

IMPERIAL LETTER #3
March 2, 1962
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE IMPERIAL DEPARTMENT
OF HERCULES POWDER CO. INC.

On a bitter night in 1893 horse-drawn engines raced along 42nd Street in Manhattan to a disastrous blaze that destroyed the William-Campbell Wallpaper Factory, which had been there since 1882. John J. Clarke, then a small boy and recently retired with more than fifty years of Company service, remembers the occasion well because his home was adjacent to the factory where his father worked, and both home and Dad's job were wiped out by the holocaust. Production was soon resumed at a location on 24th Street near Avenue A, and the Clarke family could continue its close relationship with the business, just as another generation is doing today.

Since New York City in "the Gay Nineties" was grooming its midtown area for greater things than heavy manufacturing, the move to 24th Street was a temporary expedient. A few years later the Campbell Company crossed the Hudson River and set up operations in Hackensack, N.J. In 1901 a Campbell employee, having a sufficiently strong belief that manufacturing plants should be near the source of supply of raw material, moved north and set up the first Imperial Wallpaper Plant in Glens Falls, with financial assistance from a group of local businessmen. The original Imperial building, erected in 1901 is today known as Bldg. #10 and houses the Imperial general offices, Personnel Department, Medical Department, and the Pigment Finishing Department, and Departments. By 1908, the Imperial Company and its influential Glens Falls stockholders acquired control of the original William Campbell Company in Hackensack, which operated in conjunction with Glens Falls until 1928, when all manufacturing was consolidated at the present location on Lower Warren Street.

The year 1907 was perhaps the most important of all, for a young chemical engineer named K. R. McBride was hired to begin manufacture of pulp colors for the decoration of wallpaper. Some experimental colors had been made in 1906, but practical color manufacturing started when Mr. McBride's chemical background and four years of color-making experience became available. This was a daring and fortunate undertaking, since there was no color industry in America at that time, and the art was very closely guarded by a few people who had come to this country from Europe. Virtually all dyestuffs and pigments were imported, and nearly all came from Germany. The original Color Works was a building where Mill #1 now stands, and was about the size of a large living room. Solution tanks were fish or pickle casks, with a wooden plug which could be jerked by a rope from a hole in the bottom of the cask in order to start a strike. Pulp were drained from the striking tanks by gravity into muslin bags in filter boxes, and excess water was pressed from the pulps by placing heavy weights on a stack of these filled muslin bags. Agitation was provided by men walking around the vats with long paddles, and although the methods were primitive in comparison to what we do today, history was in the making and the American pigment color industry was coming to life.

Imperial's pigment color business flourished, and its steady growth was accelerated by World War I, which reduced imports of foreign colors. Color manufacturing and sales were made independent by the incorporation of the Imperial Color Works in 1915. Business in extract colors was unusually good at that time, and another company called the Imperial Dyewood Company was formed in 1916. This company sold the extract colors made by the John H. Heald Company of Lynchburg, Virginia, and in 1917 the Heald Company was bought by Imperial.

The war years saw many changes, and when in 1918 wallpaper was declared "non-essential," Imperial was indeed fortunate to have developed color business, which was "most essential." Color shipments from Europe were war casualties with one exception, when the German submarine "Deutschland" landed on the eastern Atlantic Coast one night and under cover of darkness put ashore an unauthorized cargo consisting mainly of dyestuffs. The times were right for development of outside pigment customers, and the Imperial Color Works was a well established company when the war ended. About the same time and with a similar assist from the war years, a Black Power Company, which had been spun from the original DuPont Company and given the name of Hercules Powder Company, was burgeoning by supplying explosives to the Allies. As we all know now, these totally unconnected and young businesses were starting on a "collision course."

Except for wartime restrictions, wallpaper manufacturing also prospered. The Underwood Paper Company and Plattsburgh Wallpaper Company were purchased in 1916. Another wallpaper company, The Hobbs group, from Hoboken, N. J. was added in 1917. Business activity slowed up, however, and about 1920 the Imperial Dyewood and Hobbs names were dropped, and the plants in Hoboken and Lynchburg sold.

1921 was a crucial year for many businesses and Imperial was no exception. The Tait Paper & Color Industries was set up as a holding company comprising all remaining manufacturing plants for wallpaper and color. By now color manufacturing involved more than 100 employees and sales were greater than half a million dollars annually. The next eight years were marked by growing pains, and in 1929, a reorganization resulted in the formation of the Imperial Paper and Color Corporation, a company strong enough to weather the depression years of the early '30s and gain a nation-wide reputation for quality wall coverings and pigment colors.

The only outward change in the next twenty-one years was a new name – Imperial Color Chemical and Paper Corporation to emphasize the Company's importance as a chemical manufacturer. These were years of rapid growth, however, as the pigment color lines expanded to include more pigment types than any competitor. They were also rewarding years for the Company, and it is interesting to note some of the more important events that took place.

- 1922 - First manufacture of bright organic pigments in toner form.
- 1928 - The William Campbell Company and most employees moved from Hackensack, N.J to Glens Falls, N.Y.
- 1934 - Color Sales large enough to require branch offices in Boston, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco.
- 1937 - Erection of a plant to produce Sodium Bichromate and make Imperial basic in the manufacture of its large tonnage colors
- 1944 - Presentation of the Third Army-Navy Production award for high achievement in supplying Zinc Yellow, Chromium Oxide, Napam and Magnesium powders.
- 1948 - Production of chemical intermediates started in a building purchased in St. Louis, Mo., dismantled and brought to Glens Falls for re-assembly.
- 1955 - The plant to convert natural gas into Prussiate of Soda for Iron Blue on stream.
Announcement and first sale of Mercadium* pigments by Imperial, the first pigment type conceived and produced in America by Americans.
- 1957 - Start of operations in a color producing plant erected in St. Johns, Quebec, to serve our Canadian market.

By 1960 Imperial Color and Paper Corporation employed more than 1500 people, had its stock listed on the American Exchange in New York City, and was recognized as a quality chemical and paper manufacturer on a world wide basis.

1960 was a year of decision for Imperial, as the Hercules Powder Company, Inc. had grown to be the fourteenth largest chemical manufacturer in the United States, and was trying to diversify in the direction of inorganic chemicals. On April 1st. 1960 Imperial and Hercules merged into what has been rightfully called a "happy combination" of people possessing the same background and purpose. A merging of a smaller company into a larger one cannot fail to cause some change in ways and customs. However, as the Imperial Department of Hercules Powder Company in 1962, we look very little different in most respects, and face our future with many new and greater strengths. The years have emphasized our color business, while our wallpaper activities have met obstacle after obstacle in an industry steadily shrinking in size. The shrinking of an industry is a painful process at best. A happy solution has just been announced – sale of all wallpaper facilities by Hercules, and the formation of a new Imperial Wallpaper Company; a completely separate corporation to carry on the tradition of fine Imperial wall coverings. We at Imperial extend every good wish to the new company and its people, all of whom are our friends and former associates. The Department will

now direct all effort toward the production and distribution of pigment colors and the intermediate chemical products from which they are made.

Much has happened in the 69 years since the fire in 1893. 42nd Street with its U.N. Buildings, Grand Central, Grant Park and Times Square is still a crossroad for the world. The strength and vigor of Hercules Powder Company with its 25,000 employees and eight operating departments is well represented by the figure we recognize as our trade-mark symbol. The Imperial Department is faced with a challenge, but we are fortunate that the will to meet it is in each of us. As we bend the wheel, so will our success be measured, and our succeeding letters are planned to help each of us perform our share of the task.

* ® U.S Pat. #2,878,134