

### **Before the Thro-Mor Pump:**

In the late 1890's, Uniontown native Emmitt Cleveland Ricks began to develop the business of manufacturing coke-drawing machines for local SW Pennsylvania coke yards. Under the company name "Rick's Manufacturing and Supply", he chose to manufacture the Covington Coke Drawing and Loading Machine, designed by the Covington Machine Company in Covington, Virginia. He found a home to cast his steel parts and build the machine by purchasing an old brick furnace foundry at the present address of 45 Miller Avenue in Uniontown, PA. As a supplier to the coal and steel industry, Mr. Rick's coke machines followed the industry's unending upward trend of the times in western Pennsylvania to become an extremely wealthy man. His machines were a great success. Each machine was boasted in print ads to be able to draw, screen, and load into rail cars the coke from 50 beehive ovens per day. Today, the company archives still hold photographs taken of his coke drawing machines at work, which were featured in "Coal Age" magazine in 1906.

### **Opportunity "knocks" for the Thro-Mor Piston Pump:**

By the 1920's, E.C. Ricks had built a vast business, and deep relationships with landmark people of the steel and coal industry. With manufacturing interests like his father, E.C.'s son Robert Hunter Ricks (1915-2006) decided to follow in similar footsteps of his father. Grounded in studies in industrial engineering at Purdue University and Penn State University in 1938, Robert (Bob) came back to work with his father. But, soon Bob would get the chance to build his own manufacturing empire.

U.S. Steel Corporation (started in 1901) had diversified holdings. Included was a mining division, which encompassed many coalmines in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Some of the top producing mines of this region often went head to head with underground water in their efforts to remove seams of coal. The water was often acidic, unfiltered, abrasive, and needed to be pumped up steep runs to exit the mine. Pumps of the time were unable to stand up to the challenge, especially on a continuous pumping schedule. U.S. Steel had to solve the riddle, and Bob Ricks was soon to be their answer. After meetings discussing the

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issue, Bob re-designed a series of a piston pumps he later patented the "Ricks Thro-Mor" pump. ***The pump was built with outstanding durability and simplicity. Not only would it accept all the challenges the mine and its water had to offer, but it would do it 24 hours a day/365 days a year.*** If a pump component needed replaced, its simple design allowed for quick repair and return to duty. Also, the pumps rock solid construction allowed for a rebuild of the pump when its internal components finally became wore (instead of disposal of the machine). Even today Thro-Mor's come back to our shop with serial tags from the 1940's and 50's... are rebuilt, and sent back into service.

The Thor-Mor continued to be a big hit, and mines everywhere were using it as a gathering pump for mine dewatering. Mr. Rick's manufactured the pump at his father's Coke Machine building plant. This way, all the pumps' parts were cast and fully machined on site. As the coke business of the region slowed in the 1960's, Bob's pumps became the primary business at his father's plant. He continued to grow and build a great company until his retirement in 1997.

**The Thro-Mor sees new management:**

In 1997 Mr. Ricks sold the company to Steve and Karen Stanish of Uniontown, PA. They have continued the manufacturing and development of new Thro-Mor's, parts and service, and re-building Thro-Mor's. They operate as SKS Manufacturing, and have kept the company producing Thro-Mor's in the original plant at 45 Miller Avenue in Uniontown that the Rick's family used for over 100 years. We are proud to say that you will find our Thro-Mor's hard at work in some of the United State's top producing underground coalmines and other industrial applications. ***If you have water to move, we want to help.***