

STEEL REINFORCEMENT + UNFORMED SURFACE IMPERFECTIONS

PRECAST INC.

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THE LONG & WINDING ROAD

TERRE HILL CONCRETE
PRODUCTS

Bringing Your
**BUSINESS
PROCESSES**
into the
21st Century

**SPECIAL
BUYER'S GUIDE
ISSUE**



THE LONG & WINDING ROAD

Terre Hill Concrete Products

24 Culture and a “can-do” spirit keep **Terre Hill Concrete Products** on the path to success.

On the Cover:
 Andrew Nelson, Vice President, Marketing, and Mike Hines, Marketing Manager, stand next to large concrete precast panels at the 100-year anniversary of Terre Hill Concrete Products.
Andrea Artale/arc

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THE LONG & WINDING ROAD

Culture and a “Can-do” Spirit Keep
Terre Hill Concrete Products on the
Path to Success.

By Bob Whitmore

Gene Martin calls it a long and winding road. The road started 100 years ago in the bucolic borough of Terre Hill, Pa., when Gene’s grandfather, Adam Martin, bought a small form to make concrete blocks.

He mixed up some concrete in a wheelbarrow and started the laborious process of making blocks – one by one – that he could sell to homebuilders, masons or anybody else who needed them. Put a little mud in the form, tamp it down, add another layer. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. And voila, after about 5 or 6 minutes of tamping and clamping you had a block.

“I’m not sure what the impetus was in deciding to get into the block business other than he needed to make a living,” Gene said. “He had a large family and needed to support them.”

Adam churned out the blocks, day after day. Then in 1927 the road took a turn when Adam brought in his brother Benjamin. They began building silos for southeastern Pennsylvania farmers and soon incorporated their growing business as Terre Hill Silo Co. While the road has since turned away from silos, Terre Hill Concrete Products has





evolved into a regional powerhouse precast and block company, now heading into its second century and fourth generation.

DEEP HISTORY

Located about an hour west of Philadelphia, Terre Hill is one of the smallest boroughs in Lancaster County. In fact, the borough is so small that if an out-of-towner says he's looking for Terre Hill, most people assume they're looking for the concrete and block plant. It's a community of about 1,200 citizens with no traffic lights. It's tiny but surrounded by dozens of other boroughs, townships and unincorporated communities built around the rolling hills, green pastures and scenic vistas on the fringe of the Appalachian Mountains.

It is a place of deep history that pre-dates the American Revolution. So, it is fitting the Martin family that operates Terre Hill is on its fourth generation. Founded by Adam Martin, expanded by second-generation president Adam Eugene Martin (known as Eugene) and continuing its upward mobility under the leadership of brothers Adam Eugene Jr. (known as Gene) and Nelson Martin, the company heads into its second century with three members of the fourth generation firmly in place.

Though Terre Hill has likely evolved far beyond what Adam Martin could have imagined, the company's legacy has not been forgotten. Terre Hill's long and winding road has branched off in new and innovative ways, but its culture was established decades ago and continues today. It is spelled out in the company's "road map" that is imparted to new employees, published on its website and ingrained in longtime Terre Hill staff.



HARD WORK, HIGH QUALITY

The folks who settled southeastern Pennsylvania are known for hard work and high-quality products. Embedded among them is the world's largest community of Amish. Surrounded by this culture and mindset, Terre Hill has grown and prospered since its inception in 1919. While the Amish culture has changed little in the past century, Terre Hill has evolved.

As second-generation Eugene Martin grew the block business and looked around for new opportunities, one thing remained consistent – his need for hard working, talented, and loyal employees.

"Dad had a philosophy," his son, Nelson, said. "If I can hire somebody who came off a farm, I'm going to. Because they have a work ethic.

"They know what long hours are. They're not afraid of it."

And while there are few former farm workers available for hire these days, the culture of getting the job done is ingrained in the company's more than 170 employees across four plants.

