

Partners in Excellence



Andrea Aromatics

By Jon Otto and Michael D'Andrea

In 1938, Salvatore "Sam" D'Andrea graduated from Fordham University with a degree in Pharmacy. While a student he had two jobs; one at Fordham by day and a second at an all-night pharmacy in the Bronx. After graduation he worked at a variety of jobs; a car agency in Plainfield during the day and at a gas station he owned where he worked evenings and on weekends. In the 1940's he had a night job at Johnson & Johnson's Baby Products Division making baby cream which had to be ready and still hot for the morning shift to jar it. His son Michael remembers Sam as perpetual motion and energy; he was always fixing or building something. He never seemed to stop repairing and renovating his home, his mother's home and his mother-in-law's home and beach house.



In the 1950's he worked in research & development at DuPont's Fragrance Division developing and evaluating new aroma chemicals. He attended a perfumery course at Rutgers and American Chemical Society gatherings where he met other chemists involved in the fragrance industry. He did independent research and specialized in developing and finding new processes for the synthesis of established and new aroma chemicals. In 1956, he was one of the founders of Alpine Aromatics in Metuchen, New Jersey. As a boy, Michael often rode to work with Sam on Saturday mornings. Michael reminisced about his early introduction to the aromatics world; "My dad would hand me test blotters and ask 'which one smells stronger,





Trusses being raised to the new roof

how do these differ?' He was always searching for something new."

When the company started, Sam mortgaged his house to buy in. As some of the partners left, Sam took out a second mortgage to buy 30% of the shares, but he never gained control of the business and was forced out of his own company. As a part of his buy out, he had to work for the company as a consultant for seven years.

When his contract with Alpine was over, he wanted to provide a better future for his family. He saw Alpine's success and wanted to match it. He had already started one business and knew he could do it again and better. This time he would have his sons with him; Richard and Michael, who had worked at Alpine while students during vacations. Richard graduated from St. Peter's College and attended graduate school at Seton Hall University in Chemistry. He worked as a research chemist and a plant manager at American Interstab. Michael graduated from Jersey City State College and received an MA in Musicology from Indiana University.

On January 1, 1980 the three formed Andrea Aromatics, renting a building in Princeton along U.S. Route 1. The first day Richard and Michael spent the whole day just sweeping and mopping. Except for the dirt, the building was empty. Sam and Richard built lab benches and shelving. They had no equipment, no raw materials, and only one customer who ordered about 25 pounds of a natural cheese flavor each week. Sam made that in the kitchen at home. They bought everything used -- old wooden desks, a manual typewriter, etc. Used steel

shelving became available from Princeton University; all they had to do was disassemble it and it was theirs! Used stock pots, scoops and scales came from New York's Bowery were added to the collection of equipment.

Growing up in The Great Depression, Sam had seen a lot of businesses fail, mostly because they ran out of money before they could achieve financial stability, so everything was done as inexpensively as possible.

Raw materials that Andrea now purchase in multiple 55 gallon drums were purchased in 5 and 10 pound lots.

There was a lot of work. Everything had to be done in house for as little expense as possible. Formulas had to be created or adapted for every request. Thousands of free samples had to be made and shipped before an order was received. Michael answered the phone, typed letters, labels, bills of lading, and made samples. Richard and



Sue takes a whack!

Sam made up, packed, shipped and even delivered orders and made sales calls. The more orders they received the less cash was available and sometimes they would struggle to find the cash needed to replace raw materials. For years, most of the profits were tied up in ever increasing accounts receivable, and larger and larger inventories to keep making and producing orders. The 3 worked the first three years for no salary. The second or third year they hired a secretary who was the only one getting paid. By 1984 they were finally getting paid even though it was less than minimum wage. They bought three small businesses that were floundering, basically paying them for

their inventory and paying them a commission on the sales of their products.

About the third year, the building they were renting was sold. Sam and his sons could not find any place to rent, so they bought the building they currently occupy at 150 Enterprise Avenue in Trenton. It was the only location they could find that was properly zoned for their operations. They only needed part of the building and it already had a tenant in 1/3 of the space, so initially, the balance of the space was rented out too. However, it wasn't long until they grew into the whole building.

