

Griffin, Huber Remember Sam Duncan, Final President Of Duncan Foundry, With Sincere Fondness

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Ernest Griffin, a former employee of Duncan Foundry in Alton, just happened to be in the Downtown Alton area Thursday and spent some time with riverbender.com reflecting on his experience there in the mold area.



Duncan Foundry was started in 1884 in Alton. Duncan Foundry was always innovative and able to stay ahead of the curve on technology in the beginning. In the 1950s, the company became a leader in the production of ductile iron castings and this line helped keep the company competitive.

Duncan Foundry was a big part of the Alton community and played a significant impact on the world of manufacturing. James H. Duncan and the company donated generously to local charities and civic organizations and promoted the arts. Much of the Duncan art legacy lives on at the Alton Museum of History & Art, which houses the collection.

Sam Duncan was the last president of the company before it was sold to the Lenhardt family.

Ernest and Don Huber, the former Alton Township supervisor, who has a clock business close to the old Duncan Foundry, both describe Sam Duncan, the last of the family at the helm of the company, as a memorable person for his care of employees and the community.

Ernest remembers when he first asked Sam Duncan about a job. At the time he applied, Ernest's wife was pregnant and he was living with her parents. He desperately wanted a full-time job and Sam Duncan hired him. Soon after Ernest started, a truck was for sale at the foundry and Ernest knew there was a lot of interest in it for scrap purposes.

"I asked Mr. Duncan how much do you want for that truck and he said I would like to get \$1,000," Ernest said. "I told him I didn't have that much and he asked how much I had and I told him. About 10 minutes later he handed me the keys to the truck."

Huber described Sam Duncan as "a great guy."



“He did really take care of the employees and helped the community,” Huber said. “He would walk through the plant and he knew all the employees and even their children’s names. He is one of the finer people I have ever met in my life. I was very close to Sam and his wife gave me one of his french clocks after he died. I am so thankful for the clock and my time with Sam over the years.”

Ernest worked in the mold department and he said he became quite good at the job. He was with the company for eight or nine years before he left for other work. Ernest had fond memories that Sam Duncan would always provide three turkeys for the employees at Christmas time and he would gladly let whoever wanted to work over to do that.

“Mr. Duncan really took care of all our siblings,” Ernest said. “I am grateful to the Duncan family and I thank God for him. I still love Sam Duncan.”