

Insilco Insight

GROWTH THROUGH EXCELLENCE

Special Edition 1 of 2

Letter from the President

Welcome to the debut of the "Insilco Insight" special 100th anniversary edition. This is the first in a series of two newsletters you will receive during our centennial, spotlighting Insilco's 100-year existence. In this issue, we have taken the opportunity to focus on our first 50 years of operation and the events that preceded the company's formation. In the subsequent issue, we will address other significant events in Insilco's history.

Although International Silver Company was officially founded in December, 1898, the company's origin dates back to the industrious Yankee peddlers of the early 19th century. These hardy individuals possessed the same kind of entrepreneurial spirit and resourcefulness that would become a



Bob Smialek, President

hallmark of Insilco and its predecessor companies in the years to come. In the pages that follow, we will introduce you to the

founders of Insilco's predecessor company, Meriden Britannia. You will also read about the shift in consumer preference that directed the industry away from pewter making and toward the production of the brilliant Britannia ware.

Other significant events in our company's history include the agreement established between Meriden Britannia and the Rogers Brothers of Hartford, Connecticut, to produce the famous 1847 Rogers Bros. silverplate. Historians labeled this association as "an astute business decision that had many far-reaching implications."

Just prior to the turn of the century, in the midst of economic upheaval, International Silver Company was founded by a merger of 70 percent of the businesses that produced silverware at that time. (A precursor to the merger activities of the 1990's?) You will learn about the business climate of those days and how, when World War I broke out, International Silver responded to the challenge of war time production.

As Insilco examines its heritage, we want to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the workers of the past, and the 6,000 employees who comprise Insilco's operating companies. It is

your dedication that has enabled us to attain today's level of excellence in the industries we serve. We also salute your shared commitment to building a strong future together.

In recognition of Insilco's 100 years of success, we invite our employees to enter our Maui vacation contest. We selected Maui as our destination not only because it's a beautiful island paradise, but because Hawaii's origin parallels our own. To enter, the only requirement is to submit the attached questionnaire that provides you with greater "insight" about Insilco.

In 1998, Insilco celebrates a colorful past, and we are poised for a bright tomorrow!



The "Defender" model exemplifies the ability of International Silver Company.

Griswold Considered “Father” of Insilco

Insilco traces its origin to December, 1898, when its namesake, International Silver Company, was incorporated by a group of independent silversmiths. But the company's heritage precedes this official founding date, tracking its earliest influences to the Yankee peddlers of the dawning 19th century.

The Yankee peddlers, sometimes referred to as “tin peddlers” because of the composition of their wares, were considered the country's first salesmen. Men who pursued this vocation were recognized as hardy and ambitious, and able to overcome the adversities they encountered as they delivered goods to families carving out an existence on the burgeoning frontier.

Typically, the ultimate goal of most peddlers was to accumulate enough wealth to acquire a team of horses and a covered wagon to transport their goods. After a few years, the most industrious often retired



A display of pewter produced by Insilco “father” Ashbil Griswold.

from their travels and established themselves as merchants or traders.

Captain Thomas Danforth, a fifth generation pewter maker in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, was among the businessmen who supplied peddlers and merchants with products. Danforth also accepted a number of aspiring young men who wanted to learn the craft of pewter making under his tutelage. Among these apprentices was Ashbil Griswold, who also hailed from Rocky Hill.

After completing his apprenticeship with Danforth, Griswold founded his own small enterprise in nearby Meriden and started producing various small pieces of pewter. Because most of Griswold's line was distributed by peddlers, a considerable

portion of his business was accomplished by barter. The variety of goods accepted in exchange for his merchandise was so extensive that Griswold soon progressed into the role of general merchant.

With his business rapidly expanding, in 1830, Griswold began relinquishing a portion of the company's management responsibilities to a man named Ira Couch, who had joined the organization several years earlier. In 1834, Couch was recognized as a full partner, and the company name was changed to “Griswold & Couch.”

Because of his death in 1853, Griswold was not directly involved in the organization of the business that eventually was established as Meriden Britannia Co. However, his influence was evident among the men who had once served as his apprentices and later became involved in the formation of Meriden Britannia.

