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A BRIEF HISTORY of the SHERWIN-WILLIAMS COMPANY

In July of 1866 Henry Alden Sherwin left a position with a wholesale grocer where he had advanced from the post of bookkeeper to membership in the firm. He had three business opportunities which interested him to the extent that he gave up the good position he was holding. He was young, 24, and ambitious and chose the least remunerative of the three positions because it seemed to him to offer possibilities of the greatest development. Mr. Sherwin, by no stretch of the imagination could have realized the magnitude of events which hinged upon that decision. But had he been unduly influenced by the greater immediate returns to be enjoyed in either of the other positions offered him and had he made a different decision there would have been no Sherwin-Williams Company, today!

The First Retail Store

It is highly significant that his first undertaking in this new venture was to set up a thorough office system for the orderly, efficient handling of the many details pertaining to the business of wholesale and retail dealer in paints, oils, varnishes, glass, etc. His second step revealed how keenly he had analized his new job and showed his determination to master it in every detail. Mr. Sherwin liked to tell how he put on old clothes and go down into the stock room where he would open packages, examine the contents and study the purposes for which they were intended. Evenings were devoted to devouring all available literature on the subject.

The Original Group of Founders

We pass over the next four years of successful business until we come to 1870. Then it was that Mr. Sherwin's first partners retired and Mr. Edward P. Williams came into the firm which now became Sherwin, Williams & Co. Two months later Mr. S. P. Penn was engaged as bookkeeper, having met Mr. Sherwin and the two men becoming mutually interested through their common interest in Y. M. C. A. work. This remarkable business association lasted for the entire lives of these notable men. Mr. Williams died in 1903 having been in partnership with Mr. Sherwin for 33 years. Mr. Sherwin died in 1916 the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the company. Mr. Penn celebrated his fiftieth anniversary with Sherwin-Williams in 1920 and died in 1927 at a grand old age.

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The first Sherwin-Williams paint factory was a small two story brick building located on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland x It was purchased in 1873. The equipment installed consisted of a second hand stone paint grinding mill, a small engine and boiler, a putty chaser, etc. In a small book in Mr. Sherwin's handwriting is found the first written formula for paint produced in this factory. It was for "Guaranteed Strictly Pure Raw Umber in Oil". It is most interesting to note that this first formula shows a complete system of code numbers for raw materials - linseed oil, raw umber dry pigment, japan, etc. are still designated by those same numbers, today.

x on the site of the present building housing the factory offices and finishing department.

First Year Production

During this first year of paint manufacture 85 different formulas were made, a total of some 450,000 pounds. Today Sherwin-Williams have over ~~12,000~~ active formulas and the yearly poundage is about ~~392,000,000~~. The point of historical interest is that this entire production for that first year was of oil paste paint and graded leads. Prepared paints, as we know them were unknown at that time.

Designing New Mills

Mr. Sherwin soon found that the paint grinding machinery available at that time was not capable of turning out the quality of paint that he wanted. So in 1875 a great deal of engineering work was done and the first Sherwin-Williams Paint Mill was developed. While many developments and refinements have been added to this mill since Mr. Sherwin first built it the fundamental construction proved so well designed that it remains the efficient pattern today.

"Patent Paint Situation"

Up to this time The Sherwin-Williams Co had not made or marketed any liquid or prepared paints. A man named Averill, of Newburgh, had been actively promoting a liquid paint which he had "invented" which would not settle in the package and invited Mr. Sherwin to visit his plant and witness the process. Mr. Sherwin came away from this visit, however, convinced that the materials being used could never produce "good paint". Remember that Mr. Sherwin's ideas about paint were pretty well illustrated by that first formula for "Strictly Pure" Raw Umber. But the germ of a great idea was there and Averill had many imitators. The result was that the so-called "patent paints", as all prepared or liquid paints were then called, earned a very unsavory reputation and built up a well-founded prejudice against prepared paints.

In 1876 S-W First Quality Oil Colors were first made. At first the market had been unwilling to pay for the quality represented by the original line of "Strictly Pure" colors but it is gratifying to read that through the persistant policy of trying to sell their customers the best in quality it became possible step up to equal the "Strictly Pure" quality and these colors were made on that formula henceforth.

First SW Printing Plant

This same year saw the beginning of the first S-W printing plant for the printing of labels and color cards. Mr. Sherwin was at all times most emphatic that all cans of paint must be correctly labeled and that all descriptive literature in color cards be accurate and without any misrepresentation.

