Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Message

Twenty-five years ago, I stood on the threshold of a new and challenging venture. Since then, I have watched what was once just an idea, crystalize and become an actuality, far beyond any reasonable expectations at that time. It gives me a great thrill to look back over the years and see the process of growth and expansion which has been typical of our Company.

But change is characteristic of life. To remain stagnant is to be dead. It has been one of the chief assets of Sprague Electric and a contributing factor to its growth that we are always alert to adapt ourselves to new developments and trends. Our research department is constantly at work developing new products and improving the old. We strive to maintain a pliable organization which can adapt itself to changes, whether of an economic, political, or scientific nature. The continuing ability of the Sprague Electric Company to adapt itself to these changes will determine its success in the future, as it has in the past twenty-five years.

One of the most notable changes which I can see on this our anniversary year is the growth in the number of personnel. When we first moved to our present location, the number of employees was so small that I knew each one by name. This is, unfortunately, no longer possible, but I would like to take this opportunity to extend my greetings to each and every one of you. You are to be congratulated on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Sprague Electric. Whatever success the Company has attained has, in a large part, been a measure of your loyalty and cooperation.

R.C. Sprague

Left: Four of the six twenty-five year people gather around to cut the birthday cake at the Beaver Street cafeteria. They are William J. Nolan, Robert C. Sprague, Julian K. Sprague, and Mollie Avery. At the right of Miss Avery is Peter Horbal and, next to him, Lloyd King.

Right: Three generations at Sprague Electric -- Robert C. Sprague, President of Sprague Electric, helps his grandson, Robert C. Sprague, III, to a piece of birthday cake. Bobby is aided by his father, Robert C. Sprague, Jr., Director of Employee Relations. Julian K. Sprague and Mollie Avery watch the operation.

(Continued on Page 2)
Beverl Street Reporters


Brown Street Reporters


Brown Street Reporters

In 1929, it was decided to make the development of new products and new facilities a part of the company's strategy. The Sprague Electric Company employs about 3500 people in its three North Adams plants, and 4500 people in all its plants. The Sprague Electric Company has a history of growth and progress, as indicated by the following statistics:

- In 1929, the company had completed the move to the present Beaver Street plant and production was started in North Adams.
- The Sprague Electric Company was able to continue production through the cooperation of the company, and the continuing depression resulted in a very serious situation. But satisfactory arrangements were finally made and the company was able to continue production through the cooperation of its banks and creditors. The dark days were weathered and the large debts were finally paid off by November, 1937.
- The development of new products was then accelerated and more departments added. In the meantime, in 1933, Harry Kalker had set up the Sprague Products Company to distribute Sprague capacitors to jobbers and to the present Beaver Street plant.
- The company continued to grow and soon additional space was needed. In the meantime, in 1933, Harry Kalker had set up the Sprague Products Company to distribute Sprague capacitors to jobbers and to the present Beaver Street plant.
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- In 1934, the company decided to move from its Quincy location to North Adams, the October 3, 1929 issue of the North Adams Transcript described the move as "the most important new industrial development North Adams has seen in a generation". The headline read "Sprague Specialties Company of Quincy, Mass., Manufacturing Electrical Condensers, Selects North Adams in Which to Expand 3 Year Old Enterprise with Remarkable Record of Growth". The Transcript article went on to predict that eventually the company might employ as many as 1000 people. At the present time, about 3500 people are employed in the three North Adams plants. The Chamber of Commerce, the North Adams Industrial Company, and the North Adams Credit Guarantee Association united their efforts in order to convince the Sprague brothers to locate their progressive organization in North Adams. The Transcript pointed out that George A. Hastings, President of the Chamber of Commerce and the Industrial Company, was very active in bringing the Sprague Specialties Company here. Mr. Robert C. Sprague came to North Adams as a guest of the Chamber of Commerce in order to look over possible sites for the company. The Housatonic Mills and the Beaver Mills were among those considered. But Mr. Sprague had viewed more desirable locations and he went back to Quincy from his visit feeling that North Adams would not be satisfactory. However, the local businessmen were not to be deceived easily and they convinced Mr. Sprague to reconsider this area. He did, and the Beaver Mills were selected to be the home of the Sprague Specialties Company.
Anniversary
1926-1951

Robert C. Sprague

The President of the Sprague Electric Company graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1920, and did post-graduate work at M.I.T. in Naval Architecture. While in the Navy, Mr. Sprague was assigned to the construction corps and helped build the original aircraft carrier U.S.S. "Lexington". In 1928, he left the service in order to devote all of his time to the Company.

