THE HUENEFELD COMPANY AND ITS HISTORY

A company with an eventful past
A progressive present
A bright and assured future

The Huenefeld Company and how it has grown...

The history of The Huenefeld Company is typically American. It is a history of a small and struggling beginning, followed by periods of stress and uncertainty and finally culminating into the happy ending of a large and prosperous company, securely financed, wisely managed, administered and maintained by diligent forward-looking and progressive people.

The history of The Huenefeld Company is a history of three generations of people, its owners, and in many cases of successive generations of the same families of people working together for greater organization accomplishment.

The history of The Huenefeld Company also coincides with the expanding development of America which has provided opportunity to the industrious and far-sighted who saw and seized the opportunity afforded by the growth of America into the world's leading industrial nation. In this sense, Huenefeld history is a history of the times from 1872 on ... a history of old Cincinnati with its river pageants, with its old hotels like the Burnet House, and with the growth and development of Cincinnati into the leading and solid American city that it is. ... It is a history of the growth of America brought about by successive development of river transport, the iron horse, the automobile, the airplane, and the integrating forces of the telegraph, newspapers, and radio.

The history of The Huenefeld Company is a history of survival through the many vicissitudes that every business encounters.

Turning back the pages of Huenefeld history shows that this history is divided into three generations. The first generation is that of Ernst H. Huenefeld, whose life span included the period from 1828 to 1924; second, Walter E. Huenefeld, born in 1896 and succeeding to the management of the business in 1927; and third, Paul W. Huenefeld and Carl E. Huenefeld, who jointly comprise the third generation of Huenefeld owners and administrators.
FIRST PERIOD HUENEfeld HISTORY ... 1872 - 1910

In 1872 Mr. Ernst H. Huenefeld bought a part interest in a business owned by John Sproer which was located on East Pearl Street near Main. The business of the company at that time was jobbing tin plate, roofers' and tinner's supplies. Sproer's business needed additional capital and initial financial affairs of the company were rocky. After three years of this arrangement, Ernst H. Huenefeld bought out John Sproer and became sole owner of the business.

In 1884 there was a bad flood in Cincinnati and the business was therefore moved uptown and away from the river to a location between Third and Fourth on Main Street. In continued there until the middle 1890's when Mr. Huenefeld moved his company to East Ninth Street, between Walnut and Vine, now the location of a garage and parking lot.

In this period basic supplies of tin plate were bought from England and iron was bought from Russia. The iron, because of its mottled texture, was not entirely suited for tin plating. When open hearth mills were operating in the United States, black iron dipped in tin for tin plate was bought from H. G. Taylor in Philadelphia.

At this same approximate time The Huenefeld Company added a manufacturing operation to its original jobbing business and progressively it began to manufacture lead bars, pieced brackets, pieced elbows, one, two, three and four quart pails, as well as tin ware. In this same period the company also began to job coal heaters, wood and coal ranges and accompanying accessories. As a result of its experience in jobbing these lines, it purchased the Holliday Foundry in 1900, a company which made one of the lines of cast iron heating stoves that The Huenefeld Company was handling. The move was a progressive one inasmuch as Huenefeld ownership and management revitalized an otherwise dying business. This development also revitalized the Augusta Foundry which made castings for the stoves The Huenefeld Company then began to make.

In 1898 The Huenefeld Company became interested in the Dietz patent on Boss washing machines, securing practically exclusive Boss washing machine territory on contract. The name "BOSS," now the leading name of Huenefeld kerosene range and stove products, came into the possession of the company in this way.

In the year 1898, which historically marked the accession of the United States into a position of world power and influence, was also a significant year in Huenefeld progress and development. In this year the company made its first wood heater. This heater was practically a handmade product, developing first into a hot blast heater and then a twin hot blast heater. At the same time the first Huenefeld ovens, crude handmade affairs, appeared in the Huenefeld line and this product initiated a period of rapid company development because of the expansion of the oven line.
In 1903 plans were again made to step up the progress of the company. At that time C. T. Pfau, whose name appears as one of the original Huenefeld employees, found a piece of property at the corner of Straight Street and Spring Grove Avenue which could be bought on advantageous terms. In 1903 and 1904 the present building housing the mill section of the company was built. The company moved in on April 30, 1904, the day the lease expired on the Ninth Street location.

This new building comprising some 190,000 square feet of floor space was an ambitious undertaking. It was built so that the back could be rented out in separate units to other companies, an operation which was supervised by Walter E. Huenefeld.

Expansion was still on the program, and an expanded line of coal and wood ranges was promoted with foundry work being done by the Augusta Foundry at Augusta, Kentucky. Progressive innovations and moves for the accomplishment of the growth of the company were made.

In 1902 the Huenefeld Company brought out the Cincinnati Tin and Jalan Works. In 1909 and 1910 it produced its first glass door oven under the name BOSS, giving the company a big jump in all portable oven business.

SECOND PERIOD HUENEfeld HISTORY ... 1910 - 1940

With the beginning of this period the company grew and progressed more rapidly and the influence of the second generation of the Huenefeld family was now in full management of the business. With a rapidly growing manufacturing business on ovens and a flourishing jobbing business, the company came into a period which looked very promising.

In 1913 and 1914, having moved out its tenants and now fully occupying the mill building, the company built the concrete building which gave an extra 150,000 square feet of floor space. Conditions then took a radical, though temporary, turn for the worse because the war in Europe had begun and Huenefeld business dropped. The Government leased the sixth floor of the building, then the fifth floor, then one-half of the first floor, and then the fourth floor for the Troy Metal Products Company which was engaged in war work. The Huenefeld Company moved its manufacturing machinery into the third and fourth floors and began a progressive move with a new manufactured product ... the kerosene stove.

