Legends of Asbestos

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Legends of Asbestos

being an illustrated compilation of unusual, historical incidents about Asbestos, dating back to the 5th Century B. C., many of which were originally used by the Keasbey & Mattison Company as advertisements in "Time" magazine in1939.



(1940)

KEASBEY & MATTISON

COMPANY, AMBLER, PENNSYLVANIA

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CONTENTS

Foreword 4

Pallas Athena, Goddess of Wisdom—438 B. C. . 5

Asbestos Is Not a Plant—1st Century A. D. . . 6

Funeral Dress of Kings—A. D. 79 7

Charlemagne's Table Cloth—A. D. 800 . . . 8

Marco Polo's Salamander—13th Century A. D. . . 9

A Newe Map of Tartary—A. D. 1626 . . . 10

Ferdinand of Naples Ransom—17th Century A. D. . 11

The Royal Society Breaks an Unwritten Law—A.D. 1676 12

Ancient Roman Sarcophagus—A. D. 1702 . . 13

Franklin's Purse of Stone—A. D. 1725 . . . 14

A Pearl Necklace for a Pair of Gloves—A. D. 1800 . 15

"In Situ" in Manhattan—A. D. 1810 . . . 16

In League with the Evil One—A. D. 1850 . . . 17

The K&M Asbestos Cat—A. D. 1935 . . . 18

Keasbey & Mattison—A. D. 1940 19

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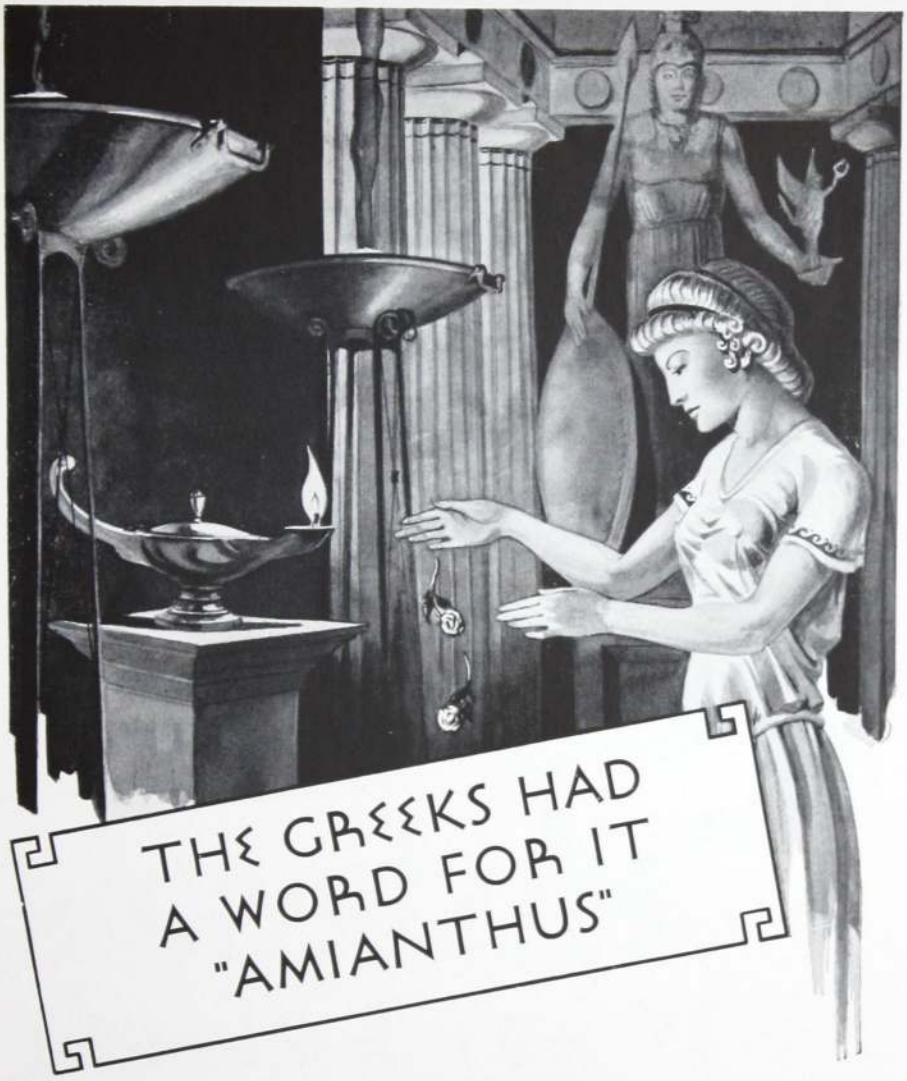
FOREWORD

IT is a far cry from the 5th Century B. C. to the 19th Century A. D. Yet it took that long for man to turn the discovery of the unusual properties of Asbestos into channels that were advantageous to humanity. Throughout these many centuries, Asbestos was a curiosity actually understood by no one. Because of its amazing qualities it was used by kings and sorcerers to terrify the unknowing, by high priests and priestesses in rituals of worship and burial, and by pseudo-scientists to impress others with their knowledge and understanding.

These bizarre uses of Asbestos brought forth a host of legends. All are based on facts, but have been colored with fancies as they have passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. The same unusual properties of Asbestos that brought forth these legends, still exist in Asbestos today. But today these properties are better understood, and have been utilized to benefit nearly everyone.

