

have the properties of relative indestructability and resistance to fire.

Asbestos has been known for centuries. We find reference to the use of it as a lamp wick as early as the 5th century B.C. It is mentioned by such early writers as Pliny the Elder, Herodotus and Plutarch. The material was described by Marco Polo and used by Charlemagne. Benjamin Franklin was the owner of a purse made from asbestos, and asbestos clothing for firemen was used as early as 1827.

During the latter part of the 19th century, after the discovery of large deposits of a type of asbestos known as chrysotile in Quebec, there was a considerable development of its use, particularly for building purposes. Pipe covering containing asbestos was developed in 1874. Substantial deposits of a different type of asbestos, the type known as crocidolite, and later the type known as amosite, were found in South Africa. The spinning process was developed in the latter part of the century. Asbestos cement was first produced in 1903 and the following year the manufacture of asbestos-cement board was begun in the United States.

However, it was in World War II that the tremendous increase in the demand for asbestos came, particularly for the manufacture of protective clothing and insulation. By 1972, well over 700,000 tons of asbestos were used in the United States