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Hygrade-Sylvania

by Susan Edwards on April 4th, 2023 | [0 Comments](#)



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Frank Poor of Salem, Massachusetts purchased the Merritt Manufacturing Company in 1901 and moved the business from Middleton to Danvers, Massachusetts. The company replaced the filaments in burnt-out lightbulbs. Frank Poor and his brother Edward Poor partnered on this venture which they named Bay State Lamp Company. In 1909, they began manufacturing and selling lamps under the name Hygrade Incandescent Lamp Company. Walter E. Poor was brought on as the company's engineer in 1911. The Poores prospered and moved the company to a larger facility at 60 Boston Street in Salem in 1916.



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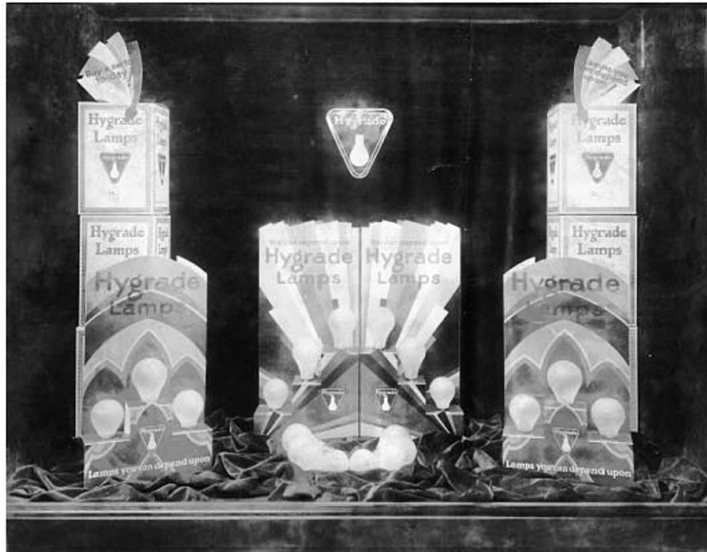
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Meanwhile, General Electric purchased the Novelty Incandescent Lamp Company of Pennsylvania in 1920 and renamed it Keystone Lamp Division. They quickly sold it to Bernard G. Erksine and two associates, Joseph C. Wortman and Guy S. Felt, who established Nilco Lamp Works in Emporium, Pennsylvania, and a subsidiary that manufactured tubes, Sylvania Products Company. Nilco, Hygrade, and Sylvania merged in 1931 to create the Hygrade Sylvania Corporation.



In 1932, the company opened a new radio tube production plant on Loring Avenue in Salem. Under the name Hygrade, the company sold incandescent lamps and marketed the first fluorescent lamp in 1938. Sylvania became the second largest producer of radio tubes, behind RCA. New factory locations were opened in Ipswich and Danvers, creating six plants in total. The company shortened its name to Sylvania Electric Products, Inc. in 1942.

Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Sylvania transitioned from civilian production of light bulbs and radio tubes to just shy of 100% production solely for the war effort. At the time, the company had around 6,000 employees, and nearly 700 were deployed during the war. This left the factories short-staffed yet tasked with increased demand. Women played a crucial role in filling that void and in January 1943, they were credited in Sylvania's newsletter "The Beam" with "having helped win the highest production award of the Army and Navy." Sylvania plants in Salem and Danvers were honored with the Army-Navy "E" award for the production of war materials in 1944. The award was given at a ceremony at the Salem Armory.



General Telephone and Electronics (GTE) merged with Sylvania in 1959.

Sylvania's Salem factories closed in 1993; when Sylvania was purchased by

Osram. In 1997, Salem State acquired the former Sylvania plant on Loring Avenue, creating the university's Central Campus. Outside of the Bertolon School of Business, sits a monument dedicated to eight employees of the Sylvania plant who lost their lives in World War II. The memorial was repaired and rededicated in 2012. The Sylvania name can still be found on lighting products.

Hygrade-Sylvania Timeline

1901 - Merrit Manufacturing Company
1901-1913 - Bay State Lamp Company
1909-1931 - Hygrade Incandescent Lamp Company
1906-1920 - Novelty Incandescent Lamp Company
1920-1921 - Keystone Lamp Division
1922-1931 - Nilco Lamp Works
1931-1942 - Hygrade Sylvania Corporation
1942-1971 - Sylvania Electrical Products, Inc.
1971-1993 - GTE Sylvania, Inc.
1993-Present - Osram Sylvania

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