Because the Keasbey & Mattison Company helped to pioneer the commercial development of Asbestos, thus helping to spread its benefits so widely, the Company is pleased to present herewith the most interesting of these ancient legends, and thus relegate them forever to the past.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 6 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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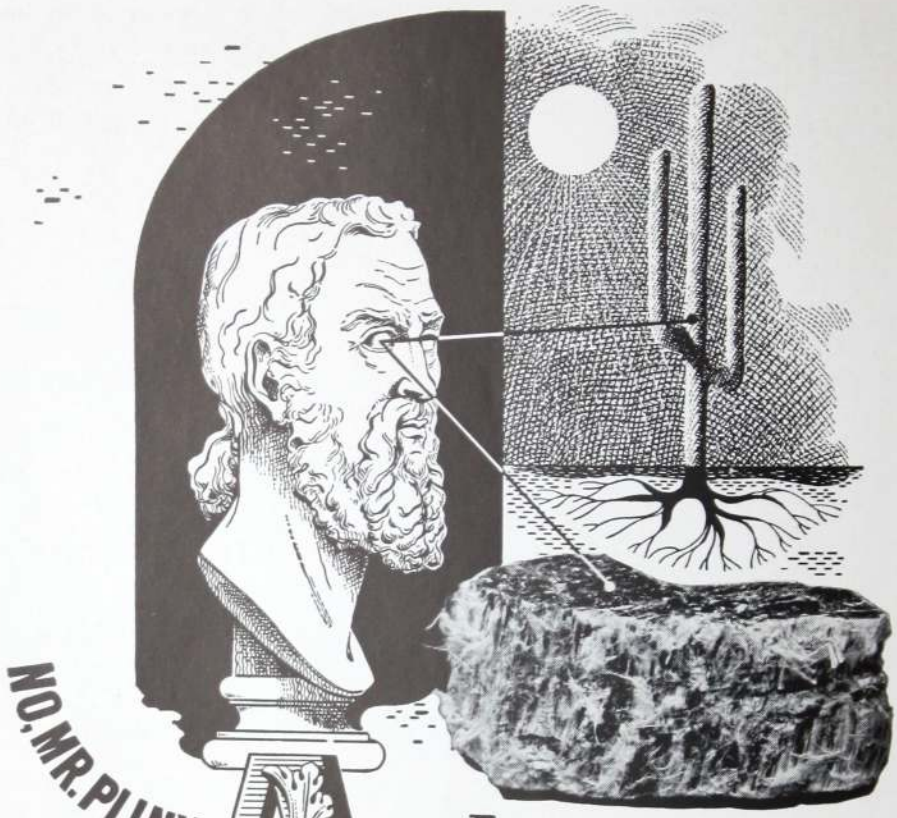
THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR IT "AMIANTHUS"

In the year 438 B. C. a temple was dedicated to Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom. She was held in the highest esteem by the Greeks and in her temple at Athens, they kept a light burning perpetually from a golden lamp. In those days this was no mean accomplishment; for though it was no problem to keep the lamp filled with oil, an everlasting wick was needed if the lamp was never to go out.

Luckily for the carrying on of the tribute to Pallas Athena, the Greeks knew about a mineral substance whose fibres could be woven into a wick that would not burn up. Naturally, there was but one word for this magic substance that we call asbestos; it had to be "Amianthus", meaning "incorruptible".

Today, the uses of asbestos are so common and so well established that millions enjoy its unique protection without giving it a thought. Products made of asbestos are bringing safety, comfort and economy to homes and industries all over the world.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 7 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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NO, MR. PLINY,

Asbestos

IS NOT A PLANT!

Back in the 1st Century A. D. Pliny the Elder wrote about asbestos. He had it "growing" in the desert, and becoming "habituated (by the sun) to resist the action of fire."

Asbestos, Mr. Pliny, is a mineral. In its original state . . . before the soft, silky fibres are extracted . . . it is hard and heavy, and it is mined like iron.

For 2000 years since Pliny's time asbestos remained a curiosity. But in 1873 Science began to concern itself seriously with this unique mineral, and to ponder the application of its virtues to every-day uses. Ever since 1873 new applications of asbestos have flowed from research, bringing new safety, comfort and economy to more and more millions of people. There is today nearly a whole alphabet of products grounded on asbestos.

Though Nature does not "grow" asbestos, as Pliny thought, she mothered it and made it ready for Science to bend to the service of mankind.



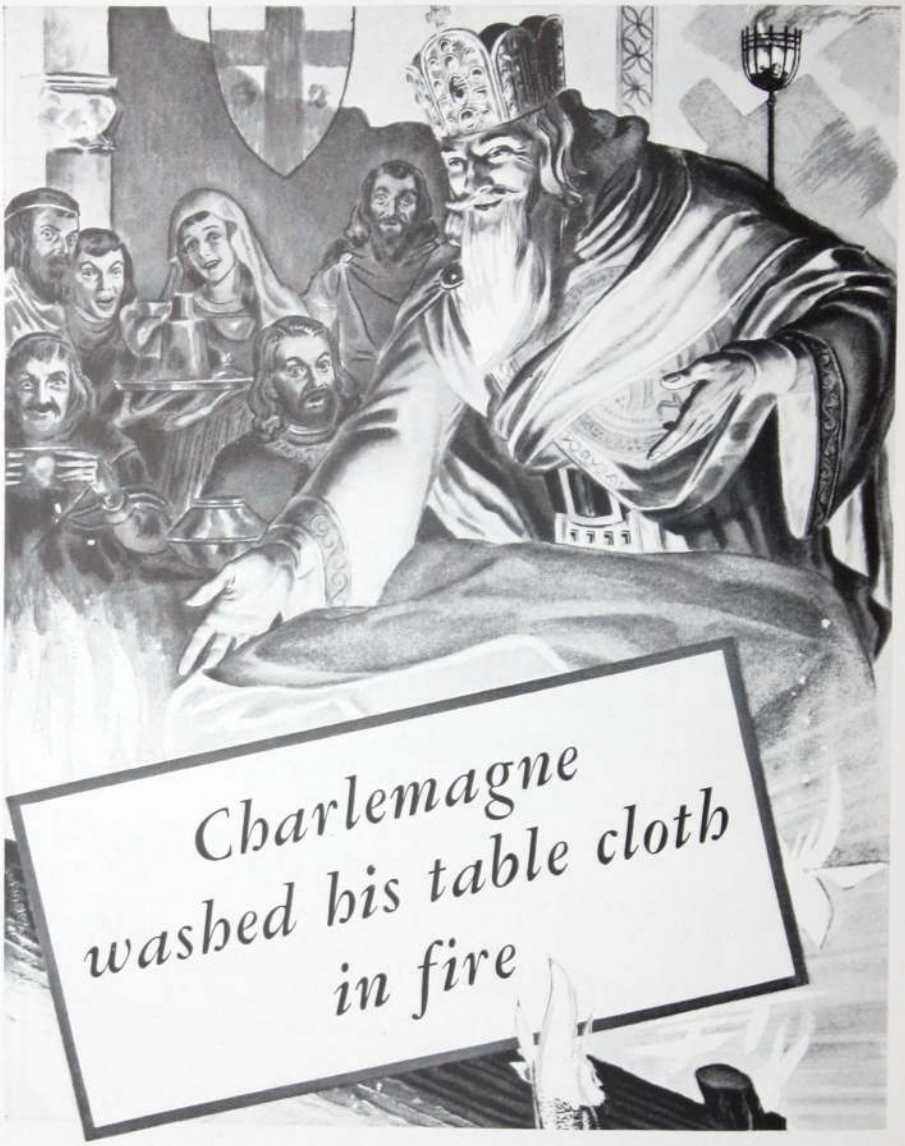
"The funeral dress of kings" withstood the fire of Vesuvius

