

October 28, 1959

VAN DINH THO.....

Report on Visit to
Rohm and Haas Company
Headquarters: 1700 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(Friday, August 14, 1959)

The first product manufactured by Rohm and Haas Company when the firm was founded in 1909 was Oropo, a product for leather making. For some years the company's activities were devoted to the establishment of this product in the leather industry but through the years Rohm and Haas has attempted to develop (by studying the industries which use chemicals) original materials which could open new opportunities for its customers or effect improvements in their products. It has also turned its attention in recent years to the making of basic raw materials for its own products.

In August 1909 after Oropo had been used successfully for several years in Europe, the firm of Rohm and Haas was formed in the United States to manufacture and sell the products in the United States.

The new company set up offices in Philadelphia, an important center of the leather industry. With World War I, the United States was cut off from many imported chemicals and the small chemical industry of the United States was called upon to supply many products which had not previously been manufactured here. The young Rohm and Haas Company was able to supply some of these and in doing so extended its business into new fields.

Among the company's new field was a product which was essential for the use of vat dyes in dyeing textiles. As a result, Rohm and Haas was the country's first chemical manufacturer to offer a domestic product equal to imported material in every way.

In 1920 Rohm and Haas Company purchased Charles Lennig and Company, a manufacturer of inorganic chemicals with a plant on the Delaware River in the Bridesburg section of Philadelphia. An entirely new field explored by Rohm and Haas in the mid 1920's was that of insecticides. The insecticides which has been used since the last 1880's possessed definite limitations because of their insolubility which led them to accumulate in the soil resulting in the possibility of soil sterilization. Lethane, an organic material was found effective against a wide variety of insects.

In 1926 an associate firm, the Resinous Products and Chemical Company, was formed. The operations of this company were always closely associated with those of Rohm and Haas and its products were manufactured at the Lennig Plant. In 1948 it was merged with Rohm and Haas Company. The first coating resins developed by the associate company were amberol resins which react with various oils to produce fast-drying varnishes and enamels with high glass, hardness and resistances.

One of the most important advances in the textile field --the application of synthetic resins to rayon and cotton -- began in the mid 1930's. The material produced by Rohm and Haas under the trade name Rhonite, provided one of the first durable, crease-resistant finishes, replacing starches and other temporary finishes that would not withstand laundering. About the same time, the company's initial group of tutton products was introduced in the textile industry. In subsequent years, additional and improved tutton products have been used, not only in the textile industry but in cleaning compounds, insecticides, rubber, papers and cosmetics.

The advent of World War II created problems. Military aircraft for example required a glazing material which was tough and weather resistant could be formed easily and had excellent optical properties. Plexiglas sheet was recognized quickly as the best material available for this purpose and became used for bomber noses, canopies, gun turrets, astrodomes, and numerous other applications.

In 1939 Rohm and Haas research chemists had found a hydraulic fluid that would be serviceable over an extreme range of temperature. The manufacture of the first acetyl oil additive was begun in 1942 and the product was soon established as a standard in the aircraft field for the formulation of satisfactory, hydraulic fluids.

In 1944 the introduction of dithane was the first of a series of organic fungicides for the control of diseases of potatoes, tomatoes and other vegetables, fruits and flowers. Today dithane is used on crops in all parts of the world.

In the postwar period demands from overseas for the company's products increased in spite of currency exchange problems. Therefore, Rohm and Haas products came to be exported to almost every country of the free world. Foreign exchange restrictions, difficulties in obtaining imports permits made it necessary to construct plants abroad in order to meet the rising demand and between 1952 and 1956 small plants were put into operation by wholly owned subsidiaries in France, Brazil, Canada, England and Italy and by a jointly owned company in Japan.