

## Minnesota Linseed Oil Paint Company/ Valspar/Sherwin-Williams

1872, 1905, 1912, 1926



*Minneapolis Star Tribune, November 5, 1878*

product within the United States and to Europe. In 1878, the company began using linseed oil to manufacture paint. It offered two paints, a house paint, and a barn paint. The former was available in eight colors plus black and white. By 1889, the paint business was so successful that a separate business was formed, Minnesota Linseed Oil Paint Company. The two companies remained closely affiliated. Under the new business, the company grew to include floor paint, carriage paint, enamels, and stains.

Gottfried Scheitlin was born in Switzerland in 1821 and arrived in Minneapolis in 1856. His original business venture in Minneapolis was as an investor in ginseng. The business was not successful.

Around 1868, he erected a linseed mill near the corner of Tenth and Washington Avenues South.

In 1870, working with others, Scheitlin established the Minnesota Linseed Oil Company. *The Minneapolis Tribune* announced the venture in its September 28, 1870, edition. The company secured its future by providing the seed for the flax crops that fed its mills, thus controlling all the flax used to make linseed oil in the state.

During its first year, the mill was destroyed by fire. The company then planned a new building at Washington Avenue South and Eleventh Avenue. The new mill was running by 1872.

Within a few years, the mill was producing five hundred gallons of oil per day, and the company was shipping



*Minnesota Historical Society*

Having outgrown its space, the company acquired additional land and built a new facility at Eleventh Avenue and Third Street. The new five-story headquarters, designed by architects Franklin and Louis Long, was completed in 1905. The building was constructed of dark-red, pressed brick with terra-cotta and Portage sandstone trim, and plate-glass shop windows on the first floor. Other buildings followed including a boiler room, production facilities, storage silos, and an engine house.

By the twentieth century, the company was the largest manufacturer of linseed oil in the state. In 1911, the city of Minneapolis shipped 97,563,755 pounds of linseed oil and another 178,438,643 pounds of linseed cake. In 1912, architectural firm Long, Lamoreaux, and Long designed a brick and reinforced concrete addition to the 1905 building. This three-story structure had a more industrial design. The design elements alluded to the original building uniting the two structures stylistically.



Mpls Star Tribune, April 2, 1922

By the 1920s, linseed oil was Minneapolis’ fourth largest industry. In 1926, the company purchased land across Eleventh Avenue to build a more modern plant. The architectural firm Croft and Boerner designed the building with an angled rear wall that paralleled the railroad tracks.

In 1936, signaling the importance of the painting company, the Linseed Oil Company side of the business sold its assets to the Minnesota Linseed Oil Paint Company, becoming a division of the Paint Company.

During World War II, 40 percent of the linseed oil business and 20 percent of its paint business supported the war effort. By 1944, the Company employed 260 workers and was referred to as “the oldest manufacturing firm west of the Mississippi River” by the *Minneapolis Daily Times*. Knowing that with the war’s end, they would lose a major market, the Company created new products including varnishes, resulting in an addition on the northeast section of the 1926 modern plant building. The Company also anticipated increased business in the housing market as soldiers returned.

In 1947, The Company announced an expansion plan, and in 1949, a linseed oil processing facility was built in Fridley. The linseed oil business was subsequently spun off.

In 1949, because of the growing importance of paint in the company’s business, the company changed its name to Minnesota Paint Company and became



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one of the largest independent paint companies in the United States.

In the 1960s, C. Angus Wurtele, then president of the company, examined options to sell the company, acquire another company, or merge to stay competitive. In 1970, Minnesota Paints



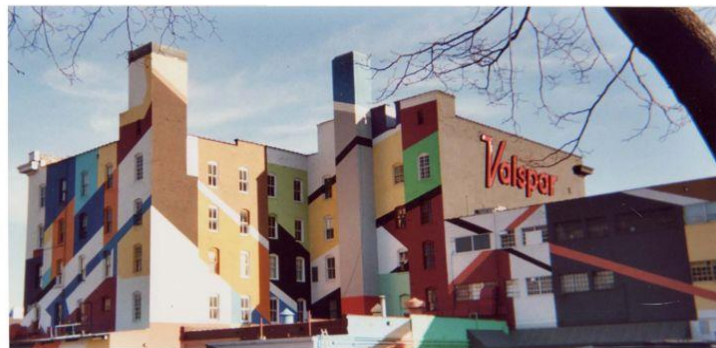
*Hennepin County Library*

merged with Valspar Corporation. The combined company retained the Valspar name and established their corporate headquarters at the Minnesota Paint Company's campus in Minneapolis.

To showcase its expansion, the original building underwent significant interior renovation. In addition, the Company commissioned local artist, Peter Busa, to design and paint a mural on the rear of the building. In honor of the buildings razed to make way for an interstate

ramp, Busa named the mural, "Demolition." In 1979, he expanded the mural. In 1980, a second mural was commissioned for the 1926 modern plant building, entitled "Sport," in honor of the neighboring sports arena and its fans. "Sport" required 110 gallons of primer, 194 gallons of paint, and thirty-two gallons of colorants for the twenty-five different colors.

The Company's growth continued. In 1984, it acquired Mobil Chemical Coatings which made Valspar the 5<sup>th</sup> largest coatings company. Over the next several years, Valspar continued to grow with the acquisitions of Enterprise Paint Companies, Dexter Corporation and Lilly Industries to name a few.



Minnesota Linseed Oil Co.  
Valspar  
1101 S 3rd Street  
Minneapolis  
Peter Busa murals 1973 & 1979

In 2009, Valspar's corporate headquarters moved to a new location downtown, and the facilities on Eleventh Avenue and Third Street were left vacant. Subsequently the property was rehabilitated and became "Valspar Applied Science and Technology Center".

On May 28, 2013, Valspar (Minnesota Linseed Oil) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2017, Sherwin-Williams acquired Valspar at a cost of 11.3 billion dollars. The merger of the two companies made Sherwin-Williams the world leader in coatings. After the merger, Sherwin-Williams headquarters remained in Cleveland, Ohio. The former Valspar headquarters in Minneapolis is now home to a variety of research and development and administrative functions.

Both Sherwin-Williams and Valspar have a rich history of producing quality paint and varnish. Sherwin-Williams manufactures products under brands: Sherwin-Williams, Valspar, HGTV HOME by Sherwin-Williams, Dutch Boy, Krylon, Minwax, Thompson's Water Seal, and Cabot. The Sherwin-Williams Performance Coatings Group supplies highly engineered solutions for the construction, industrial, packaging and transportation markets in more than 120 countries around the world.