July 3, 1930.

AMUSING REMINISCENCES OF JOHN T. LEWIS & BROS. COMPANY

About 1882 to 1884 there was a white-lead pool formed by the Chicago and St. Louis corroders. I think those in the pool were Shipman, St. Louis, MacBirney, Collier and Southern. Colonel Richardson, President of the Collier Company, and Mr. Euston, Secretary of that Company, were most deeply interested in it. At the meetings of the officers of this pool minutes were signed by Joseph L. MacBirney, secretary, from August, 1885 to 1886. Sometimes they were presided over by Messrs. Pulsifer, Gregg or Rockwell.

Mr. Tehle, who was a young man in the office of the MacBirney Company at the time, sent weekly reports of sales to the pool clerk, Mr. Woltman, of St. Louis. The companies reported to the pool their annual sales of dry and lead-in-oil made during the year, and their interest in the pool was to be increased or decreased, year after year, according to their increase or decrease in sales. Therefore about 1884 Mr. Euston, being unable to increase the sales of the Collier Company in the Western territory, and desiring a larger percentage in the pool, determined to unload all his surplus lead in Philadelphia. He sent some active salesmen here and spread the report that he intended to run the Lewises out of business. He offered the Collier brand at a very much reduced price to a number of our leading jobbers, among them Geo. D. Wetherill & Co. and Messrs. Chipman & Nice. Our Lewis Company felt the only way to cope with this was to ship the Collier lead back to the Western territory and thereby break prices made and held by the pool.

Our Mr. George T. Lewis, who was very active at that time in our business, went to a few people, especially Geo. D. Wetherill & Co. and Messrs. Chipman & Nice, and induced them to buy several hundred tons of Collier lead at the lowest possible price for our account, although he was not to be known in the matter. Mr. Lewis drew up a contract for these gentlemen to have signed between their respective houses and the Collier Company.

I had forgotten exactly the wording of the contract, and got Mr. Nice, under date of December 16, 1929 to give me the purport of it, and I quote from his letter:

> "We made a contract with the Collier White Lead Co. for 100 tons of white lead. I rather think Mr. George T. Lewis got up this contract. It read just like this: '100 tons of Collier's best white-lead ground in oil, packages as wanted; to be delivered in part or whole during the year, or countermanded at our option, with protection against decline in price.' So you see we were not bound in any way at all to take the lead if we didn't want it, but Mr. George T. Lewis said he would take the 100 tons, and when I asked him what he would give me for it, he said '25¢ a hundred more than you paid.' I sold him the lead. We ordered one or two lots delivered to George T. Lewis and the Collier people came over to see us and raised a rumpus and said they would not deliver us any more lead. I said 'You will deliver whatever we want during the year, unless we countermand it, as that is the contract,' and then they told me about selling to George T. Lewis. I told them there was nothing in the contract to prohibit us from selling to George T. Lewis, and that Lewis was good pay, and that was what we wanted. They made quite a little complaint about what Lewis was doing, and I told them that the matter was between them and the White Lead people, and that they would have to go over and talk to Lewis about it, as it was none of my business whatever. I don't remember now just what was done, but there was something fixed up some way in which we countermanded the balance of the order that had not been taken."

Mr. Lewis made a similar contract with Geo. D. Wetherill & Co., and as they were a little more active than Nice he had them prepare a circular quoting Collier lead considerably lower than their prices, ~~delivered~~ free at all main points in the Western territory. As Mr. Nice explained, this brought the Collier people to their senses and they ~~sent~~ wires and asked us to sell them 100 tons of their lead. Mr. Lewis replied he was not selling it in ton lots but only in 100-lb. lots. This brought a controversy which lasted some weeks, and as I remember it, finally broke up the Western pool and resulted in the National Lead Trust in 1887.

My recollection is that soon after this Mr. Rockwell and Mr. Carpenter came East, Mr. Rockwell as chairman and Mr. Carpenter as secretary to talk over the situation. We had several meetings in New York, in which Mr. Pulsifer was very active in trying to establish prices that would be satisfactory to both the East and the West; but for some months we could come to no agreement. Finally through Mr. Bradley's intimacy with Mr. Pratt, of the Standard Oil Company, the purchase of the Pittsburgh factories was accomplished; and soon after St. Louis, Collier, Southern, MacBirney and Shipman were acquired; thereby forming the National Lead Trust in 1887. At that time the most active members in the newly formed National Lead Trust were Messrs. Bradley, Pulsifer, Alexander Euston; Beamer, of the Beamer-Bowman Co.; Rockwell; and McKelvey, of Armstrong & McKelvey.

The newly formed National Lead Trust was anxious, of course, to have prices uniform and they frequently called meetings, chiefly in New York, inviting outside corroders, such as ourselves, Wetherill and Mr. Colgate, to attend. Mr. Samuel Colgate was then head of the Atlantic White Lead Works and was a very forceful man. The meetings took up considerable time, and little was accomplished.

Being a junior member of the firm I was delegated to attend these meetings and I remember very well on one occasion, after a few days' talk, that Mr. Samuel Colgate rose and in his strong, forceful, stammering voice said: "I do not propose to be a tail to Mr. Pulsifer's kite." and then left the room, after which the meeting of course adjourned.

Our Lewis firm incorporated on August 9, 1888, under the name "John T. Lewis & Bros. Company," simply adding the word "Company" to the old title, "John T. Lewis & Bros," and I became secretary.

Soon after that overtures were made by the National Lead Trust to purchase our plant, and those who were delegated to make the inspection were Messrs. Beamer and Bradley.

Mr. George Lewis was also quite an intimate friend of Mr. Pratt's, and I think Mr. Pratt rather led him to believe that the Trust was so strong that outsiders would have hard sledding, and was instrumental in inducing Mr. Lewis to sell out. Therefore, on April 30, 1889 we agreed with Mr. Bradley to sell to the Standard Oil Company (not to the National Lead Trust) our entire business of white lead, oxides, linseed oil and painters' colors. I was elected President of the Lewis Company June 20, 1889.

On September 21, 1889 I accompanied Mr. George Lewis to New York and delivered to Mr. Bradley in person stock held by the individual members of our firm and we received checks from the Standard Oil Company, to the order of each member for the amount of his interest, which I personally figured.

As I understand it, the Standard Oil Company, or the membersof the Standard Oil Company who were negotitating this business, turned our stock in to the National Lead Trust four for one, thereby making a very handsome profit and vastly increasing the liability of the National Lead Trust. Soon after this Colonel Thompson was elected President of the National Lead Trust. On December 8, 1891 I was made a Director of the National Lead Trust.

It was during Colonel Thompson's administration that the press reported the stock issue of the National Lead Trust as an amount out of all bounds. I think it stated ninety millions, or some figure which caused a tremendous slump in the market. It was at that time that Colonel Thompson felt he must reduce the amount of stock and form the National Lead Company, which was incorporated in New Jersey in 1891.

By the manipulation of the lead plants I am under the impression that the Standard Oil Company made a very large sum of money. One of the sad features was that Colonel Thompson told me he was induced by his intimate friend, Colonel Payne, to pay two dividends on the stock of the National Lead Trust against his better judgment. This of course was to enable certain holders to sell out to an advantage. He told me that when Colonel Payne made application for a further dividend he positively refused, and this caused a break in a lifelong friendship which was never healed.
