

Exploring Asylum Hill – 20-28 Sargeant St

The fate of Veeder Place at 20-28 Sargeant St has been suspenseful for years. The building that began as a state-of-the-art factory around 1900 as Veeder manufacturing and merged with the Root Company from Bristol in 1928, finally ceased manufacturing by 1980 and move their world headquarters to Simsbury. It sat empty for a decade before Father Thomas Barry



organized the MJB Corporation to revitalize it. Father Barry is a Roman Catholic priest who grew up across the street when as a young boy his father worked there. He believed it could bring manufacturing jobs back to Asylum Hill and also provide space for non-profits. The second part has worked well, but the manufacturing jobs never materialized. Starttel Cellular Group was going to provide the light manufacturing that would make the effort financially viable and provide the much needed jobs. They were out of business before Veeder Place was completed. The next hope was Giftcorp Inc. and their sign pointing to the loading docks is all that remains of that effort.

In 2016 Hartford Health Works led by Mark Borton attempted to buy Veeder Place to create a medical equipment manufacturing and workforce training facility. They were the winner of the SC2 Strong Cities Strong Communities competition, but were never really able to pull together the financial backing to make it happen. There was also an effort by OPP to purchase the building that also was not successful.

The closest that Veeder Place has come to manufacturing is Fresh Start Pallet Products that moved there in in 2018. They make furniture and other useful products from pallets and other repurposed wood while employing and training people left behind by the for profit sector.

Other tenants there currently include Our Piece of the Pie, NINA, HPATV, MaturityWorks, Platform to Employment, Jobs Funnel, Capital Workforce Partners and most recently MARJOR LLC, a new company started by Georges Annan Kingsley.

Over the past year or more, the building has seen a dramatic increase in activity as Express Kitchens began filling up much of the formerly empty space with cabinets. After a long process with the City of Hartford they are now the owners of 20-28 Sargeant St although the title to the property is in the name of James Lusa who is according to Linked-In, the Property Manager at Express Kitchens.

What their eventual plans are for the building remains to be seen, but we welcome them into the neighborhood and look forward to a beneficial future for Express Kitchens, Asylum Hill and Hartford.