

HISTORY OF MILLER'S FURNITURE 1900-1975



Nathan Miller, Founder (1885-1967)

The early history of Miller's cannot be told without first giving an early biography of our founder, Mr. Nathan Miller, whose unique drive to escape oppression and strong determination to succeed in life has earned him a "Horatio Alger" reputation among American Businessmen. During the late 1890's, young Nathan at age 15 made his decision to flee from Czarist Russia. After a brief stop in Antwerp, he made it to Philadelphia, joining his older brothers, Charles and Samuel. Although Nathan received some formal education during his early years in Warsaw, he was unable to speak any English when he arrived and furthermore, he was penniless.

Acquiring small notions and odds and ends he and his brothers began to peddle from house to house and during their travels the young "Miller Brothers" discovered Wilmington as a more desirable area to peddle their wares.

Working and saving, the brothers eventually scraped up the funds to open a store in the 600 Block of West Second Street around 1900. In addition to operating the store each brother maintained his peddling route on the weekends.

During evenings young Nathan enrolled in Beacom College where the record indicates he

was a prize student. He shortly overcame the language barrier and his business acumen manifested itself in a move from Second Street to a large building at 213 Market Street in 1905. Under Nathan's leadership Miller Brothers prospered as a general store selling clothing, jewelry, and furniture.

Ten years later our country became deeply involved in the First World War. Nathan's confidence in America and himself persuaded a group of Bankers in 1915 to lend him the money to purchase the James Meharg Furniture Store at 9th & King Streets in Wilmington. The bankers and suppliers were deeply impressed with his courage during those years of fear and uncertainty. Shortly thereafter Nathan purchased his brothers interest, becoming the sole owner of the Miller Brothers Company.

While the store prospered during the twenty year period from the end of World War I to the depression of the 30's, Nathan Miller simultaneously grew in many other areas.

In the Business Arena, he founded the Home Building & Loan in 1912 with a total capital investment of \$55,000, where he served as its President for 50 consecutive years. Today Home Federal's assets exceed 50 million dollars. During those years he also was responsible for establishing the ferry linking New Castle, Delaware and Pennsville, New Jersey.

His civic and religious involvement during those years include every major financial drive and community enterprise for which he was continuously being honored during his later years.

In 1925 a Silver Anniversary was held in Wilmington's Hotel DuPont. In addition to employees, the most prominent bankers, civic leaders, and business people in Delaware paid tribute to Nathan Miller's achievements at this Silver Anniversary observation. That year the first neon sign in Delaware appeared over Miller's newly remodeled store.

When the Great Depression threatened his financial accomplishments, he worked day and night as the driving force to protect Miller's from financial adversity. Miller's famous "no charge for credit" policy emerged during these years as did Miller's "furniture for the needy" program in which all furniture traded in at Miller's was distributed to hundreds of needy families throughout Delaware at no charge.

During the years prior to World War II money was difficult to borrow so as the business began to grow, the company held a public offering of Preferred Stock to friends and employees. This additional capital enabled the company to survive the war years and the stock was ultimately redeemed.

By this time Nathan's sons, Richard and Howard, were active in the business, Richard as the Advertising Manager and Howard as the Carpet Manager.



Miller's Original Seaford Store 1939

In 1939 Nathan purchased the "Seaford Furniture Company" from a Mr. Soren Thompson located at Front and Water Streets in Seaford, Delaware. This branch store was a small three story building of 6,000 sq. ft. at the bottom of a hill. Warehousing for both Wilmington and Seaford was in a building at 206 W. 2nd Street near the original location in 1900. In addition, an outlet store at 515 Shipley Street, "The Exchange Furniture Company" was opened by the Company and managed by Nathan's brother Sam.

In the early 50's extensive remodelling was done at the 9th & King Street location including air-conditioning, a marble store front and an addition was built at the rear of the 2nd Street Warehouse. At a fiftieth anniversary celebration, Nathan presented gold watches to



50th Anniversary Watches presented to Long Term Employees, 1950

five long term employees each with over 25 years of service: Clarence Drummond, Sr., S. R. Ike Anderson, Helen Monigle, Harry Slagle and Bruno E. dePolo.

Once again Nathan stepped out into the civic arena where he served as Chairman of The State Park Commission under both Governor Carvel and Governor Boggs. Under his leadership, Brandywine Springs Park was established and Fort Delaware was purchased.

In the business arena his greatest accomplishment occurred in 1953 when he established and founded Brandywine Raceway Association. By this time Richard was running Miller Brothers on a day-to-day basis and Howard was named President of Brandywine Raceway.

Under Richard's leadership the Company received national recognition as Brand Name "Retailer of The Year" for four consecutive years, 1951-1954.



Richard Miller Receives Brand Name Award, 1953

In 1955 Richard and Howard leased a store at 56 E. Main Street in Newark, Delaware, opening a branch store with 14,000 square feet.

In 1961 the Seaford, Delaware store was doubled in size with a major addition to the original facility.

In 1963 another store was opened in the Pennsville Shopping Center, Pennsville, New Jersey.



Miller's Pennsville Branch 1963

In 1965 Richard's son, Andrew, who joined the firm in 1962 supervised the construction of a new central warehouse, 50,000 sq. ft. at 700 Moorehouse Drive, New Castle, Delaware. Upon completion, delivery operations of all stores were integrated for better efficiency.