Others likewise praised Ashbil Griswold's contributions, referring to him as a “powerful influence in the establishment and growth of the pewter and Britannia industry, out of which came the Meriden Britannia Company and, eventually, International Silver Company.▲

Meriden Britannia Forms Association with Rogers Bros.

The market for Meriden Britannia products was rapidly expanding when the company's management entered into an agreement with the Rogers Brothers of Hartford, Connecticut, in 1862. The association relocated the three Rogers brothers—William, Asa and Simeon—to Meriden for the purpose of supervising production of the famous Rogers silverplate. The agreement stipulated the product would be trademarked “1847 Rogers Bros.,” commemorating the year Rogers silverplate was first offered for sale.

Expansion to accommodate the Rogers brothers immediately resulted. Ground-breaking for construction of a new four-story brick factory, 500 feet long and 40 feet wide, coincided with

the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Because it was considered especially large for that time, residents



Front cover of a Wm. Rogers catalog, issued in 1882.

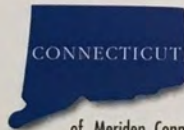
affectionately referred to the structure as the “Big Shop”—a nickname that remained for nearly 80 years. The new facility

concentrated on production of the 1847 Rogers Bros. silverplate and the significantly expanded silverplate holloware bearing the Meriden Britannia Company stamp. During the first eight months of Meriden Britannia's association with the Rogers brothers, recorded sales of 1847 Rogers Bros. silverplated flatware totaled only \$45,000. Within two years, sales escalated to over \$200,000.

History would later record the association between the Rogers brothers and Meriden Britannia as “a brilliant business decision and a key event” in the history of the company and its successor, the International Silver Company.▲

Insilco... 100 Years

1898



International Silver Company established in December of 1898 by 17 silver makers working in the vicinity of Meriden, Connecticut. Four other companies were added by 1935. Although originally incorporated in 1898, several businesses that comprised Insilco at that time were themselves several decades old. And by 1898, these companies had earned a reputation of quality silver craftsmanship and value.

1950's

Beginning of diversification. The decade saw the beginning of a planned program of diversification which was destined to change the International Silver Company into an entirely different kind of company. First acquisition in 1955 - Times Wire and Cable Co., a small New York firm specializing in coaxial cable and other engineered wire and cable.

1957-1968

Sales grew more than fourfold from \$49 million to \$250 million. Acquired 23 companies in 12 years, including several still owned today by Insilco:

Steel Parts Corporation — 1964



Taylor Publishing Company — 1967



Stewart Stamping Corp. — 1968



1969

Name changed to Insilco Corporation. "Diversity defines Insilco" - reflects changing corporate structure from traditional silver operations.



1970's

Acquires Rolodex — 1970



Continues diversification into automotive and electronics industries, acquires: McKenica — 1973



Acquires Escod Industries — 1978



1980-1983

Divests Silver Businesses

1983



Acquires Signal Transformer

1984

Acquires Thermal Component Division



1985

Adds four new business units



Forms Stewart Connector Systems



Acquires General Thermodynamics



Forms Thermalex joint venture with Mitsubishi Aluminum

Acquires Romac

1988

Company taken private through Leveraged Buy-Out



Acquires Curtis Manufacturing

1991

Files Chapter 11 Bankruptcy

1993

Emerges from Chapter 11 — New Management Team



Stock trades on NASDAQ

1994

Divests Sinclair Paints



1996



Acquires ARUP, a Germany-based automotive heat exchanger company and a Detroit based industrial radiator manufacturer

1996-1997

Refines Business Focus— Divests Rolodex and Curtis Manufacturing

1998

Insilco 100th ANNIVERSARY 1898-1998

Insilco... Now

Today, Insilco is structured to support a strategy of steady, profitable growth by serving growing niche markets. With a focus on industrial components manufacturing and specialty publishing, the Company's three business segments serve a number of markets and industries including the following: wire and cable assemblies and high speed data transmission connectors serving the telecommunications and computer networking markets; heat exchangers, related heat exchanger components and equipment and stamped steel parts serving the automotive industry (OEMs and aftermarket); power transformers and high precision stamped metal components serving electronics / electrical markets; and school yearbook publishing and reunion services, serving the consumer market.





