



A FAMILY COMPANY

THE HISTORY OF SC JOHNSON IN GREAT BRITAIN

“Make something better than your competitors, tell everyone about it, and people will insist on buying it”. So said Samuel Curtis Johnson in 1886 when he founded his parquet flooring business in Racine, Wisconsin, USA.



From these small beginnings has evolved an international corporation operating in nearly 70 countries with annual turnover in excess of \$4.5 billion

Make something better than your competitors, tell everyone about it, and people will insist on buying it". So said Samuel Curtis Johnson in 1886 when he founded his parquet flooring business in Racine, Wisconsin, USA.

It is in the fulfilment of this belief that the worldwide growth and success of the CS Johnson business have since been built.

From a very small parquet flooring business in a mid-Western state has evolved an international corporation operating in nearly 70 countries with annual turnover in excess of \$4.5 billion.

International it may be, but it remains a family-owned private business, one of the largest of its kind in the world. The Johnson family is still at its helm and Samuel Dr. H. Fisk Johnson, the present Chairman, is the 5th generation of his family to lead the enterprise.

Having set up his flooring business, it was not long before Samuel Curtis Johnson was being asked by his customers to develop a prepared wax paste to care for their newly-installed parquet floors.

Market potentials

He soon realised, however, that there existed a potential market not only for a product to care for his floors but also for products to protect and enhance furniture and that new wonder, the automobile. By the turn of the century, the parquet flooring business had been

sold and SC Johnson & Sons had been launched as a manufacturer and marketer of polishing and cleaning products. It has never looked back. Product ranges have been consistently extended and acquisitions of complementary companies made.

In June 1914, as the great powers of Europe headed towards war, Herbert Fisk Johnson, the son of

a venture. Apart from having to face considerable local competition, war in Europe had now broken out. Indeed, the first consignment of wax from Racine never reached the shores of Britain - a German torpedo sent the vessel to the bottom of the Atlantic. Persistence and optimism fortunately prevailed.

The business prospered throughout the war years. By 1919 it had

outgrown the High Holborn premises and a search began to find a new home for the Company. So began the long association with West Drayton.

Great virtues

Dilapidated as it was, Collham Mill at West Drayton in Middlesex had two great virtues: it provided badly needed storage space and it stood beside the Grand Union Canal. This position permitted the waxes, wood stains and varnishes, which were still being imported from the U.S.A. to be delivered conveniently and economically by barge.

The mill was repaired and an

office built. In those days most orders were small and the warehouse crew - a foreman and an helper - went into West Drayton to buy a suitably sized box for each customer's delivery!!

The business continued to grow. In 1922 it became a limited company. In 1923 a factory was added to the site and native manufacturing began. The import of goods from

INTERNATIONAL, YET A FAMILY BUSINESS

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Samuel Curtis Johnson, arrived in Great Britain and opened a small office at 244 High Holborn in London. His purpose was to find a new market for his company's paste waxes. The first overseas subsidiary of SC Johnson was established.

A less persistent and optimistic man than Herbert Fisk Johnson might well have been deterred from such

the US was phased out.

Production methods at that time could hardly be described as sophisticated. The waxes were melted down in open kettles and poured into a bucket from which the tins of polishes were filled by hand. An old ceiling fan was used for cooling purposes. Everyone helped on a production run, from the Managing Director to the office clerks. By 1929 the staff totalled 16 plus a dog who kept the old mill free from rats.

Early adverts

From its earliest days in Great Britain, the Company had advertised its products. Advertisements in press and magazines had begun to appear as early as 1916. During the 1920's the new medium of wireless was used. Radio Luxembourg was attracting huge audiences. Slowly but surely the company's name and reputation became better known and new ideas in sales promotion and merchandising were adopted.

Glo-Coat, the first self shining floor polish ever produced, was launched in 1932 during the height of the great depression and was considered a marvel at the time. Its introduction marked the beginning of a rapid expansion in the Company's fortune. Another major breakthrough which helped to establish the Johnson name in Britain was the production of small containers of polish for sale by Woolworth stores, which in the 1930's had a strict "nothing sold

over sixpence" (2.5p) policy.

