

A new station built by Cities Service Oil Co. in Detroit.

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**Washable
 And Won't Fade**

by Geo. P. Mac Knight

DESIGNS and color schemes that identify business establishments, as well as products, have a recognized value as aids to retail marketing. Tea stores, dime stores and restaurants (outstanding successes in retailing for the past decade) have used standardized store fronts to good advantage. They were not adopted for economy alone, although there is a unit saving possible in buying standardized commodities.

Oil marketers in the meantime have been content to identify the units in their chains of service stations with a certain uniformity in pump globes and with signs over service station doors—the buildings being almost any color and shape. A rapidly growing industry struggling to serve a rapidly grow-

ing market was the reason, along with the erroneous idea that oil marketing was inherently a dirty job.

This is no implication that a studious imitation of chain store methods would have made any set of service stations successful. Not all chain store policies have proven good. Moreover, oil marketers have had some singular problems of their very own. But it is interesting currently to watch a few of the leaders in petroleum marketing put over their uniform station designs and uniform color schemes.

Now that they are at it, the oil companies are doing an exceptionally fine job of standardization. And the job ought to be good, for the oil companies have a lot more to work

with than the chain stores, and a lot more to gain. In most cases the chain stores had only one narrow end of a store building to work with. Oil companies have prominent little buildings in the middle of spacious lots.

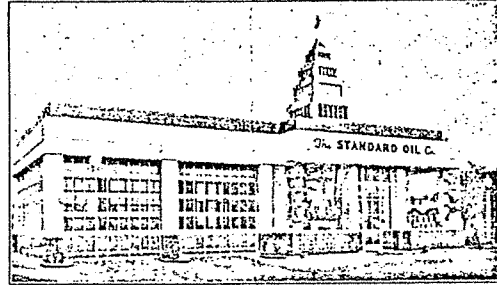
Chain store customers are usually on foot, with time and opportunity to look around. Service station customers are moving fast, often in a stream of traffic, with their eyes glued to the road. It takes a real eye appeal to attract the attention of a man driving a car, in time to get him off the road and into the station, even if he is already conscious of needing gasoline.

The pictures accompanying this article illustrate but feebly what three big oil companies are doing to identify their outlets. Pictures have to be printed in black and white, which leaves plenty to the

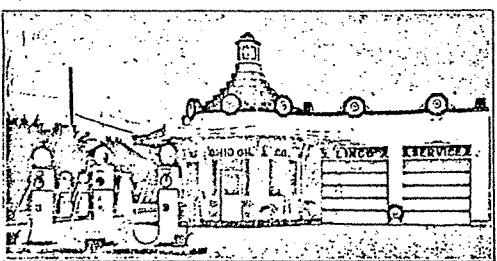
readers' imagination. The station picture of page 1 is really black and white. The others have elaborate color designs. By the way, all the stations shown here are built of the same material—porcelain enamel tile.

A casual observer, seeing one of these new models, might think the companies were spending a lot of money to the end that their stations might all look alike. But that happens not to be the case. They probably would not revert to brick if all the stations had to be different. The new material is cheaper than conventional forms of permanent construction.

In a sense, the service station is the package in which oil products are sold. At least the embellishment of retail outlets generally is going hand-in-hand with the modern trend in beautification of packages.



A station of the Standard Oil Co. of Ohio in Cleveland.



Not one of those little restaurants. It's an Ohio Oil Co. service station in Columbus, O., erected under the L. W. Ray patents owned by the White Castle System of Eating Houses with headquarters at Wichita, Kan.

Manufacturers of foods, cosmetics, drug sundries and similar products have probably spent more money improving the eye-appeal of their packages in the last two or three years than ever before.

The subject is of such importance that business papers everywhere are emphasizing the value of this new eye-appeal. A recent example of this was the cover illustration on February's *Nation's Business*. It showed two executives inspecting recently submitted packaging ideas for a product that had been sold in the same container for many years.

Now the time has come when oil companies may give thought to the matter of eye-appeal. The replacement age has come in the service station field. Few new stations are springing up on new locations. Most of them are replacement stations. There is no rush to build or buy sta-

tions already built. Current progress is more deliberate and better organized. Moreover, competition is keen and selling ideas are valuable.

The Standard Oil Co., of Ohio, the Cities Service Oil Co., and the Ohio Oil Co., are typical of big marketing organizations that are tearing down old stations and replacing them with more attractive and more efficient ones. These companies, in a sense, are re-designing the package in which their merchandise reaches the consumer.

