The A&V Bryan, OH facility circa 1963. All art courtesy Anderson & Vreeland.

Anderson & Vreeland

50 Years of Innovation

Howard Vreeland Jr., chairman.

It all began 50 years ago. Two men joined together to form a company that has become the foremost supplier of flexographic platemaking equipment and materials for the graphic arts industry. Anderson & Vreeland has come a long way from its humble beginning in 1961. Today, the company employs 145 people, has its corporate office in Fairfield, New Jersey, a state-of-the-art 112,000 square foot manufacturing and warehouse facility in Bryan, OH, and sales warehouses strategically located throughout North America.

Andy Anderson and Howard Vreeland first met at Union Carbide's Bakelite division in Newark, NJ, where Howard was a lab assistant. But it was while working at Williamson and Co. that they decided to go into business together. Andy was the vice president and general sales manager, while Howard was the sales manager of the Midwest, selling printing plate materials to the industry.

The two men left Williamson and started their new business on Jan 1, 1961 with two locations; Fairfield, NJ and Bryan, OH. "They realized this business had tremendous growth potential and wanted to be a part of it," said Ron Kerr, vice president of Anderson & Vreeland. Ron joined A&V in 1961 as one of the first employees in the Bryan facility.

- Sales exceeded $1 million in initial year of operations.
- Nationwide distribution network established beginning in 1964. Atlanta, Ga.; West Covina, CA; and Elk Grove, Il. Facilities prove pivotal.
- International expansion to Canada and Europe begins in 1983.

INTRO TO BRYAN

How did you end up in Bryan, OH? "It's one question we are asked quite often," said Howard Vreeland Jr., chairman of the board. Oddly enough, it was a broken headlight that prompted Anderson & Vreeland's Midwest offices to be located in Bryan. While still at Williamson and Co., Howard and company owner Gene Williamson drove to Fort Wayne, IN to establish a new warehouse. Somewhere along the way, a headlight fell off the car. Howard and Gene ended up at a car dealership in Bryan to get the light fixed. While there, Gene bought a car for Howard to use and ended up leasing a building for the warehouse. According to Howard Jr., the family has been in Bryan since 1953.

In the company's first year of business, family members were running much of the duties. Both Andy and Howard's wives handled bookkeeping for the company.

In the 1960's, rubber and matrix became the main application for making flexo printing plates. The matrix material was supplied by Rogers Corp. and rubber supplied by U.S. Rubber and Goodyear. In addition to selling platemaking materials, A&V serviced equipment used in the rubber platemaking process, including PrecisionPlate hydraulic molding presses.


Tom Gavin, president and CEO.


Darin Lyon, vice president and general manager.


Drew Elisius, vice president of operations, Engineered Products.

It was not long before A&V introduced its own line of molding presses manufactured out of the Bryan facility.

The business did more than $1 million in sales during its initial year, far surpassing their $400,000 projection. A&V began growing with the industry it served, opening an Atlanta, GA facility in 1964 and West Covina, CA facility in 1969. Elk Grove Village, IL soon followed and a nationwide sales/distribution network was established.

PHOTOPOLYMER INTRODUCED

In 1974, Uniroyal introduced a sheet polymer material that is still utilized by the flexo market today. Anderson & Vreeland quickly became an innovative leader in the manufacture of equipment that processed photopolymer plates for flexography. Rotary plate processors, exposure systems and dryers were manufactured in a range of sizes from 15in. x 27in. to 52in. x 80in. Combination systems that contained everything required to expose, washout, dry, post expose and detack solvent-wash photopolymer plates soon followed, along with other plate processors.

As the quality of flexo improved with innovative materials and equipment, the market expanded, and so did Anderson & Vreeland. In 1983, A&V completed the acquisition of Williamson & Co. "It was a logical move," noted Howard Vreeland, Jr. "Our sales were $20 million and Williamson's sales were $10 million." International expansion was soon on the horizon when an operation in Holland was established. A&V held the business in Holland for 14 years before selling it.

Anderson & Vreeland was concerned with environmental and ecological issues long before it was fashionable to do so. Before water-wash plates were introduced, flexo plate processing required harmful chemicals (perchloroethylene/butyl alcohol) in the washout process. A&V introduced fumeless processors featuring a special vapor evacuation system, exhaust fans and automatic plate input and take-off to prevent operator exposure to fumes. The company then introduced Poly-Safe, a non-toxic, biodegradable and environmentally-safe washout alternative to foul-smelling perc/butyl. A&V also pioneered the use of UV light to detack photopolymer plates.

In the late 1990s, Anderson & Vreeland introduced to North America Cosmolight, the world's first water-wash flexo plate from Toyobo, a Japan-based world leader in photopolymer chemistry. A&V also introduced the equipment required to process water-wash flexo plates, reducing the industry's reliance on solvent-wash plates.

THE NEW MILLENIUM

Andy Anderson and Howard Vreeland Sr. retired from Anderson & Vreeland Inc. in Dec. 2001. At the same time, Thomas O. Gavin, formerly president of MacDermid's Graphic Arts Division, joined A&V as president and chief executive officer. Howard Vreeland Jr., who worked at the company in every facet of the business, became vice president of operations and chief operating officer.

