The Story of Oberlin Smith

Local historian Arthur Cox has discovered information about the father of Bridgeton's Ferracute Machine Co. that proves the substantial contribution Oberlin Smith made to developing the technology we take for granted today. Cox is looking for an author to tell the story.

A Book in Search of an Author

(Continued from Page A-6)

Cox said. He adopted systems of time and motion study, which he discovered while employed by the Pennsylvania Railroad. He designed a keyless lock, always alert for anything that would speed up production. He saw a "traveling side-show," a fascinating world of illusion and magic. He watched the birth of the automobile, which had an impact on the mundane to the magnificent.

In a 1905 lecture, Smith cautioned that "there would be no TVs, Coca-Cola bottles, a popular dance, or the American dance until there were radios." He was not only a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, but a frequent speaker and a prolific writer. He had invented one himself and was president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. A member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, he was president in 1890 of the American Society of Mining Engineers.

Smith was a frequent visitor to the Lummis Library, where he could discuss his work, "...but there is much more now than when I was there," he said.

In Bridgeton, his home, years before the World War, he wrote: "Endless Novelty: Specialty Printers, Original Merchants, and the Lumber Industry." He was important to science and industry.

The full story never told...