

PRESSING ON



The Vindicator/Robert K. Yosay

CAREFUL EYE: John Kovach checks copy on some items being printed at City Printing. The 90-year-old business just moved from downtown Youngstown to Oak Hill Avenue. Below right, Jeff Furr checks the accuracy of a cutting machine at City Printing. The business moved last year and added a new printing press to upgrade operations.

City Printing relocates; owner calls it 'a good deal'

A local printer was eager to get out of the way for YSU's expansion project.

By **DON SHILLING**
VINDICATOR BUSINESS EDITOR

YOUNGSTOWN — City Printing has a new home and new million-dollar press as it marks its 90th year in business.

Displaced by an expansion project at Youngstown State University, the business moved last summer from West Wood Street downtown to 122 Oak Hill Ave., a location just across the Mahoning River.

Rather than move the company's old press and put up with two or three weeks of down time, Joseph Valentini, company president, decided to buy a new one.

The old press was working fine, but Valentini said the new one has advantages, such as printing in six colors instead of five and increased speed.

The move to Oak Hill is another chapter in the long history of City Printing, which was founded by Valentini's grandfather, who also was named Joseph Valentini, in 1920.

The company's founder came to the area from Italy in 1911 and worked as a Latin teacher, writer and editor before he opened the printing business. His sons, Ralph and William, later ran the business.

The business was on Champion Street downtown before moving to

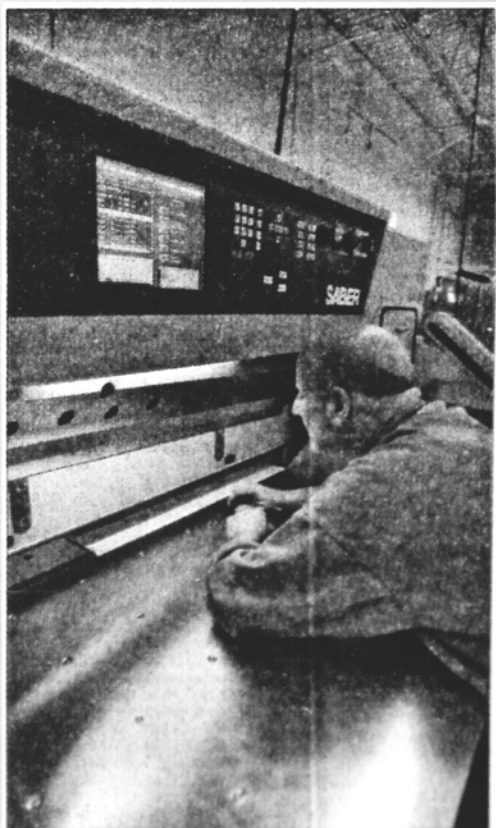


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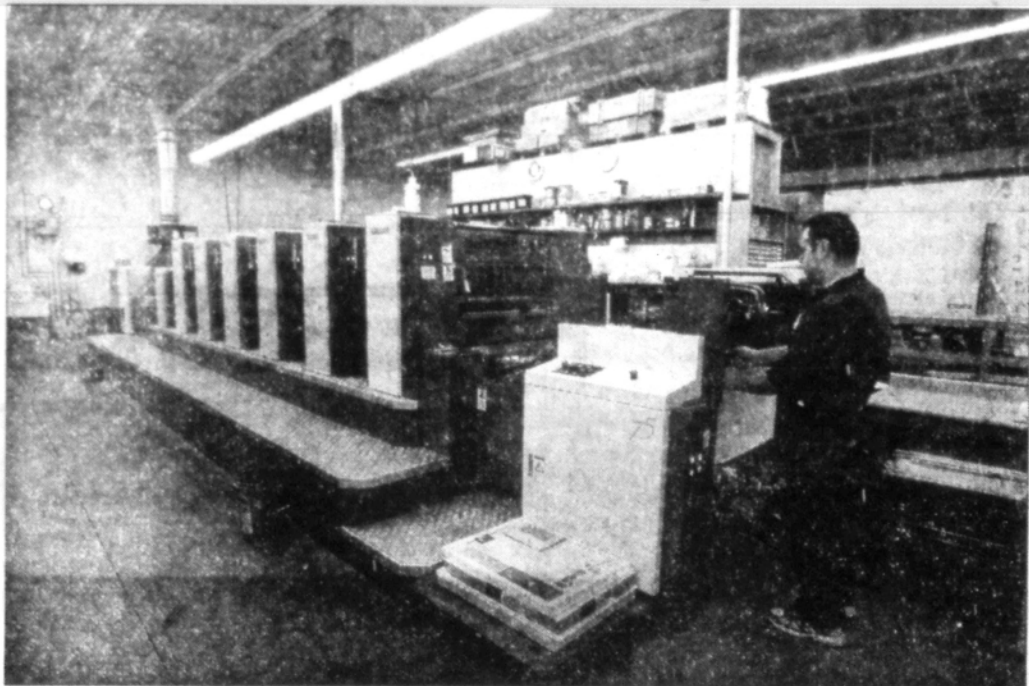
Wood Street in 1970.

