

By Michael Meyer

Keeping it in the Family

Pennsylvania company has been helping rural customers with water quality issues for more than 60 years

In and around the northern Pennsylvania borough of Troy, water quality is complicated by several environmental factors. Thankfully, residents of the area have three generations of treatment experience from Havens Well Drilling to assist them with their water needs.

Generations of Service

Don and Marge Havens founded Havens Well Drilling in 1955 after Don received an offer he could not refuse.

"He purchased the company off a retiring water well driller," said Rich Havens, partner in the business and grandson of Don and Marge. "He was having a well drilled at his farm, and he showed some interest. The guy who was drilling [the well] was in his seventies and getting ready to retire, and he wanted my grandfather to buy the business. That's when we got established."

After several years in the well-drilling business, Don decided to begin offering water treatment products and services.

"No well is [free] from impurities in the water, so he thought, 'What a great opportunity to get into the water conditioning [business],'" Rich said. "We did it only for our customers who we did the water drilling and the pump work for, but in the past five years, we've expanded it out into more of an open, public kind of thing—not just our [current] customers, but going out and trying to find other customers as well."

Today, Rich and his father, Keith Havens—who has been an employee since 1973 and a partner since the 1980s—operate Havens Well Drilling, which employs two other people. The company is based in Troy and services an area that includes parts of Bradford and Tioga counties. Rich estimates that 30% of the company's business is well drilling, 40% is well service and 30% is water treatment.

"We're there from the start," he said. "We know the quality of the water right from drilling it and putting in the pump. Sometimes we try to take care of the problem in the well itself. Instead of using [an ultraviolet] light, we might put a sleeve in the well to try to prevent the contaminants



Above: Don, Keith and Rich Havens represent three generations of well drilling and water treatment service. Left: Matt Oldroyd, another of Don's grandsons, installs a pressure tank and water softener.

from coming in the water. Sometimes you don't have that option, but being in the water well industry, we do have more options than a standard water conditioning company would have."

Drilling for Quality Water

Havens Well Drilling's service area is sparsely populated, so many of the water quality problems its employees encounter when assisting customers are endemic to rural areas where people get their water from wells rather than municipal systems.

"Some of the wells are old and maybe don't have enough casing in them, so we use a lot of UV light applications because there can be contaminants—it's not city water that's being chlorinated or anything like that," Rich said. "Other than that, the hardness is not super high in our area."

The land in and around the Havens service area historically has been home to a number of large-scale coal mining operations. These businesses are mostly gone now, but their activities created some water quality issues that the Havens team continues to address.

"Because of the coal mining in our area, we do have some problems with high iron and acid mine drainage, so there are low pHs in some areas," Rich said. "A lot of times, in the coal mining areas, we have to put an acid neutralizer on it to bring up the pH in the water, and then run it through a greensand filter to take the iron out, and sometimes after that we top it off with a fine-mesh resin softener to take out some of the hardness and also help clean up the iron."

In recent years, coal mining has been replaced in prominence in the area by hydraulic fracturing. This has led to many of Havens' customers experiencing new water quality concerns.

"The natural gas industry has brought a lot of issues to people's water, and now with what's going on in Flint ... people are concerned about their water."

"With natural gas drilling, there are some methane problems," Rich said. "There have always been some methane problems, but people are more aware of it now. Treating the methane has been not necessarily a problem, but a bigger issue, I would say. Sentry makes a methane stripper that pumps [water] into a big black tank that vents off the gas and has a chlorinator on it."

Caring for Customers

Rich attributes the company's success to its respect for customers and wide-ranging industry knowledge.

"Upfront honesty with customers is key," he said. "They're calling you because they don't know a whole lot about water quality. People know they can trust us. We've established a name locally—people know Havens is about water. We're up-front and honest, and we give them the best product possible—no cookie-cutter application, but just giving the best option they actually can get."

To better serve its customers, Havens

Well Drilling is a member of the National Ground Water Assn. and the Pennsylvania Groundwater Assn., and is looking to join the Water Quality Assn.

"People are concerned about their water, especially in our area," Rich said. "The natural gas industry has brought a lot of issues to

people's water, and now with what's going on in Flint, Mich., people are concerned about their water." **WQP**

Michael Meyer is associate editor for WQP. Meyer can be reached at mmeyer@sgcmail.com or 847.954.7940.

MAXI-CONNECT
High Quality Brass Push-In Fittings

Arrow Industries offers a wide variety of high quality Push Fittings. These LEAD FREE Brass fittings are designed for fast and easy installation. They will be a solid solution for your installation needs.

STOP BY AND SEE US IN BOOTH # 532

Call 1-800-24ARROW (242-7769)

ASK FOR OUR NEW 2016 CATALOG TODAY!

ARROW INDUSTRIES Since 1931

465 N. Berry St. • Brea, CA 92821
www.arrowindustries.com