

HANDTMANN GROUP OF COMPANIES PRESS RELEASE

ALBERT HANDTMANN: THE FOUNDER

Biberach an der Riß, 19th April 2023. The history of Handtmann as a company begins with Christoph Albert Handtmann (1845-1918). The founder of the company was known by his first name Albert, and stands for the artisan roots of the future technology company, although he already demonstrates the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit so typical of the coming Handtmann generations.

Christoph Albert Handtmann is born on 6th February 1845 as the eighth child to Sophie Dürr (1805-1867) and baker Johann Christoph Handtmann (1794-1853). As a later-born son, this offspring of a family that has been resident in Biberach since the end of the 16th century does not succeed his father in the baker's trade, but learns a new trade at a local armourer. In a small town like Biberach, such a blacksmith's shop would primarily produce agricultural equipment and tools.

Craftsman Albert Handtmann, however, feels the urge to broaden his horizons. Hence in the mid-1860s, he sets off on the then still customary, although no longer required, itinerancy, the so-called journeyman years. On foot, he makes his way to Kempten, where he works as a bell-foundryman. He not only learns about elaborate and costly bronze casting, but also about the more inexpensive brass casting, also called "yellow casting", because simple and small bells are often cast from brass. A bell-foundryman also manufactures items such as water pumps and fittings, also primarily from brass. A piece of history of great importance to the future company called Handtmann. Albert Handtmann then moves on to Saxony, where he acquires knowledge in mechanical engineering and advances to become a master mechanic.

The journeyman years of Albert Handtmann would last almost ten years, when he returns to Biberach in his late twenties to settle down. In 1873, he sets up his own business and founds the "Mechanische Werkstätte und Gelb-Gießerei Albert Handtmann" in the Bachmühle mill at Ehinger-Tor-Platz square 21. He can make use of the large mill wheel to operate the large drive wheel for his machine tools. On 25th August 1875, he marries the innkeeper's daughter Anna Marie Flächer (1847-1907). Together, they bring around 12,000 guilders into the marriage, a sum that would, in terms of today's buying power, correspond to cash assets of 140,000 euros. The couple therefore can be considered rather wealthy.

A man with many interests and an instinct for innovation

Right from the beginning, Albert Handtmann's professional interests extend beyond the mere trade. When he gets married, for example, he also lists five commercial books and four trade books as part of his personal belongings, a remarkable stock of specialist books for the time, which shows his ambition to make progress. His open-mindedness towards new technical ideas also bears witness to this. For his foundry, for example, Albert Handtmann sets up an oil-fired smelting furnace, which achieves the 1,000 °C required for smelting metal a lot quicker than the coal furnaces that were commonly used at the time.

In general, the sturdy man from Swabia is considered well-read and educated. Apart from specialist literature, he would have an unusual number of books and a good-natured character, goes the tradition. Otherwise, he would be fully focused on his business and leave his wife Anna Marie in charge of family matters. Albert Handtmann

cultivates the patriarchal style of running a business, rather common among the craftsmen at the time. This also includes the family having lunch together with apprentices and journeymen every day.

Company patron with commercial skill and entrepreneurial spirit

Albert Handtmann always finds a way to expand or reorient the business with his good sense for business. Via the production of brass barrel taps, he moves on to supplying brass connectors and taps for a machine factory in Biberach, which equips breweries and mash houses. And because he works for breweries, he soon also supplies their taverns and inns. Handtmann manufactures iceboxes and refrigerated cabinets for them, as well as hand pumps and semi-automatic pumps to deliver the beer from the cellar to the taproom.

Albert Handtmann's versatility is astonishing. In the catalogue of the Biberach district trade exhibition in 1900, he lists as products: "Iceboxes and refrigerated cabinets, carbon dioxide, air and water pressure devices. All types of taps and connectors. Rubber tubes. Large, circular, vane, suction and pressure pumps." Handtmann's clientèle also includes private households, for whom he operates a retail shop and takes even small commissions. For more remote farms, Handtmann develops the so-called hydraulic rams, which raise water from a stream to a higher level, and thus ensure consistent supply, solely with the help of dynamic pressure. A key product for decades will be caps, screw fittings, valves and encapsulated manometers for the distillation apparatus of fruit distilleries.

Albert Handtmann once again demonstrates his entrepreneurial spirit in 1894, when he acquires a steam engine because the town has cancelled his lease of the water power he had previously used to drive his lathe, the milling machines and drills. He quickly realises that the exhaust steam from the machine can be used to steam pieces of laundry and, without further ado, he sets up a laundry.

Father of nine

Albert and Anna Maria Handtmann have nine children. Their eldest son Karl Albert (1874-1951) enters the parental business as the successor at an early age and becomes a master mechanic and caster. He remains unmarried and childless. Their daughter Marie Amalie (1875-1914) becomes a dressmaker, remains unmarried and dies of tuberculosis. Georg Karl dies as an infant in 1877. August Hermann (1878-1954) becomes a master locksmith. Their daughters Anna Marie (1879-1944), Luise Sophie (1882-1949) and Luise Rosine (1886-1972) follow. The fourth and youngest son, Georg Heinrich (1888-1916) becomes a blacksmith and is killed in World War I. It is their third son, Adolf Karl (1884-1953), who would carry on the Handtmann line.

When World War I breaks out and brass becomes a wartime material, Albert Handtmann has to stop manufacturing brewery and distillery fittings. The learned armourer does not take on arms production. All that is left to produce is bronze plain bearings for locomotives and lubricating bearings for horse-drawn carriages. Meanwhile, he also switches his focus to the manufacture of pumps for fire brigade syringes. The workforce dwindles in size to leave his son Karl Albert and five to six workers who have been exempt from military service. Together they barely manage to keep the company going.

Christoph Albert Handtmann should not live to see the war end; he dies on 16th June 1918 at the age of 73. Nevertheless, the senior principal has left his company thus well positioned that it should successfully weather these and all subsequent times of crisis. Today, Handtmann is one of only two companies in Biberach to have persisted without interruption since industrialisation in Upper Swabia at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

About the Handtmann Group of Companies

The Handtmann Group of Companies is a globally active technology company operating in the processing industry with 4,300 employees, 2,700 of whom work at the headquarters in Biberach an der Riß. Cutting-edge technology, innovation and a strong focus on the individual are at the core of the business run by the founding Handtmann family from Biberach. Handtmann is decentrally organised in six divisions with autonomous management structures: Light Metal Casting and Systems Engineering for the automotive industry, Filling and Portioning Systems and Process Technology for the food industry, Plastics Engineering and e-solutions. At the head of the group of companies is a holding, which acts as the management, financing and holding company. In 2022, Handtmann generated sales of 1.1 billion euros. A high degree of investment in research and development and production facilities is facilitated by a strict reinvestment policy on the part of the owners of the company to be able to sustainably support qualitative growth. The Group of Companies is currently represented in over 100 countries with its own production sites, subsidiaries and agents. Established in 1873 as an artisan brass foundry, Handtmann will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2023.

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