Ironically, Slowly, a new gateway to Pottstown

On Tuesday, we discussed the upcoming restoration of the 19th century Meyerhoff shirt factory at Charlotte and Cherry streets as condominiums and apartments. The shirt factory had been absorbed and reused decades ago by Mrs. Smith's Pie Co., which itself closed in 1998.

The repurposing of the Mrs. Smith's site began in 2000, when most of the property was sold to a land broker. Pie-making had relocated to Stilwell, Oklahoma, which had newer facilities and lower wage rates.

A plan for a mix of townhouses, offices, and retail was approved by Borough Council in 2006. Construction of 117 townhouses began shortly thereafter, but not the offices and retail. The developer paid a $100,000 forfeiture to the borough for failing to build the commercial part of the project within 30 months of approval.

The townhouse plan required brick facades facing the Industrial Highway. Garages and driveways were to be hidden in the rear off alleys.

As a result, the gateway to Pottstown from the Hanover Street bridge boasts townhouses as handsome as those in any upscale city neighborhood.

With the restoration of the shirt factory, Pottstown's gateway will take another big step forward.

Also coming: two buildings at the corner of Hanover Street and Industrial Highway, containing retail and commercial space. The first of these buildings is now under construction.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

MRS SMITH'S FACTORY COMPLEX as seen from the south side of the Schuylkill River in 1999.

FACTORY COMPLEX being demolished in early 2000s. Meyerhoff shirt factory building is at the rear, right.

HANOVER SQUARE townhouses on the site of the Mrs. Smith's factory, as seen from the Hanover Street bridge. Meyerhoff building is at the right.

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