First Prepared Paint

With his customary discernment and foresight Mr. Sherwin realized the potential possibilities of prepared paint and all effort was put into the development of a prepared paint made upon a quality basis. 1878 saw the announcement of a complete line of tints under the name of Osborn Family Paint. The White was made with equal parts white lead and zinc and the liquid consisted of boiled oil, turpentine and drier. It was apparently "good paint" all the way through.

SWP the Leader

Late in 1880 SWP was first brought out. It was knownfirst as "Painter's Prepared Paint". A couple of months later, however, realizing the great potential value of this new product and wishing to express their complete confidence in its quality and worth it was given the name SWP Sherwin-Williams Paint, Prepared. Reading the literature of that time we find that SWP was the first strictly first quality prepared paint made. The succeeding 53 years during which time SWP has been constantly maintained at the point of highest quality and value have amply justified Mr. Sherwin's confidence in it as the key product of the S-W Line.

Beginning of Special Paints

SWP was originally offered for practically any kind of general painting. The first SWP color card, in recommending its use for inside floors, makes special mention that several days must elapse between coats and that a week or two must be allowed for the paint to harden before walking on it! The public apparently were not willing to stand for this and in 1884 Special Floor Paint was offered which would dry "over night".

In 1881 the first office building was built on Canal Road, Cleveland and in this same year the first Sherwin-Williams convention was held. Six men, including Mr. Sherwin, Mr. Williams and Mr. Fenn comprised the entire executives of the company and there were eight traveling salesmen. The following year the company withdrew from its retail business and conducted its jobbing business from the new building.

Year of Events

The year 1884 was an eventful one: In April a graduate of Boston Tech was engaged as chemist: In May a disastrous fire destroyed part of the factory, a loss of $70,000: In July the present corporation The Sherwin-Williams Company was incorporated: In September a great lumber yard fire just across the river threatened the entire destruction of the plant and office building which were saved only by heroic efforts by the employees.

First Expansion

A prolonged period of expansion now set in. The Cleveland plant was enlarged through the purchase of additional land and the construction of new buildings. 1888 witnessed the purchase of the Calumet Paint Company in Chicago, then manufacturing paints for the Pullman Company. This plant has, with the passing of years, been developed as the greatest paint, varnish, lacquer and chemicaltplant in the world. Mr. Geo. A. Martin came into the Sherwin-Williams organization with the purchase of The Calumet Paint Company.

Origin of "Cover-the-Earth Trade Mark

1890 deserves special mention as the year when Sherwin-Williams really began to advertise aggressively. Mr. Geo. Ford joined the company to start the "Publicity" department thereby relieving Mr. Sherwin and others of the work connected with printing, advertising and publicity. It was Mr. Ford who conceived the idea for the "Cover-the-Earth" trademark. But so extremely modest was Mr. Ford that the original sketch remained for some time in his desk before he ventured to advocate its use. It was adopted officially, however, in 1895 replacing that most interesting animal, The Chameleon, which, on an artist's pallette, was the original trade mark of the company.

Canadian Business Organized

1895 saw the organization of the Walter H. Cottingham Co Ltd., in Montreal, Canada for the ~~developing and handling~~ manufacture of paint and varnish business in Canada. Two years later this company was merged with The Sherwin-Williams Company. Mr. Cottingham was made a director of the company and manager of its Canadian business.

All driers, japans and treated oils used in making S-w paint products had been made by the company for many years. And during later years some varnished had been made also. But in 1896 this branch of the manufacturing was extended by the building of a new and large plant embodying all the most modern equipment for making quality varnishes. By 1899 a complete line of varnishes and japans had been developed.

Expansion

In 1898 Mr. Walter H. Cottingham was appointed general manager of The Sherwin-Williams Company with headquarters at Cleveland. A program of expansion soon began to gain headway which was destined to make the company fulfill the implication of the "Cover-the-Earth" trademark quite literally. This program of expansion was built upon the most solid foundation, namely, the production in Sherwin-Williams factories of all the basic ingredients used in Sherwin-Williams Products.

Chicago Dry Color Plant

In 1899 a new plant was built at Chicago where dry colors could be made more on a scale to meet with our vast requirements for paints and enamels because the dry color department in the original Cleveland factory was inadequate. A dry color department was built later at Newark, N. J. to supply the heavy demands of the newly built paint factory erected there in 1901.

Newark Plant

In 1901 the company's business along the Atlantic coast had grown to such a volume that it was not practical to continue to handle it from the Cleveland factory and a complete new paint and varnish factory was built at Newark, N. J. to give the required service. In 1911 this plant was again expanded by building a dry color department to relieve shipments from Chicago.

