

The Right Choice

On May 10, 1952, Schott opened its new main glassworks in Mainz with a crucible casting for optical glass. This event was re-enacted for the 50th anniversary celebrations.

► The Schott Group began a new chapter in its long history with a move five decades ago that made Mainz its second home base. After only eleven months of construction time, the new glassworks was officially opened in 1952 with a crucible casting for optical glass. In an event held at the end of January, 2002, this casting process was re-enacted, marking the beginning of a number of anniversary events set to take place in 2002. The term “crucible” is the technical designation for the porcelain vessel used in melting the glass.

Know-how is the basis of our market leadership

The success of Schott is now based on a wide range of products. Nonetheless, optical glass continues to play a vital role in the history of the company. “Schott’s international leadership in glass production goes back to the 19th century and rests in particular on its ability to produce optical glass better than anyone else,” says Dr. Leopold von Heimendahl, spokesman for the present management of Schott Glas. In 1884, the chemist Otto Schott founded his glassworks in Jena with the aim of providing a scientific basis to glass production technology, which had up until then been merely empirically based.

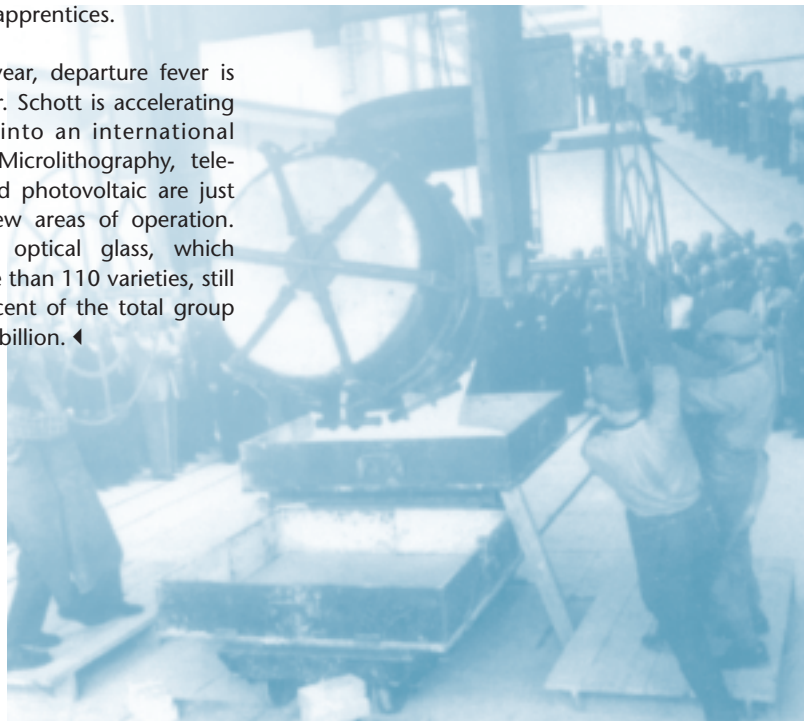
After the end of the World War II, American troops were forced to pull out of Thuringia in exchange for West Berlin. In July 1945, they organized the “train of 41 glass makers” to keep this important technology from falling into the hands of the Soviets. “We had 24 hours to pack what was necessary and prepare our families for the evacuation,” recalls 90-year-old Hans Kirchner, one of the few of the 41 veteran experts still alive today. The end of their odyssey was reached with the

reestablishment of the firm in Mainz, as the political situation dashed any hopes of a return to Jena. The original glassworks was expropriated in 1948 and transformed into a state-owned company. The division of Germany was made official a year later with the founding of two German states.

Transformation into a technology group

“We were looking for a mid-sized city like Jena that was centrally located with good transportation links and also had a university,” said Erich Schott, managing director and son of the firm’s founder, when subsequently explaining the reasons for the choice of location. It was certainly a big benefit for Mainz. Schott is now the city’s largest industrial employer with 4,600 employees and 200 apprentices.

In this anniversary year, departure fever is once again in the air. Schott is accelerating its transformation into an international technology group. Microlithography, telecommunications, and photovoltaic are just some of Schott’s new areas of operation. The production of optical glass, which today comes in more than 110 varieties, still accounts for 20 percent of the total group sales revenues of €2 billion. ◀



The historical crucible casting in 1952 and the re-enacted casting (left) in 2002 for the “50 Years Schott in Mainz” celebration.