

The Beginning:

Sikkens products have been available within the New Zealand since 1993, but the Sikkens brand dates back further than this and encompasses a wealth of history as demonstrated below.

It all started in 1792 when painter and decorator Wiert Willem Sikkens started the production of Sikkens lacquers in the town of Groningen in the Netherlands. He used a small gateway in the Groningen town wall as a boiler house and bought a property on Herestraat, the best shopping street in the town. In the busy Herestraat he sold glass, wood and tools as well as paint and lacquer to painters and decorators. His son Geert Willem took the company over in 1837 and alongside his brother-in-law Willem Penaat chose G.W. Sikkens & Co. as the company name. This name became synonymous with quality and craftsmanship.



First Stages of Growth:

The business continued to expand. Following the death of Geert Willem Sikkens, Willem Penaat further developed the business in 1869 by having a new factory built. Sikkens lacquers had become well known by now and were in great demand, even as far away as Germany. In 1903 the two Penaat sons, Willem and Johannes, took possession of a larger factory on the new Helpman Industrial Estate. This was followed by a number of expansions within this new factory including machinery, buildings, stores and a laboratory where quality was monitored and new products were developed, such as Japanese lacquers (around 1900) and fast drying car lacquers (in 1924), which made it possible to refinish a car perfectly within six days.



New Products for New Purposes:

A great revolution brought about the introduction of cellulose lacquer in 1928. A special factory was built and many industries profited from the development of this modern lacquer. Many diverse products were finished using the new Sikkens lacquers: cars, aircraft, trains, typewriters, furniture, shoes, walking sticks, water heaters, dolls, portrait frames and much more.

A new era began for painters and decorators (in 1934) with the introduction of the synthetic coating Rubbol AZ.

A Large Scale Move:

The town of Groningen became too small for the continuously expanding Sikkens factories, and in 1939 the entire company moved to the west of the country. A completely new, modern complex was acquired in Sassenheim. The Second World War delayed further growth. Importation of foreign raw materials was impossible. In the laboratories a great deal of time was spent on developing artificial resins, with great success. This even led to the set up of the artificial resin company 'Synthese' (in 1947), now 'Akzo Nobel Resins'. Immediately after the war Sikkens resumed deliveries to customers as quickly as possible: for buildings, transport and industrial products.



Full Range of Coatings:

Sikkens had specialised in the production of high quality finishes for professional users for many years, but within the market there was also a demand for a variety of other kinds of paint. Due to this, during the fifties and sixties Sikkens decided to take over a number of well known factories. Alpha wall paints, Flexa DIY paints, Smits' nautical and construction paints and Cetabever stains completed the Sikkens offering. Several production units were also opened, Sikkens Fama in Belgium, Condorverken in Sweden, Sikkens SpA in Italy and Sikkens Lackfabriken GmbH in Germany. All of these companies (plus several raw material factories like Synthese) were amalgamated within the Sikkens Group holding company.

Continued Expansion:

Increase in scale was the fashionable term in the seventies. Sikkens was at the forefront of this. In 1962 the Sikkens Group affiliated with the Koninklijke Zout chain, the chemical alliance that had been created the year before. In 1965 KZK merged with Koninklijke Zwanenberg Organon. In 1969 these two were linked to the AKU, the Algemene Kunstzijde Unie, and so Akzo was created. That was the beginning of European growth. In Germany the Lesonal paint factory (established 1858) was purchased and Astral (established 1855) was bought in France. Together with the Sikkens group these three formed Akzo Coatings. The companies combined their many years of experience, which resulted in integration of production and distribution and a broadening and improvement of the offering.

The Rapid Changes of Today:

The linked international research of Akzo Coatings started up an ongoing flow of new and improved products. Examples include high performance transparent woodstains in the 'Filter 7' range, where special absorbers and reflectors drastically reduce damage by UV radiation, water based opaque systems and 'High Solids' systems that reduce the environmentally damaging emission of solvent substances. From the seventies onwards Akzo Coatings continued to grow by building and purchasing factories in Western and Eastern Europe, in North and South America, in Asia and in Africa. In 1993 a merger was created with the Swedish corporation Nobel Industries, which had specialised in lacquers and varnishes since 1871. With the formation of Akzo Nobel, the outstanding elements of Akzo were combined with the expertise and strength of Nobel, to create an organisation which even today feels strongly about quality and service, just as Wiert Willem Sikkens did in 1792.