It was in A. D. 79 that Mt. Vesuvius erupted its fiery cinders upon Pompeii and buried that city. But it was not until 17 centuries later that archaeologists began the excavations that revealed the treasures in the buried city.

A peasant digging in his garden unearthed a piece of cloth that had passed through the destruction of Pompeii, and the erosion of the centuries... unharmed. The archaeologists identified it as a fabric called by the Romans "the funeral dress of kings" . . . an amazing fabric used by them to wrap the bodies of their honored dead, in order to keep the sacred ashes separate from the wood ashes of the funeral pyre. The "funeral dress of kings" was no other, could be no other, than fabric woven from the silky fibres of the mineral, asbestos.

Luckily for posterity the morbid uses of asbestos have been abandoned; and today asbestos in many forms and shapes is contributing daily to the safety and comfort of both commoner and king.

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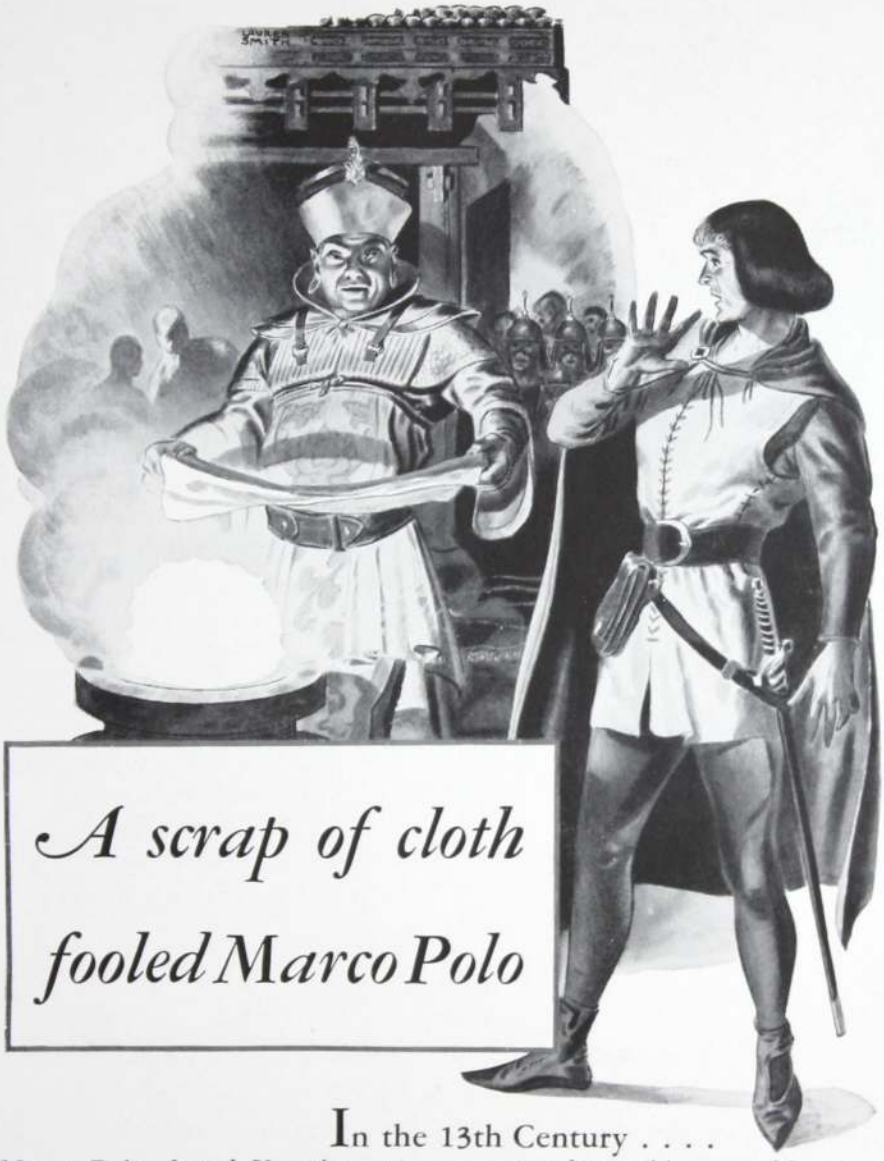
In the year 800 A. D. Charlemagne's empire was threatened by an Arabian known as Haroun El Raschid. So great was the power of Haroun's army that Charlemagne knew that to war with him was to court disaster.

