



The Vindicator/Bruce Palmer

REMINISCING: Ralph Valentini, former president of City Printing, holds a photo of the company's original building on South Champion Street in Youngstown. Valentini's nephew, Joseph, is the current company president. The business, now on West Wood Street, is celebrating 80 years of doing business downtown.

Area printing business presses on with technology

The longtime family business has invested more than \$1 million in high-tech equipment over the past five years.

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YOUNGSTOWN — History is repeating itself at City Printing on West Wood Street downtown.

Joseph Valentini founded the business in 1920 with his wife, Rose, working closely by his side as office manager.

Now the founder's grandson, also Joseph Valentini, is president and chief executive, with his wife, Irene, at his side as controller and office manager.

But that's where the similarities end.

Changes: The Valentini family is keeping its 80-year-old business in touch with the technology revolution, having invested more than \$1 million in high-

tech equipment over the past five years.

Old printing presses and Linotype machines that once produced rows of type in solid metal slugs have been displaced by computers, state-of-the-art presses, scanners and other technical tools of the printing trade.

And the effort has paid off. Although officials wouldn't release profit or sales figures, they said sales have more than quadrupled in the past decade.

About the business: The business specializes in commercial printing — from simple business cards and stationery to full-color, glossy newsletters, posters, programs and brochures. Its primary service area is within a 30-mile radius of Youngstown, but its products

have been shipped all over the world.

Still a family-owned business, the company is taking a new, more aggressive approach to sales as it celebrates eight decades of serving the Mahoning Valley's printing needs.

"We've always been pretty conservative about publicity. I guess you could say we're one of Youngstown's best kept secrets," Valentini said. "We've decided it's time to come out of our shell a little."

Early days: The company's founder came to the area from Italy in 1911 and worked as a Latin teacher in Pennsylvania and as a writer and editor for an Italian newspaper downtown before opening his printing business at 114 S. Champion St. His sons Ralph and William Valentini, who took turns serving as company president over the years,

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PRINTING/Longtime area business presses on

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remember playing at the shop as little boys.

"He had a sign on his front window," Ralph Valentini said, grinning as he held up an old photograph of the original shop. "It said: 'Say it with printing. Flowers die.' That's not something you'd see in a window today."

The business weathered several major downturns, including the Great Depression and the collapse of the area's steel industry in the 1970s and 1980s.

"My father always said, give them a fair price and do the best you can," William Valentini said. "It worked. We're here 80 years later."

Current president: Like his father, William, and his uncle Ralph, Joseph remembers playing at the print shop as a boy. He started working there for pay at 16 and stayed on through his days as a student at Youngstown State University.

