

Company History

1906 – 1958

Schenectady Varnish Company

The Early Days

The Schenectady Varnish Company was established in 1906 to manufacture versatile and economical electrical insulation materials. The beginnings of the company, however, date back to 1895 when the General Electric Company in Schenectady, NY, hired W. Howard Wright as an Assistant Chemist.

Mr. Wright quickly progressed to Chief Chemist as he and his GE peers - including Thomas Edison and Charles Steinmetz - pioneered the age of electric motors, generators, and transformers. Among Mr. Wright's responsibilities was the analysis of certain raw materials and rating the performance of varnishes made from the recipes he developed.

In 1903, following Mr. Wright's recommendations, General Electric funded the construction of a facility to manufacture insulating varnishes and compounds. As orders for GE's electrical devices skyrocketed, their in-house Varnish Operations could not sustain the demands placed upon it. George E. Emmons, Lynn Works (G.E.) Manager, and Howard Wright studied the problem. Emmons proposed that Wright set up a business to supply insulating varnish to the G.E. plants. The Schenectady Varnish Company was born and quickly became a success.

As the company grew and expanded to manufacture clear coat and agricultural varnishes, Howard began searching for the site of a new facility. Mr. Wright located a six-acre site in Schenectady on the main line of the New York Central Railroad. The first edifice on the present Schenectady plant site was built in 1907. Growth continued at a steady, rapid pace. By 1925, the original staff of three had grown to 50, and there were several prime accounts sustaining the business.

During this period, a method was discovered for applying a coating of the company's Schenectady Spar Varnish to the wire forming the coils of motors and transformers. The product worked exceptionally well – which eliminated the need for the bulky tape-wrapped wire formerly used, and permitted a large reduction in the size and weight of the electrical devices. Schenectady Spar Varnish became the industry standard for wire enamel.

1959 - 1968

Schenectady Chemicals, Inc.

Product Diversification and Growth

In 1959, the Company came under the capable and assertive leadership of Mr. Henry D. Wright, Howard's son. Henry had worked his way up through the ranks from the shipping door to the front office. His tenure was characterized by innovation, aggressive research and development, and expansion. Groundbreaking in Rotterdam Junction, NY, in the early 1950's was quickly followed by the construction of a resin manufacturing facility – which was to grow into a formidable commercial provider of phenol-formaldehyde resins.

The name of the Company was changed to Schenectady Chemicals, Inc. in 1962. Members of the Wright family, who envisioned the need for a research center and tribute to their predecessor, authorized the construction of the W. Howard Wright Research Center on Balltown Road in Niskayuna, NY, a suburb of Schenectady. The facility was completed and dedicated in 1968.

From the knowledge of varnishes and their associated insulation characteristics, came forth business opportunities in resins and chemicals. A broad assortment of resin products and intermediates were offered in solution, 100-percent-solids, lump, powder, and flake, to meet the needs of industry. Equipped with sophisticated processing equipment and quality control facilities, Schenectady Chemicals grew through its assurance of product excellence and uniformity. The resin manufacturing operations were designed to provide railcar and tankwagon service to all of its customers anywhere in the world.

Understanding the benefits of product diversity, and capitalizing on the Company's strong technical and customer service history, Henry oversaw the expansion of manufacturing operations into three main divisions: the Electrical Division, the Resin Division, and the Chemical Division. Operations once more expanded – to four sites in the Schenectady area.

1969 – 1994

Schenectady International, Inc,

Plant Expansion and Globalization

From the 1960's through the 1990's the company expanded to operate as a true global manufacturer with plants and customers in multiple countries. An alkylphenol plant (P-300) came on stream at the Rotterdam Junction site in 1969 to produce para-tertiary butylphenol and para-tertiary octylphenol. Today – the P-300 unit manufactures butyl, octyl, and nonyl phenols. In 1975 the Company's much larger alkylphenol facility came on stream in Freeport, Texas, to meet the increased demand for these products. The Company's Resin Division used some of the alkylphenols, but the Chemical Division sold mostly in the merchant market.

The Company increased its Texas alkylphenol manufacturing capacity in 1981, in 1986 and again in 1990, enabling production of specialty alkylphenols to include ortho-secondary butylphenols, para-secondary butylphenols, di-secondary butylphenols, and dialkylphenols. These specialty alkylphenols are sold both as intermediates for antioxidant production and as antioxidants under the trade name ISONOX®.

In 1993 the company name was changed to Schenectady International, Inc. (SII). This was done in order to reflect the changing scope of the business as it serves an ever-growing worldwide marketplace with a variety of products.

Later in 1993 Schenectady Chemicals acquired Alphen Pratteln, AC, an alkylphenol producer near Basel, Switzerland. The Alphen operation became known as Schenectady Pratteln AG. This acquisition complemented the company's alkylphenol manufacturing operations in the U.S. and Japan. By that time, the Chemical Division had become the world's leading producer of alkylphenols and had earned ISO-9002 quality certification.

1995 – Present

SI Group, Inc.

International Growth

In 1995 Henry Wright died leaving the company in the talented hands of his son-in-law, Wallace Graham. Mr. Graham, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board, joined Schenectady International after a twenty-five year career with the IBM Corporation. Later that year the company reorganized. The Electrical and Resin Divisions merged to become the Polymer Division, earning ISO-9002 certification in 1998. In honor of the founding fathers of the Company, the Niskayuna facility was renamed the Henry/Howard Wright Research Center.

In 2006 the company celebrated its 100 year anniversary and changed its name to SI Group, Inc. In 2008, Stephen J. Large was named President and Chief Executive Officer to become the first non-family member to lead the company. The company's divisional structure was replaced by a global structure with Regional Vice Presidents reporting directly to the President and Chief Executive Officer to align the organization with the new strategic direction.

Frank Bozich became the company's new President and Chief Executive Officer in May 2013, following the successful tenure of and retirement of Mr. Large. Under Frank Bozich's leadership, SI Group made its largest acquisition in company history, purchasing the antioxidants and active pharmaceuticals businesses from Albemarle Corporation, and welcoming over 500 new employees.

Today SI Group includes approximately 20 sites in 10 countries, including U.S., Brazil, China, England, France, India, Korea, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, and Switzerland, with over 2,700 employees. We are proud of our heritage and dedicated to protecting our legacy.

SI Group is an inspired leader that solves global challenges and enables customer success. Driven by relentless commitment to business excellence, the company manufactures the world's best chemical intermediates to create value that is directly embedded into customers' processes and their products. The global philosophy is in forming substantive, mutually beneficial, long-term relationships with customers that adds to the unique essence of the corporate culture. The company remains confident in their ability to produce and deliver quality products and services while ensuring the health and safety of its employees and the environment. 