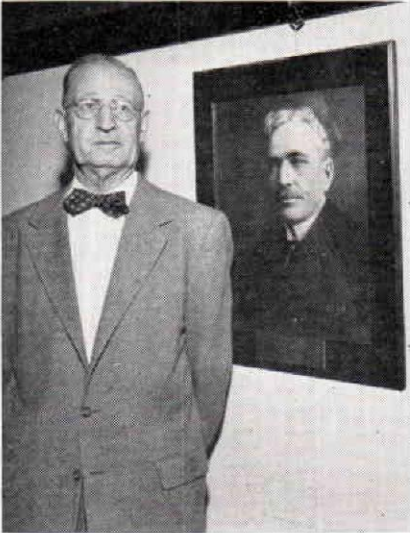


## SCHOENE TAKES CONTROLLING INTEREST IN THE J. F. ROWLEY COMPANY

Report by JACK HELTSLEY



J. Blaine Korrady, manager for many years of the J. F. Rowley Company in Chicago is shown with a photograph of the late J. F. Rowley, founder of the firm.

Waldemar Schoene, Chicago, has purchased controlling interest in the J. F. Rowley Company, which occupies 3,000 square feet of floor space at 521 West Monroe Street, Chicago. In issuing this statement, Blaine Korrady, who has guided the destinies of the company since the late J. F. Rowley's retirement in 1933, announced his own approaching retirement.

"Waldemar was formerly associated with the Rowley Company," said Mr. Korrady. "He understands thoroughly the type of artificial limb with which we have been identified and he has remained a close friend throughout the years. We thought he was the best qualified to carry on the high standards and traditions of the firm."

Mr. Korrady has consented to remain for an indeterminate period as consultant.

"I promised to stay on as long as I'm needed," he said, "but I'm optimistic enough to believe it won't be for too long. I have a lot of important loafing to do."

With the retirement of Korrady, a long and important chapter in the history of prosthetics in America comes to a close.

Blaine Korrady is as well known in prosthetic circles here and abroad, as the founder of the firm, J. F. Rowley who died in 1938, was before him.

Mr. Korrady was secretary of the Orthopedic Appliance and Limb Manufacturers Association immediately preceding the incumbent secretary, M. P. Cestaro. He was also the first secretary-treasurer of the American Board for Certification. Until its dissolution in 1956, he was an active member of the Advisory Committee on Artificial Limbs of the Council on Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation of the American Medical Association, and

numerous citations in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* attest to the importance of his contribution. Korrady joined the J. F. Rowley Company in 1922 as office manager, later becoming secretary of the firm.

The rise of the J. F. Rowley Company is an American success story and, in the artificial limb field, many of its incidents have become legendary. But it is really more than this: it is a story of social significance because the era of its growth parallels, and is even identified with, the evolution of the concept of rehabilitation as we know it today.

J. F. Rowley opened his first one-man shop in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1886. As a child in a very large Iowa farm family, he gave early evidence of cleverness with his hands and an independent and inquiring mind. As we might surmise, his own ideas about his manifest destiny did not always coincide with the plans his family had for him. Milking cows and pitching hay were useful and honest work, but they didn't fit his notion of what he should do with his life.

How his attention turned toward the problems of limb prosthesis is now obscure, but there is no doubt but that his peculiar combination of artistic skills and mechanical inventiveness ideally fitted him for that career. During his lifetime he secured some fifty patents for improvements in artificial limbs.

From Des Moines, Rowley later came to Chicago, where the J. F. Rowley Company was incorporated in 1904. By that time the energetic founder of the firm had already laid the basis for many of the improvements in artificial limbs later generally identified with his name.

Before opening his own shop, Rowley had been employed in making artificial legs with wooden sockets and wooden feet. A catalogue issued by his company in 1922 says, "The Anglesey leg somewhat modernized and the Marks leg with sponge rubber foot with rigid ankle" occupied the market until Rowley entered the field as an inventor in 1886.

To appreciate the problem confronting him, it is necessary to assess the situation which prevailed in 1886. In the first place, there was the element of human resistance. The old timers thought that what was good enough last year would be good enough this year, and to overcome this conservatism Rowley was forced to strike out for himself. In the second place, there was the matter of materials.

Rubber, later to become an industrial and household commonplace, was at that time little known or used. In that day, a few carloads was enough to supply the needs of the entire country. Rowley himself knew little of it; the plants which manufactured the commercial product were hundreds of miles away and weren't giving out any information.

One way or another, he had come by a section of a rubber foot (probably of the Marks type mentioned above) and became fevered with the desire to do something on his own, and, if possible, do it better. From a dentist he got the address of a supplier and soon had a small supply of uncured gum. His first attempt at vulcanization was successful as far as it went. Using equipment he borrowed from the dentist, he turned out some solid rubber, much like the rubber heels of today.

What he wanted, however, was a sponge rubber which, he figured, would be much lighter, much more elastic and resilient, and much more durable. In a general way, he knew how the rubber could be sponged: if a chemical which would become gaseous during vulcanization could be introduced into the raw gum, a leavening process would occur similar to that in the baking of bread.

The chief problem was how to introduce the chemical into the green rubber, which is a refractory material. This was solved by passing the raw rubber through hot rollers during which the chemical was introduced into the gum. A vulcanizer big enough to hold several foot molds was obtained, a foot form made, patterns and castings made, and the first attempt was launched. On the first try the rubber was not properly cured, but the second was successful.

The first client was a young farmer with a below-knee amputation. He was fitted with a wooden socket leg attached solidly to the rubber foot. Later the mortise and tendon joint became slightly loosened—a mishap that left the young man undisturbed because, he said, it gave enough play to make walking more natural for him. This led to an early modification resulting in a sponge rubber foot having elastic cushions of rubber so placed as to permit this type of motion. It was patented as the Rowley Standard Foot.

There followed a succession of improvements in the foot and other components of the leg with which the trade is familiar. The Rowley foot, joints, and other components are used by artificial limb manufacturers in this country and abroad.

The story of the Rowley triumphs in the international field during the first world war was ably told by Mrs. Dillard in the biography of her father, William Edgar "Billy" Isle, in the June 1959 issue of the *Journal*. The triumph of the Rowley leg over all others in competition with it in Great Britain on July 21, 1915, gratifying as it was, brought additional burdens and responsibilities to Rowley.

As many as 500 legs were shipped per month from the Chicago plant, and the establishment of facilities in England and Scotland made it necessary for him to be abroad much of the time during the war and immediately in the postwar era. Despite this, he maintained a constant interest in facilitating exchanges of ideas, the elevation of professional standards in prosthesis, and the improvement of professional relations in the industry.

He played a prominent role in the organization of the Association of Limb Manufacturers of America, which preceded the present OALMA. His intimate association with orthopedic surgeons in resolving the problems of amputation in their relation to prosthesis led him to take an active though non-official interest in the discussions which later bore fruit in the *Handbook of Amputation*, the first manual of its kind, issued by the Council on Physical Therapy of the American Medical Association.

No specific plans for reorganization of the Rowley Facility have been announced. Mr. Schoene, who is himself prominent in American prosthetics, says that the company will continue to maintain high standards of service both to fabricators of limbs to whom it has supplied Rowley parts for many years and to individuals who wish to be fitted with an artificial limb. Among the changes contemplated, however, Mr. Schoene has definitely announced that the machining of all parts will be standardized and that they will be available to all manufacturers.