Production at West Drayton soared and by 1935 a new building had to be added to the factory. The future looked very bright, but then in 1939 the Second World War broke out.

Employees were called up into the services and the factory went over to producing bomb sights for the R.A.F. Whenever materials became

was shipped to Russia to help speed the Red Army over the snow during the siege of Leningrad.

With peace in 1945, employees began to return from active service and raw materials again became available. Full production was resumed. By 1949 output was doubling each year and it was apparent that factory space was inadequate. A new four storey

building was added to the site and production from it began in 1950. New products came on apace.

Pledge boost

It was the introduction of Pledge, the world's first aerosol furniture polish, in 1958, which resulted in a massive increase in the company's business. Within weeks of its launch, Pledge had become Britain's leading furniture polish, an envied position it still retains.

The Glade range of aerosol air fresheners were launched in 1959 and, like Pledge, soon attained a leading market share.

With the successful launches of Pledge and Glade, it soon became clear that the West Drayton site could no longer continue to cope with the company's production needs. Since all scope for factory expansion had been exhausted, the search began for a new home for the business.

A 66 acre site was speedily found in Frimley Green, Surrey. By 1960 some 125,000 square feet of factory

SIGNIFICANT TESTAMENTS TO PRODUCT QUALITY



By 1960 "the Company had now become a significant force in the household and industrial polishing, cleaning and hygiene markets in the country. It was proud that it held - and continues to hold - four Royal Warrants for its products".



available, a batch of polish would be made, but you had to be very "well in" with your grocer to get a can. Some wax products were still manufactured - shoe polish, boot dubbin and rifle-bore cleaner but all these items went to the armed services. It is perhaps ironic to reflect that it was the war which led to the first export of a Johnson product from Great Britain. Ski wax

and offices were built and occupied.

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In 1963, the company installed its first computer.

1968 saw the British Johnson's first entry into the field of acquisition. In that year, the company acquired the respected J.Goddard & Sons Ltd., famous since 1839 for the manufacture of silver and metal polishes.

New Warehouse

In 1970 a new warehouse of 143,000 square feet was constructed. So within ten years the factory had almost doubled in size. In 1982 a further 85,000 square feet of warehousing was added.

The company by the late 1970's had established for itself a considerable reputation for product performance, innovation and creativity. It had also won by then an envied reputation for environmental conservation, particularly by its decision in 1975 to unilaterally and voluntarily discontinue the use of CFC propellants in its aerosol products, when scientists began to assert that they were damaging the earth's ozone layer. Since then, the Company has continued to develop and pursue progressive and proactive environmental policies.

Throughout the 1990's, SC Johnson received over 40 recognitions for its environmental efforts around the world. The company's emphasis on cleaner technology resulted in the elimination of more than 460 million pounds of waste from its products and processes world wide.

70th Birthday

In 1984 British Johnson celebrated

featured in the main national news bulletins on both BBC and ITV, such was the uniqueness of the event.

1986 saw British Johnson's second acquisition, the Brillo Manufacturing Company of Great Britain, famous for its Brillo Soap Pads and Lifeguard Disinfectant. This acquisition led to the construction of another 23,000

square feet of factory building. The factory and office site now covered some 24 acres, an impressive growth in 17 years.

The third acquisition occurred in 1993. Through its American parent's purchase of the Drackett Company in the United States, British Johnson acquired the Mr Muscle range of products. And continuous innovation has led to the growth of these already popular brands.

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pervaded its past.

A FUTURE BASED ON PAST OPTIMISM AND STRENGTH

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its 70th birthday in fine style. Samuel C. Johnson, then Chairman, invited the whole British Company - some 600 people - to visit Corporate headquarters in Racine. The Frimley Green site closed down for a whole week in October as the staff flew off to the United States and a celebration which will live forever in the memories of those involved. The event even

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