"A company is only as good as its people," said Gene, "and we have been blessed, from our very beginnings, with many great people. Without our people, we would not have the success and longevity that we have had as a company. Reaching our 100-year anniversary is really a tribute to the people who have served, and continue to serve, this company."

The many long-term, committed employees are a great source of pride to the entire management team. Many have spent their entire professional careers working for the company, helping to sustain and grow its success.

Fourth generation family member Adam Eugene Martin III (known as Adam), the company's current safety manager, said it comes down to taking responsibility. He learned it from his father, Gene, and uncle, Nelson. They learned it from their father, and it has been passed on to longtime employees as well.

"I look at our people who've been here for a while, and it's like this: if something needs to get done, who can be the first to raise their hand and jump on it – even if it's not their responsibility or not in their job title?" Adam said. "I think it's one way we separate ourselves from the competition."

Terre Hill Concrete Products was founded 100 years ago by Adam Martin in Terre Hill, Pa. What started as a small concrete block business has grown to four plants and more than 170 employees.

"We're afraid the ghost of grandpa is going to come back and get us if we don't," Gene said, chuckling.

TOTAL AUTOMATION

Mechanization has exploded Terre Hill's capacity to produce blocks over the years. From the original 50-per-day, hand-tamped blocks, the company now can crank out 20,000 or more, depending on demand. The original plant, known as Plant #1, is equipped with a Stearns 3-at-a-time block machine, while Plant #3, which came online in 1980, contains a fully automated 6-at-a-time Besser system that tripled the company's capacity.

"The blocks are molded, cured, and cubed automatically," Gene said. "When our guy grabs them with a lift truck to move them out to the

yard, that's the first time the blocks are touched, so there's no human intervention whatsoever. What you see is 100% automated, from the handling of all the raw materials, the mixing, batching, conveying, block-making – to the kilns and out to the cubers – everything. Total automation."

But that's only part of the story. In the 1960s, with a solid block business going, Eugene Martin was interested in branching out and took another turn in the road by getting into the precast concrete business.

"My dad, sometime in the '60s, saw the upcoming precast market," Gene said. "Like many precasters, he started doing things like septic tanks, and since they were in the silo business, he also started making agricultural products like feed bunkers and things they would sell to

SHARED VALUES

Terre Hill's daily commitment to willingly live a life of ...

INTEGRITY – Conducting ourselves ethically, honestly, and authentically

INGENUITY – Meeting challenges with enthusiasm and developing creative solutions

STEWARDSHIP – Caring for our people with genuine concern and managing our resources wisely

SERVICE – Focusing on the greater good in order to place the needs of others ahead of our own





farmers. And that developed into doing sanitary manholes and then drainage products – inlets and catch basins and those kinds of products,” Gene added.

That success led Eugene to construct Plant #2 in 1969 to grow the precast side of the business.

“He made a very significant investment to really get into the precast business well beyond just manufacturing septic tanks and that type of thing,” Gene said. “My dad was a very intuitive guy. He had an entrepreneurial spirit and was always looking for the next best thing.”

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

While Adam Martin, the founder, was a straight-up, hard-working guy, his son Eugene was more of a visionary. He always wore a dress shirt, tie and jacket to work.

“Dressed for success,” Gene said of his father. “But he was still a laborer at heart. In the trunk of his car was a pair of Tingley rubber boots and full coveralls that he would put on.

“He would show up at the plant at any time and he’d have his coat and tie on, and he’d take off his jacket, leave his tie on and dress in his coveralls and Tingley boots. If something was going on at the job site, he would never go out there and just stand and watch. He had to be engaged in everything. All portions of it.”

With two block plants and a precast plant, Terre Hill was firmly established, but there was more opportunity. In 1987, they opened Plant #4, 28 miles west of their original site, in neighboring Lebanon County. They found a steel plant that had gone out of business, acquired a few universal forms and made a deal with a local ready-mix producer to supply the concrete. They needed employees, so Gene and Nelson went to a job fair.

“We hired eight guys on the spot,” Gene said. “It was like, ‘Show up for work Monday we’re starting a precast plant.’”

