



History of Cleveland As a Paint and Varnish Hub

AN INDUSTRIAL LEADER ON LAKE ERIE.

To a large degree, the growth of Cleveland and much of what exists here today can be attributed to its industrial base. The United States was an early leader and Cleveland a major center of industrialization. Strategically located, Cleveland developed because it offered one business benefit few other commerce centers at the time could – access to different transportation networks. The development of shipping on the Great Lakes and the completion of the Ohio and Erie Canal in 1832 gave the city a major advantage. In the 1850s, a growing network of railroads enhanced Cleveland's potential as a transportation hub, giving it easy access to coal and oil from the east and south. These modes of transportation allowed Cleveland to receive a large flow of raw materials and to ship out finished products. As a result, Cleveland's paint and varnish industry began to develop after the Civil War, in response to the emerging shipbuilding, oil, iron-and-steel, machine-tool, and automobile industries.

STANDARD OIL CO. SPAWNS OTHER INDUSTRIES IN CLEVELAND.

The success of Standard Oil had a profound impact on Cleveland. It all started when John D. Rockefeller bought into a small oil company in 1863. Seven years later, Rockefeller transformed it into the Standard Oil Co. and quickly captured the bulk of the industry through aggressive acquisitions of smaller companies. Once Rockefeller established his company as an industry giant, other businesses that supplied and relied on oil flocked to Cleveland in the hopes of cashing in on Standard Oil's dominance.

Cleveland's chemical industry arose in part out of the oil refiners' need for sulfuric acid. In 1866, Eugene Ramiro Grasselli built a plant in Cleveland to manufacture the sulfuric acid needed by the city's growing number of oil refineries. Grasselli's new plant was conveniently located on the Cuyahoga River, adjacent to his major customer, Rockefeller's refinery.

Rockefeller built or purchased almost all of Cleveland's refining capacity in the 1870s and made the city the center of the American refining industry. Relying on petroleum products for their raw materials, Cleveland's large paint and varnish companies were founded.

By the time Rockefeller moved to New York in 1885, Cleveland had been transformed from a merchant village to a roaring industrial hub filled with steel, shipping and chemical companies. The presence of chemical manufacturing in Cleveland paved the way for local manufactures to start producing paints. So in part, the Cleveland paint and varnish industry can thank Rockefeller for its birth.

THE PAINT AND VARNISH INDUSTRIES ARISE IN CLEVELAND.

Two of Cleveland's important paint industries emerged to supply the growing construction, shipbuilding, machine tool, and automobile industries. Over the years, countless local companies contributed to Cleveland evolving as the center of the American paint and varnish industry, some of which are still here today, such as Waterlox Coatings Corporation.

Circa 1916



Circa 1916





THE BIRTH OF WATERLOX COATINGS CORPORATION.

Waterlox, a pioneer in the development of the coatings industry, was started in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1910 by R.L. Hawkins, Senior. He became involved in the industry as a Secretary and National Sales Manager of The Ohio Varnish Co. However, being an independent problem solver, he left that endeavor, and bought a small paint making operation named the Empire Varnish Company located on East 76th and Woodland, which would later become Waterlox Coatings Corporation. His new business discovered the values of tung oil and used it to create the specific formulations necessary to produce a full line of interior and exterior paints, varnishes, enamels and stains.

Circa 1960

The Waterlox name originated with a promotional group in Detroit. In the 1930s, Empire Varnish acquired "Waterlox" and its business plan from the group, including the philosophy behind the product, its applications and range of possibilities. Empire Varnish took all of this newly attained information and applied it to its existing formulas to mark a pivotal point in the company's history, one that made its Waterlox product what it is today.



R.L.'s son, Bob, also joined the company in the 30's when he began working in the plant during the summer at age 15. Bob, who would later earn degrees in both chemical engineering and in industrial chemistry, eventually took over the company in the 1940's. In the 1960's, the Empire Varnish Company became Waterlox Chemical and Coatings Corporation. This decision was made because Waterlox, the company's star product, was what it was best known for. In fact, everyone had already been calling them Waterlox.

Over the years, Waterlox expanded its production to manufacture a variety of products, from interior house paint and paint for car running boards to a penetrating sealer, gym floor finish, marine finish and outdoor wood finish. Bob even invented coatings for the rubber mats used in automobiles, as well as a revolutionary process in which the color coat and mat were all cured together in a mold.

Proud to own a Cleveland-based business, the Hawkins family could not see any advantage in doing business anywhere else. "The best part of doing business in Cleveland is location, location, location," said Bob. The city is fairly central in the country making it ideal for receiving raw materials and shipping products. However, in 1963 Waterlox did move to the Passonno Hutcheson building on Meech Avenue, which remains its location today.

Circa 1916



In the 90's the company's name changed again, from Waterlox Chemical and Coatings Corporation to Waterlox Coatings Corporation, as it remains today.

