

McGill Manufacturing

Near the turn of the century, James H. McGill founded the Crescent Company located in Chicago, Illinois. In 1905, he moved his company to Valparaiso, Indiana where it continued as the Crescent Company until December 1st, 1910 when the name was changed to McGill Manufacturing. The first products were for the electrical industry and included wire guards for lamps, cord spools, socket handles, coloring fluid for incandescent light bulbs, chatterton compound and other electrical specialties.

In 1910 the Levolver switch was developed following the purchase of the Despard-Gordon Company who manufactured a light socket containing a novel switching mechanism. This switching mechanism evolved into the Levolver switch which when first marketed was an immediate success. This development proved to be an extremely profitable product and these profits enabled Mr. McGill to dabble in a variety of other sidelines such as automotive carburetors, floor start switches, venetian blinds, golf clubs, small blow torches, washing machines, laxatives, gyroscopes, cracker jack whistles, time clocks, and even a venture in gold mining.

The Electrical Division steadily expanded its product line with the addition of toggle, snap-action, rocker and push button switches as well as lamp guards, sockets, cord reels, bench lights, and lamp changers. The McGill trademark, Levolver, was synonymous with quality among electrical wholesalers and contractors. McGill became major producer of switches for a multitude of electrical products including washers, dryers, ovens, fans, power tools, blenders, and more.

Along the way, McGill acquired a nonferrous foundry which in 1910 was housed in a separate building on north Lafayette Street to produce permanent mold, sand, and hydraulic pressure castings of aluminum bronze. The McGill metal company was formed and among other products, they developed a line of bronze retainers for ball bearings and sold them to the Strom Bearing Company of Chicago, Illinois.

The Strom bearings using these cages known as super Strom were sold to machine tool manufacturers and to premium automobile manufacturers such as Duesenberg, Cord, Chrysler, Packard, and Rolls Royce. About 1924, Strom sold the bearing portion of their business. A number of ex-Strom employees moved to Valparaiso and led by Mr. Frank Shubert in 1925, interested McGill in producing bearings using the aluminum bronze retainers formerly sold through Strom. The initial production had the trademark Shubert, but in late 1926 or early 1927 all bearings produced were marked McGill.

In the years that followed, McGills introduced and patented the Multirol bearing, the first self-contained full-type needle roller bearing and the first roller bearing cam

follower later trademarked as Camrol. Later, Guiderol, the first heavy-duty roller bearing with center-guided rollers; Cagerol retainer type roller bearing; Sphere-rol, the first single-row spherical roller bearing with built in seals; and the Nyla-K Mounted ball bearings (pillow block) were developed and contributed to making McGill a nationally recognized leading source of precision bearings.

After incorporation, McGill expanded and built additional plants in Valparaiso, Malden, Culver, and Monticello, IN, El Paso, TX and Taiwan. Emerson bought McGill in 1990, and McGill/EPT in Valparaiso is the headquarters of Emerson Power Transmission Division.

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