



### Americhem / LTL Color “Hello Again”

By Jon Otto



In the fall of 1998, we received a call from Tony Kasmer, founder and president of LTL Color. He was in the process of purchasing a 7.5 acre lot on Progress Drive in Phase II of the US Steel Industrial Park in Falls Township. We knew the site very well as we were already in the process of designing projects for Tri-Lite Plastics, now Pexco on the neighboring site and Accu-Fire Fabricators two lots away. During the call, Tony invited us to meet with him and his team.

The next day we called on Tony, his son Chris, daughter Nina and Jim Figaniak who formed the management team at LTL. They took us on a plant tour that told us two things; first, that they were highly organized and ran a very clean business and second, they were very clearly out of space. Tony had already hired a civil engineer to start on his site plan and had a very clear idea of what he wanted. The building would be 61,200 square foot pre-engineered steel building with a small external office wing as a focal point and interior support facilities on two floors creating an overall square footage of 66,835. The site plan provided for future expansion of about the same size.

The fall and winter of 1998 was spent developing



Original construction completed in 2000

preliminary plans and budgets.

In March of 1999 we entered into a design agreement for the architectural, structural and mechanical designs. LTL handled the electrical design and construction. This all went very smoothly mostly because Tony and his team as stated above, knew their needs and had the building requirements figured out. By late June, we had not only land development approval, but a building permit and construction was commenced. Ten months later, in early April of 2000, we laid down the topcoat of paving, completed the landscaping and turned the building over to LTL.





Pre-engineered steel installation



major focus on providing color compounds to its customers who included the Aerospace and Defense industries, Healthcare and the Electronics Industries, so the work to be performed in the new addition would continue to be more or less the same as in the existing building, but with 21st century refinements.

It is always a boost to be working with familiar people, so Jim's presence gave us just that. By happy coincidence, Carlos had worked, not once but twice with one of our most highly valued customers Barry Arkles of Gelest Inc. also in the US Steel Industrial Park. We have built many highly

Now fast forward just about 20 years to the late summer of 2018 when we received a call from Carlos Carenno who was serving as an advisor to Americhem/LTL Color Compounds. Carlos who had been president of a similar business in Swedesboro, New Jersey which had been purchased by Americhem, had been placed in charge of expanding the LTL plant we had built 20 years ago. Carlos invited us to meet with him and learn about the project. So it was that in the last week of August, John DenBleyker and I had our first meeting with Carlos and his team. At that meeting we learned that in 2014 LTL had been sold to Americhem, that Tony was retired and that Chris and Nina had moved on. Jim Figaniak however, was now with Americhem as Vice President and General Manager of Color Compounding and would soon become part of the many meetings held to hone in on the design and scope of work. The larger parent company still had its

technical buildings for Barry and his partner Kevin King in the last 20 years. Carlos and Barry have maintained a close friendship through the years and Barry gave us a strong recommendation. This helped us greatly.

The fall and winter of 2018-2019 were spent on sketch plans and budgets. By April we had brought the plans for the addition into focus and signed the first phase of a design agreement which would ultimately include site plans, architectural and structural plans and the complete mechanical and electrical design package. Choosing Fiorvanti Engineering for the site plan was an easy decision as Vince Fioravanti had handled the original land development plans.

State of the art clean compounding "White Room"



Concrete floor polishing





For the rest of our design team we chose old friends, Steven C. Tiberio as the architect and Bob Busch of Leonard Busch and Associates as the structural engineer. For the MEP package we turned to Blue Rock with whom we have been working for about 3 years with good success on some of our more technical projects.

The new building footprint of 60,945 Square Feet would basically double the original facility Creating a total of 131,478 Square Feet of floor area including the ground floor and 7,733 Square Feet of support mezzanines.

It includes manufacturing, warehouse, employees support areas and a specialized “White Room”. This space is a very clean, well illuminated, and climate-controlled manufacturing space that maintains a narrow temperature range required for the manufacturing process. As the name “White Room” suggests, everything in this space, from floor to ceiling is bright white. A viewing area allows customers and Americhem/ LTL’s quality control staff to view the manufacturing of the multiple colored products extruded in this space.

The design and approval from Falls Township consumed the spring, summer and most of the fall of 2019, but



Color matching lab

ultimately in December of 2019, we were able to break ground on the new building. This is not the ideal time to start foundation work, but the winter was more or less average, so we were able to fight are way through it. We were actually progressing very nicely when we and everyone else, quite literally in the world, were thrown the major curve ball of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On March 20 of 2020, all our projects in Pennsylvania and New Jersey were shut down. Fortunately, Pennsylvania had wisely set up a waiver program for “essential industries” to stay open. Construction on buildings for those “essential industries” would also be eligible for

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for these waivers. On the 20th, I was returning from trip out of the country. Information was sketchy, but it looked like we had a chance to get at least some of our jobs restarted. That night I called Chris Weight, our CFO and John DenBleyker our VP of Construction and asked them to join me in the office the next morning which was a Saturday. Together, we, which means mostly Chris, figured out the waiver process and applied for waivers for those jobs which we deemed eligible. We wanted to get the process started and then would follow up with our various customers to learn their actual intent on Monday. Americhem/LTL based on its link to both Aerospace/Defense and the medical supply chain was in our opinion eligible for the waiver. Accordingly, it was among the half dozen waiver requests we applied for on that Saturday.

Much to our surprise, our waiver requests were processed with uncharacteristic celerity by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We were granted our waiver for Americhem/LTL in only five days and with the owner's blessing we were back to work in less than two weeks.

That was the good news, the bad news was that many of our suppliers and subcontractors were having trouble keeping their crews fully manned. Far away states had more rigid protocols and factories that provided hardware and overhead doors were all but closed. Closer to home, with schools closed, someone had to watch the kids. If, as was the case in several instances, the lady of the house was a nurse, dad had to stay home with the kids. Other workers and in some occasions the owners of the companies were simply scared to come to the jobsite for fear of getting infected. A few of our subcontractors and even some of our own staff succumbed to the coronavirus and had to quarantine.

It was a difficult time, but our Project Manager Justin Seymour and our Superintendent Chuck Keenan persevered and with God's help we were able to stay relatively healthy and complete the Americhem/LTL project just in time for Thanksgiving of 2020. Right on schedule!

#### For More Information:

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Issue 39, June 2022



38,000 Square Feet of new warehouse space