

**The Kendall Company
50 Years of Yankee Enterprise!**

by Henry P. Kendall

"Were American Newcomen to do naught else, our work is well done if we succeed in sharing with America a strengthened inspiration to continue the struggle towards a nobler Civilization - through wider knowledge and understanding of the hopes, ambitions, and deeds of leaders in the past who have upheld Civilization's material progress. As we look backward, let us look forward."

Charles Penrose
Senior Vice President for North America, the Newcomen Society of England

This statement, crystallizing a broad purpose of the Society, was first read at the Newcomen Meeting at New York World's Fair on August 5, 1939, when American Newcomen were guests of The British Government

"Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda"

"THE KENDALL COMPANY"
50 Years of Yankee Enterprise!
(1903-1953)
An Address at Boston

AMERICAN NEWCOMEN, through the years, has honored numerous industrial enterprises both in the United States of America and in Canada, and has paid tribute to those whose pioneer leadership has made possible the growth and development of what today are corporate organizations of reputation and importance. Such a Newcomen manuscript is this, being the very human, colorful, and dramatic life-story of The Kendall Company.

"For a moment let me travel back in memory to a day in 1903 when as a young man I had been called in to look at a decrepit little plant in Walpole, not far from Boston - a plant with 75 employees scattered through several old buildings where a few antiquated machines were running. The business was insolvent, saddled with debt, and apparently on its last legs.

"Today, fifty years later, The Kendall Company operates thirteen plants in six States and others in Canada, Cuba, and Mexico, has about 8,000 employees, and does a \$100,000,000 business."

Henry P. Kendall

"The Kendall Company"
50 Years of Yankee Enterprise!

Henry P. Kendall
Member of the Newcomen Society
Chairman
The Kendall Company
Boston

The Newcomen Society in North America
New York San Francisco Montreal
1953

Copyright, 1953
Henry P. Kendall

*

Permission to abstract is granted provided proper credit is allowed

*

The Newcomen Society, as a body, is not responsible for opinions expressed in the following pages

This Newcomen Address, dealing with the history of The Kendall Company, on occasion of its 50th Anniversary (1903-1953), was delivered at the "1953 Massachusetts Dinner" of The Newcomen Society of England, held in Louis XIV Ballroom of Hotel Somerset, at Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., when Mr. Kendall was the guest of honor, on March 26, 1953.

INTRODUCTION OF MR. KENDALL, AT BOSTON ON MARCH 26, 1953, BY DR.
CLAUDE M. FUESS, HEADMASTER-EMERITUS OF PHILLIPS ACADEMY, ANDOVER,

MASSACHUSETTS, MEMBER OF THE NEW ENGLAND COMMITTEE, IN THE
NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND.

My fellow members of Newcomen:

The story of The Kendall Company is one of typical American enterprise, resourcefulness, and far-sightedness, displayed in the character and career of its founder. Henry P. Kendall was graduated from Amherst College in 1899, and the legend of his athletic prowess was still vivid when I received my diploma six years later. To that college, and to American Education, he has always been devoted, and the roster of his good deeds is long and creditable.

The tale of how he took over small and unprofitable mill and built it into a company with sixteen plants from Toronto to Mexico City and eight thousand employees is intensely dramatic. When his advisers urged him to change the name to The Kendall Company, they did well, for from the beginning he has been its leading spirit. He has been a wise administrator, recognizing that the interests of labor and management are intimately related, and willing to offer rewards commensurate with production. In this and other respects he has been consistently ahead of the thinking of his industrial generation.

A Clergyman's son, who, after his father's death, was brought up in a small country town, has been awarded by three colleges their highest honorary degrees. He has been a generous employer, a public-spirited citizen, and a loyal friend. His wide interests as a collector and sportsman have given him relief from administrative monotony and kept him young in body, mind, and spirit. As he moves into his seventy-sixth year, we hail him as one of the outstanding industrial leaders who have made, and will keep, this Country great!

It is my happy privilege, at Boston tonight, to introduce a distinguished American industrialist:
HENRY P. KENDALL.

My fellow members of Newcomen:

For a moment let me travel back in memory to a day in 1903 when as a young man I had been called in to look at a decrepit little plant in Walpole, not far from Boston - a plant with 75 employees scattered through several old buildings where a few antiquated machines were running. The business was insolvent, saddled with debt, and apparently on its last legs.

Today, fifty years later, The Kendall Company operates thirteen plants in six States and others in Canada, Cuba, and Mexico, has about 8,000 employees, and does a \$100,000,000 business.

How did this come about within the span of fifty years? What were the underlying factors, the driving forces, in the rise of this New England industry from humble and unpromising beginnings?

