HISTORY OF FIRMS USING PERFINS

JOHN DICKINSON & CO., Manufacturing Stationers from Dave Hill.

(J1960.01; 1960.01a; 1960.02; 1980.02; 2060.04; 2080.01; 2085.01)

John Dickinson was born in 1782 and started up on his own in 1804. At this time a stationer just stocked paper and a few pens. John Dickinson developed the first commercial mill to make paper "on the web" (i.e. in a continuous length) at Hemel Hempstead. Postal reform was one of many social reforms which increased the demand for paper. The envelope was no longer charged extra postage and demand soon outstripped manufacture by hand. Dickinson developed a machine to make envelopes. There was much competition from abroad for papermaking. Dickinson's more and more became manufacturing stationers. John Dickinson died in 1869.

John Dickinson & Co. became a limited company in 1886. They have trading companies in South Africa, Canada, Australia and N.Z.

Dickinson's nephew was J.W. Grover who was to found his own company, still in existence today, making machines to perforate the margins of stamps. Dickinson employed Grover to experiment making cheaper paper and this may have started Grover making machinery for the paper industry. Grover also helped with the supply of water to Dickinson's mills. He went on to advise foreign Governments on their water supplies.

(From "ON THE WEB" by Joan Evans, a great niece of John Dickinson)

SIR JOHN BROWN of THOMAS FIRTH & JOHN BROWN LTD.

(F0210.02; 0220.05; J0680.01; 0695.01)

John Brown born in Sheffield in 1816. When he was 21 he was offered a share in the business where he worked (manufacturing steel) and with his father's backing and a loan of £500 he began file and spring production. He built a new factory, namely ATLAS STEEL WORKS in 1854. With the expansion of Railways he produced rails and buffers and other rolling stock. His works were the first to use the Bessemer Converter. Brown was a pioneer in the manufacture of rolled armour plate. In 1867 it was reported that three quarters of the ironclads of the British Navy were protected by armour plates made at Atlas Works. In 1871, mainly due to ill health, John Brown sold all but his preference shares in the

business. In later years he sold these shares too and established a new firm, with new partners, called Brown, Bayley and Dixon. John Brown & Co. continued making steel under the founder's name and in 1871 Chromium Steel was made at the Atlas Works for the first time in England. In 1879 they used the new Siemens process of steel melting.

THOMAS FIRTH (T1730.01; 1740.01)

Thomas Firth and his two sons, Mark and Thomas, founded their steel making company in 1842 at PORTOBELLO WORKS. When Thomas Firth senior died, a younger son, John, joined the firm. Porto-bello Works was outgrown and Claywheels Forge was leased from the

Duke of Norfolk in 1849 to 1858 whilst a new works, NORFOLK WORKS in Saville street, was being erected. In the late 1850's the firm moved firmly into armaments: specialising in projectiles rather than armour plate from about 1860. In the 1870's the projectile-versus-plate race continued and the firm supplied very heavy land-based guns for Malta, Gibraltar and the Italian Government. By 1880,Thomas Firth & Sons was fifth in size amongst the large Sheffield steel firms. In 1875 Mark Firth subscribed £20,000 towards the building of Firth College. This building became the basis from which Sheffield University developed.

From 1908 to 1930, Thos. Firth & Sons and John Brown & Co. had collaborated in research and formed the Brown-Firth Research Laboratories. In 1913 the Research Laboratories discovered the process for making Stainless Steel. In 1930 Thos. Firth & Sons and the steel producing interests of John Brown & Co amalgamated to form Thos. Firth & John Brown Ltd. (F0210.02; 0220.05)

(Details of latter two from 'Victorians Unbuttoned' by Sarah Levy)

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