Linseed Oil Mill

1902 saw the building of the S-W Linseed Oil Mill to make the various oils required in our paints, varnishes and enamels. In this same year land was purchased in Montreal for the building of a new and much larger plant there. Depots were opened in Winipeg and also in Minneapolis, Minn.

Mines & Smelter

Continuing the policy of producing our own basic ingredients and raw materials a mine was purchased at Magdalena, New Mexico and in 1906 a smelter was erected for the production of leaded zinc pigments. This was follwed in 1910 by the building of the white lead plant in Chicago to produce all the Dutch process white lead used in S-W products. Here is made S-W Old Dutch Process White lead, so well known to painters because

of its superior quality and its guarantee of absolute purity.

The manufacture of paints is a highly developed chemical industry and frequently its ramifications are difficult to understand by the layman. The Dry Color Plant was perfectly adapted to the making of insecticides. Paris Green is one familiar example because it is at the same time both a color pigment and a popular insecticide. Perhaps it is the most familiar of the early insecticides. Sherwin-Williams began its manufacture on a large scale in 1903 and the product became well known and well favored. This was folowed shortly by the manufacture of Arsenate of Lead. While this was first discovered by a Swedish chemist in 1775 it did not come into general use until the Gipsy Moth Commision in 1892 found it effective in controlling that pest. Lime sulphur solution was added to the line in 1910 and in 1915 the market was startled by the invention of a process by Sherwin-Williams for making Dry Lime Sulfur which not only offers economies in shipping and handling but has other points of superiority of performance. Arsenate of Calcium was produced in 1918 for the control of the cotton bol weevil.

It may interest the reader to know the dates when many of the now-well-known S-W finishes were first brought out:
Floorlac (now called Flo-Lac), Floor Wax, Aluminum Paint and Machine Paint and Filler in 1901.
Shellacine, Crack and Seam Filler in 1902.
Commonwealth Barn Red, Enameloid, Metalastic, Marnot Varnish and Dry-O-Lite in 1903.
Sheep Marking Liquid, Snow White Enamel, Polish-Ol and Taxite Paint and Varnish Remover in 1904.
Flat-Tone Washable Flat Wall Paint, Handcraft Stains, Shingle Stains and Ebonol in 1906.
Flaxoap Pure Linseed Oil Soap in 1908.
Concrete Finishes in 1909.
In 1910 S-W Old Dutch Enamel was first marketed under that name although it had been made under the name of Enamelastic since 1906.
Commonwealth Barn Gray, Carbolic-ol, Bras-Brite, Scarnot and Rexpar Varnishes were added in 1913.

Rewrite to include most important lines marketed before 1901 and after 1913. If mentioned at all the list should include a brief selection of present lines featuring the earliest and longest lines ma like Family Paint 1878 1st Quality 1875 Interior Enamel 1911 Opex 1917 Bras Brite 1914 etc, etc.

Chemical Production

At the outbreak of the World War in 1914 consideration was given to the manufacture of aniline dyes and intermediates which had been imported from Germany. In October of that year the first real work in making Beta Naphthol was undertaken. The first attempt was only partially successful but much of the strength of the company was focused upon this development. New men were brought into the organization, a great deal of

money was invested in plant and equipment and the manufacture of many products established. Development work was carried forward in this department with the greatest possible intensity until The Sherwin-Williams Company now ranks as one of the strongest in this particular field. Beta Naphthol, Para Nitraniline, Toluidine and a considerable number of other dyes and intermediates are made in large quantities and represent a large share of the production of these products in the United States.

Acetic Acid Plant

In 1917 a plant for the production of Acetic Acid was started in Chicago to make the ever increasing quantity required for dye, dry color and insecticide manufacture. This business grew so rapidly that in 1921 another plant was erected in Bound Brook to serve the eastern market.

Coal Tar Distillation

A plant for the distillation of coal tar was commenced in Chicago in 1914. Here were made the popular black tar paint Ebonol, Liquid and Elastic Roof Cements, Phenoline and other disinfectants, Kiltik, etc.

Lithopone Production

One of the most important pigments used in paint manufacture is lithopone. It is used in a wide variety of wall paints, enamels and undercoaters. Building of a complete lithopone plant in 1917 made possible, for the first time, the control of the great quantities of this pigment used by S-W factories. It formed another link between the mines and smelters and the finished product. 1919 witnessed the beginning of operations in the new plant erected at Oakland, Calif. to properly service the business which was growing by leaps and bounds on the pacific coast.

