

THE STANDARD OIL COMPANY (NEW JERSEY) HISTORY PROJECT

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A brief introduction to the history of the writing of the history of the Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) seems appropriate here. Dr. Henrietta M. Larson has devoted many years of her life to the project on which her paper is based.

In the mid-1940s the preliminary steps were taken to write of Jersey Standard, a corporation with an international pattern dating from the nineteenth century. Executives of the company approached Professor N. S. B. Gras, then Isidor Straus Professor of Business History at the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard University, on the possibility of writing its history. His co-worker there, Miss Larson, made the careful survey of records necessary to determine the feasibility of such a study. On the basis of the information gathered and the relationship and understanding growing out of discussions between the Harvard professors and executives of the company, the work started in 1947.

Leadership of the project was at first in charge of Professor Gras (who in 1947 was still active at Harvard), with Dr. Larson assisting as local supervisor of the authors in New York. The failure of Professor Gras' health and then his death left Miss Larson bearing the major responsibility for completion of the work. The return of some authors to teaching assignments or other employment when parts of the study remained to be completed has occasioned her participation to be enlarged and extended much beyond what she could have anticipated in the first autumn of the project.

Several characteristics of this study, although no longer unique in the writing of business history, deserve mention here. The authors and researchers worked under the auspices of the Business History Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit New York corporation. They had free access to all existing records of the company, although, as copious footnotes indicate, they are indebted to many libraries. Specialists in various fields in Standard Oil and trustees and several members of the staff of the Foundation read the volumes, but the authors had freedom of expression, benefiting only from those comments they wished to utilize.

A new volume is soon to be available in the series. Those already published are:

Ralph W. Hidy and Muriel E. Hidy, *Pioneering in Big Business: History of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), 1882-1911*, Volume 1 (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1955).

George S. Gibb and Evelyn H. Knowlton, *The Resurgent Years, 1911-1927: History of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey)*, Volume 2 (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1956).

Henrietta M. Larson and Kenneth Wiggins Porter, *History of Humble Oil and Refining Company: A Study in Industrial Growth* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1959).