Still based in Cleveland, Waterlox is the nation's leading manufacturer of premium wood finishes, handmade from natural resin-modified tung oil. A fourth-generation, family-owned company, now run by Chief Executive Officer Jay Hawkins and Vice President Kellie Hawkins Schaffner, Waterlox continues to manufacture products using the finest ingredients, combining tung oil, resins, mineral spirits and other ingredients to produce a complete wood finish that gives the look and feel of naturally oiled wood. Waterlox products represent the flooring industry's highest level of quality protection for both interior and exterior wood finishing projects and supplies for application. For the most part, the company still makes its hand-made wood finishes the exact same way it did over 100 years ago.



THE WATERLOX STORY

The Hawkins family has worked for four generations to provide finishing solutions that enhance and protect the natural beauty of wood. We began manufacturing Waterlox products in 1910 by using the best ingredients and our original family formulas. Today, the tradition of quality continues with products that are handmade by our expert staff. Our experience is supported by a continuous dedication to satisfying our customers in the woodworking and wood flooring industries.

WATERLOX HIGHLIGHTS

1910 - Our Beginnings

R.L. Hawkins, Sr., establishes The Empire Varnish Company to produce a full line of exterior and interior paints, varnish, enamels and stains.

1930's - Introducing Waterlox Products

The introduction of Waterlox Transparent leads to other tung oil-based finishes that become the company's most prominent product line. The Waterlox Division is established.

1940's - Family Pride

R.L. Hawkins, Jr., joins his father's company full-time.

1960's - Change and Development

The Empire Varnish Company becomes Waterlox Chemical and Coatings Corporation. R.L. Hawkins is named President.

1970's & 1980's- The Next Generation

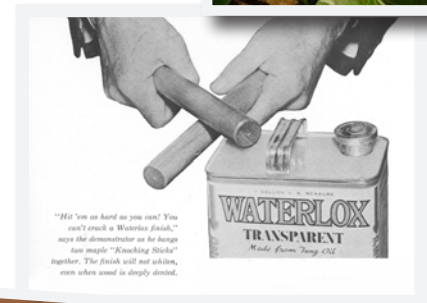
J.W. Hawkins (3rd Generation) joins the company, becomes president (1985), and continues to run the company today.

1990's - New Name, New Products

A name change to Waterlox Coatings Corporation signifies a continued commitment to delivering a new, expanded product line and a dedication to quality coatings.

2000's - New Look

Waterlox launches a brand new look for its tung oil line of legendary wood finishes. Kellie Hawkins-Schaffner (4th Generation) joins the company, reaffirming the Hawkins family commitment to quality, value, reliability and knowledge.





PAINT AND CHEMICAL COMPANIES EMERGE: SHERWIN-WILLIAMS, GLIDDEN PAINT, AND HARSHAW CHEMICAL CO.

In addition to Waterlox Coatings Corporation, other significant paint and chemical companies emerged in Cleveland – companies that made major contributions to shaping the industry as well as the city itself.

Henry Sherwin, Edward Williams and A.T. Osborn partnered in 1870 to form a paint manufacturing company in Cleveland, called Sherwin Williams, & Co. Today, the Sherwin-Williams Company is the largest producer of paints, varnishes, and specialty coatings in the United States. Its corporate headquarters are still located here in Cleveland.

America's third largest paint brand also began in Cleveland and still bears the name of one of its founders, Francis Harrington Glidden. It all started in 1870 with the formation of the Glidden Varnish Co., which supplied coatings to the growing railroad car-building industry. While AkzoNobel owns the Glidden name today, the paint brand still dominates the American household consumer market.

Harshaw Chemical Co. was founded by William Harshaw as the Cleveland Commercial Co. in 1892 to deal in chemicals, oils, pigments and dry colors - many of which were consumed by paint and varnish manufacturers. After a few name changes, the firm became the Harshaw Chemical Co. in 1919. The company remained in Cleveland until 1988, when a specialty chemical and metallurgical maker from Oakland, CA purchased it.

A CLEVELAND-BASED INDUSTRY EVOLVES.

In 1927, a Cleveland Trust (local Cleveland bank) billboard located in downtown Cleveland proclaimed that it financed "Paint and Varnish, Cleveland's Leading Industries." But Cleveland's paint and varnish industry grew to be far more than that. This industry in Cleveland evolved from a homegrown one serving local manufacturing industries to an internationally diverse enterprise. Over time, the paint and varnish industry's viability in Cleveland went from being based on proximity to natural resources and areas of product demand to that of availability of a skilled research workforce and viable facilities. Over the years, countless local companies contributed to Cleveland being the center of the American paint and varnish industry, some of which are still here today, such as Waterlox Coatings Corporation. These companies not only defined an industry, but they helped make Cleveland what it is today.

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