

THE GLIDDEN COMPANY

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THE A. WILHELM COMPANY

Today the A. Wilhelm Company occupies 28 buildings which cover 20 acres in Reading, Pennsylvania. A branch of the Glidden Company, it is the largest producer of syndicate store paints, varnishes and enamels in the world—a field in which the Wilhelm Company pioneered in 1910.

The story of the Wilhelm firm since 1919 has been a highly important chapter in the story of the Glidden Company, one of the world's largest producers of paints, varnishes, lacquers, enamels and other products. But, from 1857, when Aaron and William Wilhelm founded their paint business in Easton, Pa., to 1919, when it became part of Glidden, the A. Wilhelm firm wrote its own success story.

Originally called A. Wilhelm and Brother, the company was moved from Easton to Reading in 1871, where it first occupied a three-story plant at 221 Poplar Street. After its removal to Reading, the young firm prospered.

In 1878 William Wilhelm withdrew from the firm and Walter S. Davis was brought into the business. The company name was changed to A. Wilhelm & Co. The company continued to grow and by 1886 Wilhelm products

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were being sold in eight different states. Sales were steadily mounting.

Three years later Founder Aaron Wilhelm died and the company was incorporated as The A. Wilhelm Company. Charles W. Wilhelm, son of the founder, was president and Walter S. Davis secretary and treasurer.

For several years the new corporation remained at the Poplar Street location. The two-man paint factory had grown and now was recognized as the largest paint manufacturer in Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia. By 1901 larger quarters were needed.

Mr. Charles Wilhelm, in addition to the paint factory, had acquired a nut and bolt works located at Third and Bern streets in Reading. He merged this company with another, removed the equipment from the plant and the Third and Bern location became the new home of the A. Wilhelm Company.

Growth of the firm continued. In 1916 more than 110 persons were employed in the Wilhelm plant and office. It was during this period that Wilhelm originated 10-cent paint, varnish and enamel products for sale in chain and syndicate stores.

The Wilhelm payroll numbered 150 in 1919 when the thriving firm became an important part of the Glidden Company. Under Glidden's banner it has achieved even greater success.

The Glidden Company itself was founded in 1870 as the Glidden Varnish Company, as it was known until 1917 when Adrian D. Joyce headed a syndicate which purchased the company in its entirety.

Less than three years later the new organization sprang into national prominence through the consolidation of 18 paint and varnish companies under the name of The Glidden Company. Included in the consolidation were plants and marketing facilities in Canada, California, Texas, Massachusetts, Missouri and Louisiana. One of the most important of the new companies was the A. Wilhelm Company, Reading, Pennsylvania.

This consolidation, paradoxically, first led the company into the wide diversification of products for which the name Glidden is known. In addition to the original line of paints and varnishes, the company now began manufacturing arsenical 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 also knew this would provide plants and equipment which could be utilized to make other products and to broaden the scope of their market.

This policy led Glidden into such seemingly unrelated fields as paints, foods and chemicals. Yet, each step led logically to the next one, each product to the one which followed. How these steps developed is shown by Glidden's linseed oil operations.

Linseed oil is an important raw material in paint and varnish and in its 1919 consolidation, Glidden acquired a linseed oil plant located in St. Louis. The crushing season for the manufacture of linseed oil lasted only six months and the plant lay idle the rest of the year. Glidden, searching for an operation which would keep the plant busy the year round, discovered its machinery could be used in crushing the dried meat of the coconut into a vegetable oil.

Further experimentation revealed this vegetable oil could be further refined and made edible. And the paint company had entered the food business.

To carry out this refining process, the company bought an abandoned brewery and its equipment, and the coconut oil became margarine, hard butter, biscuit coatings and kindred products which are widely sold to bakeries. The company then moved further into the food business.

Margarine plants were purchased in Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio and on the Pacific Coast. The plants and facilities of E. R. Durkee & Co., Elmhurst, Long Island were acquired, as was the Dunham Company, an old, established dealer in shred coconut and other packaged goods. The entire food business then was consolidated under the name of Durkee's Famous Foods Inc., thus perpetuating the famed Durkee brand name.

It was at this point that foods, paints and chemicals meshed together. To take further advantage of its wide grocery outlets, Glidden began manufacturing powdered blueing, Paris green and other insecticides. As an outgrowth of Glidden's interest in vegetable oil processing and food manufacture, attention was drawn to the soya bean as a source of food and paint oils.

After thorough investigation, the Glidden Company constructed a large soya bean processing plant in Chicago. This plant soon 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 Company's transition from paint to chemicals, pigments and lead is similar.

Pigments are as important as linseed oil in the manufacture of paints and Glidden purchased a chemical plant in order to control its pigments. This gave the firm its first contact with the printing business, in which colored pigments also are used.

White lead came with the purchase of the Ruston Lead Co. at Scranton, Pennsylvania, and red lead with the purchase of the Metals Refining Co. at Hammond, Ind. These acquisitions started another chain of new products, among them litharge, used extensively by rubber and varnish manufacturers; type metal and babbit; battery metal and copper powder.

Utilization of tin and zinc, which came to the lead plants in scrap products, brought the company into these industries. This led to the purchase of zinc and lead mines in California and they, in turn, to the buying of the Sacramento Valley and Eastern Railroad.

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 and some of the zinc found its way into lithopone, an important pigment. Since barium was required for this product, Glidden bought barytes properties in California and began production of barium sulphide and bleached barium.

The diversified development of the company has naturally brought about a realignment of Glidden business. Paint and varnish production now comprises 33 per cent of the total volume, food products 51 per cent, chemicals and pigments 16 per cent and soya products 30 per cent. The A. Wilhelm Company of Reading is a large and important segment.

The general headquarters of the Glidden Company are in Cleveland.

Glidden operates paint factories in Reading, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Toronto. Food plants are located in Elmhurst, Chicago, Portland, Berkeley, Norwalk, C., and Louisville, Ky. Also under Glidden operation are a soy plant in Chicago, a soap factory in Louisville, pigment plants in St. Helena, Collinsville, Oakland and Scranton, zinc and barytes mines in California and paint stores in major cities from coast to coast.

Under Glidden management, Reading's A. Wilhelm Company has kept up its constant record of growth. A unified sales plan, together with standardization of products and colors, have led sales and production figures to new heights. Today the 23 Wilhelm plants employ between 400 and 500 employees who handle more than 25,000 tons of paint products a year.

President of the Glidden Company and, therefore, of the A. Wilhelm Company, is Adrian D. Joyce. Mr. Joyce is nationally famous for his foresight as a leader in his industry. His policy of operating a widely diversified yet highly integrated business has been imitated in many other businesses.

Director of the A. Wilhelm Company branch of Glidden is Fred B. Vickham. A resident of Reading, he directs the company with the title of regional director.

Other executive officers of the Glidden Company are R. H. Horsburgh, vice president; R. W. Levenhagen, senior vice president; W. J. O'Brien, vice president; Dwight F. Joyce, vice president, and J. A. Petern, treasurer.