In the summer of 1874, Charles Jeremiah Smith started a small business in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, making "hardware specialties." The entrepreneur could not have imagined that his one-person business would grow and thrive to become a global manufacturer with more than 15,000 employees. What C. J. Smith did know and understand was the importance of taking care of his customers, solving their problems, and helping them find "a better way." He believed strongly in doing business with honesty and integrity.

As the accompanying timeline illustrates, A. O. Smith's history is one of finding creative ways to solve customer problems and make them more successful. It also is a history of achievement—the innumerable contributions of the men and women who make up the company. By following the credo of Integrity, Innovation, and Customer Satisfaction, A. O. Smith's employees will ensure the company's prosperity and success for another 144 years.
In the summer of 1874, Charles Jeremiah Smith started a small business in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, making "hardware specialties." The entrepreneur could not have imagined that his one-person business would grow and thrive to become a global manufacturer with more than 16,000 employees. What C. J. Smith did know and understand was the importance of taking care of his customers, solving their problems, and helping them find "a better way." He believed strongly in doing business with honesty and integrity.

The business that C. J. Smith founded grew quickly, supplying metal parts for baby carriages and bicycles. Two of his sons, then a third – Arthur Oliver Smith – joined the Milwaukee business. A. O. Smith and his brothers shared their father’s belief in technology and innovation. In 1899, during the earliest days of the automobile revolution, A. O. Smith developed a new, lightweight steel car frame. Within a few short years, he was selling these frames to a “who’s who” of car makers including Cadillac, Oldsmobile, and Ford. A. O. Smith’s son, Lloyd Raymond, carried on the family company, expanding the automotive business and introducing the world’s first automated frame production line, the Mechanical Marvel, in 1921. Ray Smith’s engineers also discovered an improved method of welding, enabling the company to develop a wide range of steel products, including the pressure vessel for oil refining and large diameter steel pipe – an innovation that contributed to the creation of the oil and natural gas industries.

Ray Smith built an engineering organization unmatched at the time. Among the many technologies company engineers investigated was the process of fusing glass to steel. This led to new products including glass-lined beer kegs, large glass-lined brewhouse tanks… and, in 1936, the process for glass lining a residential water heater tank. Glass-lined water heaters quickly became the standard of the industry and remains so to this day. New businesses, including electric motors, fiberglass pipe, the innovative Harvestore® structure, and others all were established during this period.

As the company grew, it began to look outside of the United States for more opportunities. It expanded into Canada and Europe, opening small water heater operations to serve those markets. More recently, it became one of the first U. S. water heater manufacturers to enter the Chinese market. A. O. Smith employed a familiar formula in China, using its engineering expertise to develop products uniquely suited to Chinese consumers. It also brought along the A. O. Smith values, doing business with honesty and integrity and developing a workplace environment of mutual respect and dignity. A few short years later, the company entered India, becoming the first U. S. water heater company to serve the Indian market. Today, A. O. Smith Corporation is a global water technology company manufacturing residential and commercial water heaters and boilers and water purification equipment.

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Celebrating 144 Years of Integrity, Innovation, and Customer Satisfaction

In 1874, Charles Jeremiah Smith establishes Charles J. Smith Machine in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, beginning as a machine shop making metal parts for baby carriages and other hardware specialties. He was later joined by two of his sons and changed the name to C. J. Smith and Sons.

1888: Company enters the bicycle industry by introducing the concept of folding steel racing frames, or “folding frames,” as a rain protection alternative to existing frames.

1914: C. J. Smith and Sons receives its first order for bicycle parts from Peerless Car Company. Orders soon follow from other bicycle, motorcycle, and automobile manufacturers.


1967: A. O. Smith opens its first European sales office in The Hague, The Netherlands. Originally a sales office serving Europe and the Middle East, the facility expanded to include assembly and eventually fabrication.


2001: A. O. Smith acquires State Industries, Inc., nearly doubling the size of its water heater business. The acquisition enables Water Products to enter the retail market segment and on-the-go water purification industry with a new venture – A. O. Smith Filtration Products.

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2011: A. O. Smith was selected as the automotive industry after 30 years by selling its U.S. business and a Mexican subsidiary to Tower Automotive.

2017: Electrical Products makes the first of a series of strategic acquisitions with the purchase of UPPC, Inc. The following year, it acquires General Electric’s flow control and water heater, boiler tank, and related businesses.

2020: A. O. Smith enters the China market with three joint ventures – automotive products, fiberglass oilfield products, and residential water heaters.

2022: A. O. Smith celebrates 140 years of Integrity, Innovation, and Customer Satisfaction.

1888-1914: Under the direction of L. R. Smith, Arthur O. Smith, and their father, Arthur O. Smith, the Smith family grew the foundry into a multi-million dollar company.

1953: Glascote Products, Inc. becomes a subsidiary of A. O. Smith, expanding its vessel manufacturing capabilities. The company’s vessel manufacturing business supplies thousands of vessels and related businesses make A. O. Smith the world’s largest manufacturer of glass-coated steel products.

1972: A. O. Smith enters the China market with three joint ventures – automotive products, fiberglass oilfield products, and residential water heaters.

1974: A. O. Smith acquires the Barkley Company of North Carolina, a manufacturer of electric motors. One of their products was a pump motor that could be used on oil well applications.

1977: A. O. Smith begins producing small-scale gas turbines for military barracks, jeep frames, and 46,700 propeller blades, as well as nose airplanes.

1982: A. O. Smith begins market residential and commercial water heaters in India, one of the 10 largest in the world.

1988: A. O. Smith celebrates 100 years as the world’s largest manufacturer of commercial water heaters.

1997: A. O. Smith patents the process of making water heater tanks. This concept quickly became the standard of the industry, making A. O. Smith an industry leader in the process of fusing drinking water to steel, the company innovates the first large, single-piece glass-lined全程 replacement tank. Over the next 25 years, A. O. Smith makes more than 11,000 glass-lined brewery tanks.

2000: A. O. Smith enters the China market with the acquisition of Aquasana of Austin, Texas. Aquasana manufactures water filtration products. A. O. Smith buys Takagi’s North American manufacturing plant in Bangalore. The facility also serves as the world’s largest manufacturer of glass-coated steel products.

2008: A. O. Smith acquires State Industries, Inc., nearly doubling the size of its water heater business. The acquisition enables Water Products to enter the retail market segment and on-the-go water purification industry with a new venture – A. O. Smith Filtration Products.

2010: A. O. Smith celebrates 140 years of Integrity, Innovation, and Customer Satisfaction.

2017: The company expands its North American water treatment presence with the acquisition of Fraser Water Quality Manufacturing, an industry leader and innovator of water treatment solutions sold through retail and dealer channels.

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