

Coronado Steel Company
By: Charles Davis

The Coronado Steel foundry provides an excellent example of traditional manufacturing processes and a successful attempt at rejuvenating Youngstown's depressed industrial sector. The foundry is located in a former industrial area near the Mahoning River, northeast of downtown Youngstown. At one time, neighboring factories contained so many blast furnaces that the employees of Coronado Steel had to constantly shovel ash off the roof to keep the building from collapsing. Although little remains of many of these structures, the Coronado Steel building has survived decades of economic decline in the city. When Coronado Steel began operations in the early 1960s, the owners opted to convert a former church social hall to serve as their manufactory. Their innovative reuse of an existing structure designed specifically for public use marks an interesting reversal of traditional building refurbishing.

In 1997, Mike and Steve Phillips purchased Coronado Steel and instituted several significant additions to the original structure, more than doubling the square footage of the initial structure. In addition, the Phillips have applied dramatic new technology to their production, including the creation of heat-resistant and wear-resistant high alloy castings. These changes have fueled remarkable growth within the company, which has developed from a factory with five employees and \$150,000 in annual sales to a business with 29 employees and \$4 million in yearly profits. The factory originally produced items primarily for the Youngstown area, but in recent years has expanded its customer base to include businesses throughout the Midwest. Coronado also attracts and keeps customers by offering a wide array of products. Workers at the manufactory utilize 60 different alloys in order to meet the demands of their clientele, producing products ranging from small parts to items as heavy as 3500 lbs.

As a foundry, Coronado Steel follows a basic process that workers have used for hundreds of years. Workers at the factory begin by using a pattern (many of which come from Liberty Pattern & Mold) to form a sand mold. The mold initially consists of two sections. Workers compress sand into each part and combine the two sections to form a single mold containing a small opening. In a neighboring section of the foundry, additional workers use induction furnaces to melt scrap steel to approximately 3000 degrees. Supervising their work is a 32-year veteran of the industry whose expertise is crucial for ensuring that the very technical process operates smoothly. Then, using forklifts, employees pour the melted steel into the mold. After the steel hardens, workers remove the product from the mold for finishing. They transport it to the cleaning room, a connecting section of the manufactory where employees grind and weld the product to meet customers' specifications. In general, each worker at Coronado conducts the same task everyday. Although the workers utilize modern equipment, the basic foundry process employed is similar to traditional methods. Every order provides a unique challenge for Coronado's employees. The workers must rely upon their skills and knowledge of the foundry process to satisfy the demands of a diverse clientele.