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FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



# The Sylvania BEAM

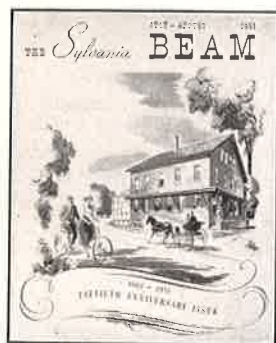
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## THE COVER



The artist has attempted to re-capture the spirit of "the good old days" of 1901, when busses, horse-drawn carriages and bicycles-built-for-two were the rage. That was the year Frank Poor became part owner of an electrical firm in Middleton, Mass. The original plant—the birthplace of Sylvania, as we know it today—is highlighted in the drawing.

## Table of Contents

Five Decades of Progress.....	3
Oh, for the Good Old Days!	6
Sylvania City.....	7
Story of Our Trademark.....	10
4,977 Years With Sylvania....	11
The Sylvania Album.....	12



## A Glance Backward

By Frank A. Poor

EVERY now and then when I am talking over the early days of the Company with some of the boys and girls from the factory, almost always somebody says that it was lots easier to get a start then than it is now.

I suppose it is pretty hard to get started in a good business today but don't let anybody tell you it was easy fifty years ago. It was hard work and long hours, and, for me, poor pay.

My father had helped me buy a hay and grain business and in a year's time I was able to sell out at a nice profit. My lawyer then put me in touch with a man by the name of Merritt who had just started in the renewed electric lamp business and who wanted to sell a half interest.

So I used all my profit to buy into this business and let me tell you this—there was many a time in the first two or three years when there was nothing I would have liked better than to have back the \$3,500 that I put in the business and be through with it.

IT WASN'T long before Merritt began to lose interest and wanted to get out, so in a few months I borrowed some money and purchased the other half. Then I was all alone, doing everything except the actual renewing of the lamps. That was done by the girls I hired.

The factory had a ten-hour day, six days a week but my day was longer. I had to do all my own buying, including the old burned-out lamps we refilled, and my own selling. When the old one-lung gas en-

gine would get out of order, and it did quite often, I had to fix it. When big sugar barrels of old lamps came in, I had to sort them. I was never so glad to see anybody come to work as my brother, Ed. He had long arms and could reach down so easily to the bottoms of those big barrels. It was one chore I thoroughly disliked.

For those long hours and hard work I drew \$5 a week. That is, I drew it when I had it, but there were lots and lots of weeks when I drew less and sometimes nothing. I know, I was lucky. I lived at home and I wasn't married and \$5 a week then was a whole lot more than it is today.

JUST the same, it wasn't easy then and I don't believe it will ever be easy for a young man to start a business of his own and make a success of it. As I recall men who have been successful, whether it be Joe with his fruit stand or Henry Ford with his automobile, I notice that they all had to work long hard hours for many years before they really got on their feet. And, in the meantime, they had very little to spend on anything else than the barest necessities of life, and sometimes not always that.

So when young people tell me that they couldn't do now what I did fifty years ago, maybe they are right. But the reason isn't because there aren't the opportunities. I am afraid the reason is that people who say this aren't willing to face the prospects of several years of the hardest kind of work, without any of the pleasant luxuries they could have by working for someone else.



# Five Decades of Progress

HIGHLIGHTS OF SYLVANIA'S GROWTH AND EXPANSION  
THROUGH ITS 50 YEARS OF EXISTENCE

**W**HAT SYLVANIA is today is the result of the work and effort of thousands of Sylvanians in the past half century. Its policies and traditions have grown and developed over years of hard work.

The complete history of the Company will be told in the book, "Five Decades of Progress," which is being prepared by our Public Relations Department. For the benefit of both old and new employees, these pages will retell some of the highlights of the Company's progress through each decade.

**1901-1911.** This was a decade of inventions. Henry Ford formed his famous motor car company. Orville

Wright made the first successful airplane flight. In 1901, the year McKinley was assassinated and Teddy Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the United States, a 21-year-old man by the name of Frank Augustus Poor joined forces with an electrical manufacturer in a Middleton, Mass.,

plant. Although the transaction appeared relatively insignificant at the time, it was later to prove to be one of the history-making events in the field of electronics.

