

PROCTOR & GAMBLE CO.

Corporate Archives

by Ed Rider

In 1837, Alexander Norris suggested to his sons-in-law, William Proctor and James Gamble, that they go into business together. One made candles, the other soap. It was an ideal merger. Both used by-products of Cincinnati's pork packing industry. Their business prospered through the years and went on to create such American institutions as Ivory Soap and the soap opera.

Collecting the history of a Fortune 50 company began informally in 1957. A company magazine editor with an interest in soap memorabilia was struck by what Ford and Firestone were doing with their historic records. He set up an archives (a closet) and began collecting products, papers and oral histories as time permitted. This part-time approach to archives management changed in 1980. The company had just finished celebrating Ivory Soap's 100th birthday. A draft of a new corporate history was in the works. These projects demonstrated the usefulness of the archive's collections and the need to develop a more coordinated approach to preserving Proctor & Gamble's history. A full time professional archivist position was created in 1980.



Figure 1. Star candle box, 1860-1870, top label identifies the box as property of the Rye Patch Mining and Milling company, active around 1864 in central Nevada, Pershing County. One of the earliest Proctor & Gamble candle boxes.

The Corporate Archives occupies 2,000 sq. ft. of space in the company's headquarters building in downtown Cincinnati with over 1500

boxes of less frequently used material stored offsite in a records warehouse. As is typical in many corporations, the Archives serves as a museum, historical library and archives. Lining the shelves are over 12,000 product samples from German Mottled Soap to Pampers, advertising speeches, press releases, price lists, sales manuals, Norman Rockwell paintings, and copies of all company publications.



Figure 2. Star candle box, side view, note distinctive trademark.

The archives is also the caretaker of the Folgers Coffee Collection of antique silver coffee pots and an art collection of 90 paintings by Cincinnati artists. A photograph collection of over 200,000 images includes factory scenes, executive portraits, soap opera and television shows sponsored by P&G, and a large group of product photos documenting package changes over time.

All of the above has resulted in a growing number of people contacting the Archives for historical information. The Archives receives around 150 requests per month. Approximately 50% are of a public relations nature, either consumers calling in to find out about old products or premiums or requests by the news media for information on the company's history.

The other half of the requests come from inside the company and represent the most important segment of our users. The Archives collections exist first and foremost to help employees reapply the lessons of the past that may be critical to helping move the business ahead. Responding to these business needs is crucial if the Archives

program is to be maintained and expanded. One recent request, for example, came from the department responsible for developing new product ideas.



Figure 3. End piece, candle box from 1890's, found in central Nevada, paper label.

In order to properly evaluate new product ideas, they determined it would be essential to first review past product initiatives that had failed and understand why. The Archives collections were one of the few places in the company that could give them that perspective.

If you are interested in further information about our operations, please contact any of our staff. This includes Amy Fischer, 513-983-9462, Dianne Brown, 513-983-2945, or Ed Rider at 513-983-5443.



Figure 4. End piece, candle box from 1880's, black ink, found in central Nevada.

Procter & Gamble is one company that obviously understands its link to the past and treasures the artifacts that represent the early beginnings of the enterprise. The previous article was excerpted from a description of the archives by Ed Rider, the curator, who has been instrumental in procuring many of the early candle boxes that P&G created to serve the mining effort of the nineteenth century. Luckily, P&G is one of the few

surviving companies that began in candles and has stayed in business in its original form. The box shown in these photos is the Star Candle brand and is currently on display at the Archives department in the general offices in Cincinnati. This box was preserved after locating it near a mine in central Nevada.



Figure 5. End piece, candle box from 1880's, paper label, found in central Nevada.

The writing on top identifies it as coming from a mining company active in the 1860's and according to Mr. Rider this brand was the oldest variety made by the firm. You can see this box being held by Mr. Rider by contacting the P&G Tide web page and selecting the Archives icon. The address is <http://www.clothesline.com>.



Figure 6. Candle wrapper, from 1880-1890, contained six, 14 ounce candles.

Proctor and Gamble candles can be found in mining districts throughout the West and they played a prominent role in mine lighting in the 1800's. Selected box labels and wrappers have been included to show examples of their various styles and logos some of which represent P&G today. ✕



Figure 7. End piece, candle box from 1880's, black ink.

BOOK REVIEW

Firmin Bruner, "Some Remembered... Some Forgot, Life in Central Nevada Mining Camps". Nevada State Park Natural History Association, Carson City, Nevada. 1974, 39 pp notes photographs.

I met Firmin Bruner the day I bought this book and, of course I had him sign it and made some small talk about living in Nevada during the early days. I knew his grandson and talked about meeting him but nothing prepared me for this gentleman, who was in his mid-90's, he was mentally and physically fit and ready for life's next adventure. Unfortunately Mr. Bruner passed away this year, 97 years old, 22 years after he wrote this book and I find it only fitting that we review his writings at this time and put them into perspective.

The author was born Firmin Ascargorta in the Basque region of Spain in 1899. He immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1903 settling in Elko County then moving to central Nevada where Firmin was raised to young manhood. This book details his early family

history especially as it relates to moving to a new unsettled region and the interaction between the Basque people and the other nationalities. He relates many interesting daily events characteristic of mining towns of the time as well as the work necessary to keep the mining activities going. The joys and hardships living and working in the mining camps of Berlin, Austin, and Ione are told in great detail.

This book is especially important now that the ghost town of Berlin has been made a state park and is to my observation one of the most complete, authentic towns left in the West. The house where Firmin used to live is still standing as is the stamp mill and surrounding structures, truly a unique preservation. My recommendation would be to visit the Churchill County museum pick up a copy of this book and then head east to the Berlin State park, by the time you get there you will have read the book and will be absorbed in the life of early Nevada mining camps. This state park also has an interesting exhibit of the fossil remains of giant Ichthyosaurs that inhabited this region millions of years ago. L.G. ✕

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