by: W.R. Sieplein

Up to about the time of the Civil War prepared paint was unknown. Houses were painted with white lead and linseed oil mixed on the job. Tints were obtained by the use of dry colors, or colors ground in oil. It can readily be understood that the painter necessarily had to possess considerable knowledge of materials to prepare paint properly.

Evidently because of the many men involved in the Civil War there was a shortage of skilled labor and this encouraged manufacturers in all lines of industry to offer their products in a state more adaptable for the consumer's immediate use and quite naturally prepared paint appeared on the market. The first paint made thus proved unsatisfactory as it settled in the package and could not be readily stirred up.

A man named D.R.Averill of Newburgh, a suburb of Cleveland, invented a liquid paint which he claimed would not settle. He obtained this feature through making an emulsion and unfortunately he mixed in a liberal portion of adulteration with the lead, zinc, linseed oil, etc. used. He thought he had made a great discovery but was destined to disappointment as he did not put a real quality into the product. Many others followed his lead and thus prepared paint, or ready mixed paint soon got a bad reputation and there came to be a well founded prejudice against prepared paint from which it has not fully recovered.

Patent paint as it was called was vigorously opposed by the best manufacturers, but the demand persisted and finally some of the larger and better manufacturers, began to turn their attention to the production of paints of high quality in liquid form. Henry Sherwin became a real pioneer in this movement and in 1880 brought out S-W-P, the best paint it was possible for Sherwin-Williams & Co. to produce at that time.

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Liquid Paints

by - W.R. Sieplein

It was very difficult to introduce this high quality paint because of the prejudice, but he was fundamentally right and after a few years the paint met with much favor and led the field. It set a standard and elevated generally the character of paint and now there are a number of good prepared paints on the market, the best of which are similar to S-W-P. The sale now runs into several million gallons, the distribution being four to five times larger than the next competitor.

It is generally recognized among practical painters that a combination of lead and zinc with a small proportion of inert material linseed oil and drier make the best paint. Specifications of the Railways, War Department and other governmental departments and all other industrial specifications require outside building paint to be made along these general lines.

Others of the present standard S-W products were put on the market as the demand developed. The first S-W-P color card stated that it was very suitable for floors, but that a floor so painted could not be used for several days, however after three or four weeks the paint would present a hard surface which would wear very well. Evidently the public was unwilling to stay out of the house for this time and the Company met the situation by producing Interior Floor Paint in 1884 which would dry satisfactorily over night so that the room could be used the next day.

About thirty years ago Doctors began to realize that painted walls were more sanitary than those covered by wall paper. Thus, paint became the standard for all hospitals and office buildings. A great deal of research was carried on in the Lakeside Hospital in cooperation with the Sherwin-Williams Company and they found that a dull finish with neutral green or tan tones was the best finish for the walls in hospital rooms. In 1906 the Company put on the market

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Development of
Liquid Paints
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a full line of special interior colors which developed into the present line of Liquid Flattones.

There was also a demand for enamels for interior walls, but the majority of these were very difficult to apply and our research developed Enamelpid in 1903 as an enamel which would work very easily under the brush. The very finest enamels in the world at that time were made in Holland and Belgium. The S-W Company approached these very closely with Enamelastic first made in 1906. In 1910 we employed a man from Holland who was skilled in the manufacture of Old Dutch Enamels. Much research was undertaken to adapt this enamel for the requirements of the American painter. We have in the present Old Dutch Enamel a genuine Dutch enamel which has become Americanized.

The S-W Company is generally looked upon as a manufacturer of paint rather than varnish. As a matter of fact we really manufactured varnish two or three years before we manufactured paint. In 1871 there was organized a Murphey-Sherwin Company which continued until 1884 manufacturing a complete line of varnishes, Japans, etc. Again in 1896 a new varnish plant was built in the Cleveland premises and this with the varnish paint at the other factories was developed until we now have fifty-seven varnish fires with a productive capacity of about 6,000,000 gallons annually. Our storage tank capacity is about 1,000,000 gallons and we have at all times not far from 1,000,000 pounds of varnish gums in stock.

W.R. Sieplein.

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