

## Resource 1: History of the DuPont Company

From: <https://www.dupont.com/about/our-history.html>

In the late 19th century, it was discovered that valuable acids were escaping from a nitroglycerin plant at the Repauno Chemical Company and killing fish in the Delaware River. In March 1884, Lamont du Pont was experimenting with better ways to recover them, when the acids overheated and exploded, killing Lamont and four others. This accident took a terrible toll, but Lamont, a University of Pennsylvania-trained chemist, had understood that the company's survival depended on research.

E.I. du Pont, like his grandson, had also worked hard to improve explosives production through innovative machinery and methods, and both men's efforts exemplified the 19th century pattern of individual initiative. But in the 20th century, DuPont carried its research efforts much further, inventing and improving new products and furthering basic scientific knowledge in the process. Since the early 1900s, DuPont's labs have conducted two types of research. "Applied research" focuses on developing new products or finding new uses for existing ones. "Basic research" pursues scientific questions not necessarily connected to any specific product or market, but on the faith that science will eventually open up new possibilities.

Over the last century DuPont has always remained committed to research, although the emphasis given to each variant has continually shifted. After the younger du Ponts purchased the company in 1902, they established the Experimental Station near the old powder plant on the Brandywine and the Eastern Laboratory at Repauno. In their first decade of existence, these two laboratories established sharply contrasting records. The Experimental Station, operated as an arm of DuPont's Development Department, explored a wide variety of problems related to DuPont's product lines, and failed to show a clear cut return on investment. Eastern Laboratory, on the other hand, focused solely on high explosives and succeeded in producing both product and process innovations.

World War I put the company's research capabilities to the test. When hostilities closed off access to the synthetic dyes and chemical expertise of German firms, America looked to DuPont to fill the gap. DuPont's response included the establishment of Jackson Laboratory at Deepwater, N.J., to investigate dyestuffs chemistry. Although the research and production efforts proved to be more difficult, costly, and time-consuming than most had imagined, it was a qualified success. An important benefit of this early dyestuffs work was that it gave DuPont a grounding in organic chemistry. Equally important, it underscored the advantages of long-term,

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well-coordinated research strategies closely linked to factory-floor technologies. It was just such a system that scientists Charles Stine and Elmer K. Bolton hoped to expand at DuPont after the war.

During the 1910s, even as DuPont began to diversify its product lines, the company's research efforts became increasingly concentrated in the Chemical Department based at Wilmington's Experimental Station. But when the Executive Committee decentralized DuPont's management in 1921, they also bowed to pressure to decentralize much of the company's research, so it could be tailored more closely to sales and manufacturing needs. Product departments such as Explosives, Paint and Dyestuffs also specialized, setting up their own applied research facilities. This effort to apply scientific research directly to the development of specific products and production methods proved successful, yet the company continued to maintain its centralized basic research efforts in the Chemical Department. After Stine succeeded Reese in 1924, he strengthened the commitment to basic research, likening scientific research to the "adventuring argosy" of ancient navigators and explorers.

1. What are some changes that occurred during this period for the DuPont Company?
2. What are some continuities that occurred during this period for the DuPont Company?
3. How might these patterns affect the geographic landscape of Delaware?