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Featuring

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**NICKELOID
METALS**

Since 1898

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FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, ILLINOIS-BASED AMERICAN NICKELOID CO. HAS BEEN SHIPPING OUT THE MATERIAL OF THE AMERICAN DREAM, FROM JUKEBOXES AND AUTO TRIM TO KITCHENS WITH THAT MODERN STAINLESS STEEL LOOK. WILLIAM BUNCH TELLS HOW THIS INNOVATIVE COMPANY IS EYING NEW MARKETS.



Pictured: Coils of pre-plated steel.

THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN NICKELOID Company over the last century is really not too different from the history of America itself.

The Illinois-based metal-finishing company, which started out at the tail end of the 19th century marketing zinc plating for items such as metal toothpaste tubes, has helped to drive American culture, from the bullets that helped to win World War II to the chrome-plated jukeboxes and tail-finned big cars of the 1950s to today's satellite receivers and microwave ovens.

Today, U.S. consumers – flush with cash for home remodeling projects – are in the middle of a craze for high-tech kitchens with the sleek look of stainless steel, and American Nickeloid is making products that allow manufacturers to offer that look at a lower cost.

American Nickeloid this year has been developing a family of specialty alloy-coated material that it calls Alloy Plus. This alternative to stainless steel is highly corrosion-resistant steel, available in a satin finish with fingerprint-resistant coating. Rich Halen, the vice president and general manager of American Nickeloid, said most consumers can't tell the difference between Alloy Plus and stainless steel and the alloy material actually offers some enhanced properties despite the lower cost.

"THERE BEFORE THE MARKET CHANGES"

Most appliance manufacturers are evaluating Alloy Plus as an alternative to stainless steel. In the mean time, American Nickeloid is producing large volumes of nickel-plated steel with satin finish and anti-fingerprint coating. This product is also a close match to stainless steel.

Alloy Plus is just the newest example of how American Nickeloid has responded very quickly to the marketplace – a skill that has allowed the company to not only survive but prosper over 107 years. Halen said that it has helped that ownership of the firm has remained in the same family all that time.

"We need to be there before the market changes, not waiting around for change," said Halen. For that reason, Nickeloid employs metal finishing experts who are constantly developing new finishes and processes. "Our investment in our laboratory and technical staff centers around product development, not simply production support," he added.

While advanced in technology, American Nickeloid has never forgotten where it came from: its hometown of Peru, Ill. It was there that the company opened in 1898 in a small building that the founders rented from the Illinois Zinc Company, plating nickel on a sheet zinc base.

The new company called its process "Nickeloid" and the basic concept, selling metal sheets with surfaces already finished to make the manufacturing process simpler for its customers, has remained the same ever since. At first, American Nickeloid metals went into consumer products popular at the turn of the 20th century: washboards, washing machine tub trim, paintbrush ferrules, toothpaste containers, ad displays, and price tag rims.

American Nickeloid eventually opened a second plant in Walnutport, Pa., also near a zinc source and able to better service customers on the East Coast. That plant would become especially critical during World War II, when Walnutport was converted entirely to the manufacture of copper-plated steel, which had replaced solid copper alloy for use as military bullet jackets.

Another interesting side effect of the war was that the copper shortage led to work in Peru on a zinc-plated steel penny.

Stepping

Up

To

The

Plate



Pictured above (from left): Polished brass with protective Bake-kote; raw material unwinds at start of finishing process; left: satin finish copper plated steel.

the appliance field as well as for trophies and awards.

POPULAR IN VENDING MACHINES

One of the company's long-time most successful products is its trademarked Laminol, a vinyl-metal laminate. By permanently bonding various plastic films to galvanized steel, stainless steel, cold-rolled steel, and aluminum, American Nickeloid is able to

Pictured right (from top) : Automated sheeting and packing line; American Nickeloid plant from 1900 to 1950; below (from left): many colors available in a variety of finishes.

produce metals with unique textures and characteristics. Frequently used in automobiles to improve protection or appearance, the laminates are available in wood grains, leather look-alikes, fabrics and smooth finishes in an endless array of colors.

"Laminol is popular in vending machines," Halen explained. "You can have a leather look, or thousands of patterns, much like wallpaper. It has a durable finish, and is easily formed into cabinets."

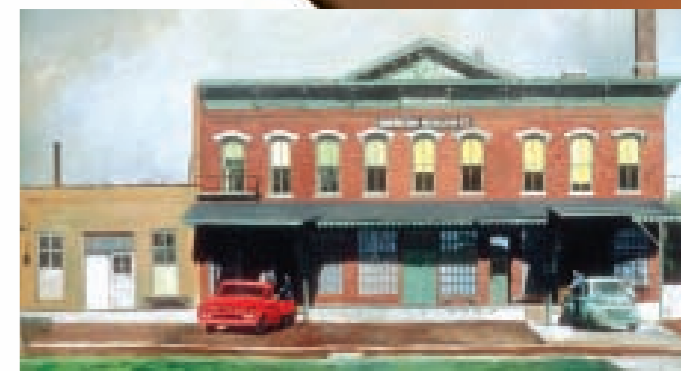
Over the years automotive parts have become an increasingly important part of American Nickeloid's customer base. Materials made by the company have been used for components such as glove compartment doors, window and door trim, knob inserts, dashboards, and coordinated color hubcaps.

In addition, Nickeloid has invested in advanced equipment improving both quality and efficiency. This allows the skilled Nickeloid employees to focus on the processes and to produce high quality decorative finishes.

AMERICAN NICKELOID IN CHINA

Like many American companies, American Nickeloid is in the process of developing a strategy that will address the large shift in manufacturing work to the China market. This is difficult, Halen said, because labor costs there are so low that, unlike American manufacturers, it's easier for China-based companies to simply use bare metal and finish it after the assembly process. While Nickeloid metals are more environmentally friendly than post-finishing, and though the quality of pre-finished Nickeloid coils is superior, price still rules – for today.

The company's strategy in China is to penetrate the market, promote the quality and environmental aspects of its material, and to



have its brand established within China as that market matures. Maturity in this case means a higher demand for superior quality and a stronger focus in China on environmental protection. "As China continues to evolve on the world stage, Nickeloid will be there to support the need for highly decorative metals produced in the most environmentally favorable manner," Halen said.

A CUSTOM FINISH FOR EVERY CUSTOMER

Where Henry Ford promoted the idea of whatever color the customer wants, as long as it is black, American Nickeloid has the opposite view. Though its standard product line includes many basic finishes, colors and processes, each specific application results in a tailored specification. This results in superior performance in specific areas as well as the ability to set trends in color or finish.

The key is maintaining flexibility in its designs so that it can adjust to the needs and desires of its customer base. "We develop new products every day," Halen said. While most modern appliances share common features, what sets one apart from another is often the appearance."

At American Nickeloid, they've been improving the appearance of products – from toothpaste to refrigerators – for over a century.



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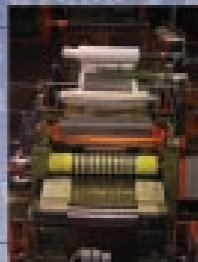
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