That plant became one of Nelson’s key projects, and it grew over the years into Terre Hill’s heavy highway production facility.

The fourth generation of the Martin family is also heavily involved with Terre Hill. Joshua Martin serves as the company’s director of business improvement, and Michelle Custer serves as the human resources director.

“We do all different kinds of bridge structures,” Gene said. “We are a manufacturer for Contech and their proprietary product CON/SPAN, so we do a lot of CON/SPAN work. And then after we get past box culverts we do arch culverts – up to 60-foot clear-span.”

Terre Hill has also patented the technology for three proprietary stormwater systems that are mainly produced at Plant #4 – Terre Arch, Terre Box, and Terre Kleen.

“Because of our location in the southeast corner of Pennsylvania, within 50 miles we can be in New Jersey, we can be in Maryland, we can be in Delaware,” Gene said. “We do DOT work in all those states as well as some in West Virginia and an occasional job in Virginia.”

In addition to extensive bridge work, Terre Hill has carved out a niche in airport infrastructure, marine terminals and other specialty projects. Its engineering department is critical in this phase of the business.

“We’ve got a good group of engineers and draftspeople,” Gene said. “We try to take work that is otherwise designed as cast-in-place and convert it to precast. We like to think that our only limitation is, ‘Can you truck it?’”

Terre Hill’s regional visibility as a can-do precaster has drawn some unique jobs over the years, including one of which they are most proud: supplying the Terre Kleen system, their hydrodynamic separator for pre-



Terre Hill manufactured its licensed stormwater system, Terre Kleen, for a project at the World Trade Center Transportation Hub.



treatment of stormwater, to the World Trade Center rebuilding in New York City. The smaller footprint of the Terre Kleen system, due to its unique design, made it the only system of its type that would fit into the available space at the site.

FOURTH GENERATION STEPPING UP

While the third generation of the Martin family – brothers Gene, Nelson and Dave – will not be retiring any time soon, the fourth generation is stepping into leadership roles and

helping the company adapt to a changing workforce with a plan to continue the legacy well into the 21st century. Nelson's son Joshua serves as the company's director of business improvement, which includes overseeing the IT functions and managing the company's Titan platform. It was the Titan II Precast Management System that actually brought Joshua to Terre Hill shortly after he graduated from college.

"Uncle Gene called me," Joshua said. "They wanted to computerize basically everything, and he asked me if I would help convert the office operations to Titan. I said 'Sure, I'll do it for a year,' and I was here for 11 years."

Joshua added HR to his responsibilities in 2011, left in 2016 when he was recruited by another company, and then returned 18 months later.

During that time, Gene's daughter, Michelle Custer, stepped into the HR role. Like most family members, Michelle grew up working at the plant while she was in school, but she was more interested in teaching. She taught English for 18 years at Garden Spot High School in New Holland, Pa., then took a sabbatical when her sister, Liz, was battling terminal cancer. It was a traumatic time for the entire family, and afterwards, Michelle was not ready to return to the classroom. The HR director's position – and being close to family – may have been just the right fit.

Joshua and Michelle now work closely on employee development, recruiting and operational issues.

Gene's son Adam serves as safety manager, but like everybody else, wears other hats too. Like Gene and Nelson, he has been with Terre Hill since he was a kid cleaning up the yard on Saturdays and biding his time until he could get into the plant as a production worker.

TERRE HILL BY THE NUMBERS

100
YEARS IN BUSINESS

173
EMPLOYEES

4
PLANTS
(2 in PA, 2 overseas)

6
FAMILY MEMBERS
currently involved in the business

20,000+
MAX CONCRETE BLOCKS
produced per day

5
PATENTED PRODUCTS



“This is the only job I’ve ever had,” Adam said. “Every summer and during college breaks, I was at home working at the plant, wherever we needed help. I’ve pretty much worked in every department at all our plants.”

After Adam graduated from West Chester University, Gene and Nelson offered him the safety manager’s position.

“My attitude was, I’ll do whatever the company needs,” he said. “I really like it now. Safety as a company has come a long way, so we’re really happy about that, but I still like to get out and work on the road and in the plants occasionally.”

