

Transcript of Unilever 'Heritage Video'

As one of the most successful consumer goods companies ever, millions of families choose Unilever brands to feel good, look good and get more out of life. With a huge range of food, personal care and home care goods sold across the globe, consumers will choose a staggering 330,000 Unilever products in the time it takes to watch this video.

But this did not happen overnight... From humble beginnings, this is the story of the early pioneers whose innovation and vision led to the creation of a global company that changed the lives of both its customers and employees alike. This is the story of Unilever and the two products that started it all.

Our journey begins late in the 19th Century, with the industrial revolution in full swing and Britain replacing much of its farm land in favour of industrial development. A growing population and an increasing gap between rich and poor had created a shortage of butter - at the time a vital ingredient in maintaining the health of the wider population.

As a result, Britain was importing butter from the Netherlands, but Dutch capacity was already reaching its limit. However fierce competition between two rival family businesses - the Jurgens and the Vandenbergs - was driving innovation... transforming quality and production capabilities.

One of the ways of increasing production and shelf-life was the invention of margarine. Developed in France in 1869 under the orders of Napoleon, margarine was designed to be a longer-lasting version of butter.

Initially margarine didn't taste very good, but the competition between the two Dutch families resulted in significant developments and improvements. Innovation followed innovation, new technologies like "refrigeration", used to import animal fats from the US, were embraced and the companies went from strength to strength. Later, faced with increased competition, the two rival businesses merged to create Margerine Unie. The business continued to invest heavily in new research to improve flavour and adding vitamins that contributed to the improved nutrition of families all over the world.

At the same time, another visionary was building a business that would eventually touch every country in the world. English grocery wholesaler William Lever, had a revolutionary idea. Instead of selling to shops in bulk, he would cut up his soap into smaller pieces, package it, create a brand that was ready for consumers to use... Lord Lever's idea of creating a mass-produced product that made cleanliness and hygiene affordable for everyone turned merchandising on its head... and transformed the lives of the poverty-stricken lower classes of Victorian England.

But William Lever's ideas stretched beyond sales. He realised that a successful business needed solid foundations if it was to win long-term. In class-dominated Britain, he had an original idea... by paying people properly, reducing their hours and treating his employees fairly he could boost productivity. Unheard of at the time, he started pension schemes, unemployment and sickness benefits, work

canteens and the concept of the eight-hour working day... He used his wealth to build Port Sunlight, a village for his employees to live in and enjoy. It is these ethics and sense of social responsibility that are ingrained in Unilever's success to this day.

Eventually, in the 1920's, with businesses growing rapidly, Margarine Unie and Lever Brothers merged to create Unilever.

Over the decades, the business has built on the pioneering work of its forefathers. In everything we do, whether it's leading in sustainability or our award-winning television and digital marketing, William Lever's entrepreneurial spirit lives on.

The company's growth strategy continues to draw on its proud heritage, as through our products, we aspire to create a better future every day.