Mollie Avery

Miss Mollie Avery, secretary to Mr. Robert C. Sprague, came to work at Sprague Electric when it was a small enterprise which carried on its business in Mr. Sprague's Quincy home. For a short time previous to this, she had a position with the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation of Quincy, Massachusetts.

Julian K. Sprague

Julian Sprague, brother of the President of Sprague Electric, joined the Sprague Specialties Company of Quincy, Massachusetts in 1926. He helped design and manufacture the original Midget condenser and for four years was the Plant Manager at Quincy. Mr. Sprague is a Director and Vice-President of the Company.

William J. Nolan

Mr. Nolan is a graduate of the Yale Law School. During World War I, he served as an officer in the Navy, and took up the practice of law in Boston after his release from active service. He is one of the original stockholders of the Sprague Specialties Company, and has been its attorney, secretary, and a director since 1926.
Twenty-Five Years OF SERVICE AT SPRAGUE ELECTRIC

FRANK J. SPRAGUE, FATHER OF SPRAGUE BROTHERS FAMOUS INVENTOR IN ELECTRICAL FIELD

FRANK J. SPRAGUE

FRANK J. SPRAGUE

Frank J. Sprague, father of Robert C. and Julian K. Sprague, was world famous for his developments in the electrical field. He was generally known as the "Father of Electric Traction." For a short period, he worked with Thomas Edison. He made important inventions for the trolley car, the electric elevator, the automatic railway signal and safety system. These are just some of the highlights of his distinguished career.

In 1881, Mr. Sprague worked out some of the principles which were later applied to the earliest systems for the distribution of electric power. He served on the staff of the famous inventor, Thomas A. Edison, but left in 1881 to form his own company. This company developed an electric motor which attracted a great deal of attention at the American Exposition held in Philadelphia.

Frank J. Sprague began the installation of electric street car systems in St. Joseph, Missouri and Richmond, Virginia. When completed, the electric street car system in Richmond was the first in the United States. He then formed the Sprague Electric Elevator Company. Next, he developed a multiple unit system of electric train control by which several cars could be combined in a train and guided by one operator. This was an important step in electrical development as it made the surface car, the electric elevator, and the electric subway train possible. He had by no means exhausted his ingenuity for he later developed a system of automatic signal and brake control by which a train could be halted after it ran past a block signal. During World War I, Mr. Sprague contributed to the development of fuses and aerial and naval depth bombs.

The inventor also established the Sprague Electric Company (no connection with present company of the same name) which was absorbed by General Electric in 1933. Also, he later served as a consulting engineer for the General Electric Company.

At the time of the move to the Beaver Mills by the Sprague Specialties Company, Frank J. Sprague was the head of the Sprague Safety Control and Signal Corporation. He also was busy organizing a new firm, Sprague Signs, Inc. to develop his most recent idea which involved a new principle of outdoor advertising.

As a boy, Frank J. Sprague lived in North Adams. After his mother died when young Frank was sent to this city by his father to live with his aunt, Mrs. Anna Parker, whose home was at the corner of Westleyan and Egle Streets.

He was an appointee from this district to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis.

It is of considerable local interest that his grandfather, Joshua Sprague, a carpenter and builder, came here to North Adams from Wardsboro, Vermont in 1856 with his wife, Betsy, and their 10 children, including Frank Sprague's father, David Cummings Sprague, who was three years old at the time.

In 1881, two of Joshua Sprague's daughters, Martha L. Sprague and Betsy Sprague, were members of the first class graduating from Drury Academy, now Drury High School.

So when the Sprague Specialties Company moved from Quincy, Massachusetts to this city, it was to an area familiar with the Sprague name for almost 100 years.

Mr. Kalker was the first sales representative for the Sprague Specialties Company in New York City up to 1930. In 1930, Mr. Kalker took over the job of sales manager for the Sprague Specialties Company. Three years later, he formed the Sprague Products Company which was purchased by Sprague Electric in 1946.

Mr. Darmstader, Chicago sales representative, and one of the Company's top representatives, sold Sweetheart soap for the Manhattan Soap Company for eighteen years before coming to Sprague Electric. He considers Sunday the longest day in the week because it is the day on which he can't sell Sprague Electric capacitors.

