

# WHERE POPCORN IS



Henry Reist (left) and son David at Reist Popcorn building in Mount Joy.

Business Monday  
Photo by Marty Heisey

## Mount Joy se celebrates 76 new mural and

by Rochelle A. Shenk  
New Era Correspondent

Motorists driving into Mount Joy on Route 772 (Manheim Street) may notice something a little different – a beautiful mural on the Reist Popcorn building.

The mural is not the only thing that is new for the company – its name has been changed from Reist Seed Co. to Reist Popcorn Co.

“The name change reflects our current emphasis. We still have seed, but we now mainly concentrate on the popcorn,” explains company president David Reist.

Reist Seed Co. was established in 1925 by David Reist’s grandfather, Alvin J. Reist. The company started in a corn barn on the Reist family farm, and three years later (1928) moved to its current location, circa 1880 brick building at 11 Manheim St.

When the company was founded, its main product was open-pollinated field corn seed. The corn to produce the seed was grown on the Reist farm or was bought from other local farmers. The company also sold other seed, including barley, wheat, alfalfa, timothy and clover.

But seed production and sales were only a seasonal business.

In the 1930s, Reist Seed began producing popcorn – at least 60% of the company’s 76 years in business have included popcorn production.

David Reist said the company has shifted its emphasis from seeds to popcorn over the last decade or so.

“We still have seed sales, but now our main focus is on popcorn,” he said of the company, the only popcorn processor in the Northeast.

Reist Popcorn Co. continues to sell lawn seed, water softener salt and wild bird seed.

# WHERE POPCORN IS KING



## Mount Joy seed company celebrates 76th year with a new mural and a new mission.

by Rochelle A. Shenk  
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Reist indicated that the company’s name was changed to more accurately reflect what it does, and underscores the company’s commitment to the popcorn business and its many loyal popcorn customers.

“As a way of announcing our name change to the community,



we had a mural painted on our building. It is a popcorn harvest scene,” the company president said.

Elizabethtown artist Wayne Fetto painted the mural, commemorating the company’s 76th anniversary.

“I have admired Wayne’s work ever since I saw the mural on Cloverleaf Road. I talked to him about doing a mural here in November. We worked on the

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## Popcorn

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concept, and the last week of April he started painting it, and it was finished in a week," Reist said.

"The timing was perfect since Mount Joy celebrated its 150th Anniversary at the end of May. The mural not only celebrates our company and announces the name change to the community, but also emphasizes the fact that we're proud to be part of this community," he added.

The mural's popcorn harvest scene features founder Alvin J. Reist driving a 1920s vintage Fordson tractor, with great-grandson Jesse proudly displaying the new crop.

"Creating this mural was real-

ly interesting. We wanted to make it as historically accurate as possible," Reist said.

The Fordson tractor was the tractor that his grandfather used on his farm in the 1920s. They searched throughout Lancaster and Lebanon counties for one of these tractors, finally finding one in Lebanon County.

David Reist's father, Henry, posed behind the tractor, and Fetro took a digital snapshot. He then used a photo of Alvin to create the mock-up for the mural.

"My grandpa died in 1977. He was well-known in Mount Joy. We've had some of the folks who have seen the mural and have commented on the likeness," Reist said.

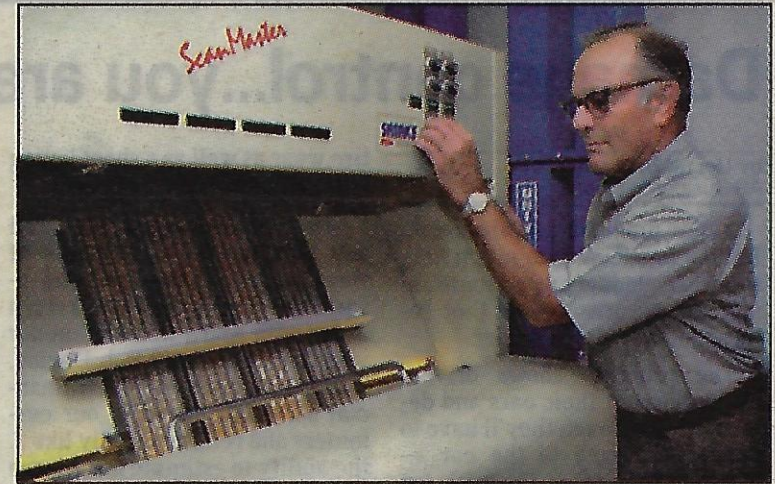
Having his nephew, Jesse, in the mural underscores the fact that a family tradition is continuing, he added.

Reist Popcorn has a total of five employees. Henry Reist, David's father, continues to be part of the business. David, himself, grew up in the business.

"I would come in Saturdays and after school to help. I got to know the business really well from the labor side," he said with a chuckle.

Reist Popcorn receives the raw product as corn grain in 2,700-ton hopper trailers. The company has contracts with various growers in several states. The majority of the growers are in Ohio, but the company also contracts with farmers in Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey. The company chooses the hybrids that the growers plant and advises growers on the chemicals (herbicides and insecticides) that they may use.

At harvest time, the company



New Era photo by Marty Heisey

Henry Reist works at an optical corn sorter

works with growers to ensure that the corn is harvested at its peak; it should have a 17% moisture content. During the harvesting pro-

cess, the corn is separated from the cob and shelled. It arrives at Reist's Mount Joy facility and is processed through air screen separators, polishers and optical scanners.

Through a variety of steps, this process separates kernels that are too big or too small, stones or debris, and even discolored kernels. (Discolored kernels are defective and may not pop completely or at all.) The kernels that are left are then put in 50-pound bags, 2,000 pound totes or loaded into tank trailers for delivery to the customers.

The majority of the company's popcorn is sold to snack-food manufacturers; a small percentage of the business is retail sales. Reist popcorn can be purchased at stores supplied by Associated Wholesalers Inc. as Hi-Pop Dutch Country popcorn, which can be made in the microwave, on the stove or in hot-air poppers. (Hi-Pop is also the used on the 50-pound bags that are sold to the snack food industry.)

After processing the popcorn has a 14% moisture content, which is ideal for popping the kernels. Since most of the corn grain arrives at the Mount Joy processing facility in the fall and production of popcorn occurs year