Having invited representatives of Haroun to dine with him, the emperor resorted to a clever bit of strategy. After the feast was over, Charlemagne flung the soiled table cloth into the fire, then drew it back cleansed and unharmed.

Haroun's representatives were mystified, and returned to their leader to warn him not to war with the emperor since he possessed magic powers and was, therefore, invincible.

Little did the men of Haroun suspect that Charlemagne's table cloth was woven of unburnable asbestos fibres. Thus, an asbestos table cloth saved an empire.

Asbestos products today serve a different kind of empire . . . industrial empires that depend on asbestos products for a thousand practical purposes.



A scrap of cloth fooled Marco Polo

In the 13th Century . . . .

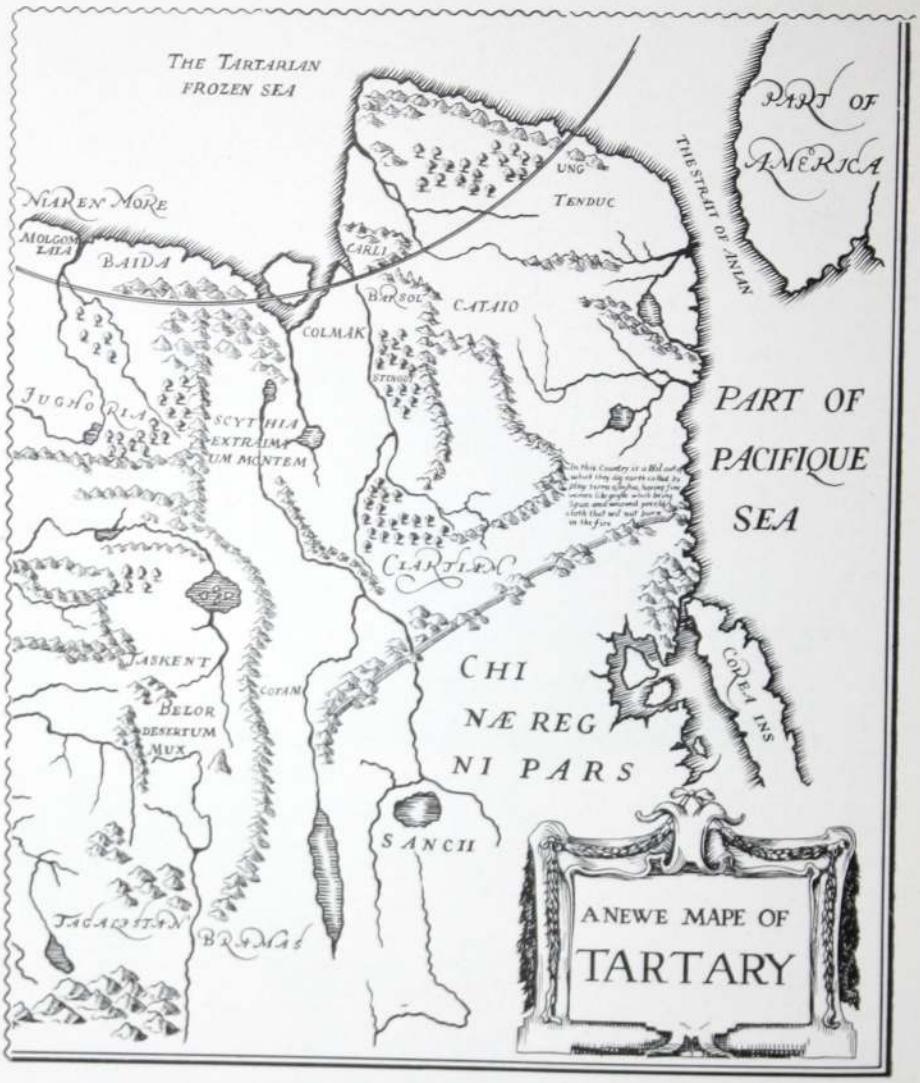
Marco Polo, famed Venetian, saw many wondrous things on his great trek to the Court of China's Khan.

When the Great Khan took a piece of coarse-textured cloth, tossed it into a raging fire, then drew it back unharmed, Marco Polo was astounded. He thought he had discovered at last the skin of the legendary salamander, a creature reputed to live in fire.

Marco Polo later discovered that this magic salamander skin was cloth woven from the fibres of a mineral rock—asbestos. He described it in his book as "a fossil substance with fibres not unlike wool."

More than 600 years were to pass before his amazing "salamander skin" was to be made commercially practical. If Marco Polo could look in on the 20th Century, he would see the "skin of the salamander" making the basis of a whole new industry uniquely serving thousands of other industries and homes the world over.

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In mapping Tartary in 1626 John Speede, a well-known cartographer of the middle-ages, indicated very plainly the location of asbestos deposits.

