



Rockwell Fire Brigade, 1957 [RMA]

Smith to Rockwell to “Hopewell 57” – A Hopewell Story

Wednesday, October 9, 2024; 7:00 pm; Presented by Douglas Dixon

Attend in person at the Hopewell Presbyterian Church. The in-person event is free and open to the public. Or to attend the event online via Zoom, please visit www.hopewellvalleyhistory.org for more information.



Speaker:

Douglas Dixon is an independent technology consultant and writer, now morphed into a history enthusiast and author. He is a board member of The Hopewell Museum and the Hopewell Valley Historical Society, and developed the *Hopewell Valley History Project* (HopewellHistoryProject.org).

Since mid-2019, the History Project has collected, digitized, and freely shared local historical materials to aid research into area people and places. With the assistance of some 140 local contributors, the site now hosts some 640 documents and maps, 4170 images and videos, and an interactive *Hopewell History Map*. With these materials, Doug also has authored some 40 *Hopewell Borough History Briefs*, over 500 pages of research reports on local organizations, businesses, and properties — and the people who made them.

As a software technologist, Doug specializes in Web technology, databases, and digital media. He has authored four books on digital media, published hundreds of feature articles, and presented over a hundred technical seminars and talks.

What is “Hopewell 57” – that big brick building complex at the corner of Hamilton Avenue and Somerset Street in Hopewell Borough, which was earlier known as Rockwell and then Kooltronic?

That block along Hamilton actually has an agglomeration of buildings that developed over time as part of a quintessential Hopewell story — as an individual entrepreneur worked with the town to create a business that expanded to provide 75 years of good jobs for locals, eventually employing over 200 people.

Doug Dixon will chronicle this local saga, starting in 1900 with a group of town boosters who invested in the town to attract new business, and with Hugh A. Smith, who chose Hopewell to pursue his dream of establishing a manufacturing business. He then will trace the evolution of the small Smith company into Rockwell, and the associated development of the building complex along Hamilton Avenue.

There’s some angst in the story, and the eventual sad clearing of Somerset Street due to ground contamination. But there also is an ongoing theme of community in Hopewell, town and businesses, as Smith was twice elected mayor, and Rockwell provided ongoing support for town events and groups, especially the Fire Department.

Co-sponsored by the Hopewell Valley Historical Society, the Hopewell Museum, and the Hopewell Public Library.

