



Gentex Optics

100 Years of Innovation



GENTEX

BEGINNINGS

1894

New York based silk producer
Klots Throwing Company
reopens in Carbondale, PA after
a major fire

1901

Company purchased by its former
controller Marcus Frieder

1917

L.P. Frieder, son of Marcus,
joins the company, bringing
Mechanical Engineering Science
to textile production

1923

Company is one of the country's largest silk weavers with several mills and more than 7000 employees

1925

Silk industry begins to suffer significant economic decline with advent of inexpensive rayon fiber

1932

Company forced into reorganization
after stock market crash.

New name –General Textile Mills – is
adopted

Diversification

1939

Early signs of war create opportunity for the company – design and development of military cargo parachutes

1942

Company has become largest cargo
parachute producer in the world

1950

Faster jet aircraft bring need for improved air crew head protection. Laminate technology is applied to helmets

OPTICS BEGINS

1955

Company produces its first optical component – acrylic helmet visor

1958

Name changed to reflect increasing diversification – Gentex Corporation

1959

Reported first commercial use of optical grade polycarbonate – for bullet proof windows

1960

Former A.O. employees start Omnitech to continue work A.O. had begun in nuclear flash protection. Gentex and Omnitech begin working relationship

1965

Omnitech acquired by Univis

1966

L.P. Frieder, Jr. joins Gentex

1970

Gentex acquires Omnitech from
Univis concurrent with Univis sale to
Itech

The Product Line Evolves...

1972

First industrial safety product – 3mm
plano lenses

**» L.P. Frieder, Jr. becomes
Gentex President and CEO**

1978

John K. Davis joins Gentex

1980

First prescription lens-70mm x 3mm
FSV

Optics moves to new, larger Dudley
facility

1982

Organic synthesis capability added in
Carbondale to produce laser dyes

1985

First semi-finished Rx products
added to line

First tintable coating applied

1987

Cole Vision signs long-term Rx lens purchase agreement. Repositions polycarbonate as all-purpose lens

Poised for Growth

1989

Optics created as separate operating subsidiary. Major facility expansion completed.

1990

First Gentex-produced progressive lens (A.O. Omni) PDQ tintable coating introduced Featherwates launched by Lenscrafters

1991

E.O.A./Gentex relationship begins
with Varilux Plus Polycarbonate

1993

Agreement signed to expand
E.O.A./Gentex relationship

Profile Aspheric introduced

1993-1994

Major facilities expansions:

16,000 sf. Molding/coating/AR
(Dudley)

30,000 sf. Rx warehouse

20,000 sf. Molding/coating
(Carbondale)

Gentex History

Our beginnings trace back to Gentex Corporation who, shortly after World War II, contracted to make U.S. Military helmets, each of which incorporated transparent face shields. The company began making its own visors from acrylic plastic in the mid-1950s.

In the 1960s, polycarbonate had been introduced as a tough, impact-resistant material for making burglar, vandal, and bullet proof windows for banks, schools, etc. Through a new association with Omnitech (an optical products company in Dudley, MA), Gentex soon became a pioneer in developing other uses for this exciting new material.

In 1970, Gentex purchased Omintech and soon entered the plano (non-Rx) safety lens market – drawing heavily on their newly acquired optical experience. The first Gentex lens coating system was developed and built for safety product applications. The company became a major lens supplier in the industrial safety field.

From 1970 to 1980, the safety lens business grew substantially. As the technology for processing polycarbonate improved, Gentex turned its attention to prescription dress lenses (Rx) made of polycarbonate.

In the Spring of 1981, Gentex moved its Dudley operation from the original Omnitech facilities into a new manufacturing plant and officially changed its name to “Gentex Corporation”.

In 1986, the name changed again to Gentex Optics. That, with further growth, officially became Gentex Optics, Inc. in 1989.

In February 1995, Essilor announced its acquisition of Gentex, “the world’s leading manufacturer of Polycarbonate corrective lenses”.

As of June 1, 1995, Gentex Optics became a subsidiary of Essilor International, whose headquarters are in Paris, France.

The facilities have expanded several times in the attempt to keep up with the exceptional growth in demand for polycarbonate ophthalmic lenses.

The expansion of Gentex Optics’ manufacturing, lens design, coating, anti reflective coating, and R&D operations has enabled the company to reap the benefits from the lengthy process of establishing polycarbonate as a viable ophthalmic lens material. In addition to the military and sunwear products, the Gentex product line covers all Rx ophthalmic lenses, ranging from finished and semi-finished single vision, multifocals, and progressives. Gentex Optics serves as the primary source for polycarbonate progressives sold by a number of ophthalmic lens suppliers throughout the world.

1998 Building #1 expansion

2003 Building #2 Ground-breaking ceremony