The story in detail, Mr. Chairman, would fill a book. In this Newcomen address I shall only try to give a brief first-hand summary of what seem to me significant high spots. If in doing this I make some unavoidable use of the personal pronoun, please bear in mind what we all know, that while every team has to have a leader, the joint efforts of all are what pile up the gains and winning points. No one who has ever played football, as I did at Amherst, could ever forget that. Such business success as I may have had has been the joint result of my own efforts and the support and cooperation of able and loyal associates, in the business and outside of it, who have stood by me down the years from that distant day in 1903.

The rundown old plant in Walpole was that of the Lewis Batting Company, better known locally as the Shoddy Mill. It was making a little absorbent cotton and also cotton batts, stair pads, and carpet linings. An analysis of costs showed a loss on everything except the crudely-made absorbent cotton. The manufacturing processes were quaint. The cotton, for example, was dried on chicken wire over boxed-in steam coils through which air was blown.

We disposed of the old lines except the cotton, revamped the plant by putting in some second-hand machinery, added gauze as a new item, hired a salesman, and went into the absorbent cotton and gauze business in competition with bigger and stronger rivals. We changed our name to Lewis Manufacturing Company, and, by the time the First World War broke out, we had established a niche for ourselves.

Then came a period of tremendous pressure from the U.S. Government and the Red Cross on the surgical dressing industry. I went to Washington and helped to organize a committee of the industry to deal with the problem and work out contracts with the Government and Red Cross which met their needs. To provide our share, we made extensive additions to buildings and machinery at Walpole.

To enlarge our capacity further, in 1915 we bought the Slatersville Finishing Company at Slatersville, Rhode Island. I also had decided - and this was one of the most important of my early decisions - that instead of buying our grey goods in the open market, we should own our own cotton mills, buy raw cotton in the bale, weave it ourselves, bleach and finish it in our northern plants, and sell it to users through our own salesmen - an integrated operation. In 1916, we took the first step in this program by buying the first of our cotton mills, the Wateree Mill at Camden, South Carolina, followed in 1918 by the purchase of the Addison Mill at Edgefield, South Carolina.

At the close of the war the Government and Red Cross threw on the market tremendous quantities of surplus surgical dressings, the bottom dropped out of prices and earnings, and our business entered one of its most critical periods. Only the strenuous efforts of our organization and unwavering support from our banks enabled us to weather the storm.

By 1924, growth had been resumed. That year we bought another cotton mill and merged our five plants into a new corporation, Kendall Mills, Inc. During the remainder of the 1920's we added two more cotton mills in the south, followed by four more in the 1930's, two of which were later sold.

We also increased our output by modernizing equipment and by doubling the size of our Oakland Mill in 1950. Today we operate approximately 300,000 spindles and 6,800 looms.

Meanwhile we also were growing in other directions. Our most important addition in new fields was Bauer & Black of Chicago, acquired in 1928. In that year we changed our name to The Kendall Company. Later acquisitions were the Bike Web Manufacturing Company of South Bend, Indiana, in 1929, another finishing plant at Griswoldville, Massachusetts, in 1932, and the Burson Knitting Company of Rockford, Illinois, in 1948. In 1950, we built a new Canadian plant near Toronto. Our plant in Mexico City was built in 1947.

How did it come about that we needed these plants, and what did we do with them after we got them? The answer to this question leads us back to some ideas underlying the development of the business.

Early realization of the importance of evolving new products and improving existing products led us into the development of research laboratories. Our search for new products and new uses for old products has gone on unceasingly from that day to this, in all parts of our business. Today, well-staffed and adequately-equipped research laboratories are found in all our divisions.

In addition to product research, we have continuously studied manufacturing techniques and improvements in machinery, equipment and plant layouts, purchasing methods, and sales programs.

What has all this done for us? One outstanding result is the fact that a large proportion of our present business consists of products that either did not exist in their present form or did not exist at all 10, 15, or 20 years ago.

Here are just a few examples of what research has done for us, out of a multitude that might be mentioned if there were Tim:

Twenty years ago gauze diapers were unheard of. Mothers used whatever cloth they happened to have, or bought Birdseye, a heavy and somewhat uncomfortable material. Our research men got the idea that gauze would make better diapers than any other material. They developed a special weave. They turned the product over to our market research specialists. Tests showed acceptance by mothers. Effective advertising and promotion campaigns were devised. The result? We were ready for the expanding baby crop with a superior, nationally-accepted product, the "Curity" gauze diaper. Today we are struggling to keep abreast of demand, operating thousands of spindles and hundred of looms in our southern mills on a full three-shift schedule, the year round, producing diaper cloth which we finish in our northern finishing plants.

Another example: Several years ago our Bauer & Black Research Department decided that basic improvements could be made in the small finger bandages produced by us and others. Extensive research, not only on the product but on the machinery for manufacturing it and th