Modern Tin Can Plant

In 1921 the manufacture of cans was moved from Cleveland to the large new modern tin can plant erected as a unit of the growing group at Kensington Chicago. And the same year the new plant for the manufacture of white lead by the Carter process was put into operation to be followed shortly by the department for making red lead and litharge.

...ight

...n this same year S-W Zilo was also introduced in order to provide the painter with a scientifically controlled combination of white leand and zinc pigments in the form to which they were accustomed.

Since 1921 the paint industry has experienced two revolutionary developments in manufacturing processes. There had always been an insistant demand for faster drying finishes of all kinds. It was quite natural that the longer drying times required by standard finishes would result in inconveniences in home use and costly delays in industrial use. Up to this time any noteworthy gains in drying speed of varnishes and enamels was always accompanied by a corresponding loss in the life or durability of the finish.

Lacquer Development

Pyroxylin lacquers and enamels had been known for years and Sherwin-Williams had a limited production of this type of material for such highly specialized purposes as the protection of silverware, copper articles, etc. But this type of finish could not replace standard paint, varnish and enamel finishes because of its inability to provide a substantial durable film. The reason for this was that the solvents available at the time for putting the nitrocellulose into solution were inadequate to carry sufficient film building material to make the desired finish. An entirely new situation was created by the ending of the world war. Vast new plants developed for the creation of war explosives became suddenly idle and there was an urgent necessity to find profitable use for these resources. It is not a great step between the production of high explosives and the manufacture of nitrocellulose for use in lacquer finishes. Through this resultant concentration of industry upon uses for nitrocellulose added pressure was brought to bear upon the development of the necessary solvents required to produce usable lacquer finishes. The first experience of the general public with the new lacquer finishes was with automobile finishes. The great durability of the finish helped to mitigate somewhat the lack of attractiveness of those first lacquer finishes. The film lacked the rich lustre of the good varnish and enamel finishes in vogue but it did not mar easily and its life was greater.

New Lacquer Plant

Sherwin-Williams take particular pride in the modern lacquer plant which was constructed as a complete independant unit in the Chicago group. Every known device for the efficient execution of this new kind of paint product was made use of. An entirely new "technique" of manufacture was called for. The thinners and solvents used are

of extremely volatile nature which made necessary to conduct all operations in closed vessels. It required, also, the handling of great quantities of liquids which called for safe handling. Sherwin-Williams Lacquer plant buildings were designed by the engineering chemists who had all their knowledge and experience back of them which made it possible to design ways of handling materials which were just as new to the industry as were the fist paint grinding mills designed by Mr. Sherwin In other words, Sherwin-Williams engineers have time and time again had to create new designs and new equipment. Such is the experience of those who pioneer in every new line of endeavor.

~~In the pictures we show here it can be seen how~~ the lacquer solvents, lacquer base liquids and finally the finished lacquers themselves are piped from building to building finally reaching the finishing department where the cans are filled, not handled by human hands, not exposed to the air, clean, uniform and efficient.

Quo Vadis?

While there were many to say that the new type lacquer finish was destined to displace older types of finishes the older heads of the company were confident that the new finishes would "find their place" and that there would still be need for the excellent products which had been developed to such high quality and efficiency throughout the years. And we have lived to see that these men knew what they were talking about. Lacquer finishes have come to be used for a ho st of other purposes in addition to finishing automobiles. Sherwin-Williams were not only leaders in automotive and furniture finishing lacquers which required spray application but another equally famous product was developed Rogers Brushing Lacquer for use by the home owner and for many industrial purposes where brush application was required under certain circumstances.

Synthetic Resins Developments

The second revolutionary development is even now in its final development. In this development the chemist has played the all-important role. The old type fossil resins commonly used in the manufacture of varnishes and enamels, always subject to considerable variation in quality and characteristics, were becoming increasingly difficult to obtain in satisfactory quality and volume. They also imposed well defined limitations upon the paint engineer in the matter of drying and other characteristics. A message from Mr. E. C. Holton, Chief Chemist of the Sherwin-Williams Company explains this situation very clearly:

"Some of the older men etc. (follow from Kem boo

Some of the elder men in our industry can remember the time when chemists were rarely employed in paint factories or in varnish plants. The making of paints and varnishes was not then considered essentially as chemical operations. Many learned to make these products under competent supervision and became paint makers and varnish makers. Sherwin-Williams earned their reputation for quality paints in those early days through the purity of the ingredients they used and the skill with which their men tended their mills and varnish fires. One of our pioneer paint makers, Philip Steyer, recently retired after 50 years' continuous service.

