

Crescent Cardboard makes cardboard Jeeps?

John Maxwell tells an interesting story about an art supplier many artists depend on: Crescent Cardboard manufactures paperboard products for the art and framing industry. The U.S. company has been around for over 100 years, and played a significant role during World War II, as John's historical Crescent Cardboard handout (below) explains.

John also adds that a good friend of his (an artist and regular customer of Maxwell's) was conscripted by the British army to teach troops to paint the camouflage on the decoys. His name was Sam Black. Crescent Cardboard made the 'fake' jeeps and airplanes. Maxwell's was the first Canadian dealer to buy from Crescent Cardboard (originally named Chicago Cardboard.)

John Maxwell owned and operated Maxwell's Artists Materials (located in Vancouver, then Langley) until 2005. Maxwell's Artists Materials began as a family run business established in 1949 in Vancouver, by Alf Maxwell.

Enjoy this regular "art history" feature in The Artist's Journal, thanks to John Maxwell and his daughter Colleen.

@MaxwellsArtistsMaterials

CRESCENT CARDBOARD COMPANY

Innovation from the Front Line!

World War II Jeep Decoy manufactured by Crescent



Photo by Joseph Minardi
January 9, 1945

Crescent Rolls to the Rescue with Jeep Decoys!

The one thing that the Great Depression of the late 1920s couldn't depress was the Crescent Imagination. This innovative company survived by creating an ingenious range of paperboard products — everything from board games to shirt collars to jigsaw puzzles.

But World War II gave Crescent the opportunity to provide the pieces for the greatest puzzle in history. As the Allies prepared to invade Europe, they also launched Operation Fortitude. This elaborate Allied ruse was designed to lure enemy troops away from the real landing site — Normandy.

Crescent Cardboard Company played a major role in this military sting by fielding an army of cardboard military decoys — fake Jeeps and planes. These Crescent decoys — carefully detailed down to casting realistic shadows fooled enemy air reconnaissance experts. So the Axis committed 400,000 troops plus planes, tanks and supplies — a force that could

have stopped the Allied landing on the Normandy beachhead — to defend enemy occupied Norway from an Allied attack that never came.

Nor was this Crescent's only contribution to the war effort. Wet ammunition is useless ammunition. To protect Allied ammo, Crescent developed *Lock and Block*, a paraffin coated paperboard used for ammunition cartons.

This special paperboard product served two vital purposes. First, it 'locked' the ammunition in the carton to protect it from rattling around. Then it 'blocked' out moisture to protect the ammunition from misfires caused by damp gunpowder.

Today there isn't much demand for Crescent's decoy Jeeps but peacetime has proved no less innovative from the company. Crescent continues to play key roles in the custom framing, wall decor, art & crafts supply and photography markets in the United States and over 80 countries worldwide. And the unwavering dedication to this tradition of innovation will carry Crescent forward into the next century.

Crescent
CRESCENT CARDBOARD COMPANY
100 West Willow Road
Wheeling, Illinois 60090 USA

INNOVATORS OF CREATIVE PAPERBOARD PRODUCTS SINCE 1902