"Meet a man older than Methuselah — the new president of the Radio "Old Timers" Club." These were Harry Kalker's words of greeting to Mr. B. C. Darmstader in Chicago on May 20, when he returned to the Sprague Electric Headquarters during the annual Radio Parts and Electronic Equipment Show, to announce that he had been elected president of the Radio "Old Timers" Club for 1951-1952. Shown congratulating Mr. Kalker is Samuel B. Darmstader, Sprague Electric sales representative in Chicago, who will celebrate his twenty-fifth anniversary with the Company this September.

The "Old Timers Club" is a group of fun-loving radio men who have been connected with the radio industry for twenty years or more.
WHAT WE PRODUCE

The Sprague Electric Company is one of the leading manufacturers of electrical and electronic components. We manufacture capacitors of many basic types which are made to thousands of different specifications for a great variety of uses. In 1950, over 10,000 different types of components were made by the Company.

Sprague Electric is the chief manufacturer of capacitors for television sets. Besides capacitors which are used in electronic and electrical equipment, we make such things as hearing-aid batteries, noise-suppression filters, high voltage pulse networks, high temperature ceramic coated wire, and capacitor analyzers.

Products Used In Military Equipment

Many of the products manufactured by Sprague Electric are used in important military equipment. Ceramic coated copper wire is used in the armored forces in many important military projects. This specially treated copper wire also finds use as magnet wire in coils, transformers, chokes, motors, and other electrical equipment. The Miniature Metal Clad capacitor is employed in different electronic devices, including proximity fuses and guided missiles. Pulse networks find use in radar equipment. Miniature molded tubular capacitors, oil capacitors, dry electrolytic capacitors, and mixed-lawne paper, mica, and ceramic capacitors are used widely by the military.

Electrical Devices In Home Use Sprague Electric Equipment

Almost any of the electrical devices which you may have in your home could very possibly contain Sprague Electric equipment. You will find capacitors in your radio, television set, refrigerator, washing machine, electric mixer and vacuum cleaner. In your telephone, a capacitor is used to suppress an electrical arc which would interfere with your radio reception. In an automobile, capacitors are used in the horn, the clock, the radio, and the ignition system. Sprague Electric products can be found in fluorescent lights, electric typewriters, calculating machines, electric razors, X-ray machines, airplanes, trains, ships and geophysical equipment.

Sprague Electric Awarded Army-Navy "E" Five Times For War Production

Robert C. Sprague receives Army-Navy "E" pennant on "Sprague Day".

The Sprague Electric Company was one of the first companies in the United States to receive an "E" award. The continued awarding of the "E" was made on a basis of quality as well as speed and quantity of work produced. The morale and cooperation in the Company also were factors which were considered.

Another Army-Navy "E" was received on October 28, 1941. Sprague Electric employees were still maintaining a high production of war materials. The fifth award, which added the fourth star to our "E" pennant, was presented in 1945. On September 26, 1945, a fifth star was added to the pennant. Sprague Electric was awarded the Board of Ordinance "E" for its work on the "C-N-Five", a navy secret weapon.

SPRAGUE ELECTRIC'S PART IN WORLD WAR II

With the outbreak of war, Sprague Electric was called upon to manufacture goods to fill important military orders, and to fill them as soon as possible. It was necessary to increase the employment in order to meet the consumers' demands. Research was stepped up so that our armed forces would be sure to have the benefit of the best in electronic equipment.

Capacitors played an important role in the war program. The following list gives an idea of the type of military equipment which required capacitors:

- Tank ignition systems
- Two-way radio in tanks, battle cruiser has radio, plane and submarine detectors, airplane transceivers, portable radio sets used by parachute troopers, phones and switchboards for headquarters dugouts, land mines exploded by remote radio control, radio beacons which guide bombers on the beam, airplanes have special magnetic capacitors and must have special capacitors masking out radio interference caused by motors that might disturb important radio messages.
- Motorcyle radio equipment, elaborate radio and detection apparatus for military headquarters, and super-power searchlights require capacitors in an intricate mechanism.

Sprague Electric did a great deal of work on the Proximity Fuzes, which was used so effectively in the Battle of the Bulge and in the Pacific. The Company also played a vital part in the development of the Atomic Bomb. The supplying of equipment to the military was one phase of the war program at Sprague Electric. Another phase of the war was the number of Sprague Electric employees who entered the service. Fifty and fifty-five Sprague Electric employees entered the military forces. Of these, eighteen gave their lives.