Never-the-less is soon came about that, in those plants where chemists were employed marked improvements in the qualities of paint and varnish began to appear. Competition has from time immemorial driven the manufacturer of any product to exhaust every means that might help make his product more saleable. Today there are many chemists working in these industries and countless finishes of exceeding beauty and general utility have been developed and are coming into universal use.

In the meantime chemists, in the various countries of the world, have been busily engaged in developing all sorts of new compounds. By synthetic processes they have developed substances sweeter than sugar, dyes which are as brilliant as the best found in nature and yet vastly more permanent, medicinal specifics far more desireable than some of those found in nature because many of them, while possessing equal potency for good are superior to the product of Nature in that they can be made free from the toxic properties often present in Nature's product.

Hundreds of definite compounds have been synthesized by chemists and, as a byproduct of the processes of developing these compounds, many indefinite, gummy, tarry or resinous substances have also been produced. To the chemist pursuing some other definite line of research these incidental or accidental creations, byproducts, or whatever you might be of a mind to call them, would naturally hold little interest. Consequently but comparatively few of these substances have been carefully investigated and we know very little as to the actual composition of these few.

It has been found, however, that some of these substances resemble, somewhat, the so-called varnish gums. And for some years it has been the problem of the paint and varnish chemist to work with these synthetic, gummy substances in an endeavor to ascertain where and how they may best be used in our industry. This research has shown that some of these synthetic substances do lend themselves to use in combination with the well known vegetable oils and fossil varnish gums, producing protective coatings which, in certain respects, surpass any hitherto known.

A change in market conditions sometimes takes a certain chemical product which today may be merely a relatively costly laboratory material and makes it tomorrow commercially abundant. Possibly the paint chemist has been waiting fifteen or twenty years for this very thing to happen. What will be the scope of the new developments released to the chemist by this new line of research he does not predict.

~~In the picture on a preceding page we have an assortment of raw materials which~~ a wide variety of raw materials, after processing in a modern chemical plant, become converted into resins ~~such as shown in the foreground.~~ Such resins are synthetic resins because they do not occur in natural state but are the product of chemical reaction. The materials used have been changed chemically as well as physically to an entirely new form.

During the last half century, moving step by step, slowly at first, but now with accelerated speed, the synthetics are marching up to the front. Nitrocellulose, ester gums, ester solvents, phenol-aldehyde compounds, amino-aldehyde compounds, glyceryl and other esters of dibasic organic acids, vinyl compounds, cumars, arochlors and others in multitudinous combinations with the older materials, offer a dazzling array of new finishes awaiting attention and exploitation by the paint chemist.

There is practically no field of paint manufacture that has not been profoundly affected by the discovery and development of processes for producing resins synthetically. We now are making varnishes/with chemically evolved resins and treated oils which not only dry in a fraction of the time required by the older type finishes but these new finishes are superior in appearance and durability, as well. In household finishes Enameloid,/Floor Enamel and Varnot Varnish are outstanding examples of finishes which dry rapidly for greater convenience, 4 to 6 hours and the newly finished surfaces can be handled.

/and enamels

/Auto Enamel,

Industrially an integral line of finishes has been developed built upon the nXXcharacteristics of the new synthetic resins which are called S-W K E M finishes and provide many finishes of extraordiary interest. Space will permit ue to mention them but in the briefest way:

KEM Bulletin Colors are making possible to paint more attractive highway signs because the S-W Kem liquids in which the colors are ground dry with a lustrous enamel-like film which resists weather better than ordinary oil colors, stays bright longer and saves cost by not requiring varnishing of the sigh.

KEM/Krinkle Finishes are those amazing beautifub brocaded satin finishes being used so effectively on typewriters, automobile radio sets, loud speaker cases,/etc. This unusual finish is obtained by only one coat of the finish applied to the bare metal, sprayed on and then baked.

/Art Metal

/toys, scientific instruments, vanity cases,

KEM Transport Enamels used on large fleets of busses and trucks.

KEM Baking Enamels used on toys, trunks, boiler jackets, automobile wheels, pumps, etc., etc.

Those who remembered the speculation regarding the fate of standard finishes at the time when lacquers were first introduced now were given fresh food for thought. What would be the effect of the new KEM finishes, would lacquer survive, would SWP House Paint still continue to be the world's finest prepared paint for painting buildings?

The answer to these questions is that, once more, there will be adjustments. Where KEM resins and treated oils can improve old-type finishes they are being used to give us new Enameloid, Varnot Varnish, Auto Enamel, etc. Our chemists are governed in each case by the results of tests. In the case of SWP this product, too, has benefited by cor