



Weekly News

Did You Know...?

Innovation in Tremont: Peter Sommer's Legacy

A humble little fence making business six miles south of Tremont became one of the world's largest wire mills.

Like many farmers in 1889, Peter Sommer spent countless hours of back-breaking work putting up wooden fences. The fences required constant, frustrating maintenance. So, in a small shed on the farm he rented, Peter and sons P.W. and John sought relief by experimenting with making fences from wire. The product that evolved was a woven wire fence. Little did they know that their invention would be life-changing for millions of farmers.

They produced enough for their own needs and the needs of neighbors, but as word traveled, they soon had farmers from all over coming to see this wonderful, quality, low-maintenance invention. The Sommers quickly obtained a patent for their unique fencing, which they called, "Keystone," for the innovative shape of the fence weave. The Sommers advertised the fence as being, "horse high, pig tight, and bull strong."

In just two years, they had outgrown their tiny shed and moved the business to Tremont, located near the area where the (recently demolished in 2022) grain elevators stood. It was a location close to the railroads and a main road, convenient for transportation of materials and goods. This location soon tripled in size, with from ten to fifty employees. Sommers incorporated the company as Keystone Woven Wire Fence Company.

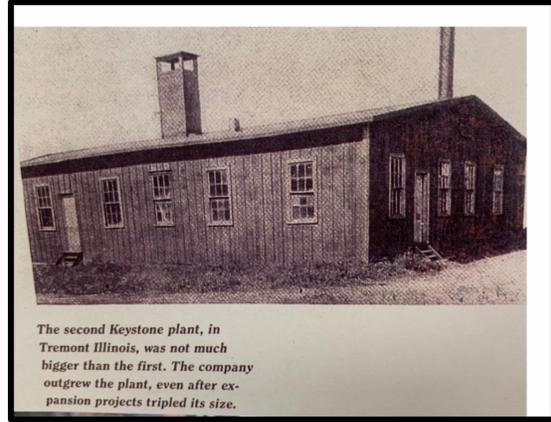
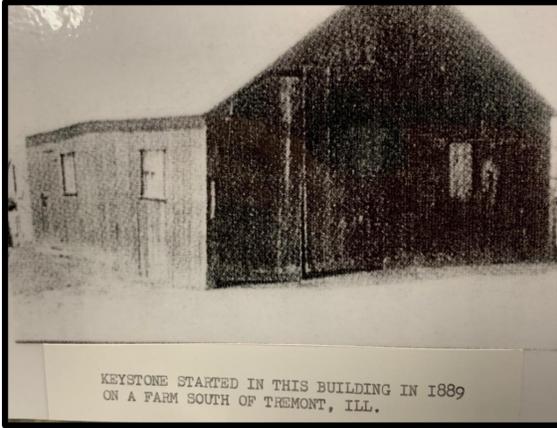
As dealers began requesting large stockpiles of the fencing, Sommer could not keep up with demand. By 1885, the business moved to South Adams Street in Peoria, where it stayed for the next 21 years. By 1905, they built a wire mill and added barbed wire and nails, as well as their fencing. They began to manufacture and recycle steel. The company continued to grow and by 1907, the company reorganized, becoming Keystone Steel and Wire Company.

With the demands for steel during WWI, Keystone decided to build a new plant in Bartonville, near the Illinois River and employed 750 people. Promotional material for the company's 100th anniversary stated, "Worker housing was erected within walking distance of the plant and a private railroad was built to connect the new plant to the wire mill. Daily trainloads and shiploads of raw material arrived to sustain Keystone's 24-hour-a-day operation. Those same box cars and barges left Keystone laden with steel bound for all four corners of the country."

In 2013, Keystone merged with Contran Corporation. By 2019, Keystone Steel and Wire company manufactured 700,000 tons of steel annually, employed around 1,300, and was acquired by the British company GFG Alliance Liberty Steel, USA for 320 million dollars.

The Sommers' little experiment to make a low-maintenance fence had succeeded beyond anything they could possibly have imagined and has left a lasting legacy.

~ Tremont Museum and Historical Society



Tremont District Library

Summer Reading starts this Wednesday, June 1st!
Summer Reading is for ALL AGES — birth to adult!

Registration Week: June 1st – 4th
Prizes available June 6th – August 13th

Summer Reading develops early literacy skills in babies and toddlers, prevents summer slide for school-aged kids and teens, and promotes learning and a healthy mind for adults. We want you to enjoy yourself and read how you want! Audiobooks, graphic novels, it all counts! Join us to read beyond the beaten path!

Turkey Festival Booksale Volunteers Needed

Sign up at the front-desk to help the library with our annual booksale during the Turkey Festival!

Baby and Me

Wednesdays
10:30 am

New and experienced parents are invited to join Miss Nicole on Wednesday mornings for a parent/baby support group. Meet other parents in the area, make friends, enjoy new toys, lots of books, and a must: free coffee.

The focus of this group is parents and young children ages 0-3, but other siblings are always welcome! No registration required, drop in whenever works best for you.

Story Hour

Thursday, June 9th
10:30 am - 11:15 am

Story Hour is held on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month from 10:30-11:15am. No registration is required.

Story Hour is perfect for ages 3-6. Miss Maddie reads stories, sings songs and rhymes, and does activities that all encourage early literacy and improves socialization skills in the youngest of library patrons. Wiggles are welcome! Make Story Hour a step you take in preparing your child for life-long learning.



Camp Invention

Attention Parents and Guardians! If you are still looking for an exciting and fun summer learning opportunity for your child, check out Camp Invention®! For students entering grades K-6, this program is a one-of-a-kind experience that will introduce your child to STEM concepts through engaging, hands-on challenges. As they rotate through four all-new activities, campers collaborate with friends, develop problem-solving skills and bring their creative ideas to life. Students do NOT need to attend Tremont schools or live in the Tremont school district to attend camp.

Tremont Middle School is offering the program from June 13th to June 17th from 9:00AM-3:30PM daily.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Camp Invention.

Contact Steve Verdun at steve.verdun@d702.org with questions or to learn more.

Tremont Museum - Save the Date

Don't Forget: June 18, 10:00-11:00 AM
The Underground Railroad Conductor Recognition Event

Where: Tazewell County Court Administration, 342 Court Street #102, Pekin IL

Tremont's own Peter Logan will be remembered and recognized. Peter is a recently discovered conductor. He was the first formerly enslaved person to own property in Tazewell County. Then, at great risk, he helped escaped slaves pass through the Tremont area on their way to Canada and Freedom.

Wednesday

Summer Reading Registration Opens
Tremont Library

Around Town



Photo Credit: Whitney Gingrich

Please send us your news stories and they will be included in upcoming emails. Deadline to include information is Friday, 6:00PM for the following Monday.

We accept information from official Tremont, IL businesses, organizations, and advertisers. We will also post Public Auctions and Open Houses.

Thank you,

Haas IT Solutions, Inc. on behalf of Tremont Winning Communities

Tremont Winning Communities | info@tremontil.com | <http://tremontil.com>