In a short time, Mr. Poor bought out his partner and moved the business to Danvers, later changing the name to the Bay State Lamp Company. Actually the manufacturing process was comparatively simple—burned-out carbon filament lamps were cut open, refilled with new filaments and then resold.

In 1904, a similarly significant but seemingly unrelated event took place in St. Marys, Pa., where another 21-year-old, Bernard Garfield Erskine, was called in to do some electrical work for a lamp concern that was in the process of being organized. Mr. Erskine did his job so effectively that he was soon asked to join the new enterprise, which was known as the Novelty Incandescent Lamp Company. He accepted the offer and another important chapter in the history of what was to become Sylvania was written. Eventually Mr. Erskine was to head up both the St. Marys and Emporium plants.

That same year—1904—Frank Poor got some much-needed help when his brother, Edward, joined the Danvers concern to concentrate on sales. Shortly after, the manufacture of new carbon lamps was begun under the name of the Hygrade Incandescent Lamp Company. Both Hygrade and Bay State operated under the same roof, with the latter continuing to make the old-type lamp. Frank served as president of Hygrade while Edward headed up the Bay State operation.

For both F. A. and B. G. and the firms they represented, those early years were rocky, but both men held



The old Novelty plant as it appeared around 1904.

on with the determination and perseverance that was to characterize them through the years.

In 1911—Hygrade's first substantially profitable year—another member of the Poor family, brother Walter, joined the concern to take charge of engineering projects. One of his first contributions was a small low-wattage sign lamp that yielded a relatively large profit. That same year, Mr. Erskine became president of Novelty.

**1912-1921.** By 1912 Walter Poor's sign lamps had caught on so well that 30,000 of them were visible in New York's famed Times Square. That was the year of the greatest sea disaster of all time. The ill-fated *Titanic*, on its maiden trip across the Atlantic, hit an iceberg and sank, bringing death to 1,517 persons.

It was in 1912 that Hygrade bought a job lot of "squirted filament" type tungsten lamps (which had replaced the old filament lamps) from Westinghouse for \$10,000 and resold them for a profit of \$7,000. This profit gave Hygrade a large increase in working capital and a magnificent opportunity for further development.

In 1916, Hygrade moved from Danvers to the present plant site at 60 Boston Street, Salem. This was just two years after fire had destroyed a large part of Salem,

(Continued on next page)



# Five Decades of Progress

(Continued from page 3)



30,000 Hygrade lamps decorated Times Square in 1912.

causing 15,000 to be homeless. In 1917, Hygrade contracted to handle all the lighting for the new buildings of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. That same year U.S. troops took part in a concentrated attack that led to the surrender of Germany.

The year 1918 saw the end of World War I. It also saw a lot of "firsts" registered at the Hygrade plant. The first Suggestion Box made its appearance and a group insurance plan for employees was introduced. Other innovations were a plant cafeteria, a dispensary with a full-time nurse and a company publication—*The Triangle*. That year a young man by the name of Max Balcom joined Novelty as a purchasing agent. A year later he hired an assistant named Ward Zimmer.

In 1921, Mr. Erskine, along with his associates, Guy Felt and J. C. Wortman, closed a deal that saved the jobs of hundreds of people in St. Marys and Emporium. General Electric, which then owned the concern, announced plans to close Novelty. Messrs. Erskine, Felt and Wortman promptly intervened by purchasing Novelty. Under new ownership and with a new name—Nilco Lamp Works—the firm soon prospered.

**1922-1931.** The first sound-on-film talking pictures were shown in New York in 1923. One year later the energetic Ben Erskine formed a new concern, Sylvania Products Company, to manufacture radio tubes. At that time broadcast radio was only four years old. It wasn't long before sales and production outdid all expectations. By 1925, Sylvania tubes were being nationally advertised.

A little later, Hygrade was also in this new field called radio. In 1928, one year after Charles A. Lindbergh's



epic flight from New York to Paris, the Company, under the trade name of Neutron, began the manufacture of radio tubes in a factory in Beverly, Mass. The name was soon changed to Hygrade and production was moved to Salem.

