

# 140 Years of Excellence

The Fletcher-Terry Company Shares Insight on How It Has Grown and Thrived Since 1868.



## The Fletcher-Terry Company

By Daniel Mullen

**T**he year 2008 marks The Fletcher-Terry Company's 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since 1868, the company has been dedicated to achieving the quality and service customers have come to expect and bringing innovative products to the hardware, glazing, stained glass, picture framing and art material markets. The story of Fletcher-Terry started in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a jeweler residing in Leverett, Mass., named O.M. Pike, became interested in cutting glass. Refusing to believe that only a diamond could score the surface of glass, Pike began to experiment with a piece of hardened steel wire, which he held in such a manner that its angular edge contacted the glass. He thought drawing the rod across the

glass under pressure would cut it, but his first several attempts failed.

Pike eventually found that the desired results could be accomplished by rotating, instead of drawing, the edge of the steel wire against the glass, but he needed a way to control the cutting process. The wire had to be accurately guided and made able to turn freely under pressure. On Dec. 29, 1868, Pike patented a glass cutting machine called the "Magic Diamond" with a hardened steel rod positioned between friction rollers that caused a wire to rotate, and he assigned Samuel G. Monce, a 22-year-old employee of the R.J. Ives Machine Shop in Bristol, Conn., to help manufacture it.

Monce was thrilled to work on the machine, but he soon devised a way to dramatically improve it, using a sharpened steel wheel mounted in a slender bone handle to cut the glass. Monce's machine, which was both more comfortable to handle and more easily controlled, was the first modern-day, steel-wheel glass cutter. Monce patented the device on June 8, 1869, and began manufacturing and selling the "Bristol Diamond."

In 1893, Monce's 22-year-old nephew Fred S. Fletcher joined the company, and just like his uncle, he came up with an idea to improve the glass cutter. Fletcher believed a cutter could be made with replaceable wheels, letting the company pass considerable savings on to its cus-

tomers. Monce, however, was not impressed. So, Fletcher patented his invention, convinced relatives and father-in-law Franklin Terry to invest in the idea and began manufacturing his machine in 1903. The interchangeable-wheel glass cutter was a huge success, and The Fletcher-Terry Company was founded as a result.

After Franklin Terry passed away in 1926, Fred Fletcher's sons Arthur and Franklin expanded the company into manufacturing other tools involved with the hardware, paint, tile and lumber trades. These included Arthur's patented "Quick Tip" refill, which combined a glass cutting wheel and axle in one unit.

Fred Fletcher's grandson Terry



Taken around 1912, this photograph shows Franklin J. Fletcher (current president Terry Fletcher's father) on the far left and Franklin Fletcher's older brother Arthur T. Fletcher on the far right. They are making The Fletcher-Terry Company's largest customer delivery to that date.

joined the firm in the mid 1950s, was elected President in 1968 and was elected Chairman of the Board of Directors in 1992. The company's Bristol, Conn., manufacturing plant, founded in 1903, progressively expanded from a 16'-x-16' room to a 20,000-square-foot plant. In 1969, the company added a 25,000-square-foot facility in Farmington, Conn.

In the late 1980s, Fletcher-Terry expanded into the picture-framing market with its No. 5 Point Driver, Picture Framing Points, Frame-Master Point Driver, Fletcher 2000 Mat Cutter, Fletcher 3000 Glass/



Plastic/Mat Cutter and Fletcher 1000 Circle/Oval Cutter.

In the midst of another expansion, the company continued to provide excellent service and innovative products to customers, garner awards and showcase picture-framing equipment at trade shows every year—traditions that continue to this day. However, the company hasn't lost sight of its core objectives.

"At The Fletcher-Terry Company, everyone knows our aim is to innovate—to be creative and introduce new ideas—and everyone works toward that same goal," says Rose Mitera of Fletcher-Terry's Marketing Department. "The staff works in a close-knit, personal environment, and there's no competition amongst each other. The president comes in every day, and you can walk into his office if you have a question or suggestion. I'm proud to say that the people who work here really care about their company; they're not just here to collect a paycheck because Fletcher-Terry is an ESOP (Employee Stock Ownership Plan) company."

Jim McNickle, director of marketing, says a company's strongest asset is its employees, and Fletcher-Terry is lucky in this regard because



**Pictured are Fletcher-Terry's second manufacturing facility (left), which was built on the same property as the company's original barn facility, and the company's current headquarters in Farmington, Conn. (above). Since founding the Bristol facility in 1903, the company has grown into an operation that owns more than 90 patents for cutting technology and sells products to picture-framing, glass, sign and hardware markets in 60 countries.**

the company's people all know their roles and care enough to continually improve. In turn, Fletcher-Terry has remained a family-owned company with its headquarters and manufacturing facilities in Connecticut, a state with some of the highest manufacturing taxes in the United States.

The company's biggest change in recent years has been to tap into all possible markets with every new product, rather than pigeonholing certain products into certain industries. "One of the things we're really focusing on doing right now is finding the cross-over possibilities for the new products we develop," McNickle says. "Whenever we introduce a new product to cut whatever substrate is widely used by a certain industry, we also try to show customers in other industries how they can use it in their businesses. We target each product at a primary market, and then, we introduce it to the related secondary markets. With our new Alta99 Automated Substrate Cutter, for example, the product is aimed primarily at the commercial sign and graphics industries, but we are also showing framers how it could boost their bottom lines and add new services and skills to their shops."

"We are planning on showing the Alta99 at the West Coast Art & Frame Show in Las Vegas in Janu-

ary," McNickle continues. "By introducing another industry to the possibilities of a new product, we're showing more people that we've added something new and different, and at the same time, opening up new revenue opportunities for the end user. During a time when many frameshops, and arguably the framing industry as a whole, are facing huge economic challenges, we should develop products and educate them on products that can allow them to offer more services and tap into new markets. We owe it to our customers to find the cross-over markets, and I think all the companies in the framing industry, from manufacturers to publishers to distributors to publications, have that same responsibility."

McNickle says new product development and production of quality products will continue to provide growth for The Fletcher-Terry Company and maintain its standing in the picture-framing, glass, sign and hardware markets. "By working together as a team with quality as our top priority, we will continue to build our business on the pride of American workmanship."

For more information on The Fletcher-Terry Company, call 888-888-5165 or 800-843-3826, fax 860-676-8858, e-mail [customerservice@fletcher-terry.com](mailto:customerservice@fletcher-terry.com), or visit [www.fletcherterry.com](http://www.fletcherterry.com). V