



dahl-beck electric

Dahl-Beck Electric History

The **Charles W. Dahl & Son Electrical Company** was started in San Francisco by Charlie Dahl in the year 1900. At the age of 19 Charlie came to the United States from Sweden where he had served his apprenticeship by learning the machinist and electrical trades. Charlie was a likeable character and was well known in the area for his splendid integrity and reliable workmanship.

William U. Beck was a teenager when he began working for Charlie Dahl as a general laborer, but with hard work and a perpetual drive learned the skills necessary to become a master motor mechanic, machinist and winder. William U. Beck had become so involved in the business that he eventually purchased it in 1933 at the age of 27 from a retiring Charlie Dahl. Charlie Dahl had such a fine reputation in San Francisco that William U. Beck decided to keep the name "Dahl" in the name as a source of recognition. The new name for the business would be **Dahl-Beck Electric Company**.

In the early days the company's primary focus was on maritime repair. Merchant marine and navy vessels would often call on the Port of San Francisco and Dahl-Beck Electric would be there to assist with any repairs that might be necessary. It must be noted that back in the early and mid 1900's the Port of San Francisco was one of the busiest ports in the nation and there was a constant flow of ship activity in the bay.

The business soon outgrew its Mission Street location and moved to 118 Main Street (pictured). The Main Street location also became too small and again the company moved to a larger building on Howard Street. In 1952 the company moved to 580 Howard Street (pictured) and a few of the smaller adjacent buildings located on the Natoma Street alley between Howard and Mission (pictured). Built in 1906 this 4 story brick building proved to be a wonderful home for 38 years. Our industrial wiring division had branches in Redwood City (pictured) and Sunnyvale, CA.

No thanks to Bay Area politics the maritime industry was slowly being driven from the Bay Area. The shipping lines that we had depended on for so long were moving or bankrupt and the military bases were closing. The city of San Francisco was becoming increasingly difficult to do business in and the South of Market Area (SOMA) which we were located was beginning to transform from an industrial sector into a more retail and residential area. We felt it was time to move on. Since we vacated the Howard Street location in 1990 the building still stands and has become live/work lofts for many small high tech/internet firms. The building has become a historical landmark and we are proud to see that our original neon sign has been reworked and continues to glow (pictured below).

William U. Beck was joined in 1956 by his son Bill Beck Jr. who has been the catalyst behind the success and longevity of this family run business. In 1990 Bill Beck Jr. made the decision to move Dahl-Beck Electric across the San Francisco Bay to Richmond where we have been able to stretch out in our 56,000 square foot facility and operate the business in a more efficient and streamlined manner.

Bill Beck Jr. also started the sister company **Beck Electric Supply** (www.beckelectric.com) in 1972 which supplies Dahl-Beck Electric, other marine contractors and the shipping lines in the S.F. Bay Area with the marine electrical products essential for the electrical repair and retrofitting of ships and other watercraft. Beck Electric Supply has since grown with branches in Richmond, Seattle and Long Beach.

Today the third generation of Beck's are actively involved in the family businesses. Roger Beck went to work for Dahl-Beck Electric in 1990, Ray Beck went to work for the Beck Electric Richmond branch in 1992 and Ron Beck headed North to Beck Electric Seattle in 1995. Third generation family businesses have become a bit of a novelty these days because so many have either been sold off, swallowed up or run into the ground. We can't forecast what the future holds for us, but our roots remain strong and deep and our attention focused on the horizon — full steam ahead.

Please don't hesitate to call and ask for Bill, Roger, Ray or Ron Beck if you have a concern, special request or need assistance.

