

Evolution of an Identity

Named after its founders, Van Waters & Rogers served as the company name for 42 years. Then the company went through two name changes in eight years, a result of the 1966 merger with United Pacific Corporation.

The first name change – VWR United – was “cumbersome, difficult to remember, and certainly not euphonious,” wrote company historians, Gordon Newell and Richard Sawyer.

According to Newell and Sawyer, the new name – Univar – was the brainchild of T. Frank Rawlinson, president of Centennial Mills, a major division of the company. The company then hired a public relations firm, which also came up with “Univar.”

Next, a contest was held within the company with about 100 employees submitting 300 names. The field was narrowed to 40 names, and the top three entered the finals. “Univar” won the vote by a margin of four to one. The shareholders overwhelmingly approved the choice, and “Univar” was adopted in 1974.

Although the parent company had a new name, the company continued to operate to the customer as Van Water & Rogers.

Royal Pakhoed, a Dutch company, acquired Univar in 1996, and it merged with Royal Van Ommeren in 1999 to become Royal Vopak.

In 2002, Univar split off from Royal Vopak as an independent company and a world leader in chemical distribution.



1966



1974



1996



1999



2002