

ing. The following year he founded the O. K. Button Moulds Manufacturing Company, which made buttons of all types and sizes. One year later he purchased the Funk Machine Company and operated it under the name of Gefes Machine Company, making gold, straw, silk and wood veneer cigarette tips.

Mr. Straus became interested in cigarette paper just prior to World War I, and in 1915 he started importing cigarette paper from French mills. This was the year that he founded Endless Belt Corporation, making endlessly woven belts for cigarette manufacturers. He also purchased the High Grade Button Works.

The period from 1915 to 1918 found him delving into various fields. He founded the Electric Directory Company, which made electric advertising signs and city map guides; he manufactured snap fasteners; imported bottle crown cork from Spain; exported general merchandise to South America; and made looms to manufacture twill weave belts. During that period he founded Peerless Roll Leaf Company, which hot-stamped gold leaf on pencils, hat bands, books, etc.

He founded the Sterling Gold Stamping & Embossing Company in 1918 for the printing of candy box tops and general fancy stamping in gold. When Spain started manufacturing Cork Bobbins in 1919, Boucher Cork Company imported these bobbins, concentrating on the making of gold and straw bobbins in New York.

The organization moved to W. 40th Street in New York City in 1923. During that year, Mr. Straus purchased substantial interest in the largest cork factory in Spain, and founded the Cork Import Corporation, importing No-Void pipe covering and insulation for refrigerators, ice houses and various other items.

In 1927 he founded the DeMauduit Paper Corporation, importing cigarette paper from France. Three years later he secured substantial interest in leading cigarette paper mills in France, and founded Champagne Paper Corporation, importing on a larger scale than at any previous time. The manufacturing of Tip-Top, first 100-leaf booklets of roll-your-own cigarette papers, began the following year, and one year later he designed and built the first machine to produce free booklets.

Just one year after the inauguration of President Roosevelt, he developed the American type Rizla Booklets. He secured gumming machines, a Chambon printing press, and built booklet machines. This year, 1933, was the real beginning of Ecusta. On October 18th his plans were first published to make cigarette paper in America with an American Raw Material.

The next year additional booklet machines were built, and the ground was laid for the production of a raw material when a mill was built for plant research at Estill, S. C. On February 4th,

1934, the first bale of fibre was produced at the Estill mill. This necessitated the test planting of flax in Oregon, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. On March 26th, 1936, the first American grown flax was shipped to French cigarette paper mills. A big event in his life came on April 25th of that year. He was presented the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur by the Government of France.

He founded Central Fibre Corporation and California Central Fibre Corporation in 1937, building a plant at El Centro, California. They purchased the first flax from the Imperial Valley, shipped it to France, and the first cigarette paper made from American flax came from the French mills.

On May 5th, 1938, the newspapers displayed the headlines, pleasing to the eyes of many Americans, HUGE CIGARETTE PAPER PLANT TO LOCATED IN PISGAH FOREST, N. C. On August 7th, CONSTRUCTION OF WORLD'S LARGEST CIGARETTE PAPER PLANT WELL UNDER WAY.

The year 1939 saw great activity in the hitherto quiet mountain community. Boucher Cork Company, Champagne Paper Corporation and Endless Belt Corporation moved into Pisgah Forest. Ecusta was fast nearing completion. On June 14th, the first blast came from the Ecusta whistle; and on September 2nd came the anxiously awaited moment—the first cigarette paper made in America from flax rolled from the huge paper machines. One year later Mr. Straus decided to double the production, making several changes in the Pulp Mill, adding seventeen larger beaters to the Refining Department, and installing four new paper machines.

The ensuing year brought about many changes. Production was doubled, portable decorticators were built, production of booklets was doubled, a large cafeteria was built, new machines were designed and built for making booklets, and new methods of manufacturing came into use.

In 1942 Mr. Straus was elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Transylvania Community Hospital. He was elected Vice President of the North Carolina Engineering Foundation in 1946. On June 9th, 1947, the honorary degree of Doctor of Engineering was conferred to him by North Carolina State College.

Mr. Straus, a mountain of physical and mental energy, has come a long way in his 65 years. He has been a busy man, yet he has never failed to interrupt his busy schedule to be of service to his fellow men. Providing employment for hundreds of native Carolinians, he has from the start been interested in their welfare and happiness. He has been a boon to the region, adding financially and materially to education, religion, health and civic betterment.