International Silver Company demonstrated its willingness to respond to challenges when the company orchestrated what is believed to be the first commercial shipment of goods by air. A railroad strike was the impetus for the shipment involving 125 pounds of 1847 Rogers Bros. silverplate, which landed by parachute at its Newark, New Jersey destination. A trade publication reported: "The incident is typical of the enterprise of the International Silver Co. and its up-to-date methods in carrying on its great volume of business and meeting new situations as they arise."

International Silver Company Comes Into Existence

The latter half of the 19th century was sometimes plagued with economic upheaval. After short panics were recorded in 1893, 1894, and 1896, the silver industry—as a maker of non-essential goods—was particularly hard hit.

Meriden Britannia's management soon realized the new economic climate necessitated the formation of a new business organization. In 1898, the company joined with 16 other large and small businesses and consolidated under the name of International Silver Company. Businesses involved in the consolidation represented about 70 percent of the silverware production in the U.S.

Prospects for the new company appeared promising. Although the economic climate was generally depressed, living conditions across the nation had improved since the end of the Civil War. Another benefit was the scope of Meriden Britannia Company's

operations. With sales offices in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Canada and London and factories in Connecticut and Canada, company products were internationally known.

International Silver Company established an executive office in the Empire Building in New York City to oversee its general business—although the company's headquarters remained in Meriden. When the need for more space at the latter location became apparent, the front of the Meriden Britannia Co. facility was raised to four stories and enlarged.

With the beginning of World War I, International responded by converting a portion of its manufacturing facility for war time production. Items produced included navy gas masks and depth bombs, magazines for Browning rifles and Colt automatic pistols, kit knives and food pans. Throughout the War, regular production of silverware was never interrupted ▲

Post-War Years Are Time Of Change

In the years following World War I, International Silver Company's business was favorable. The impact of the Great Depression, however, was immediate, with sales plummeting from \$20 million in 1927, to \$14.7 million three years later. By 1932, sales declined to their lowest point at \$7.6 million.

The company reacted by implementing a plan of consolidation that involved closing two factories and combining production of the most popular lines in the remaining facilities. International's sales and marketing functions were also reorganized.

To bolster employee morale, International renovated a former factory, transforming it into a modern showroom complete with sales offices and on-staff advertising personnel. The new facility was called the "Sales Service Institute" and debuted amid a flurry of publicity in 1934. The Institute seemed to positively affect the company's bottom line as sales began to rebound from \$7.6 million in 1932, to \$10.6 million in 1935.

During the 1930s and '40s, International emphasized its flatware line. In response to the changing business climate, the company once again underwent a reorganization, which included the appointment of sales managers for the various lines and the company's three divisions, the Ecclesiastical Division, the Hotel Division and a General Merchandise Division.

Even after the onslaught of World II and the multitude of changes that occurred at International's production facilities, the company continued to service some of the most prestigious hotels in the country. The International Hotel Division employed its own sales force specially trained in this field.

One of the largest orders received during the 1940s included 10,223 pieces of holloware and 8,732 dozen pieces of flatware, procured for the newly constructed Statler Hotel in Washington D.C. International also counted among its customers a number of the luxurious steamship lines. ▲

“Defender” Attests To International Craftsmanship

The silver ship encased in glass at Insilco's headquarters is not only a work of art created by an International Silver Company craftsman, but it represents a piece of Insilco history. The model is a replica of the “Defender” yacht, the original America's Cup winner.

Silversmith James Francis Pullan, who was 50 years old at the time, constructed the model at International in 1899. From all accounts, Pullan built the “Defender” to scale according to the



James Francis Pullan, an International Silver Company silversmith, constructed the “Defender” yacht model in 1899.

original plans designed by shipbuilders John Brown and Nathaniel Greene Herreshoff. When the silver ship was completed, it was placed on display at International, where Pullan showed it off to his six-year-old son, Walter. Eighty-six years passed before Walter Pullan next observed the model at Meriden in 1985.