In 1968 Andrew acquired additional land in Seaford for the second time in a decade and the Seaford Store was enlarged again up to 20,000 sq. ft. That same year an addition was made to the rear of the Wilmington Store.



1968 Addition to Seaford Store

September 6, 1967 was a very sad moment in the lives of many people when Nathan Miller died at age 82. Richard was elected President and Andrew, Secretary-Treasurer and placed in charge of day-to-day activity. For the first time two non-family employees were elected to the Company's Board of Directors, Charles J. dePolo and Stanley P. Salamon.

Also in 1968 A Profit Sharing Plan was adopted and presented to all employees at a dinner-dance in the Hotel duPont. Richard and Andrew presented gold watches to C. S. Wessells, Mary Sentman, Charles dePolo, and Harry Odien for over 25 years of service. Additional watches were presented at subsequent award banquets to Jason Kraft, Callie Varlan, Odell Lovelace.



Watches to long-term employees 1968

In 1971 the Company relocated its Newark, Delaware store to the University Plaza Shopping Center leasing 25,000 sq. ft. on a single floor. The impact of this move transformed Miller's from a large "small" company to a small "large" company. A 14,000 sq. ft. addition to the Moorehouse Drive Warehouse was completed that year.



University Plaza 1971

In 1974, having already outgrown the warehousing facilities the firm built and moved into a large distribution center (131,000 sq. ft.) at 500 W. Basin Road, New Castle, Delaware. Executive offices were built at the distribution center and top management, the accounting department and the stock control department were all moved from the Wilmington Store to the New Distribution Center.



Grand Opening Carpet Warehouse 1974

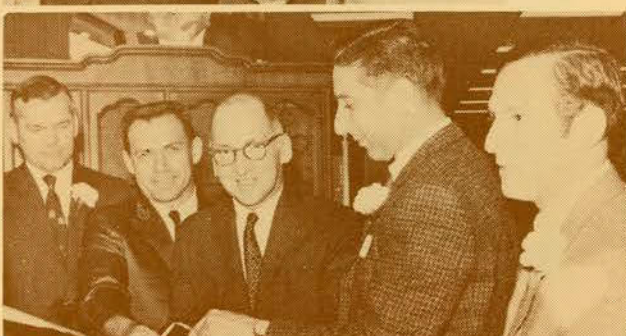
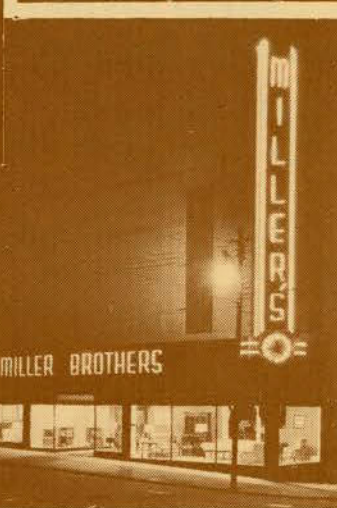
A fifth retail unit opened in 1974 at the Distribution Center selling only carpet on a high volume basis. Additional units are planned for 1976 and 1977.

In 1974 the Company was re-organized and the name officially changed to Miller's Furniture Industries.

In March, 1975 Richard Miller retired from active management and was named Board Chairman. Andrew was elected President and Chief Executive Officer. Also Howard Miller resigned as Vice-President, remaining on the Board in an advisory capacity. He was succeeded by Charles J. dePolo as Vice-President and Merchandise Manager. Richard's son-in-law, Roger M. Levy, who joined the firm in 1973, was elected Secretary-Treasurer. Stanley P. Salamon was elected Assistant Secretary-Treasurer and was named Director of Operations.

In commemorating the conclusion of 75 years of business in Delaware, an Employee Award Banquet and Dinner-Dance was held on January 17, 1976 at the Cavaliers Country Club, Churchmans Road, Newark, Delaware.

75 Years With Miller's 1900-1975



a message from the chairman...



The 75th anniversary of Miller's is at an end and as chairman of your Board I am very proud to be here and thank you all, in person, for a job well done.

As most of you know, I am the second generation to head your firm. As of last April, my 67th birthday, I have now retired (according to Social Security regulations). However, I am still able to fill my role as an active participant and with God's help, I will.

I am grateful that I have a son who is willing and able to lead the Miller organization to higher goals and I urge all of you to give him your full cooperation; no company is as good as the sum total of the efforts of all of you.

This is a time of rejoicing and not long speeches. I would like all of you to remember two things and I assure you that you will all have a happy and successful life. 1. Plan ahead or fall behind. 2. Learn to live with what you have.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard Miller".

Richard Miller

a message from the president...



Dear Friends & Employees:

As our Diamond Jubilee year comes to a close, I am proud to have formally assumed the mantle of leadership of a company I have grown to love!

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and training given me by my late Grandfather and my Father, particularly the encouragement in my early years to participate in our family business.

In pledging to provide outstanding leadership for the years ahead I am counting on each of you for your confidence and loyalty as you have expressed so well to me in the past.

My goals for Miller's can only be reached with your continued dedication and cooperation.

Tonight let us all be thankful for the opportunity we each have to work together as friends in a community that has been good to each of us.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Andrew L. Miller".

Andrew L. Miller