

Our History— How it Began

What began as a small family-run candle and soap business, grew through innovation, creative marketing and partnerships to become the largest consumer goods company in the world.

P&G WAS FOUNDED IN 1837 BY TWO MEN WHO MET BY CHANCE.

William Procter, emigrating from England, established himself as a candle maker in Cincinnati, which was a busy center of commerce and industry in the early nineteenth century. And James Gamble, arriving from Ireland, apprenticed himself to a soap maker. The two might never have met had they not married sisters Olivia and Elizabeth Norris, whose father convinced his new sons-in-law to become business partners.

As a result, in 1837, a bold new enterprise was born: Procter & Gamble.

William Procter was born in 1801 in England. As a boy, he worked as general store apprentice, learning to “dip candles” – a skill that would later lead to both fame and fortune.

His first entrepreneurial venture, however, met with disaster. The day after opening, his dry goods shop in London was robbed, leaving Procter \$8,000 in debt – a huge sum in 1832. Determined to rebuild, he and his wife decided to immigrate to the United States. While traveling down the Ohio River, Mrs. Procter became ill and died a few months after their arrival in Cincinnati.

Procter first worked in a bank. He then decided to use his past experience as a candle maker to earn extra income and help pay off his debt. He took advantage of the fat and oil by-products from Cincinnati’s large meatpacking industry. Procter began as a one-person operation – manufacturing, selling and delivering candles to his customers in the area.

During this time, he also met and proposed to Olivia Norris, the daughter of a prominent candle maker in town, Alexander Norris.

Meanwhile, **James Gamble** was born in 1803, in Ireland. He immigrated with his family to America in 1819 as part of a mass exodus from Northern Ireland. They were headed for Illinois, but during the trip, James Gamble, then 16, became violently ill; his parents took him ashore in Cincinnati. By the time James recovered, the family had decided to stay.

At 18, James began an apprenticeship with a local soap maker, then years later, opened his own soap and candle shop with a friend. Before long, Gamble met and married Elizabeth Ann Norris, the second daughter of Alexander Norris.

172 years old
~300 Brands
135,000 Employees
\$79 Billion in Sales
80+ Countries



THE CREATION OF THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY

Father-in law, Alexander Norris, noted that his new sons were competing for the same raw materials. He suggested a joint venture. After several years, the sons agreed and on October 31, 1837, they signed the partnership agreement that founded the Procter & Gamble Company. Their total assets were \$7,192.24.

The business began during nationwide panic and depression. But the struggling young firm survived. Cincinnati proved a sound business base because as a meat packing center, it offered plenty of fat and oil for soap and candle making.

- The Procter’s eldest son, William A. Procter, was the first P&G President in 1890.
- Son Harley T. was the company’s first Advertising and Sales Manager. He named Ivory Soap.
- The Gamble’s eldest son, James N. Gamble, invented Ivory Soap and founded the first laboratory in P&G history.