

DM Stamps & Specialties History

Located in Mankato Minnesota, DM Stamps & Specialties was founded in 1952 by Harve J. Rivard. Originally its principle operations were printing and mail services. The name DM Stamps & Specialties evolved from the original name DM Service which stood for Direct Mail Service. When the store was opened, Harve's son Dick Rivard, who was only 11 years old, started working part time. By 1963, after a short stint in the military and 2 and ½ years at what was then called Mankato State University, Harve Rivard suffered a massive heart attack and Dick Rivard dropped out of school to run the company.

Dick Rivard never had any regrets about leaving college because of his love of the company and his desire to help shepherd it into its future.

When Dick started working full time stamps were set by hand setting metal type one letter at a time.

In the mid seventies Dick Rivard was instrumental in making one of the most profound changes in the marking device industry. Being involved in the printing industry, Dick saw the new photo polymers were being used as an alternative to zinc printing plates. At the time these photo polymers were being baked hard to insure that they had the rigidity to serve as zinc plate alternatives. Dick worked with the manufacturer to develop a softer and more pliable version of the photo polymer. This softer and more pliable version now replaces the vast majority of commercial rubber dies used in the US and Europe today. The main advantage of the photo polymer die is that it bypasses the molding of a plastic "matrix" board and the vulcanization of the rubber from that matrix board.

Probably the most profound consequence of this development and the nearly concurrent development of computer typesetting, was the substantially increased capacity for the vast majority of stamp houses. This of course lead to the stabilizing of stamp prices over a very long period of time.

With the advent of the polymer stamps, DM Stamps registered its POLY trademark, and uses it on all of its polymer die stamps.

The other trademark that DM Stamps has registered is DAPON which it uses for its preinked stamps. These stamps have their own ink embedded in the stamp die itself. The word DAPON spelled backwards means no pad.

With DM Stamps located in Mankato Minnesota, the Rivards needed to develop a marketing strategy, which would allow them to grow into more than just a little corner shop. The result was that most of their efforts were directed to establishing a network of distributors. These distributors consisted of local newspapers, printers, and stationery stores.

In 1982 DM Stamps hired John Ronlund as the manager of its stamp division. During his time at DM Stamps John's dealership program was the most successful in the state of Minnesota.

In 1986 DM Stamps & Specialties sold it's printing division to Hubbard Milling which in turn was sold in 1988 to Taylor Corporation and is now known as Corporate Graphics.

By 1995 Dick described himself as semi retired, and he had turned over most of his duties to Mary Jo Zupher, and Jody Harman. Mary Jo had long been the marketing manager and was known for her excellent work in catalog layouts and the invention of the Poly Parrot mascot. Jody Harman handles the purchasing, accounting, and management tasks.

By the fall of 1997, with no children interested in the business and looking forward to retirement Dick Rivard decided to sell his business. On December 4, 1997 DM Stamps & Specialties was sold to St. Paul Stamp Works, Inc.