While Joshua and Michelle have been keeping Terre Hill on the leading edge operationally, Adam has brought a more modern approach to the plant floor.

“Adam has a unique relationship with the employees,” Gene said. “Some of our directors in the past were a little hardcore – pounding the safety stuff down people’s throat, and I’m not sure that’s the most productive way to run a safety program. We’ve found that it’s a lot more successful when your employees know that you are genuinely concerned about them and not just worried about dotting all the i’s and crossing all the t’s to comply with OSHA standards.

“We’re concerned that everybody goes home safe at the end of the day, and actually last year we had zero reportable incidents at both of our precast plants, so we’re proud of where Adam has taken us.”

That focus on employees is present in the office as well as on the plant floor. Michelle’s time as a high school teacher has given her insights into young people and connections in the community that can help with recruiting new employees.

“A lot of what I did for 18 years as a teacher has really translated well into my role in HR,” she said. “Josh and I have really put a focus on developing our employees. We created a curriculum called THCPU (Terre Hill Concrete Products University).

“We did our first round last fall where we asked for volunteers – current employees who are either in leadership roles or want to eventually be in leadership roles. We took them through leadership training. I thought it went well and was well received by our inaugural group of employees.”

Like all manufacturers today, finding labor is the key challenge.

“It can be frustrating,” Michelle said, “but it can also be really rewarding. When you find the right person and the right fit and they’re engaged and growing as an employee, that’s a rewarding thing to see.”

CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM

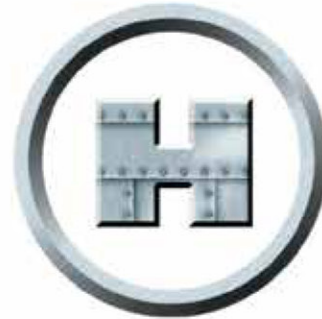
While the second and third generations have built Terre Hill into a highly respected Mid-Atlantic precast and block producer, the fourth generation is invested in ensuring the momentum continues into the second century.

“When you’ve been in business 100 years, obviously there’s going to be a lot of, ‘Well that’s the way we’ve always done it,’” Joshua said. “And so my job is to really challenge people’s thinking and to challenge the status quo. People don’t always like it when I have ideas because it means change, and that’s uncomfortable, but it’s one of the keys to the next 100 years – to not be complacent with the way we’ve always done it, but to look at how we can do things smarter, more efficiently, how we can use technology to our benefit.”

Joshua’s dad, Nelson, nodded in agreement.

“That’s one of the things that has separated Terre Hill Concrete

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Terre Hill has four plants in the southeast corner of Pennsylvania. The company manufactures a variety of precast concrete products from bridge structures to airport infrastructure and more.



Products from the other precasters in our immediate area,” Nelson said. “We are always looking for new and better, different and innovative ideas. That’s something dad taught us.

“What’s out there? How can you do it differently? How can you do it better? In essence, Joshua’s position is a continuation of that theme.”

Founder Adam Martin’s work ethic was passed to his son, Eugene, who added vision and entrepreneurial flair that was passed along to the next generation. Gene now spends most of his time in the office, “steering the ship” as Joshua says. Nelson is the guy who arrives at 5 a.m. every day before the production shift starts and makes sure the operation is running smoothly. He’ll be out on the plant floor or at an installation site if needed, just like his dad (only without the tie, coveralls and Tingley boots).

Adam trends more after Nelson and enjoys the hands-on nature of manufacturing, while Joshua and Michelle are continually working on ways to make Terre Hill a great place to work.

From one guy pounding out 50 blocks a day in 1919, Terre Hill has evolved to the point where the principals no longer have to physically labor from sunup to sundown.

“I can go home at the end of the day and not feel like I’m totally wasted,” Gene said.

And when he thinks about the long and winding road that leads to today’s Terre Hill Concrete Products, he remembers the company founder and says, “Thank you grandpa. You’ve given us a pretty good life.”

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