Valentini said the Wood Street location was highly inefficient for production, so he didn't hesitate to move the business when YSU approached him about relocation. YSU wanted the property because of the construction of its new business school next door. The school bought his old building for \$225,000.

While other property owners in the area didn't want to move and one unsuccessfully tried to stop YSU from taking his land, Valentini said he believed in the school's mission to link its campus with downtown.



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NEW PRESS: Jerry Withrow adjusts controls on a printing press at City Printing. The new press cost more than \$1 million and allows the business to print faster.

PRINTING

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"I saw it as a good deal for the city, a good deal for the university and a good deal for us," he said.

The old building had two floors and a basement, which meant City Printing's production had to be split up. Plus, there was no loading dock, so trucks pulled up on the street.

"It was like New York City," Valentini said.

YSU is using the building for its disability services office, but its long-range plans call for the demolition of the structure so a parking lot can be created.

Valentini bought the Oak Hill property for \$152,000. It was built in 1960 as a maintenance facility for Ohio Bell. It was vacant when he bought it, but in recent years it had been used by a moving company.

The building contains a single floor with an open work space and an indoor dock.

Valentini said he wanted to remain as close to downtown as possible.

"Our business revolves around Youngstown," he said.

The city provides a central location for employees who come in from various points around the area and for shipments to customers.

City Printing's customers are based in the Mahoning Valley, but some of them do work nationwide, so the company makes shipments for them all over the country. For example, it has printed brochures for resort hotels in Florida and other states.

Among City Printing's customers are area engineering firms, accounting firms, hospitals and charitable organizations.

The business prints all sorts of orders, large and small, including catalogs, calendars, tickets and annual reports.

"We can run an order that's \$25 or one that's \$60,000," Valentini said.

The business employs 23, although Valentini expects to add workers as the economy improves.

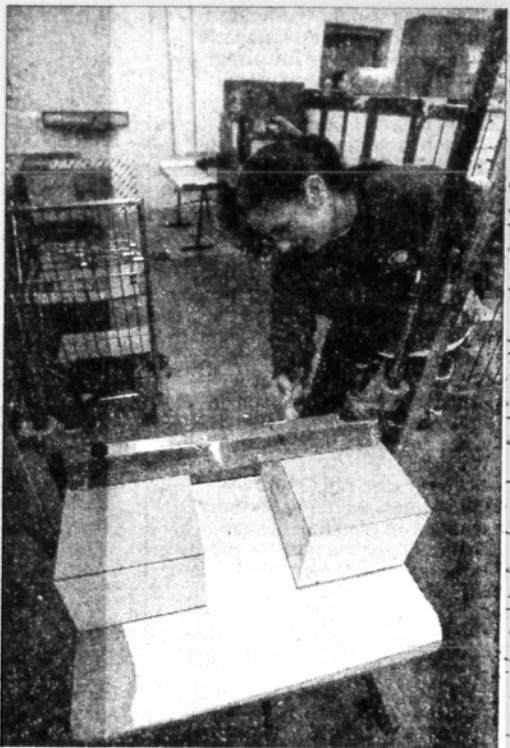
Business dropped last summer but then picked up at the end of the year, he said. Sales were down about 10 percent for the year.

He said he isn't sure what to expect for 2010, but he thinks the worst of the economic slump is over.

"We're at the mercy of our customers," he said.

In good economic times, customers tend to spend more on printing as they do more and better marketing pieces, he said.

Valentini's new press, which he said cost in excess of \$1 million, shows the confidence he has in the future.



STICKY JOB: Donna DePietro applies glue to the back of a shipment at City Printing. Moving from downtown to Oak Hill Avenue allowed the business to place all of its production on one floor.

He said, however, the past decade was tough on the printing business, and some local printers closed. Business was down nationally as companies handled more printing work in-house and moved more publications to the Internet.

Valentini said, however, his employees have maintained a high level of customer service, which has enabled City Printing to keep a long list of local customers.

"Being in business for 90 years, we have a lot of jobs that we've been running for decades," he added.