Business was going very well in 2004, when Sam, still working at age 87, suddenly died. Richard and Michael continued to run the company but they needed help. Richard's daughter Susan was a natural choice; Sue holds a Master's in Science from the University of Pennsylvania, a Doctorate in Chemistry from Seton Hall and an MBA from Drexel's LeBow School of Business. Her scientific and business education coupled with experience in the pharmaceutical world PLUS knowledge of the family business gave her a rare mix of qualifications. So, when Sue joined the company in 2005, she was able to quickly assume multiple and diverse responsibilities.

In 2014, Richard retired and Michael and Sue continued to run the ever expanding business. The only problem was that now they were totally out of space.

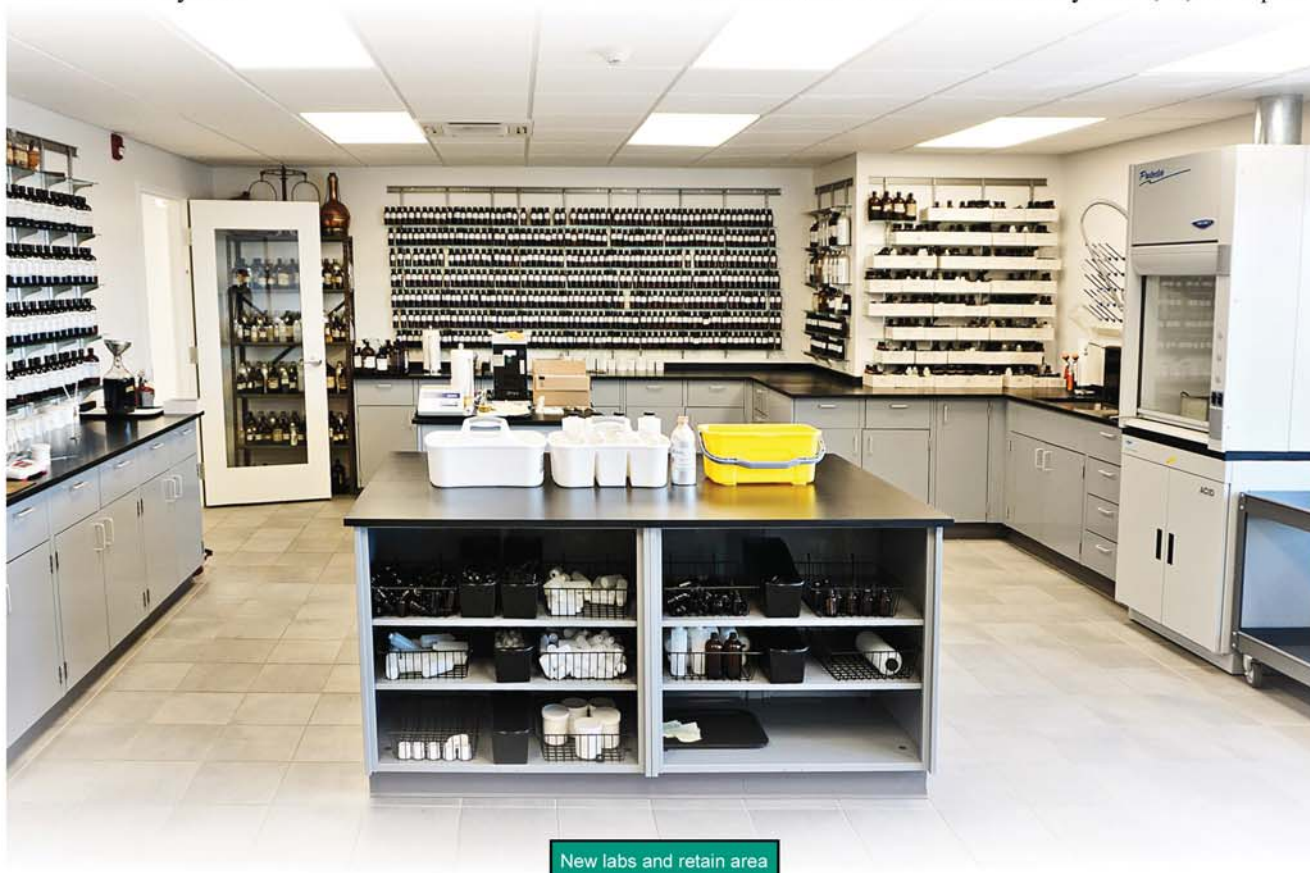
This is where Penn Valley comes into the picture. On February 26th of 2018, Susan invited John DenBleyker and me to visit Andrea Aromatics in Trenton. Two days later, John and I made our initial visit. It was a fairly mild winter's day and Susan took advantage of that opportunity to give us a complete tour of the building, inside and out, including a visit to the many different roofs. We learned on that day and later that the oldest part of the building dated back to 1889 and that it had been added on to many times over the years.