This picture was taken of a group from the W. Electrolytic Assembly at the back of the Beaver Street plant some eighteen or nineteen years ago. At that time, Frank Gassett was Foreman and Leo Lemoine was the Assistant Foreman.

First row, from left to right: Emma Massahoni Falcon (now employed in Paper Tubular Solder), William Falcon (General Maintenance), Rena Roy (Dry Tubular Assembly), Florence Lecuyer (Dry Tubular Assembly), Lena Simonelli (Paper Tubular Solder), Omer Deso, Emma Massaloni Falcon (now employed in Paper Tubular Solder), Max Deso (Retail Sales).

Second row, from left to right: Joe DeGrone (Foil Preperation), Henry Swensel (George's brother), John O'Connell (Foreman of Paper Tubulars and Molding Department), Lottie Randall (no longer employed here), and Mary Marsdidi Daniels (Retail Sales).

Third row, from left to right: Domenic Spagnola and Max Deso, neither of whom are employed here now.
EXPANSION THROUGH THE YEARS

At the right is the house in Quincy where the Sprague Electric Company had its birth in 1926. The right side of this two-family house was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Sprague and their small son. Robert, Jr. Mallo Averey, Mr. Sprague’s secretary, lived nearby in the house which can be glimpsed in the very left of the picture. All the processes required in the manufacture of a capacitor were carried on in Mr. Sprague’s home. Now those processes are carried on in three plants in North Adams by about 3,500 people. In addition, the Company has a subsidiary in Waukesha, Wisconsin, a branch plant in Nashua, New Hampshire, operates a small plant in Saugerties, New York as a joint venture with Philips Industries, Inc., has an operation in Barre, Vermont which is operated for it by the Rock of Ages Corporation, and is setting up another plant in Bennington, Vermont.

History of Brown Street Plant

The Brown Street plant was established in 1881 by Silvander Johnson and his associates as a gingham manufacturing plant. The 40,000 square foot addition, known as building No. 5, was built and operated by the Hoosac Worsted Company. Across the street from the Brown Street plant, where the Northern Berkshire Gas Company is now located, was the site of a lake. This lake supplied the plant with water power and the area was called the “Factory Ground”. During the 1920’s, the Arlington Mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts, carrying out a program of decentralization, bought the plant and made many improvements. However, they soon tired of this small branch and after the flood of 1937, which did considerable damage to the buildings, the plant was closed.

The Brown Street plant remained idle until Sprague Electric, with the necessity of more space to carry on their business, purchased it in 1937. Sprague Electric made repairs in the plant, kept it idle for a year or two and then, with the beginning of World War II, opened it in order to manufacture civilian and military-type gas masks.

History of Beaver Street Plant

The original building at the Beaver Street plant was constructed in the 1870’s and is the one next to the river. As time went by, additional buildings were constructed, the last being added about 1900. The Beaver Mills were then operated and owned by Gallup and Houghton, and cotton cloth was manufactured in the plant. Gallup and Houghton also owned, and were the chief executives of the whole Arnold Print Works system of mills. The Beaver Mills were sold in 1908 to the Hoosac Cotton Mills, a corporation formed to operate both the Beaver and the Eclipse Mills, now known as the Hoosac Mills Corporation. At a later date, the Beaver Mills were sold and operated as a tire fabric manufacturing plant. The venture had a short life and after it closed down, the North Adams Industrial Company purchased the mill and interested Mr. Sprague in coming here from Quincy.

History of Marshall Street Plant

The Marshall Street plant was started as a small textile printing plant about 1870. Business was prosperous and additional buildings were added rapidly over the years until the present size was obtained soon after 1900. The Arnold Print Works, with some changes in management, operated the plant until 1941, when it was liquidated and all the machinery was sold. Sprague Electric was expanding and leased three of the Print Works buildings for manufacturing and storage space. In 1943, Sprague Electric bought the whole plant and started an extensive program of alterations and rehabilitation.

Among the repairs was included the restoration of the clock tower in 1945. This clock tower was installed about 1890. The clock is an unusual one in that it strikes on the quarter-hours as well as on the hours. It is done by two sets of bells. The clock strikes once at quarter past the hour, twice at thirty minutes past the hour, three times at forty-five minutes past the hour, and four times on the hour. It is one of the landmarks in North Adams.