

Members Of Family Of President H. H. Straus



Shown above are members of President Harry Straus' family. In the center at the top is Mrs. Harry Straus. On the right is Mrs. Roger King and to the left is Harry Straus, Jr. At the bottom is his grandson, Tommy King.

Much Has Been Written About Mr. Straus And Ecusta

ONE ARTICLE IS REPRINTED HERE

Much has been written about Mr. Straus and the Ecusta Paper corporation in newspapers, magazines and in books.

In this special anniversary edition, the editors of The Echo intended carrying right much of this material, but due to limitations of space and various features, it was decided to reduce this to a minimum. They selected, however, one of the most significant articles and it is being reprinted below. The article is entitled, "America's White Paper". It was written and copyrighted November 15, 1940, by B. C. Forbes Publishing company and appeared in The Reader's Digest. It has also been printed in book form on cigarette paper. The article is as follows:

AMERICA'S WHITE PAPER

Harry H. Straus, a six-foot-one mountain of physical and mental energy, came to this country when he was 18 years old. But he is one of those men who, whatever their native land, were really born to be Americans.

He learned English quickly enough, but he never went back. And as his contribution to his adopted country, he has created a new industry which makes jobs in a region where there were few before, gives farmers a new cash crop, turns waste into wealth,

frees America of dependence on precarious imports and points toward further industrial developments of high importance.

He makes cigarette paper. The United States uses \$10,000,000 worth a year, and has been buying virtually all of it from France. On the very day this war began, Harry Straus's Ecusta mill in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina began to make a domestic supply. The precise date was a mere coincidence; for seven years, Straus had been engaged in a heart-breaking struggle toward his goal.

Heart-breaking because of all papers ever developed, the cigarette wrapper is about the hardest to make. It must be thinner than the diameter of a human hair, yet it must be elastic and strong to withstand the pull of cigarette machines. A strip the width of your unrolled cigarette will support a weight of eight pounds. It must fold without tearing; it must not stick to the lips; it must burn at the same rate as tobacco (this is regulated by the amount of chalk included); it must be opaque, pure white and, above all, tasteless.

French mills make it from old linen rags. New linen cloth won't do; by the time it is rags, it has been washed and dried a thousand times at no cost to the papermaker. For old linen, the industry was dependent on the rag-pickers of Poland, Russia and the Balkans. Thus the huge American cigarette industry, the American farmer, whose tobacco crop is second only to his cotton crop in

value, and the U. S. Government which collects \$500,000,000 in taxes a year on cigarettes, were at the mercy of the French mills, which were at the mercy of the rag-pickers, who, as events proved, were at the mercy of Hitler.

When Harry Straus decided, very soon after his arrival in 1902, that America was where he belonged, he found work with a company that supplied cork tips for cigarettes. Later, he became a salesman for cigarette paper. After a while, he controlled a French mill. He was doing well, but he didn't like being dependent on the rag-pickers of Europe. Why, he wondered, couldn't cigarette paper be made from domestic raw materials?

America's supply of linen rags, it developed, was wholly inadequate. And anyway, our linen cloth is imported. Why not skip the spinning and weaving and make paper direct from flax fiber?

The flax plant yields straw which consists of long, strong fibers sheathing a woody core. Linen manufacture has remained in Europe because separating fibers from the core has been a tedious hand process, done on peasant farms and uneconomic when wages have to be paid. The problem, then, was to devise a chemical or mechanical process to produce clean flax fibre cheaply. Hundreds of highly trained technicians had made thousands of experiments and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars doing it.

Perhaps if Mr. Straus had been a Ph.D. in chemistry, too, he would have known it couldn't be

done. But he's never been to college, so he hired chemists and mechanical engineers and told them to get busy.

The Bureau of Standards in Washington, the Government's Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wis., several universities and at least one paper company had come to a dead end. They could remove the woody core by chemicals, but chemicals that would do that job damaged the fibers. They could combine mechanical and chemical means and get undamaged fibers, but at the cost of wasting a large proportion of them.

Mill And Laboratory Clash

Straus's engineers, too, had bitter disappointments. It was one thing to succeed in the laboratory, another to succeed in the mill where time and money count. They would develop a process that accomplished wonders on five-pound lots, and carry it hopefully to France, only to see it fizzle when used on a 500-pound batch. Then they would come home and start all over.

One highly promising combination tested in a mill worked in a 100-pound batch, but failed when tried on a commercial scale. This time, however, the Straus engineers got a clue; they began concentrating on the simple fact that in water-logged flax straw, the density of wood is greater than the density of the fibers. Why not separate the two by flotation? The difficulty was that the fibers and the wood were locked in such tight embrace that the fibers act-

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