A Vast Industrial Wonderland

When it was built in 1919, the T.A. Huston Company at 314-318 Forest Avenue was "the newest (and) largest...baking establishment in the East." Reports of the day also termed it "...a vast industrial wonderland," built to contain the very latest in bakery equipment. The building created an assembly line that commenced on the seventh floor for the efficient baking, packaging, and shipping of the company's line of cookies and crackers.

The company's founder, Thomas A. Huston, employed the latest technology whenever possible. His first bakery, established in Auburn in 1869, featured, "...the best in cracker-making machinery obtainable," a treadmill operated by real horse power.

Technology also played a role in the end of the building's history as a bakery. The National Biscuit Company purchased the Portland bakery in 1931 and continued to operate it for another 23 years. But Nabisco closed the bakery in 1954 because the building could no longer accommodate the latest in bakery equipment.

Over the next 36 years, the former "...industrial wonderland" was used for storage and warehousing, most recently as a plumbing supply company, Johnson Supply. Eventually it became vacant and fell into disrepair. In 1990, the University purchased the property and faced the challenge of converting it into a modern, technologically advanced library.