

HISTORY OF UNION-NATIONAL, INC., Jamestown, N.Y.
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The history of the Union-National, Inc., today a nationally known manufacturer of fine furniture, specialists in Italian provincial and contemporary styles, is in essence the story of the Nord family which over a span of 62 years created, and nurtured and brought to full flower an industrial complex in the finest tradition of American Free enterprise.

The story actually started in Sweden in the early 1830s when John A. Nord, oldest of four brothers toiling on a small farm in a depression-ridden land, decided to migrate to America. He came to Jamestown and obtained a job in the A.C. Norquist factory. He was 17 when he started to learn wood carving.

Two years later his brother August F. Nord, then 17, came from the Swedish farm to join him. August went into the same factory to learn wood finishing. The two brothers saved their money and soon were able to send for the rest of the family, including their parents and two younger brothers, Edward G. Nord and Alfred A. Nord.

In 1836 the three older brothers pooled their resources and opened a retail furniture store in East Second Street. John had gone to night school in the Y.M.C.A. to learn English, so he and Edward waited on the trade while August drove a horse and wagon to make deliveries. The business flourished and moved to larger quarters in East Second Street.

The stage was set for the birth of a new furniture industry when the three younger brothers decided they wanted to make furniture.

The Union Furniture Company was started in 1901 in a little building in Crescent Street, still a part of the sprawling complex of the present industry. The building had housed a small plant which made bicycle handlebars, but which had failed. The three brothers, August, Edward and Alfred had a starting capital of \$10,000, most of which came when ~~the~~ August and Edward sold out their interest in the Nord Furniture Store to the elder John who continued to operate it until his death many years later.

The beginning of the Union Furniture was so small that the operation needed only one-half of the building. The first year's production totaled \$10,000 worth of combination bookcases and desks, an item popular at the time and retailing from \$25 to \$50. The entire force totaled eight men, including the hard-working brothers.

In three or four more years the entire building was utilized and the production doubled. The plant started making book cases, then china closets and other items. A small sales force started widening sales to many new parts of the eastern states.

As the years passed production steadily increased and the plant's reputation as a maker of dining room sets widened. New factory buildings went up on the Crescent Street location and the work force grew ever larger. New machinery was constantly added. By the early 1920's it exceeded 200 men.

In 1925 the National Furniture Co. was absorbed and the Blackstone Ave. plant was operated separately to produce bedroom furniture. The overall work force was expanded to more than 300.