

RUBBER IN NEW HAVEN

New England, and in particular Coastal Connecticut, is known for its inventions, inventors, and industrial power. New Haven is no exception. Rubber became a large industry, and several inventions and key inventors came out of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Born in New Haven in 1800, Charles Goodyear saved the doomed rubber industry by inventing a process that made the material durable and resilient enough for industrial use. After years of failed attempts, new recipes, extreme debt, and even jail time, Goodyear finally mastered sulfur-fortified rubber and perfected the process of pressure steaming, later known as the 'vulcanization' (named for the Roman god of fire) of rubber. Charles Goodyear once wrote:

"I am not disposed to complain that I have planted and others have gathered the fruits. A man has cause for regret only when he sows and no one reaps."

EXPLORE THE EXHIBIT



1. Seamless Rubber Company
2. Silly Putty
3. Sperry Topsider

EXPLORE NEW HAVEN

To visit where these artifacts were once produced or sold, visit these sites.



Seamless Rubber Company

69 Daggett St.

Silly Putty at The Block Shop

58 Wall St.



80 Hamilton St, New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 507-2436



LOST IN NEW HAVEN

INVENTIONS OF NEW HAVEN

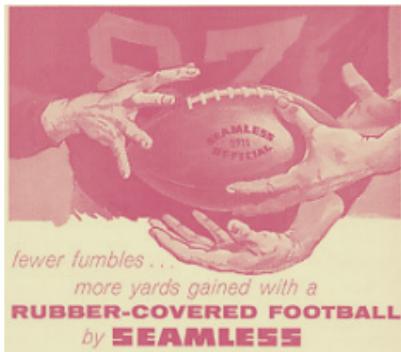
SEAMLESS RUBBER CO.

1877-1973

CHARLES LONGDON



Charles Longdon created "the first process for rubber products created without a troublesome seam." First attempting to solve the issue of the leaking, handmade newborn bottle, Longdon solved the problem by making a form and dipping it into liquid rubber while it dries. He realized this process could utilize machine capabilities to avoid the seams in products such as rubber gloves. This process and its widespread impact led him to found the Seamless Rubber Company. The company expanded to produce an array of medical and pharmaceutical products, tires, and sporting goods.



After 1919, Seamless Rubber Company moved from its original factory location at 69 Daggett St. to 253 Hallock Ave and reportedly employed nearly 1,000 New Haveners who largely lived in the nearby "Hill" neighborhood.

The Daggett Street property was listed for sale by a development company in 2023, stating the property is fully vacant, "bordering Yale University with potential for industrial or multi-family development. The area is growing and busy with a significant uptick in population".

In World War II, rubber was in high demand. "To conserve rubber, civilians in the United States were asked to donate old rubber tires, rubber raincoats, rubber boots, and anything else that consisted at least in part of rubber. Rations were placed on gasoline to hinder people from driving their cars. Propaganda posters instructed people in the importance of carpooling and showed them how to care for their household rubber products so they would last the duration of the war".



SILLY PUTTY 1943-PRESENT JAMES WRIGHT

During this time, the United States Government asked companies to invent synthetic rubber with non-restricted ingredients. This tall order reached General Electric's laboratory in New Haven, Connecticut, specifically the desk of engineer James Wright in 1943.

"In a test tube, Wright had combined boric acid and silicone oil, producing an interesting gob of goo. Wright conducted a multitude of tests on the substance and discovered it could bounce when dropped, stretch farther than regular rubber. Unfortunately, ... it didn't contain the properties needed to replace rubber".

In 1949, the ball of goo found its way to Ruth Fallgatter, owner of The Block Shop, a New Haven toy store. Selling for \$2 each, the "bouncing putty" outsold everything else in the stores catalog except for a set of 50-cent Crayola crayons. Even with the success, Ruth dropped Silly Putty from the catalog.

New Haven native Peter Hodgson didn't give up on marketing the product, purchasing 147 dollars worth of the putty in 1950 on a loan. He had Yale students separate the putty into small balls and package it in red plastic eggs at a party. By 1957, kids could watch Silly Putty T.V. commercial that were strategically placed during The Howdy Doody Show and Captain Kangaroo. In 1977, makers of Crayola bought the rights to Silly Putty.

SPERRY TOPSIDER

1935-PRESENT

PAUL SPERRY

In 1935, Paul Sperry took "a gum rubber sole, cut grooves in it, mimicking the pattern of his dog's paw... after watching his dog dart effortlessly across the ice on a cold Connecticut day". By World War II, the boat shoe was the only one trusted and the US War Department named Sperry Top-Sider as one of the official shoes of the US Navy.

Today, Sperry Top-Sider is the official footwear sponsor of the US Sailing Team, the US Junior Olympics, and the US Paralympics Sailing Team.

Your favorite "sole" is in the Navy!



Nov. 14, 1938.

P. A. SPERRY
PRO. S. L.
Filed Feb. 19, 1938

Des. 117,585

