

# A Brief History of Sperry Corporation

---

*Re-typed from an undated paper - December 20, 2012*

Sperry is historically linked to many of the major business machine advances of the past hundred years as well as to the invention of the world's first electronic computer in 1946.

The Sperry story begins in 1873 with the introduction of the first commercial typewriter by E. Remington & Sons of Iliion N.Y. After a half century of business operation, E. Remington & Sons was merged with several other business machine makers to form a new company in 1927 - Remington Rand, Inc. During the next two decades, Remington Rand earned an enviable reputation as a developer of financial record and filing systems and a manufacturer of typewriters, mechanical calculators and punched card systems. But the acquisition of two small companies in 1950 and 1952 would form the nucleus of an entirely new kind of business which continues to be reflected in the organization today.

In 1950, Remington Rand purchased the Eckert-Mauchly Computer Corporation of Philadelphia, PA. A few years earlier, while affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania, J. Presper Eckert and John Mauchly had designed and assembled ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator.) This huge electronic computer, the first of its kind in the world, was built to solve ballistics problems for the U.S. Army and was hundreds of times faster than any of its mechanical counterparts. The success of ENIAC prompted Eckert and Mauchly to form their own computer company in 1947. In 1949, they completed BINAC (Binary Automatic Computer) for the Northrop Corporation in California. Another computer which they called UNIVAC (Universal Automatic Computer) was only partially completed when the Eckert-Mauchly Computer Corporation was acquired by Remington Rand in 1950. the first model of the UNIVAC I Series was delivered to the United States Bureau of the Census in 1951.

In 1952, Remington Rand purchased Engineering Research Associates (ERA) of St. Paul, Minn. ERA had been organized in 1946 by a group of World War II mathematicians and engineers who had developed considerable expertise in electronic cryptography and special purpose military electronic systems. In 1950, ERA delivered two electronic computers to the United States Navy and Tahoma Institute of

Technology. After ERA was acquired by Remington Rand, each of the computer models in this initial series was identified as a UNIVAC 1101.

In 1955, Remington Rand merged with the Sperry Corporation, forming Sperry Rand. The Sperry Corporation had been founded in 1910 by Elmer A. Sperry, a prolific inventor and applied scientist. Called the Sperry Gyroscope Company, the firm engineered navigational gyrocompasses for maritime applications and aircraft direction finding and stabilization equipment. This included the automatic pilot development. Sperry was incorporated in 1933, and had acquired Vickers Incorporated, manufacturer of efficient, low-cost devices for powering hydraulic control systems, in 1937, and the New Holland Machine Company, producer of agricultural equipment, in 1947. Operating as Sperry Rand, the company established the Sperry Phoenix Division, manufacturer of flight systems equipment, in 1957, and separated the computer operations from the Remington office products division, forming the Univac Division in 1962.

The 1960s and 70s were decades of organizational stability and business growth in Sperry's key markets. The company expanded its international operations through formation of joint ventures in Scandinavia and Japan and establishment of engineering and manufacturing sites in Canada, Belgium, Germany, France, Scotland and England. In 1979, with the planned divestment of Sperry's electric shaver and office products operations, Sperry Rand Corporation changed its name to Sperry Corporation to streamline the corporate identity. The 1984 divestment of Sperry Vickers further focused the corporate mission on designing and producing high technology, electronic-based systems and products for commercial business, government, defense, aerospace and maritime markets.

Today, Sperry, with corporate headquarters in New York City, is composed of five operating groups:

- Information Systems Group (40,000 employees) headquartered in Blue Bell, Pa., a leading manufacturer of commercial computer systems, peripheral equipment, software and services.
- Defense Products Group (14,000 employees) headquartered in Eagan, Minn., a leader in real-time, high technology militarized information processing and support systems and products.

- Aerospace and Marine Group (9,000 employees) headquarter in Phoenix, Az., a leading manufacturer of systems and instrumentation for commercial, defense and general aviation and maritime markets.
- Systems Management Group (5,000 employees) headquartered in Great Neck, N.Y., a leading prime contractor to domestic and international government markets specializing in electronic-based systems.
- Sperry New Holland (5,000 employees) headquartered in New Holland, Pa., the world's largest manufacturer of specialized agricultural equipment.

Since the 1952 acquisition of ERA, the company's operations in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota have been steadily expanded. Today, Sperry's employment in Minnesota numbers 14,000, ranking the company as the State's fourth largest industrial employer.

The Defense Products Group is headquartered in Eagan, Minn., and operates 12 divisional facilities in the St. Paul area. Information Systems Group's System Products Division designs and manufactures large-scale computers and components at facilities in suburban Roseville, Brooklyn Park, and Eagan, and in outstate Jackson, Minn. A regional Information Systems Group asset reclamation center is located in Mendota Heights, as is the Systems Management Group's air traffic control operations. Eagan is also the site of regional operations for Sperry New Holland. [re-typed by LABenson]