Original building circa 1889

Sue's vision was to add onto it again, this time vertically. The footprint was totally covered so it was up or (get) out. Andrea's investment in equipment and infrastructure made moving to another location unthinkable. We were being invited to make a proposal to build a building on top of a building. This is always a challenge, in this case doubly so because Andrea was going to have to stay in operation and keep shipping products from the area where we would be working.

On the short drive back to our office John and I discussed how we could handle this relatively small, 2,100 square

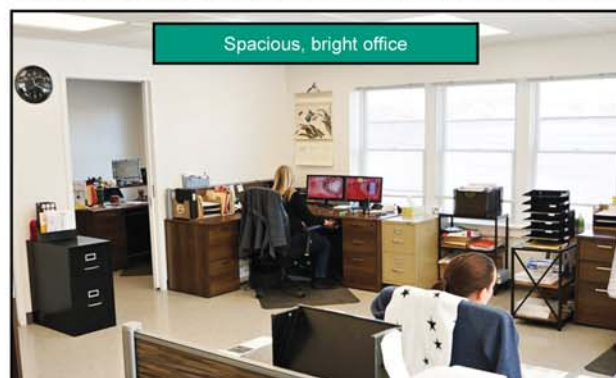
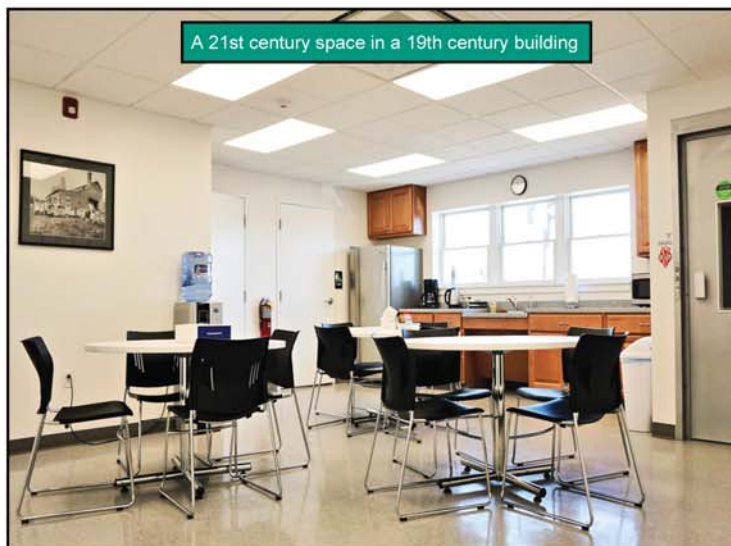


New labs and retain area

feet, but very challenging job. We knew that we couldn't assign both a project manager and a superintendent to the job which is our normal structure. Our solution was to bring Angelo Grisolia into the project. Angelo was in his 8th year with us at the time, having worked both as a project manager and site superintendent. He had started his construction career as a carpenter and has a great understanding of working with wood and old buildings. He was the perfect fit for the job!

In late June our team started the job by diverting the roof drainage away from the work zone which allowed for the new second story to be built. The exterior framing and the roof came next. Once the new second floor was closed in, roofed and "dry" we put in tapered sleepers on the old roof to frame the new second floor. A lot of people were crowded into a small space cutting, patching, wiring and plumbing. Angelo and our subcontractors had to work around Andrea people and with them. Normally this is a recipe for conflict, but all of our subcontractors embraced the project with the same enthusiasm Susan, Michael and the Andrea team had for it. It became a recipe for

success. The job had an almost party-like atmosphere which all of the subcontractors enjoyed. Sue made Fridays into a real party; pizza for everybody, Andrea staff, Angelo and our team of subcontractors. We are blessed with a group of skilled and caring subcontractors. I think Susan's efforts made them even better. As Susan said to me later, "It's the people who make the project."



P.O. Box 3091
Princeton, NJ 08543
www.andreaaromatics.com
609.695.7710



Penn Valley Constructors, Inc.

1707 South Pennsylvania Avenue
Morrisville, PA 19067
1-800-523-3746 • 215-295-5055 • Fax: 215-295-2980
www.pennvall.com
Issue 36, September 2020

Isn't it time you contact us for your next project!

800.523.3746