

Big Business in Canton

One of southeast Michigan's leading manufacturers has built a new plant in Canton, on Ronda Drive just west of I-275 and south of Joy Road. They are adjacent to Mettall Air-Port.

The company is INTERNATIONAL DOOR and is probably the country's leading producer of industrial doors and electric door control systems. Because of a large increase in the volume of business in the past few years they were forced to move from their Livonia plant.

John and Gus Kaomas started their small steel fabrication business sixteen years ago (in 1974) when they moved to the U.S. from Greece. The two brothers began by producing structural steel units, weldments, machine bases, trailers, industrial waste containers, electrical signs, conveyor work and other special fabricated items.

It wasn't long before they recognized a need in industrial and automotive markets for improvement in the industrial doors and control products. There was a need for greater efficiency and

safety and improved automotive and industry standards. This required the investment of considerable capi-



International Door had this special building constructed in Canton so they can better serve the customer and produce a product superior to the competition (top). The other photos show just how BIG their projects are.



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tal and a great deal of time to study the issues. Their aim -- to design a product that would meet and surpass what was being produced by competitors. Contractors and industrial customers were quick to recognize the quality and superior service offered by International Door.

According to Allan Osterwik, sales manager, business has quadrupled in the past five or six years. Expectations are that new product lines will account for even greater growth.

Bill Purcell, chief engineer of the firm, indicated that the new plant will accommodate a greater production

capacity and increased volume of business. The building was designed to accommodate the manufacture of giant industrial doors. In the past five years International has become a major factor in the production of aircraft hangar doors, some of which are 250 to 300 feet wide and 75 feet

high. (Large enough to house a Boeing 747.)

Recognizing the need for large, modern equipment two large overhead electric cranes were installed. Fork lifts tend to warp and stress

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finished door panels and hardware and were not practical.

Considered by trade architects and engineers to be the "King" of industrial doors is International's VERTICAL LIFT, probably the most often requested door in the country because of its versatility and service. The TURNOVER, FOUR-FOLD, HORIZONTAL SLIDING and CANOPY doors are other popular products in the industrial market. Special doors -- BLAST DOORS, FIRE-RESISTANT, SOUND RESISTANT for test cells and BI-PART SLIDERS for heat and/or acoustic sound chambers make up yet another segment of products. International designed, fabricated and installed thirty doors for General Motors Proving Ground in Milford. The door equipment, electrical controls and hardware were made from stainless steel and installed in an environmental chamber with 100 degree temperatures and

100 percent humidity. This job was completed in conjunction with Walbridge-Kilgus contractors.

Major customers include automobile manufacturers, steel mills, general contractors, rapid transit facilities, airlines, aircraft manufacturers, the U.S. Airforce, Navy and other governmental facilities. Some top-secret clearance projects have included Knollwood Atomic Lab. in Schenectady, New York and Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Locally International has been responsible for projects at Chrysler's Warren Truck Assembly and Jefferson Assembly plants; at General Motors' Pontiac, Grand Blanc, Flint Warehouse and Distribution Complex; and Ford's Research and Engineering, Michigan Truck Plant, Mazda Motors' Flat Rock plant was provided with 139 doors. Other foreign clients include Toyota Motors, Nissan Motors and Nippondeno.

The company deals with clients all across the country and does the majority of its installations from the Canton plant. Stan LaLonde, field supervisor, indicated that products have been designed for maximum reliability with minimum maintenance to eliminate those expensive "call backs", repairs and breakdown common in other doors. Mr. LaLonde frequently holds seminars with out-of-town customers' facility engineers and crews to train them to provide proper periodic maintenance and service for their doors. International guarantees their materials and workmanship 100 percent.

Many contractors request a "Fast Track" building program. The policy of the Kaomas brothers is to always meet or precede a customer's time schedule. According to Stan LaLonde he is not aware of any job which has not been brought in on time.

The plant stocks hundreds of

thousands of dollars in materials not only for the manufacture of new doors but also for the service parts market. The company also services other manufacturers doors and electric controls.

A recent innovation is the "High Speed" Vertical Lift Door which responds to the need for "speed, speed and more speed" that the fork-lift and tractor-trailer operators consider their personal challenge. The new door travels three times faster than ordinary doors but still offers security, safety and low maintenance traditionally found in heavy duty construction.

Although the new plant has been at it's Canton location for just a year, expansion plans are already being made. According to Roger Norwood, Plant Superintendent, the proximity to expressways and location of the labor market were important considerations in the selection of the Canton site.