At one time, the “Defender” was displayed outdoors on a pedestal. However, weathering led to the need for restoration and afterward, the ship was encased in glass to preserve it for future generations. ▲



International devoted nearly 100 percent of its production capacity to war time manufacturing.

International Adapts To War Time Production

Whereas International Silver Company was required to convert only a portion of its facilities to support World War I production, in contrast, the start of World War II prompted changes that evolved the company from a peace-time silver manufacturer to a significant supplier of armaments and supplies. Nearly 100 percent of the company's manufacturing capacity was devoted to the war effort.

The manufacture of silverplate was disrupted entirely on April 15, 1942—although a very small amount of sterling continued to be produced throughout the war. The realm of products and supplies produced by International is too massive and varied to describe. However, history document-

ed that the company handled 447 prime contracts, 1450 sub-contracts and invested approximately three-quarters of a million dollars in special machinery—exclusive of special tools.

For its efforts, International was presented eight Army-Navy “E” Awards for excellence, and 13 Renewals. World War II Production Chief Donald Nelson, in the book “Arsenal of Democracy,” praised the company for its ability to devise new production methods and invent new ways to handle materials.

Nelson quoted, “They (International) adjusted themselves to new conditions, kept plugging on jobs completely foreign to their experience, and cheerfully took risks which would have terrified lesser men.” ▲



Walter Pullan was six years old when he first observed the “Defender” model his father had created. He was 92 when he saw the model again in 1985.

Headquarters

Insilco Corporation
425 Metro Place N., Fifth Floor
Dublin, OH 43017
614-792-0468

OPERATING COMPANIES

Insilco Technologies Group:

Insilco Technologies Group
4709 Creekstone Drive, Suite 307
Durham, NC 27703

ESCOD Industries
6th Avenue, South
North Myrtle Beach, SC 29597

ESCOD Industries—Lake Wales, FL
ESCOD Industries—Loris, SC
ESCOD Industries—Taylorsville, NC

Signal Transformer Company
500 Bayview Avenue
Inwood, NY 11696
Signal Caribe, Inc.—St. Just, PR
Signal Dominicana—Dominican Republic

Stewart Stamping Corporation
630 Central Park Avenue
Yonkers, NY 10704

Stewart Stamping Southwest
El Paso, TX

Stewart Connector Systems, Inc.
R.D. 2, Box 2020
Glen Rock, PA 17327

Stewart Connector Systems,
GMBH—Konigstein, Germany

Stewart Connector Systems,
Japan—Yokohama, Japan

Stewart Connector Systems,
UK—Essex, UK

Stewart Connector Systems De Mexico
Cananea, Mexico

Steel Parts Corporation
801 Berryman Pike
Tipton, IN 46072

Thermal Components Group:
2776 Gunter Park Drive, East
Montgomery, AL 36109

Thermal Components Division
2760 Gunter Park Drive, West
Montgomery, AL 36109

Thermal Components Division, Inc.
175 Spartangreen Blvd.
Duncan, SC 29334

Great Lake, Inc.
8700 Belleville Rd.
Van Buren Twp, MI 48111

Great Lake, Inc.
Detroit, MI

McKenica
1714 Broadway
Buffalo, NY 14212

General ThermoDynamics
190 West Marquette Avenue
Oak Creek, WI 53154
General ThermoDynamics
—Iron Ridge, WI

ARUP ALU-ROHR UND-PROFIL GmbH
Breisenbach Strasse 87
44357 Dortmund Germany

Thermalex, Inc.
(Joint Venture—50% Owned)
2758 Gunter Park Drive, West
Montgomery, AL 36109

Romac Metals
129 Honeycutt Rd.
Troutman, NC 28166

Taylor Publishing Company
1550 W. Mockingbird Lane
Dallas, TX 75235
Newsfoto Publishing Company
—San Angelo, TX
Taylor Publishing Company
—El Paso, TX
Taylor Publishing Company
—Malvern, PA

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INSILCO CORPORATION
PO BOX 7196
DUBLIN OH 43017 - 8005