An installation in Cleveland, O., by Standard Oil Co., was perhaps the first tile station erected, but Cities Service was among the first companies to recognize the value of artistry in station building. They have used porcelain enamel shingles as standard roof equipment for several years. Now Cities Service is using the same material

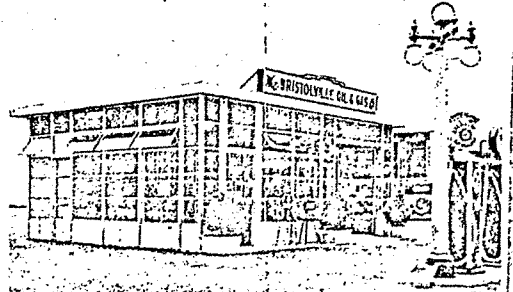
in a different design for exterior wall surfaces as well.

The idea for a change from brick for exteriors to porcelain enamel occurred to Standard's marketing officials after a certain Cleveland station was well on its way to completion. It was being constructed on an old site. The officials wanted to identify the station with the company's red, white and blue color scheme, they wanted cleanliness and they wanted adequate light diffusion. At about this time, the International Tunnel between Detroit, Mich., and Windsor, Ontario, was under construction. Its walls were being lined with porcelain enamel on metal tile. Standard's engineers investigated the effect in the tunnel to see if the same material might be used in station construction. Convinced that it

would be a satisfactory building material and at the same time answer other requirements of the marketing department, they set about to have its exterior walls and roof done in this kind of tile. The illustration on page 2 shows the result.

At the time porcelain enamel was selected, this station was ready for a brick exterior, but by using enamel tile, it is said that about 40 per cent was saved in the cost of construction. That was two years ago. Today the company is using this same material in many of its new stations and Ohio Oil and Cities Service are doing the same thing.

Several years ago the Cities Service organization designed an unique roof to help identify its stations. Since that time it has been using combinations



Light and visibility for service men was paramount in the plans of this independent marketer.

in black and white enamel shingles; green, black and white shingles; and, in many instances, black and white enamel tile for exterior walls.

The Cities Service station pictured on page 1 is a new one in Detroit. The familiar checker-board effect is in black and white and the rest of the roof is in green. The walls are white with black trim around the base.

The best test of the Cities Service idea is to drive past one of the stations at night, when the floodlights are on. Company officials have satisfied themselves that this means of identifying their stations and attracting attention is a profitable investment.

Last summer the Ohio Oil Co. began building unusual stations. The photograph on page 3 is of one built in Bexley, a residential suburb of Columbus, O. It is entirely porcelain enamel inside and outside, from the floor level to the tip of its red tower. Even the large doors of the lubricatorium, shown at the right of the photograph, are of the same material.

Octagonal Design

The main section of this station is octagonal. The outer walls reach to a canopy which extends around the entire octagon. Just under the canopy (showing from each face of the octagon) is a large concave white enamel reflector with "Ohio Gas and Oil—The Ohio

Oil Co." in red porcelain enameled letters. This shows against the white background distinctly during the day and is effectively lighted at night.

Shaded Red Tower

White braces support the entire canopy and the tower begins just above it. The tower itself is composed of steps finished in seven shades of red, ranging from a deep maroon to carmines and pinks. It extends upwards for 15 feet and tapers into a cupola resembling the beacon atop a lighthouse.

The brief descriptions of the three installations by Standard, Ohio Oil and Cities Service are merely examples of what these companies have done toward effecting a distinctive uniformity. Since these stations were completed, other units have gone up in practically every section of the country. One of Standard's stations was done so well architecturally that a reproduction of it appeared in a book called "The International Style: Architecture Since 1922."

Other oil companies operating nationally known chains of stations now using porcelain enamel construction include the Sun Oil Co., White Star Refining Co., Pure Oil Co., and Phillips Petroleum Co. There are six main reasons for its popularity and here they are:

The material is lustrous, like all other kinds of tile. It is colorful, embracing every shade in the ceramic range, which

enables the oil men to identify their stations in colors already associated with the company's printed matter, paint and package goods. It lends itself conveniently to any manner of architectural design. Those three things constitute the much coveted eye-appeal.

Besides those three features, the material is economical and classifies as permanent construction, and it is clean—i. e., it is easy to keep clean. To

make a tile surface look new it is necessary only to soap it and hose it down.

No big company has a monopoly on the use of the material. It is made in well scattered locations and comes in as many brands as shoes. The picture on page 4 shows that it is beginning to attract the attention of relatively small operators as well as marketers with wide distribution and more to gain from uniformity.

Non-White Castle