

Two honored for restoring 1887 silk mill

Store in Hackettstown Building

Historical group feared demolition.

BY LYNN OLANOFF
The Express-Times

HACKETTSTOWN | All Greg and Karen Ackerson were looking for was a commercial space with a large back yard for a local branch of their rental store.

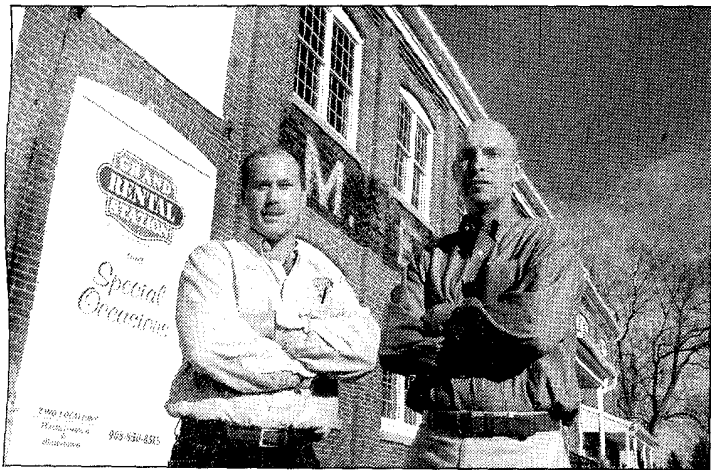
What they found won them an award.

The Warren County Cultural and Heritage Commission awarded the Ackersons the group's 2005 Preservation Award for their work in restoring the old silk mill on Maple Avenue to serve as a Grand Rental Station store.

"This fits our needs. It just worked out we were able to restore an old building," Greg Ackerson said Tuesday at the store, which opened in May. The Ackersons also own a Grand Rental Station in Blairstown Township, their hometown.

They left most of the exterior intact, including the brick walls, smokestack and the painted name "M. Eaton and Company," the building's owners in the 1940s and '50s. The two-story factory was built in 1887, when it was home to the Hackettstown Manufacturing Co., later known as the W.H. Ash-

PLEASE SEE AWARD, B2



EXPRESS-TIMES PHOTO | JIM MIDDLEKAUFF

Steve Lusby, left, general manager of Grand Rental Station, and owner Greg Ackerson are proud of the 2005 Preservation Award they received from the Warren County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

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1887 silk mill

ley Silk Throwing Co.

"They tried to stay as true to the original building as they could," said Kevin Ryan, a Preserve Historic Hackettstown trustee who nominated the Ackersons for the county award.

"The thing we liked most is they didn't tear the building down, which was a distinct possibility with the way developers look at things nowadays," Ryan said.

Preserve Historic Hackettstown was especially worried the old silk mill would be tom down after the roof collapsed a few years ago, Ryan said.

The fear the building would otherwise have been demolished contributed to the county Cultural and Heritage Commission's award to the Ackersons, said Charles Prestopine, a commission member from Hackettstown. The commission was also impressed with the quality of the restoration work, he said.

The collapsed roof didn't persuade the Ackersons to tear the building down, but it did cause problems with the restoration work. The roof repair work coincided with major rainstorms in August 2004, forcing them to redo the floors as well.

"It was a big challenge," Ackerson said of the work.

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