

# the Fact Sheet

from the Consumer Information Service

## Colgate-Palmolive and the soap industry

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of manufacturers were producing soap commercially along the Eastern seaboard of the United States of America. One of these, 23 year old William Colgate, set up a starch, soap and candle shop under his own name in 1806.

Around this time Colgate took a partner to provide working capital and six years later, with the business having prospered, he was able to buy out his partner and change the name of the firm to William Colgate & Company.

The first Colgate advertisement of record appeared in 1817. Three years later, William Colgate and his brother-in-law built a starch factory in New Jersey.

By 1847 the increasingly prosperous company had outgrown its Dutch Street buildings and moved to Jersey City. Principal products of Colgate company at that time were Colgate's Pale Soap, White Windsor and Honey Brand soaps and Pearl starch. It was not until 1866 that the Colgate starch factory in New Jersey burned to the ground and the starch business was subsequently abandoned.

It was in 1864 that Burdette Johnson opened a soap plant in Milwaukee under the name of BJ Johnson Soap Company. With the close of the Civil War and the booms of the 1870s and 1880s, the soap making industry was flourishing and the merchandising of its product was taking on a new flair. Palmolive Soap in 1898, a floating soap made with palm and olive oils, was one of these new products. By 1916, sales had increased to such an extent that the company was renamed the Palmolive Company.

In 1926 a new giant emerged in the soap industry. The Palmolive Company joined with the firm Peet Brothers to form the Palmolive-Peet Company. Two years later, this company merged with Colgate & Company to become the Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company. In 1953 the corporate

name was changed to Colgate-Palmolive Company.

From the founding of the company until 1900 all Colgate products were sold both retail and wholesale but in that year retail selling stopped. When the Colgate Company was 100 years old (1906), it was marketing 106 different kinds and sizes of toilet soaps and 625 different perfumes, sold as perfumes as well as being used in shaving soaps, shampoos, talcum powders and other similar products.

Today, hundreds of Colgate-Palmolive products are manufactured and distributed throughout the world. In addition to its soaps, the company sells leading brands of toiletries, detergents, and household products.

### Colgate-Palmolive Pty Ltd, Australia

In August 1921, the Palmolive Company (Australasia) Limited started business in Broughton House, King Street, Sydney. Land was purchased at Balmain and a fifty thousand square foot building was erected. In 1923 the manufacturing of Palmolive Soap commenced. The staff then numbered forty.

Later in the 1920s on a worldwide basis, the Palmolive Company, Peet Bros. and Colgate and Company merged and became the Colgate-Palmolive-Peet Company.

Over the years several building additions were made in Balmain but in 1994, the site was closed down due to its age and proximity to residential areas. The company now has plants in Villawood, Sydney and Labrador on the Gold Coast, and the corporate head office is located in George Street, Sydney.