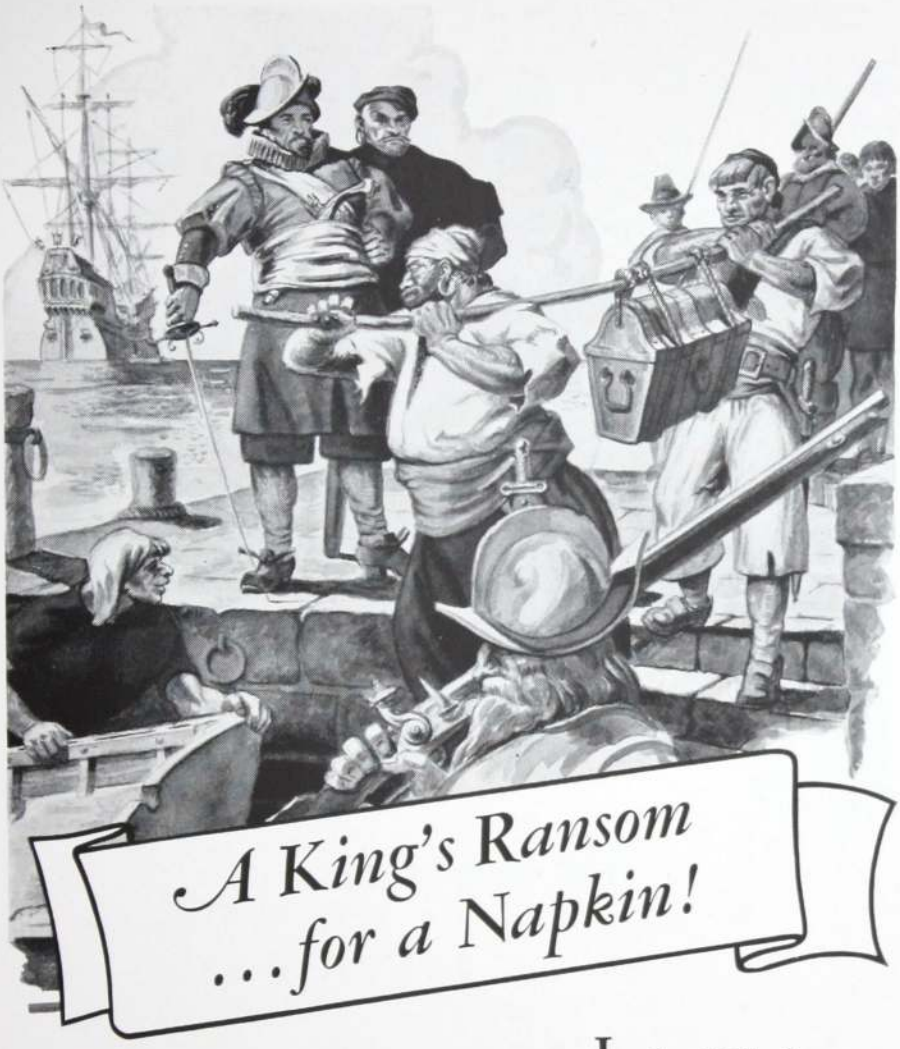
His note says, "In this country is a Hil out of which they dig earth called by pliny terra asbestus, having fine veines like grasse which being spun and weaved yeeeld cloth that wil nut burn in the fire."

There cannot be much doubt that Speede was guided to a great extent by the writings of Marco Polo, for when Marco visited the great Khan he discovered an unburnable cloth woven from silky fibres of the mineral asbestos, probably dug from this hill.

So commonplace is the use of asbestos products in homes and industries today that it is difficult for us to realize that it was considered a curio in the days of John Speede.

We will be glad to send you a four color reproduction of the whole map, (size 17 x 22 in.) bordered with colorful cartouches, if you will write Advertising Manager, K&M, Ambler, Pa.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 12 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
asbestosclaims.law/library/21257/12



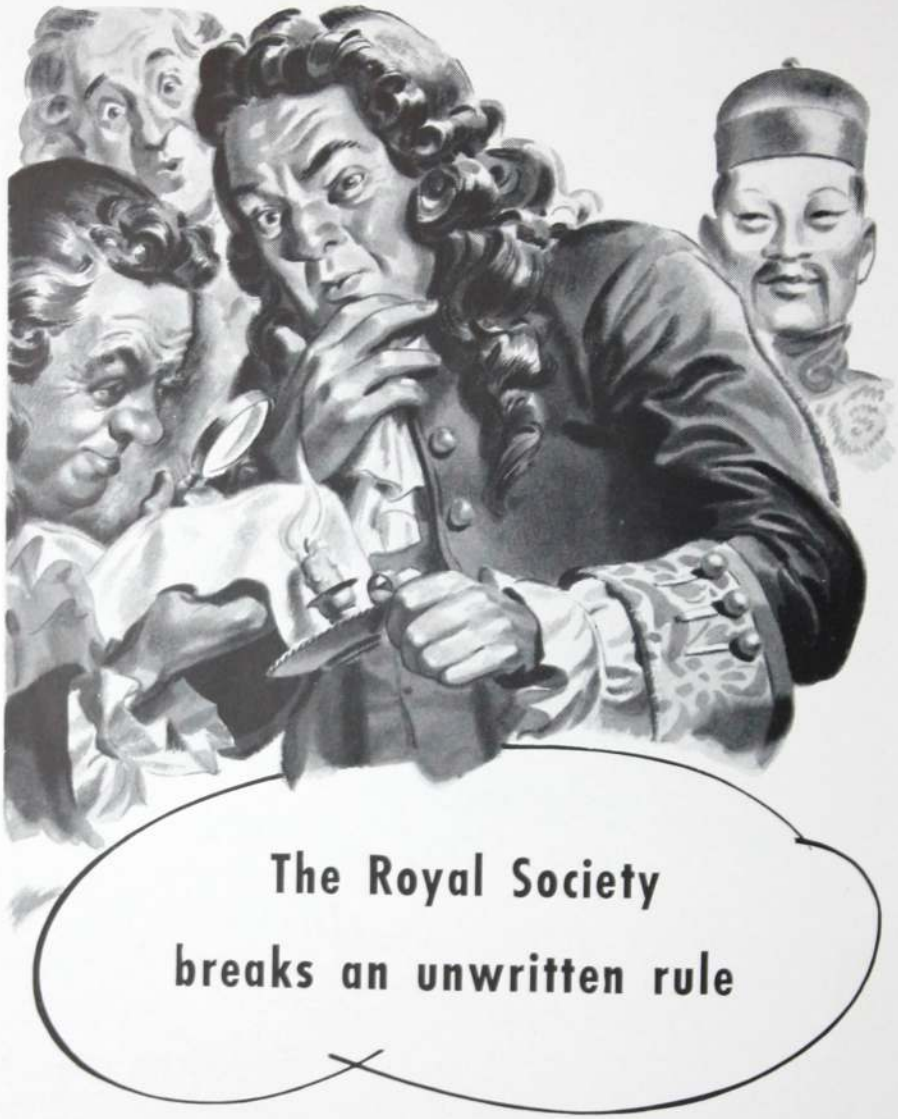
A King's Ransom ...for a Napkin!

