# A short history

When Leo Leander Bekaert started making barbed wire in 1880, what he did was not so very unique, but how he did it and where he did it were. The prevailing industrial philosophy of the time required finished products to be manufactured as close as possible to the source of the raw materials. Leo Bekaert, however, manufactured his product as close as possible to his market. He was selling to farmers, so he made his barbed wire where the farmers were.

And he very rapidly diversified: from barbed wire he went to bedsprings, wire netting, steel wire, and nails. Thus, he set a pattern of pragmatism, realism, and adaptability that has served Bekaert well throughout our turbulent century.

World War I marked the end of the First Industrial Revolution and the society it supported. It also forced fundamental changes in Leo Bekaert’s company, for the Bekaert plant – along with most of Belgium – was devastated.

Only a few of the machines could be recovered, but Leo Bekaert’s primary assets were intact: his own entrepreneurial drive and his extraordinarily loyal staff.

When Leo Bekaert entrusted the daily operation of the company to his sons in 1920, a new economic, political, and social era had dawned. And they adapted. The impending economic crisis and rampant protectionism made international expansion necessary for survival, and technological advances led to the conversion from steam to electrical power, which ushered in the Second Industrial Revolution.

# Bekaert in a nutshell

Number of factories 70

Number of countries 22

Number of sales offices/distribution centers 45

Turnover – 1999 (billion Euro) 2,5

Volume – 1999 (000 tonnes) 2,310

Number of people – 1999 16,452

Principal shareholder Bekaert Family

# Bekaert in the World

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of plants | Europe | North America | Latin America | Middle/Far East | Total |
| End 1995 | 29 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 40 |
| End 2000 | 36 | 7 | 14 | 4 | 61 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Personnel | Europe | North America | Latin America | Middle/Far East | Total |
| End 1995 | 12 850 | 901 | 2 178 | 835 | 16 764 |
| End 2000 | 10 097 | 1 491 | 4 448 | 1 641 | 17 677 |