During this time, Anderson & Vreeland recognized the growing importance of digital technology in improving the productivity and quality of flexo. More and more companies were converting to flexo, expanding the market and its potential for A&V.

In 2002, A&V introduced the first complete laser-imaged computer-to-plate (CTP) system (FlexoLaser) for water-wash flexo plates. At the same time, the company introduced Cosmolight digital plates from Toyobo for CTP systems. The digital revolution was picking up speed for A&V. In 2003, A&V began selling FulFlex laser engraving materials, including plates and sleeves. This high-performance flexo plate material continues to offer improved print quality and substantial savings to printers.

Digital technology now dominates the graphic arts and packaging industries. Technological advances, such as laser-engraved anilox rolls and sophisticated plate- making equipment, have helped flexography grow into the most effective printing method for packaging and other print products. With recent innovations in the area of publication printing, flexography has further solidified its reputation as a sophisticated, high-quality printing process that can expand to countless applications.

Anderson & Vreeland has positioned itself for continued growth as flexo evolves. In Jan. 2009, Darin Lyon was appointed vice president and general manager of A&V. Darin's responsibilities include all sales, customer service and marketing, purchasing, warehousing, technical service and training for Anderson & Vreeland's customers throughout North America and Mexico. At the same time, Drew Elisius

An early hydraulic molding press sold by A&V in the 1960s.

was appointed vice president of operations responsible for Anderson & Vreeland Engineered Products and manufacturing for A&V and its subsidiaries. Darin and Drew work together in expanding vendor and OEM relations that support A&V's business.

Anderson & Vreeland continues to introduce new products that improve plate quality, efficiency and the environment, from companies including Epson, EskoArtwork, GMG Color

A&V continues to offer cutting-edge technology, including direct laser engraving systems.

and Stork Prints. At the same time, A&V prides itself on long-standing relationships with industry leaders including 3M, Flint Group, Rogers, tesa tape and Toyobo. "We look forward to building long-term, strategic relationships with our new partners," said Darin.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Rubber and matrix, solvent-wash plates, water-wash plates, digital plates and direct laser engraving—the industry has evolved substantially during the past 50 years. Anderson & Vreeland has played a key role by introducing new materials and equipment that improved plate processing efficiency and accuracy, and address environmental and ecological concerns. The one constant to all of these products has been Anderson & Vreeland's customer support, in which the company takes great pride.

Jack Richards, former vice president at A&V, remembers back in the mid 1960s, having a customer in Pennsylvania that ran out of rubber in the middle of the night. Jack loaded cartons of rubber into a station wagon and personally delivered the order around 1 :00 a.m. to keep the second shift working. "The customer couldn't believe it and never forgot it," noted Jack.

In 2001, the company introduced toll-free phone and fax numbers making it easier to contact the company. Today, training and customer support is more important than ever. The growing sophistication of digital technology used in flexography mandates it, and without it, companies are only tapping the basics offered by feature-rich equipment and software. Anderson & Vreeland offers training and support designed for every level of experience—at customer locations, online or at one of A&V's training centers.

"When you buy from Anderson & Vreeland, it is the beginning of a relationship, not just a transaction," said Darin. "We're committed to helping make the best use of our equipment, materials and your resources."

Anderson & Vreeland's first 50 years have been very good to the company and the flexo community at large. "We'd like to thank our customers, representatives, suppliers and associates for their faithfulness and support over the years," said Howard Vreeland Jr. "We can't wait to show you what the future holds," he added.

GIVING BACK TO THE INDUSTRY

Over the past 50 years, A&V has been actively involved in the FTA and other graphic arts associations. Howard Vreeland Jr. and his father have an impressive record of service including:

- Being active members of the FTA/FFTA for four decades.
- Serving on the FTA Board of Directors, FFTA Board of Trustees, and FlexSys Training Corp.'s Board of Governors.
- A term as chairman on FTA's Supplier Leadership Council;
- Sitting on the FTA Awards Committee and acting as an awards judge.
- Serving on the High School Advisory Council to promote benefits of the flexo industry.
- Speaking at FTA/FFTA Workshops, Road Shows, Conferences and Annual Forums.

The company also sponsors the Howard Vreeland Sr. Virtual Campus designed for educators to access FTA's TEST (Technical Education Services Team) authored courses. Howard Vreeland Jr. was inducted into the Flexographic Technical Association's Hall of Fame in 2008 (see **FLEXO** May 2008). "Anderson & Vreeland takes great pride in supporting the FTA and its educational mission. Our sponsorship of TEST complements our efforts to introduce advanced training and technologies to this industry that has been so good to us," said Howard Vreeland Jr. ■

The Future Of Flexo

The future of flexo is available today from Anderson & Vreeland. For the past 50 years we have introduced new products and technologies that have continually improved flexo plate quality and efficiency while improving sustainability. Back then it was matrix and rubber. Today it is in-the-round technology and direct laser engraving. Stay tuned for what the future holds.

Experience the Difference!

ANDERSON & VREELAND INC.

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For 50 years, A&V has supplied materials and equipment that are good for you and good for the environment.