

George La Monte & Son | Nutley Yesterday · Today - 1961

GEORGE LA MONTE & SON

FRANK J. CHURCH

STARTED in 1871, when the late George La Monte obtained a patent for the manufacture of safety paper, George La Monte & Son is Nutley's oldest industry.

Since its inception three quarters of a century ago the La Monte company has not only been an important factor in the American banking system, because of its manufacture of paper that insures the validity of checks and other financial documents, but it also has been an integral part of the growth of Nutley. The company employs 300 Nutley residents, and its officers and executives have long played an important role in the affairs of the town.

The present La Monte company is the result of experiments in safety paper conducted by the original George La Monte and a paper company operated by J. and R. Kingsland. Until 1893 J. and R. Kingsland manufactured paper for Mr. La Monte who perfected experiments in safety paper at the Kingsland factory. In 1897 the Kingsland Paper Mills were organized for the manufacture of safety paper with the following officers:

President, John Howe; secretary, Thomas J. O'Neil; treasurer, W. L. Sergeant, and Mrs. Margaret Kingsland, wife of Joseph Kingsland. The Kingsland Paper Mills built the first factory structure on the present site of the La Monte company.

In 1905, George La Monte and his son, George M. La Monte, merged with the Kingsland Paper Mills, the officers of the resulting company being: President, George La Monte; vice president, George M. La Monte; secretary, Mr. O'Neil; treasurer, Mr. Sergeant; plant superintendent and a director, John Howe.

The present officers of George La Monte & Son are as follows: George V. La Monte, Chairman of the Board; George V. La Monte, Jr., President; Frank J. Church, Treasurer and General Manager; David Nichols, Vice President and Secretary; Wilbur D. Clare, Vice President.

Besides George V. La Monte, who is the third generation of La Montes in the company, Mr. La Monte's son, George V. La Monte, Jr., also is with the concern, having rejoined it after a tour of naval duty during which he saw action in the Pacific.

Three generations of the O'Neil family also have been connected with the company, the late Thomas J. O'Neil, his son, T. J. O'Neil, Jr., who died several years ago, and recently Thomas O'Neil Moore, who returned from Europe where he saw action as a pilot in the R.A.F.

The first mill on the company's present site on Kingsland Road was erected May 18, 1897, and was a one-story structure measuring 100 by 50 feet. Three years later its size was increased by the addition of twenty more feet. The present mill has floor space measuring 600 by 900 feet, and a new shipping building has been constructed. The company for years maintained its principal offices in New York, but these were moved to the mill in 1931. Only sales offices are now maintained in Manhattan.

The anniversary of the La Monte company really is the anniversary of the beginning of safety paper, since the paper process discovered by the first La Monte was coincidental with the introduction of safety paper into American banking business.

The national banking system instituted in 1863 had brought uniformity and validity to the paper money of the United States, which previously had been plagued by counterfeiting and confusion in the currency issued by state banks. What was needed, everybody agreed, was some device which would make checks and drafts drawn by a good maker on a good bank equally worthy of confidence wherever presented. Many would-be inventors wrestled in vain with the problem.

Mr. La Monte, after much experimentation, patented a simple idea which quickly proved to be acceptable. The process gave scientific protection to negotiable instruments that safeguarded them from alteration. He called his invention "National Safety Paper," and without the invention of safety paper bankers assert that the growth of American business would have been severely handicapped. Because of the validity of checks, this form of handling money came into increasing use, with the result that today Americans use vastly more checks per capita than any other people.

Although the basic idea which the first George La Monte hit upon is still the key to La Monte Safety Paper today, experience of three generations of safety paper manufacture, as well as constant experimentation, has brought many improvements and refinements of the original idea. An extensive laboratory is maintained for the scientific control of all production by the La Monte company and for the careful testing of new ideas.

The La Monte paper is today not only used by thousands of banks throughout the world, but is also specified by additional thousands of corporations for their checks and other negotiable instruments. In the last generation the use of safety paper has spread to many industries, and today safety paper is used in railroad, airplane, bus tickets, notes, certificates, cash slips, gift certificates, advertising checks and coupon books and in the heavier weights of paper such as membership cards, identification cards and card tickets.

The manufacture of safety paper at the La Monte plant is constantly under careful control. Every sheet is accounted for, and extreme care is taken to prevent any sheets from falling into irresponsible hands. All spoiled sheets are

shredded to make them unfit for printing or lithographing.

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