



# P.W. Akkerman

**In the heart of The Hague, pen retailer P.W. Akkerman preserves and furthers its legacy.**

When Pieter Willem Akkerman opened a fountain pen shop on Boxing Day (December 26), 1910, he had no way of knowing that his enterprise would become an institution. One hundred years later, Akkerman's grandson Arthur now at the helm, the shop is a mecca to pen lovers. In this milestone year, the company was awarded with the predicate purveyor to the court, an honor that is given to businesses that have existed for at least 100 years and have a good reputation. They need not actually supply goods to the court—but P.W. Akkerman has done so for many years.

P.W. Akkerman was established when its founder agreed to take over

a luxury paper, engraving and stamping business from its owner, who had no business successor. Akkerman was only twenty-four when he took over the business located in the Passage, an elegant, covered arcade that is the oldest shopping center in the Netherlands. At first, the store offered fine stationery, personalized stationery, business cards and rubber stamps. Akkerman's father worked alongside his son, and when Akkerman married a few years later, his wife worked in the shop, too, until children came along.

Akkerman was always on the lookout for new products, and when the fountain pen arrived in the Netherlands in 1918, Akkerman was ready. The first pens he carried were

Swans made in the U.K., but Akkerman traveled extensively in search of other brands and soon added Waterman, Chilton, Wahl-Eversharp, Sheaffer, Parker and Conklin from the U.S.; Montblanc, Soennecken, Pelikan, Osmia, Kaweco and Matador from Germany; Onoto and Conway Stewart from England; and Stylomine, Zodiac and Météore from France. Zodiac and Météore, in fact, made some pens under the Akkerman brand—lever-fillers in black or red ebonite. Akkerman also began offering fountain pen ink under his own name.

Because customers relied upon their fountain pens for daily use, Akkerman also provided repair serv-

ice. He retrained one of his employees specifically for this purpose, and he became an expert in all sorts of repairs, including fixing bent nibs. His reputation spread as a pen doctor, and customers from all over the country came to seek his help.

Akkerman's enterprise was so successful that he began to think about expanding. Pen lovers who have visited the Netherlands are probably aware of another P.W. Akkerman in Amsterdam. Akkerman established it in 1927, and appointed his brother-in-law as the manager. It was sold shortly after World War II, but retained the Akkerman name. It is still a thriving pen and stationery shop, but there has been no relationship between the two stores for many years.

In the late 1920s, Akkerman formed a relationship that would grow more important over time—with Carl Josef Lamy, who would, of course, later establish his own brand. In the late 1920s, though, Lamy was working for Osmia, which was then one of the most important German fountain pen brands. Parker was already established in England and in the Netherlands; seeking to expand further, Parker purchased Osmia and spent large sums to modernize the facilities and promote the brand. Akkerman wanted to have some pens made there, and Lamy became his collaborator on the Akkerman-branded pens manufactured there from 1928 to 1930, most of them closely resembling the streamlined

Parker Duofold. Due in large part to the Great Depression, the Osmia-Parker venture was not successful, and Parker soon sold it back to the former owners, leaving Lamy with limited options. He decided to produce his own pens, but he continued to manufacture the Akkerman pens in the Duofold style. Later he would produce Akkerman pens based on Lamy models, and the Lamy-Akkerman collaboration continued for decades.

P.W. Akkerman has had much to celebrate throughout its history. It provided the gold nib, set in a golden quill, used by Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard to sign their marriage contract; their daughter Beatrix, Queen of the Netherlands,

# 100 Years



Akkerman family members and employees begin the celebration. Arthur Akkerman is in the center, holding a statue presented by the Chamber of Commerce of The Hague; next to him in the red tie is Mayor J. J. van Aartsen; third from right is store manager Paul Rutte.

opposite—Akkerman poster in the Passage; Parker Centennial Duofold made for P.W. Akkerman's centenary, with special barrel imprint and a depiction of the roundabout in the Passage at the top of the cap. The numbered edition is limited to 201 fountain pens and 91 ballpoints.

is a current client. P.W. Akkerman also provided pens for the 1989 signing of The Hague Declaration on the Environment (an engraved Montblanc LeGrand for all participants) and the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam (an engraved Waterman 100 for each signer). The company was also commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to supply pens for signing the new European Constitution in Rome in 2004. These pens, chosen by former Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, were Graf von Faber-Castell rollerballs made from grenadilla wood.

To create meaningful new products to help celebrate the centenary, P.W. Akkerman went back to its roots: Parker created a limited edition Duofold Centennial especially for the occasion, and a line of inks was launched, its thirty colors all named for locations in The Hague.

It takes an extraordinary leader to build a business that survives and thrives for 100 years, weathering such calamities as the Great

Depression and World War II. According to all who surrounded him—employees, suppliers and friends—founder Pieter Willem Akkerman (1886–1955) was the consummate businessman. But more than that, they think of him as an industry pioneer who had a gift—clearly a gift his descendants inherited—for passing his love of fountain pens along to a broad public.

*Excerpted from P.W. Akkerman 100 Years, ©Paul Rutte.*

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The ink bottle incorporates an ingenious filling technique first used by Jif-Waterman, a French subsidiary of Waterman. When the closed bottle is tilted, a glass marble in the bottle's neck shifts and allows the neck to fill with ink. When the bottle is again placed in its upright position, the marble traps the ink—plenty to fill a fountain pen, even when the bottle is nearly empty.