



The A. Wilhelm Company

184 FORTY-FOUR years ago history was being made. It was the year 1857, the year in which the first Atlantic cable was laid. In Illinois a tall, row-boned lawyer named Abraham Lincoln was beginning to gain national recognition for his agitation against slavery. The newly formed Republican party recognized his ability and nominated Lincoln for the Vice Presidency. Four years later, with the "all splitter" elected to the President's chair, Civil War was to sweep the country in the greatest struggle in American history.

But meanwhile, in Easton, Pennsylvania, another kind of history—industrial history—was being made. Two brothers, Aaron and William Wilhelm, went into the paint making business. With a knowledge of paint mixing gained through experience the brothers embarked on their venture with the ability necessary for success. It is interesting to note that during that same year a financial panic swept the United States, creating difficulties for the young firm from the very beginning.

"A. Wilhelm and Brother," as the original firm was called, continued in business in Easton until 1871. Then, apparently seeking a larger market for their products than was offered by a town of less than 11,000 inhabitants, Aaron and William Wilhelm moved their equipment to Reading.

The sign, "A. Wilhelm & Bro.—Paints and Varnishes" made its first appearance in Reading on the face of a three story building extending from 221 to 225 Poplar Street. The next few years brought a steady increase in sales, and the young firm prospered.

In 1878 William H. Wilhelm decided to withdraw from the firm and Walter S. Davis was brought into the business to take his place. "A. Wilhelm & Brother" became "A. Wilhelm & Co."

With this injection of new blood into the organization, sales began to mount and their trading area began to widen. No longer depending upon local sales, or even sales throughout Pennsylvania, they began to sell their products in neighboring states. As their sales increased, their working force also increased, so that by 1886 Wilhelm paint products were being sold through 314 different outlets, and twenty workmen were employed constantly.

In 1889 Aaron Wilhelm died. After his estate was settled, the company was incorporated as "The A. Wilhelm Company." Charles W. Wilhelm, the son of the founder, became President, and Walter S. Davis, Secretary and Treasurer.

For several years the new corporation remained at the Poplar Street location, until in 1901 larger quarters were needed. The two-man paint factory had grown to the point where seventy-five employees were on the payroll. The A. Wilhelm Company was recognized as the largest paint manufacturer in Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia.

Mr. Charles Wilhelm, in addition to the paint factory, had acquired a nut and bolt works, situated at 3rd and Bern Streets in Reading. At about this time he merged this company with another local bolt and nut manufacturer and the machinery and equipment were removed, leaving an empty factory building at 3rd and Bern Streets. This location was ideal for paint production, since it provided the necessary room for immediate and future expansion. In 1901 The A. Wilhelm Company occupied its new quarters.

Growth of the Company continued steadily. Twenty-five years ago, in 1916, ninety-four men and fourteen women were employed in the Wilhelm plant and office.

During this period of expansion, the A. Wilhelm Company engaged in pioneer work in an entirely new field—that of the manufacture of paint products to be sold in national chain or syndicate stores. It was in 1910 that they first entered this field, the originators of 10c paints, varnishes and enamels.

In 1919 one hundred fifty men and women were on the Wilhelm payroll—and that was the point in Company history when another great forward stride was made.

In the latter part of the year Mr. Adrian D. Joyce, and his associates, who had just acquired The Glidden Company, saw the possibilities in the Wilhelm plant, equipment, products, sales set-up and good will, with the result that the A. Wilhelm Company became a Glidden subsidiary.

Under the Glidden banner The A. Wilhelm Company has achieved even greater success. A unified sales plan, together with standardized products and colors, has enabled them to build sales and production figures to new heights. Today the Wilhelm plant is made up of twenty-eight buildings which cover a total of twenty acres. Today between 400 and 500 employees in the Wilhelm plant annually handle more than 20,000 tons of paint products which are shipped to all parts of the world. And today the Wilhelm branch of The Glidden Company is the largest producer of syndicate store materials in the world—an important link in the Glidden chain of paint production.

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184 FROM the very beginning of its existence, The Glidden Company has been characterized by foresight. When Francis H. Glidden, in 1870, began manufacturing varnish in a small plant in Cleveland, Ohio, he must have had plans for future expansion and growth. But even he, in his wildest dreams, could not have foreseen the day when the Company bearing his name would become one of the world's largest manufacturers of paint products, as well as a major producer of food products, soy bean products and pigments.

The first years of the Company's existence were typical of other small business enterprises. An expanding market led Mr. Glidden into forming a partnership with William Joy, and the firm became known as The Glidden and Joy Varnish Company. Several years later, in 1883, to be exact, the three sons of Mr. Glidden were brought into the business, and the firm became known as The Glidden Varnish Company.

That name was retained until 1917, when Mr. Adrian D. Joyce headed a syndicate which purchased The Glidden Varnish Company, in its entirety.

Less than three years later the new organization sprang into national prominence through the consolidation of sixteen paint and varnish companies under the name of The Glidden Company. Included in the new consolidation were plants and marketing facilities in Canada, California, Texas, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Missouri and Louisiana.

It was this consolidation that first led the Company into the wide diversification of products for which Glidden is known. In addition to the original line of paints and varnishes, the Company now branched out as a manufacturer of essential poisons, insecticides, dry colors, chemicals and linseed oil.

Mr. Joyce and his associates realized from the outset that certain essential raw materials could be manufactured far more cheaply than they could be purchased, and that control of these raw materials would give greater strength and independence to the Company. They saw that this would give them plants and equipment which could in turn be utilized to make other products and would tend to broaden the scope of their market. It was this policy that led Glidden into such seemingly unrelated fields as paints, foods and chemicals. Yet, surprisingly, each step led logically to the next one; each product to its successor.

