

THE THRILL OF ICE-COLD SUCCESS: GEA REFRIGERATION CELEBRATES

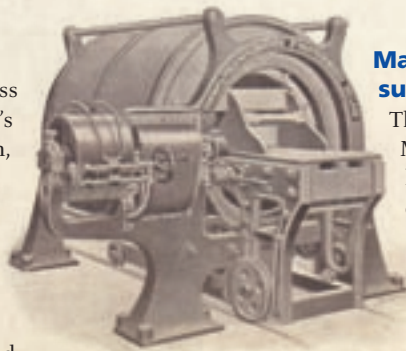


This year, Grasso's Koninklijke Machinefabrieken N.V. is celebrating its 150th anniversary. The company was founded in 1858 and has since evolved into the holding of the refrigeration companies. Grasso is the head organization of close to 40 businesses integrated into the Refrigeration Division of GEA Group around the world. All of them are operating in industrial refrigeration and offer all-inclusive product and service portfolios. Through continuous investments into the technical expertise, related innovations and the competency of its staff, Grasso was able to attain the position of world market leader in the field of industrial refrigeration.

Grasso's years of foundation

Willem Grasso laid the corner stone for success in 1858, when he decided to open a blacksmith's shop in Hinthamereinde, 's-Hertogenbosch, Holland.

Grasso was born in 1833 in Tilburg. He was the son of blacksmith Hendrikus Grasso and his wife Adriana Pulskens. The family moved to 's-Hertogenbosch in 1845. At the age of 25, Grasso opened his own small workshop in 1858. In the shop he made steam machines and agricultural machines as well as gardening tools. He also manufactured and repaired devices for the tobacco industry. Moreover, the young entrepreneur designed steam hammers for customers of his own trade – blacksmiths. He ran a lucrative business and thanks to an increasing demand he was able to set up a completely new plant in 1868.



Margarine catapults the company into a successful future

The invention of margarine by French chemist Mège Mouriès in 1869 proved to be a true milestone in Grasso's history. In 1871 butter merchant Jurgent from Oss was the first business man to license the rights for the production of the butter-like substance; just a year later Simon van den Bergh followed suit. The two began to collaborate in 1908, which eventually led to the establishment of the Margarine-Unie in 1927. In 1930 this company merged with British soapmaker Lever and the world-renowned Unilever conglomerate was born. Eventually, Unilever became a key account for Grasso. Grasso happened to be the first entrepreneur who manufactured special machines for the ever-growing dairy industry. He quickly made a name for himself in this sector. The raw materials required for the production of margarine and dairy products were highly perishable and had to be refrigerated.



150 YEARS OF SUCCESS

In 1887 Grasso's son Henri took over the management of his father's business. In a new production facility, Grasso now installed a dedicated department for refrigeration technology. In this plant, and under his own trademark, Henri Grasso developed Holland's first refrigeration compressor in 1910. A new larger factory complex started operations in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1913. The venue remains the location of the company's headquarters to date. Grasso also converted the business into a stock corporation, yet continued to hold 100 per cent of the shares.



High efficiency heat pump system for a greenhouse for orchids

Reconstruction and new beginnings

At first, it appeared that Grasso's "golden years" were numbered: When 's-Hertogenbosch was liberated by the Allies in 1944, the plant had sustained great damage and production was at a stand-still. After World War II, the company ceased making dairy and margarine machines. Instead, it developed pressurized air and refrigeration technology solutions. New beginnings: Grasso now focused on the export of refrigeration equipment and the establishment of numerous foreign Grasso branches. During the 100-year-anniversary celebration in 1958, the executive management at Grasso was awarded the honor of being "royal". In order to allow the company to make further investments and withstand ever-tougher competition, Grasso joined the GEA Group in 1992. Since the acquisition of Grasso by the GEA Group, the Refrigeration Division successfully rolled out innovative components for industrial refrigeration and made growth-driving further acquisitions that fostered the expansion of the division's worldwide activities. ■

Grasso and the refrigeration technology

- Founded 1858 by Willem Grasso under Grasso's Name, in 's-Hertogenbosch, Holland.
- Celebration of the 150-year-anniversary of Grasso's Koninklijke Machinefabrieken (GEA Refrigeration) in 2008.
- GEA's Refrigeration Division is the global market leader in industrial refrigeration technology.
- Grasso is engaged in the entire supply chain of industrial refrigeration manufacturers (compressor, refrigeration unit manufacturers, makers of icemachines, freezers, steamers, condensers, valves and other installations, including packaging systems) and handles everything from product sales to contract and service operations (development, design, production, installation, order processing, services and facility maintenance).
- GEA's Refrigeration Division is in a position of rendering service support to its customers anywhere in the world.
- The division's core business targets are food processing, oil/gas/chemicals, storage and distribution, maritime, supply facilities and retailers.
- Grasso focuses on the continued expansion of its business through investments into new technology, strengthening of its existing product groups and the geographic expansion aiming at attaining customer proximity
- GEA's Refrigeration Division aims at the development of innovative, progressive technical solutions that are energy efficient and supports the utilization of ecological and safe food production processes. ■

The old plant in 1913

