

THE HISTORY OF THE ASBESTOS TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES

Chapter X: United States Asbestos Company
(now a division of Raybestos-Manhattan, Inc.)

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As edited by the Staff of ASBESTOS

The United States Asbestos Company was incorporated August 24, 1906, with an authorized capital stock of \$60,000. The company was founded in Manheim, Pennsylvania, by eight local businessmen who constituted the Board of Directors. It is interesting to note that no direct descendant of any of these families continued for long in the management of the company. George H. Danner was the first President and Chester Hill came from Keasbey & Mattison Company to supply manufacturing know-how.

Products made by the original mill included asbestos yarn, cloth, brake lining tape and listing tapes. Several styles of high-pressure packing (cloth roll-up) were produced by hand. Rubber coating the asbestos cloth was accomplished in a simple dip tank containing a solution of latex and gasoline and after passing through squeeze rolls the rubberized fabric was laid out on long tables to air dry. The ever-present danger of fire was an accepted hazard.

The business grew rapidly from the start, constantly requiring additional capital funds. In 1910 the company was reorganized with a paid-in capital of \$175,000. S. R. Zimmerman assumed the Presidency at that time and Chester Hill was appointed Vice President and General Manager.

In 1911 fire severely damaged the original wooden factory building. It was replaced with a 120-foot x 174-foot brick building and the following year a two-story, 100-foot x 200-foot brick building was added. These were the original units of a plant which now comprises over 600,000 square feet of floor space. By 1914 a milestone was passed when employment exceeded 200 people. Present employment averages above 1600 people.

In 1919 B. Weber Luttenberger returned from service in World War I to take charge of the card room at Manheim. He rose through the ranks to Textile Superintendent, Factory Manager and finally Works Manager of the entire U.S.