The story of Glidden and linseed oil graphically illustrates the policy of Mr. Joyce and his associates, and will explain the connection between such unrelated outlets as paint products and food products. Linseed oil is an important raw material in the manufacture of paint and varnish. In the consolidation of December 31, 1919, The Glidden Company acquired a linseed oil plant located in St. Louis. The flaxseed, from which the oil is made, came up the Mississippi by barge. But the crushing season lasted only six months, and the plant was idle for the rest of the year. The question arose: "How keep the factory and machinery busy for the entire twelve months?"

The answer came from the islands of the southern Pacific Ocean in the form of copra, the dried meat of the coconut. This could be crushed into a vegetable oil with the same machinery used in extracting linseed oil from flaxseed. Experimentation showed that this vegetable oil could be further refined and made edible—and the paint company had entered the food business.

To carry out the refining process, the Company bought an abandoned brewery with all of its equipment, and the coconut oil became margarine, hard butter, biscuit coatings and kindred products which were widely sold to bakers.

Margarine plants were then purchased in Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio and on the Pacific Coast for the purpose of supplying western and central states. The eastern territory was still unprovided for, so the plant and facilities of E. R. Durkee and Company, at Elmhurst, L. I., were next acquired. This company, long a Glidden customer in a limited way, had just completed a modern \$1,400,000 plant which was being used to only a quarter of its capacity.

Again Glidden stepped into the market, and this time came out with The Durkee Company, and its old and well established national trade in shred coconut and other packaged goods. The whole food business was then consolidated under the name of Durkee's Famous Foods, Inc., thus perpetuating the Durkee brand name.

At this point foods and paint and chemicals meshed together. Having wide grocery outlets, Glidden began manufacturing powdered blueing, Paris green and other insecticides which were marketed with the edible products.

As an outgrowth of Glidden interest in vegetable oil processing and food manufacture, attention was

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drawn to the soya bean as a source of food oils and oils for use in paint. After a thorough investigation of the possibilities, The Glidden Company, in 1934, constructed a plant in Chicago to extract soya bean oil. In a short time, in addition to oil, this plant was producing soya bean flour, soya bean proteins used in the manufacture of plastics, paper coatings, water thinned paint, and lecithin, important in the paint, wood preserving, rubber, candy, baking and margarine industries. The Glidden soya bean processing plant is the largest of its kind in the country.

This, briefly, is the story of the transition from paint to food. The story from paint to chemicals, pigments and lead is another and more complex chapter.

As has been pointed out, linseed oil is important in the manufacture of paints. Pigments are equally important, and in order to control its pigments, Glidden purchased a chemical plant. This gave the Company its first contact with the printing business, for colored pigments are also used in inks.

White lead came with the purchase of The Euston Lead Company, at Scranton, Pennsylvania, and red lead with the purchase of The Metals Refining Company, Hammond, Indiana. These purchases started another seemingly endless chain of new products.

One of the by-products of red lead manufacture is litharge, a lead oxide used extensively by rubber manufacturers, varnish makers and others. Two other by-products, type metal and babbit, took the Company again into the print shop and to the automobile manufacturer. Battery metal joined other Glidden products, suggested by the large number of worn-out battery plates which came to the plant with other lead scrap.

In the scrap was found copper wire, tin and zinc. The copper was recovered and turned into copper powder. The tin was utilized, and the zinc also found its way into powder and metal. This experience with metals led to the purchase of zinc and lead mines in California. Transportation was needed to carry the minerals to a main line railroad, so the Sacramento Valley and Eastern Railroad was bought, and Mr. Joyce became a railroad President.

In addition to zinc and lead the mines produced small quantities of gold and silver. Smelters were

built to recover these precious metals. The zinc became zinc oxide, used in paints and rubber. The crude lead residues went to lead plants. Some of the zinc found its way into lithopone, another important pigment. Since barium was required to make this product, Glidden next bought barytes properties in California, and started to produce barium sulphide and bleached barium.

And so the story goes, with new uses and new products constantly flowing from the numerous Glidden research laboratories.

The diversified development of the Company has naturally brought about a realignment of Glidden business. Paint and varnish production now comprises 33% of the total volume; food products 31%; chemicals and pigments 16%; and soya products 20%.

With general headquarters in Cleveland, the Company today operates paint factories in Cleveland, Reading, Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Toronto; food factories in Elmhurst, Chicago, Portland, Berkeley, Norwalk and Louisville; a soya plant in Chicago; a soap factory in Louisville; pigment factories in St. Helena, Collinsville, Oakland and Scranton; zinc and barytes mines in California; and warehouses and paint stores in principal cities from coast to coast.

In all of its numerous branches, manufacturing plants and distribution points, one outstanding characteristic is found among the members of the Glidden organization. Everywhere exists full and eager cooperation to help make The Glidden Company constantly and consistently greater. Men who have worked with the Company or its subsidiaries for many years—the Pioneers—and newer men who have but recently become acquainted with the traditions of the Company—all are pulling together.

At the head of The Glidden Company, as its guiding hand, is the President, Mr. Adrian D. Joyce. Associated with him as officers of the Company are Mr. R. H. Horsburgh, Senior Vice-President; Mr. R. W. Levenhagen, Vice-President; Mr. W. J. O'Brien, Vice-President; Mr. Dwight P. Joyce, Vice-President; Mr. J. A. Peters, Treasurer; and Mr. C. M. Kolb, Secretary.