

# Frick Eclipse Steam Engine

Waynesboro, PA 1921



George Frick began building grain cleaners and horse powered treadmills in 1848. While watching a tea kettle whistle on the stove, he supposedly got the idea for his next project, a steam engine. Frick had likely never seen a steam engine before, but he was determined to build one.

In 1850, Frick drew up his own plans and after much time and hard work, he assembled his engine on the second floor of his shop, and he left the boiler on the first floor connected by a pipe.



After lighting a fire in the boiler and getting up steam, he was ready to test his engine. He went downstairs and cautiously opened the valve that fed steam into the engine and listened for the explosion he hoped wouldn't come. There was no bang, so he climbed the stairs and gingerly poked his head above

the floor and saw his new, 2-horsepower, stationary engine humming merrily away.

In 1853, Frick established Frick Co. to build horsepowered and steam engines under the patents of Peter Geiser. In 1861, Frick built a larger building in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, and moved his plant there.

In 1876, the centennial Exposition, or first official World's Fair, was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Frick farm engine, which carried the "Eclipse" trademark for the first time, was presented with the gold medal, the highest award, for best in its class. Then, again in 1880, a Frick Eclipse engine triumphed over 25 other competitors at the great exhibition in Melbourne, Australia.

Frick was interested in social progress and sought to innovate agricultural production and food storage. In 1883, drawings were made for Frick's first complete refrigeration machine. The success of this compressor brought in so many inquiries, Frick decided to enter the refrigeration equipment business. This early innovation set the future of the Frick Company.

The sales of steam engines reached their peak in the early 1900s with an average of 700 engines sold annually in the first decade of the 20th century. But with the sale of engines declining and Frick's refrigeration business increasing, traction-engine sales ended in 1927. The

Frick steam engine business came to an end with the shipments of the last two portable engines in 1945. This put an end to the steam engine shipments forever. In the 70-year period from 1876 to 1945, Frick Co. sold 12,944 portable and small stationary engines and 4,572 traction engines.

Frick's unit air conditioners were introduced in 1938, which opened up air conditioning to many buildings and offices. Ironically, Frick Co. cooled the world, but their own offices did not have air conditioning until 1960 when they were remodeled.

Frick equipment has been well-known for longevity. An 1877 engine was used for 72 years before it was returned to the Frick plant for refurbishing, and it later became part of the Smithsonian collection.

York International bought Frick Company in 1987. Today, their plant is still located at the Main Street location in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. Long gone are the days of dirty, grimy boiler shops. Frick's ultramodern manufacturing facility is now equipped with state-of-the-art machinery, from its welding, fabrication, and machine shops, to its brand new, climate-controlled "clean room" where the screw compressors are assembled. The plant is busy fulfilling orders, from the refrigeration compressors for the local grocer to 1600-horsepower equipment bound for Saudi Arabia's offshore oil platforms.