In the 17th Century Ferdinand III, King of Hungary and Bohemia, grew rich on galleon-brought treasures from the Americas. His extravagances became renowned as his wealth increased. Its high point was reached when he paid 18,000 gulden for an apparently plain table napkin.

But this napkin was actually an amazing piece of unburnable cloth woven from the silky fibres of asbestos—a mineral dug from the earth. At his boisterous feasts, Ferdinand astounded his guests by washing this table napkin in the roaring fire, drawing it out unharmed. 18,000 gulden was a lot to pay for a table napkin, but not for one that gave him and his court such great diversion.

Today such a feat would be commonplace, for asbestos is now well known through its commercial development. Today in homes and industries, asbestos products are bringing greater safety, comfort and economy to millions.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 13 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
asbestosclaims.law/library/21257/13



The Royal Society breaks an unwritten rule

Incorporated in 1662 as the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, this famous society had, from the beginning, an unwritten rule. It opened its doors to men of science only.

But in 1676 a Chinese merchant brought to London an article so curious that the learned body invited him to exhibit it at one of their august meetings. It was, of all things, a fireproof handkerchief. Never before had these savants seen a cloth that could be tossed into a fire and come out unharmed.

In China this fabric was known as "Salamander's wool", out of tribute to the mythical indifference of this species of lizard to fire. We, of course, know it as asbestos, the mineral whose silky fibres are today woven into a myriad of uniquely useful but now commonplace articles.

To suggest the strides made by "Salamander's wool" in two hundred years, imagine breaking down the rules of the Royal Society today with an asbestos stove mat.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 14 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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A 1700 YEAR OLD CLOTH THAT SCIENTISTS FOUND INTACT

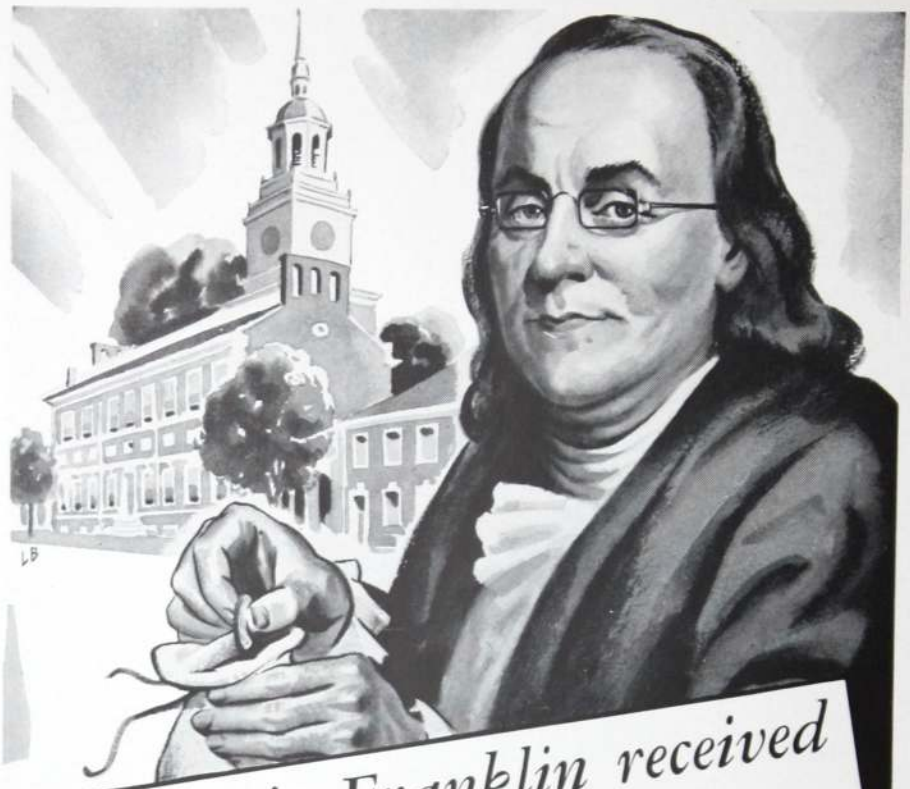
In the year 1702, some archaeologists were at work in some ancient Roman ruins. Among the objects unearthed was a Roman sarcophagus.

In this large stone coffin many interesting objects were found; but none interested the scientists more than a piece of cloth. Expecting it to crumble into dust at a touch, they handled it very gingerly indeed; but to their amazement the cloth remained intact and apparently as strong and pliable as when it was put into the sarcophagus 1700 years before.

The cloth was woven from the silky fibres of asbestos. The Romans were well aware of its durable qualities, but even they would probably have been amazed could they have found it in one piece after so many centuries.

In those olden times a sarcophagus and a wrapping of asbestos cloth was the luxury only of the well-to-do. Today, the uses of asbestos have been broadened out and they touch beneficently the lives of all.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 15 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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Benjamin Franklin received a handsome sum for his curious "purse of stone"

During the summer of 1725, Sir Hans Sloane of London received a letter from Benjamin Franklin stating that he had lately arrived from the "northern parts of America" (Canada), and had in his possession "a purse made of the stone asbestos."