In 1929, Sylvania Products built its factory in Emporium and radio tubes became the major part of the Nilco-Sylvania business. One year later, while the rest of the nation was in the throes of a terrible depression, Emporium was being cited by the press as one of the few communities not affected. Production had soared to 40,000 tubes a day and the company boasted 1,000 employees.



Radio sets swept the country by storm during the 20's.

By this time, Hygrade was making real progress in the incandescent lamp and radio tube fields. In July, 1931, the Hygrade Lamp Company and the Sylvania Products-Nilco Lamp interests were merged into the Hygrade Sylvania Corporation. Lamps were manufactured under the Hygrade name and radio tubes were marketed with the Sylvania brand. The merger made Hygrade Sylvania the largest independent producer of radio tubes and electric light bulbs in the United States.

**1932-1941.** For most of the world, this was a decade of uncertainty. Hitler and Mussolini were making menacing gestures in all directions and there was unrest in practically every nation. In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States.

For Hygrade Sylvania, this was another decade of continued growth. In 1933, net sales passed the seven-million-dollar mark. A sales office was opened at 500 Fifth Avenue, New York. Three years later the Company opened its







Early installation of Hygrade Miralumes. First complete fluorescent light package, they set pace for entire industry.

plant on Loring Avenue in Salem. That year—1936—King Edward VIII of England abdicated to marry “the woman I love.” For the Company’s Emporium employees, it was the year of the big flash flood that wreaked tremendous destruction. Two years later two new wings were added to the Emporium plant.

It was also in 1938 that the Company introduced its first fluorescent lamps to the public and manufactured its first television tube. Seeing that the expansion of fluorescent lighting was dependent upon high-quality fixtures, the Company entered the fixture business.

This activity grew so rapidly that another plant was opened at Ipswich in 1939. One year later the Company purchased the fluorescent powder division of the Paterson Screen Company in Towanda, Pa. The following year—1941—new plants were opened at Danvers, Mass., and Montoursville and Williamsport, Pa. In the ensuing months, new plants bobbed up all over.

It was in 1941 that the Industrial Relations Department was formed and The BEAM made its debut.

**1942-1951.** This was the decade of the fiercest war the world has ever known—a war that was to claim the lives of 50 Company employees. For practically everyone, it was a decade of confusion. But through all the confusion, the Company continued to expand at a rapid rate. And it made a magnificent contribution to the war effort.

In 1942, the Company officially became Sylvania Electric Products Inc. That same year “Victory Is Our Business” was adopted as the Company’s wartime slogan. Victory was the Company’s business in those days, too.

Sylvania’s most important contribution to World War II was the development and manufacture of tubes used in the Radio “Proximity” or Variable Time (V-T) Fuze. Sylvania made approximately 95 per cent of the tubes that actuated the fuze and also carried on an extensive fuze assembly operation. Some 13,700 men and



women were employed in 12 of our plants to work on the manufacture of these tubes for the fuze.

Some idea of the importance of this work can be gained from the Navy’s announcement that the V-T Fuze was the second most effective World War II weapon. Sylvania, it is interesting to note, won 46 “E” Awards, the highest number of these citations earned by any company in the V-T Fuze program.

In December, 1942, the Sylvania Savings & Retirement Plan was introduced. The Plan was arranged so that members would get back their entire savings plus interest, plus their share of the accumulated profits, even if they resigned only a few years after joining.

Colonial Radio Corporation was bought by Sylvania in 1944. Six years later it became the Radio and Television Division.

By 1945, Sylvania was manufacturing home and automobile radios. That was the year that Franklin D.



Emporium won “E” flag in 1942. (L. to r.) Quentin Reynolds, Adm. Fisher, Mr. Erskine, Mr. Balcom, Gen. McNarney.

Roosevelt died and Harry S. Truman became President of the United States. Closer to home, it was the year that Mr. Erskine, then Chairman of the Board, passed away. One year later, Walter Poor became Chairman and Don G. Mitchell was named President.

The Company purchased Wabash, makers of photo-flash bulbs, in 1946. Four years later this operation was made a part of the Lighting Division.

Sylvania began the manufacture of television sets under its own label in 1947.