This first kerosene stove had a brass burner, a cotton wick, and was of a short chimney design. Because the new product was basically of hazardous character, the company ran into product trouble. The chimney was too short and everything spilled over the stove into the burners. Connections were poor and leaky and the device for lifting the burners was poor. The only ray of hope in the situation was that competitors were experiencing similar difficulties.
In the midst of these difficulties the war intervened and brass became a lost commodity. When the war ended in 1918 the Huenefeld Company had floor space committed to Troy Metal Products. At one time a paper box business existed in the midst of the Huenefeld plant.

Because The Huenefeld Company was now in the manufacture of kerosene stoves and wished to proceed cautiously, it felt no immediate need for wide expansion. In 1917 The Huenefeld Company had bought out the Western Tin and Japan Company equipment. Incidentally, mail still arrives addressed to this company!

In 1918 a major development in manufacturing and management personnel developed. Mr. P. L. Dulaney, who was then with the Shapleigh Hardware Company of St. Louis, developed an idea for improving the burner on a kerosene stove. This development was the twin lift burner. Mr. Dulaney came to The Huenefeld Company with his idea and he remained to work there. The company then made a line of two and three burner leg models.

In 1923, shortly after the turn of the year, the manufacturing connection with the Augusta Foundry was dropped and all Huenefeld manufactured stoves were converted to sheet metal. All that remained of the previous operation was the requirement for a few castings. Concurrently with this development, the company looked more and more into the use of dies and bought one die making machine after another.

Still in a critical condition because of the war and its aftermath, in 1921 the company rented the two top floors of its concrete building to the Atlantic and Pacific Tin Company. This was done on a ten-year contract, which relieved the company's financial situation.

In 1922 the needle valve burner and stove line was developed.

In 1927, the beginning of the bull market, the wickless burner was developed. This, with the needle valve, comprised the line of Huenefeld kerosene burners. Although this new burner itself was very similar to the needle valve, it was very dissimilar in appearance. To meet the accelerated demand of the boom, the Huenefeld line was increased with new models, including a cabinet type stove, all equipped with casters.

With 1929 came the depression, and at this time Mr. Rietman died and was succeeded by H. C. Taylor as sales manager. Business became so poor that it is well to omit relating.

A move was required, and in 1931 the company purchased the Champion Manufacturing Company, the beginning of its present specialty department. This department was moved to the sixth floor at the time the Atlantic and Pacific Tin and Japan Company moved out. The new department, with Mr. Enderbrock in charge, did a small manufacturing business of job shop products.
At about this same time, after four or five years of study and developmental work had been done, the long chimney brass burner was finally perfected. This was a joint development of Walter E. Huenefeld and P. L. Dulany. The developmental period had been one of false starts and disappointments. Then the problem was finally worked out, the answer was the best kerosene burner on the market. The prize burner was soon perfected with improved connections.

With these developments the company had a very complete line of burners to cover all market possibilities, but there was little opportunity for sale because of the depression. The M. R. A. was in its prime, with consequent stifling of business. Because The Huenefeld Company's market was largely rural, the company experienced more difficult times than were the average. Farm prices were down; the farmer was being paid to plow under and not produce. Argentine beef was being imported; our own beef was being killed. The company had a real struggle through the crucial years of the middle 1930's. Progress was made despite the obstacles. The progress was temporarily interrupted in 1937 by the flood which resulted in the company offices being moved upstairs.

THIRD PERIOD HUENEFELD HISTORY ... 1940 - PRESENT

This period ushered in by 1940 has been one of progress concurrent with the entry into the business of a new generation of Huenefelds.

In the pre-war surge, business had increased so much that additional floor space was made expanding the stove building by 80,000 square feet.

A new development placed the BOSS long chimney burner ahead of competition. The Second World War began to get its grip on business, with consequent shortage of materials. Periods of chance and stress were familiar to the present Huenefeld management. The previous experience of the company had amply proved the wisdom of using slow periods to prepare for the next big forward steps. The entire office procedure and setup of the company was brought under close examination and arrangements and methods were thoroughly revised. New manufacturing procedures were also developed and set up at this time.

The United States declared war, the majority of manufacturing facilities were taken over for war production, and The Huenefeld Company was elected to produce stoves because of an advantageous size bracket. The company quickly settled down to its job of a part-time war effort and a full-time civilian production effort.

Almost overnight the company was flooded with a demand necessitating a revision of factory organization. Fortunately the company, although tempted to abandon its selling, had kept its sales organization intact, using it for securing war contracts and sub-contracts and maintaining field contact with jobbers and dealers.
The end of the war brought reconversion and the company immediately headlined its post-war effort with greatly increased advertising, carefully planned for the future.

Mr. H. C. Taylor, after his long period as Sales Manager, transferred his activities to Export Sales. Mr. Guy C. Davis, a man with a brilliant background in the kerosene stove industry, was brought in to develop and lead new sales organization which was built around the key sales personnel established in previous years.

The management of the company, fully realizing that times are changing and that business in the future will be different, has quickly habituated the operation of the company to new conditions. The line of Huenefeld stove products has been reduced and streamlined. Constantly improved production methods for turning out more goods in a more mechanical way have been achieved.

This is only the beginning. With an eventful past and a progressive present, the Huenefeld Company confidently looks forward to the years ahead.