Sir Hans, being a noted lover of curiosities, paid Franklin handsomely for his odd purse and added it to his large collection of curios that can be found in the British Museum.

It is only natural that Franklin's "purse of stone" should have come from Canada, for that dominion is one of today's largest producers of asbestos for commercial uses.

In view of the broad use of asbestos today . . . in the service of safety, comfort and economy . . . people everywhere may well be thankful that asbestos did not remain a collector's item.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 16 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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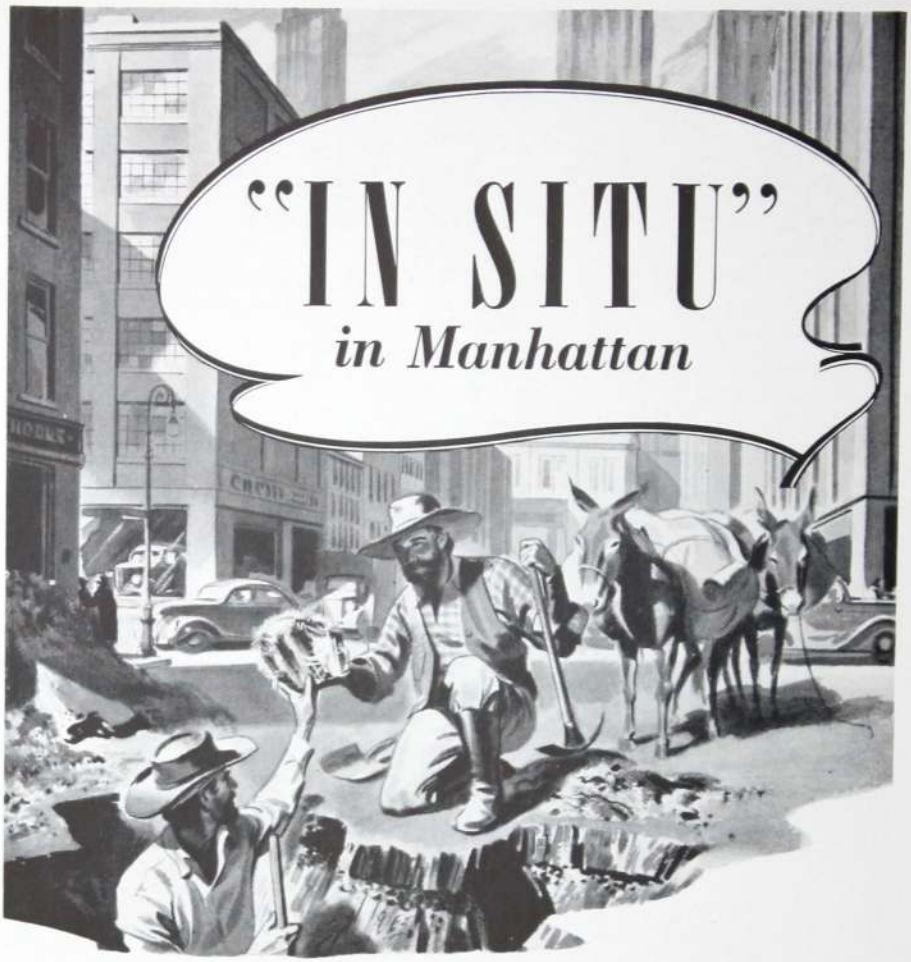


A love story of 1800 A. D. is but one of the many and varied love stories that have come down to us through the ages. Though it is little known, it is unusual. It is the story of Prince Eugene, Viceroy of Italy and Candida Medina Coeli Lena di Cordona Val Chiavenna, a beautiful Italian noblewoman.

One of the incidents that made this love story so interesting and so unusual was when the charming Prince gave the lovely lady a priceless pearl necklace in return for a pair of gloves. He considered them priceless at that time since Candida had woven them with her own hands, and also because they were made from the silky fibres of a mineral—asbestos—and were therefore unharmed even when placed in fire.

So familiar are we today with the fire-resistant and durable qualities of scores of products made of asbestos, that it is rather amazing to know that Candida's gloves should have been valued so highly in 1800.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 17 of 24
Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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Until the year 1810, from the time the white man bought Manhattan from the Indians for $24 cash, no one suspected that an asbestos mine went with the title. For 1810 was the year that geologists discovered a deposit of asbestos . . . "in situ", as they call it . . . at what is now 59th Street and 10th Avenue.

If this news is ever read by the present owners of this parcel of New York real estate, let them not get excited. It was a freakish and unimportant deposit that Nature bequeathed Manhattan. Canada, as a matter of fact, yields better asbestos; and in quantities that permit it to be the utilitarian marvel it has become since pioneering in asbestos began in 1873.

So rapid and far-reaching has the researching been that it would be impossible to find a reader of this page who has not been affected. Asbestos curtains wall him away from any backstage fire; asbestos-cement shingles insulate his home from neighboring fires; non-corroding asbestos pipe brings water to his house; and asbestos conserves heat in the pipes, boilers and furnaces of his factory.

Nature created asbestos; but Science has been making it serve mankind since 1873.

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"IN LEAGUE WITH THE EVIL ONE" BECAUSE OF HIS SOCKS

In the year 1850 at the end of a rainy work day in a Northern Quebec lumber camp, the crew returned from the woods, wet through. They gathered around the stove in the bunkhouse, seeking its consolation.