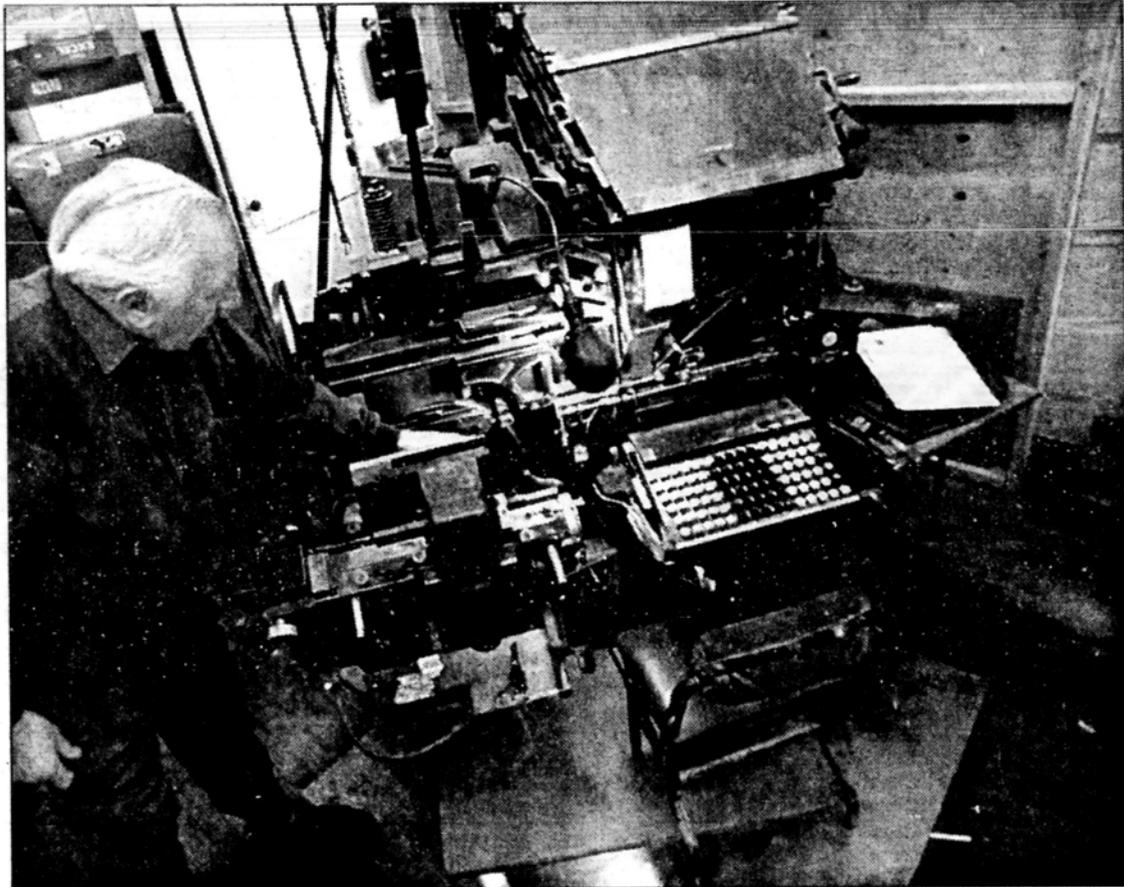
When he graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration, he decided to stay and assumed the presidency in 1989.

"I'm glad I stayed," Valentini said pensively. "But when you own your own business, it takes a 100 percent commitment. Your free time is sparing."

Joseph's older brother Jimmy took a different path. A singer and songwriter, he found success in Nashville and worked with Kenny Rogers, Crystal Gayle, Dolly Parton and other country music stars. When Jimmy's son Tony moved to Youngstown, Jimmy decided it was time to leave show business to be close to his family.

Jimmy Valentini returned to the area in 1996 to become the company's vice president of sales, and Tony joined as director of operations.

Valued employees: Al-



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LIKE OLD TIMES: William Valentini explains the workings of an old Linotype machine at City Printing, a downtown Youngstown business celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. Valentini, who served as president of the business at one time, said the company has replaced most of its old production machinery with new, computerized equipment, but the Linotype is still used occasionally for small jobs.

though Valentini family members hold many of the top positions, the CEO said other employees also play key roles in making the products come out right. The family prides itself in creating a working environment that makes people want to stay.

"I can't emphasize enough how valuable our employees are to the business," Valentini said. "It's not the business that makes the employees, it's the employees that make the business."

Location: In 1970, City Print-

ing moved to its current location at 36 W. Wood St., downtown, and has expanded to fill every nook and cranny of the two story building. Even with 15,000 square feet of production space and a 7,500-square-foot warehouse, Joseph Valentini said, the business is running out of room.

The downtown location has been an advantage cost-wise. Valentini said his overhead costs are a fraction of what the business would be paying in a suburban location. Its central loca-

tion also has been a plus.

On the downside, however, the business could be run more efficiently in a single-floor building, he said, and space is a problem. When the company bought a five-color press last year, it had to spend \$20,000 to install supports so the heavy equipment wouldn't fall through the floor.

"We're committed to downtown. It's always been our home," he said. "But we are outgrowing our building. We'll stay here as long as we can."