Walter Poor died in 1950 and Max Balcom was elected Chairman, with Edward Poor, who had retired in 1944, returning to the Board of Directors after an absence of six years. At the same time, Ward Zimmer became Executive Vice President.

The remarkable growth of Sylvania through five decades reached its peak in the first quarter of 1951, when net income and sales reached an all-time high. It was fitting that this should happen on the occasion of the Company’s Fiftieth Anniversary.

Judging by the results of its first 50 years of existence, it would appear that Sylvania can move in only one direction—and that direction is forward.



# Pages From the Sylvania Album



*Another view of the Middleton operation as it was when F. A. Poor became part owner in 1901.*



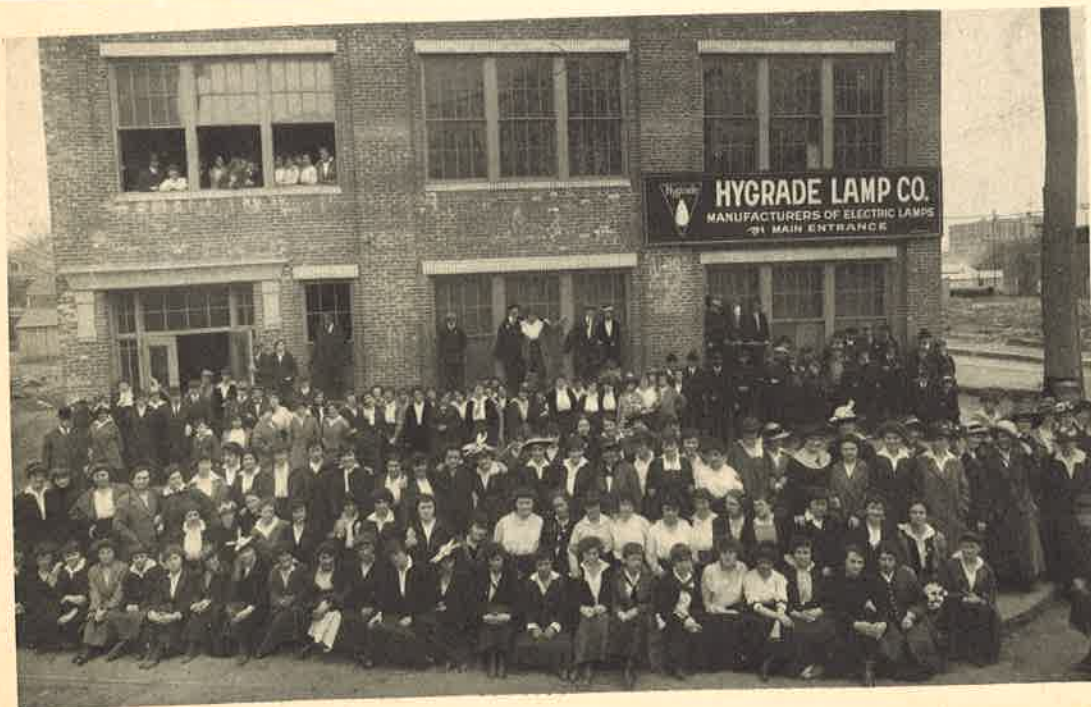
*View of the old Middleton plant as it was 'way back in 1901.*



*Putting exhaust stems on refilled bulbs.*



*Hygrade beauties at an early Company outing.*



*Hygrade employees were photographed soon after Salem Boston Street plant opened in 1916. At extreme left in third row, wearing derby, is Joseph H. Poor, father of Frank, Walter and Edward Poor. Next to him is Florence Small, with Company since 1906.*





*Salem girls parading at an outing in 1926.*



*A shipment of radio tubes, in wooden packing cases, is loaded at Emporium around 1924.*

*Hygrade employees crowded the plant windows to watch Salem soldiers marching off to World War I in 1917. Debris in foreground marks spot where great Salem fire of 1914 started.*



*C. J. Waddell, one of Hygrade's early salesmen, starting a workday.*



*These girls were an outstanding Salem radio tube team in 1929, turning out 80 tubes an hour when 50 was considered good.*