One of the lumberjacks pulled off his boots and socks, and nonchalantly tossed them into the stove. The others stared at this strange procedure, then laughed at the fool jack. But their ridicule turned to half-petrified amazement when, shortly, the new-comer as nonchalantly fished out the socks . . . clean, dry and unharmed. They fled the scene, convinced that he was in league with the Evil One. Of course, they had never seen nor heard of asbestos, from the silky fibres of which the lumberjack's socks were woven.

It was not long after this event before the world began to know about the magic mineral and its unique properties. For, in 1873, the pioneering began that was to make a whole new industry.

Legends of Asbestos (1940)
ACL Doc 21257 · Page 19 of 24
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"No more chance than a celluloid dog chasing an asbestos cat through Hades"

In the early 1900's, Billy Sunday, that great evangelist who was once a baseball player, swept the country with a religious fire kindled by his enthusiasm and oratory.

"Sinners," he said, "have no more chance than a celluloid dog chasing an asbestos cat through Hades." And that vivid metaphor, oft-repeated, left its indelible imprint on our daily speech.

The asbestos cat, indestructible even in the fiery heat of Hades, now stands as a trademark of the asbestos products which resulted from early Keasbey & Mattison pioneering, thus preserving this interesting bit of Americana.



K&M's Oval and Cat Trademark Stands for Quality Products

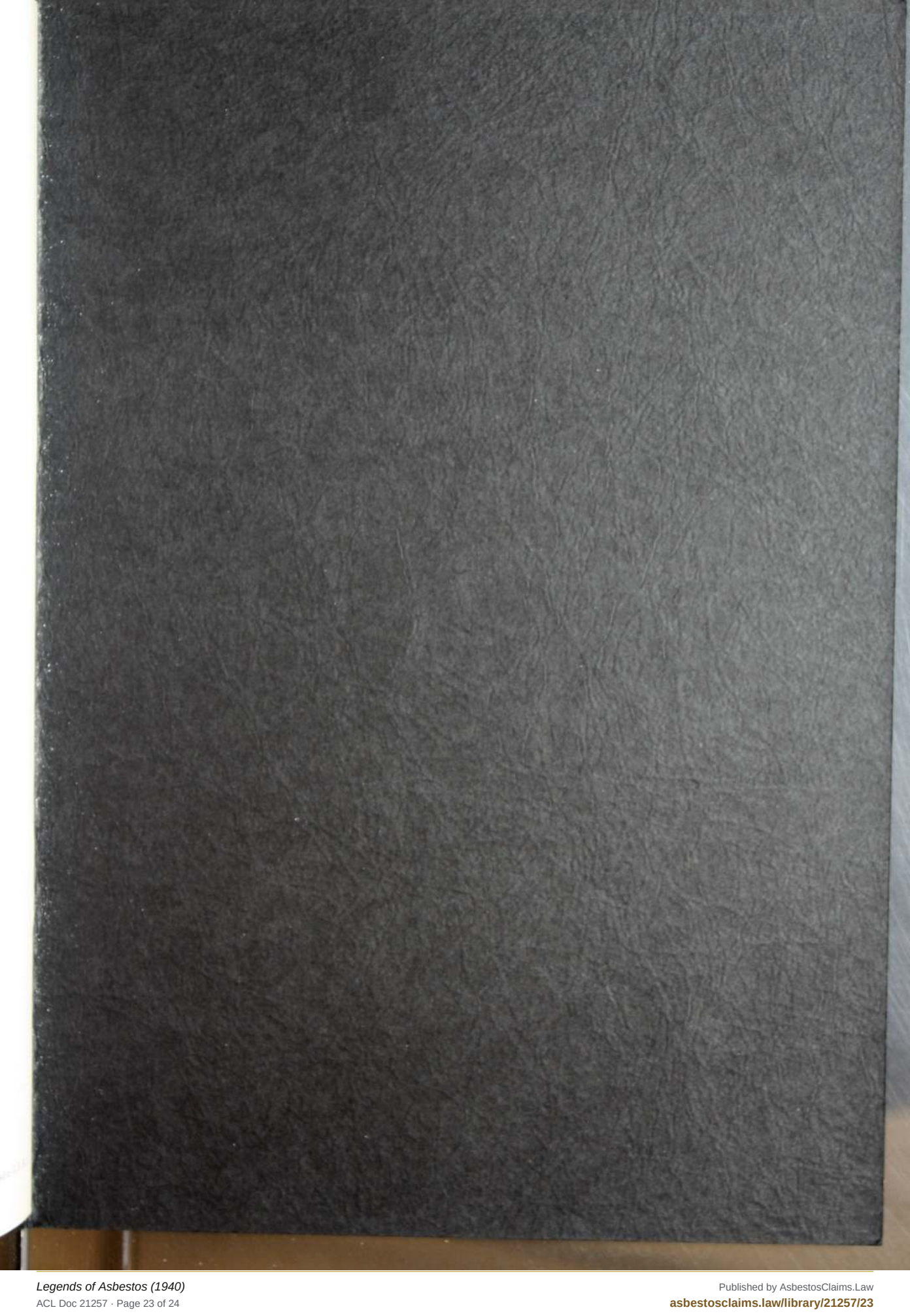
Founded in 1873, the Keasbey & Mattison Company was a pioneer in the development of Asbestos and Magnesia products in this country. K&M was the first to manufacture the Asbestos-Cement Shingle in this country. As a result K&M products have behind them an unparallelled background of experience and manufacturing skill.

The complete K&M line includes a great variety of products for use in homes and industries. Asbestos and Magnesia Insulations, Packings, Asbestos Textiles, Asbestos Paper, Asbestos Corrugated Siding, Sprayed "Limpet" Asbestos, Asbestos-Cement Pipe and Conduit, Asbestos-Cement Roofing Shingles, Siding, and Decorative Wallboards for use in the home.

Through strategically located District Sales Offices and a nation-wide network of Distributors, Keasbey & Mattison products are available everywhere.

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