new roof, new siding and to "make a statement".



Street view



Rear view before



Rear view after

We at Penn Valley truly love these types of projects. Nothing is more rewarding than working with the customer from the start and helping them through the design and creativity that makes a great end product.

Steve wanted this project to be a “metamorphosis” and it was. We put some preliminary budgets together and brought Kevin Dowell of kd2 Architects to the table to put together some design concepts. Kevin and his team came up with some exciting schemes. Some ideas were trimmed but the real thrust of their design; an ACM clad entrance tower, reverse angle sun screen canopies, new roof and new wall cladding above a new architectural masonry wainscot were maintained.

As a team we investigated many products and colors before deciding upon a Ceko Standing Seam Roof in the custom color of Patina Green to match one of the Atas Metals colors we used on the warehouse vertical cladding. That green was mixed with a white panel and two shades of gray trimmed by Eastern’s trademark yellow.

The panels at the office were provided by Metl-span. They are 3” insulated metal panels in light and dark gray installed both vertically and horizontally. The exposed structure, reverse angle canopy is clad in translucent Polygal panels. This canopy ties into the entrance tower which is clad with white Alucobond and provided with a sleek new aluminum entrance and stainless steel railings on the new limestone portico.

Work started in the summer of 2016 and was completed in the winter of 2017. The finished project does, indeed, “make a statement” and Steve and Penn Valley had fun along the way.

For more information, visit:

AUTOPARTS
warehouse
Eastern Warehouse Distributors
www.eapw.com



ACM clad tower at main entrance

Eastern Warehouse Wheeler Way—Clean as A Whistle

By Jon Otto



Exterior view of addition

When Penn Valley and Steve Thorne first met to discuss the alterations to the exterior of 355 South Flowers Mill Road, Steve also introduced the topic of adding as much square footage as possible to his warehouse a mile away on Wheeler Way. This building had been built in the late seventies for Willamette Industries, a business forms manufacturer and distributor from Oregon. By chance, Penn Valley had put an addition on the building in 1982, so we were fairly familiar with the site.

Steve's desire was to open up the exterior wall and have a continuation of his 110,000 square foot open warehouse. He wanted the framing in the addition to match the framing system in the existing building, using the more or less traditional 40' x 40' grid so commonly found in conventionally framed warehouses.

Unfortunately we ran into code driven obstacles that not only prevented us from opening the common wall between the existing construction and the new building addition but required us to install a three hour firewall at the location of the existing wall. This, in turn, altered

Steve's plans for his racks and conveyors. Column locations became an obstacle to the interior layout and it was at this point that we decided to consider a clear span pre-engineered steel building. It was the perfect solution; the design of the three hundred and forty-one foot long addition provided 25,759 square feet of unobstructed warehouse storage with no interior columns. The icing on the cake was that it cost less than conventional framing.

Construction started in mid-July and we were ready for steel by late August. Construction of the building could not have been more basic and went very smoothly. The site work was more of a challenge owing to the tight site with an underground storm water management system.

With the able assistance of key subcontractors, T.S. Hess and Sons on the site work and R&S General Contractors handling the foundations and concrete slabs on grade, we delivered the building in late November in time for Steve to receive his racking and conveyors. The end result as the pre-racking picture depicts is a wide open building that's "Clean as a Whistle!"



Interior view of addition

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