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Jamestown Lounge, Marking 75 Years, Has Rich History

the business today is Richard L. Swanson, president; his sons, David Swanson, in charge of production, and Richard D. Swanson, in charge of sales.

Richard Swanson, who was previously associated with his father, O. A. Swanson, operator of the store, joined the company in the 20s.

Howe the Swanson connection dates back to 1892.

That Angie Dowler was a graduate of Jamestown Business College and was one of the first girls to work in a manufacturing plant office. She went to work at the Jamestown Lounge in 1917, left when she married H. Wilson, who was a captain in the Spanish American War and in 1898. When her husband was on military duty that year, Wilson rejoined the company and was the grand-mother of W. and Richard D. Swanson.

Several other men also joined the firm in the early days of manufacturing upholstered furniture and later became widely known in the industry. One of them is

He is Vollmer, who in 1903, left the John Wrights Home Telephone Company to join Jamestown Lounge Company. After 60 years with the upholstery firm, Mr. Vollmer is the compa-

ny's vice president, and will be seen at the Jamestown furniture show, here, and at High Point, N.C., furniture show next month. Mr. Vollmer covers the Philadelphia and eastern Pennsylvania area for the company.

Another noted furniture man to gain fame while with the company was the late Charles F. Reilly. In 1910 he began his furniture career with the firm, and in 1917, he was elected company president and served in that capacity until his death in 1947. Mr. Reilly was best known as a salesman.

Another furniture man to represent the company until he took over his own factory was the late Clarence Bergquist, father of C. Robert Bergquist. Clarence Bergquist died several years ago, and his son, Robert, is now president of Monitor Furniture Co. His father represented Jamestown Lounge Company in the New England States.

When Clarence Bergquist left the lounge company to run his own factory, Francis Goodwill, son of Herbert Goodwill, who recently died in Lakewood, succeeded Bergquist in the New England territory. Mr. Goodwill still covers the New England area for Jamestown Lounge Company. He is related to Fletcher Goodwill, known for years in the banking circles.

The mid-west retail furniture men know well a father-son sales team. They are Victor Seaburg senior and junior, and represent Jamestown Lounge Company in the mid-west area. The Seaburgs were part of the Seaburg family, which also operated a furniture company here.

The furniture manufacturing business is like any other business. It has its ups and downs.

However, Jamestown Lounge, since inception, has always come

through each 'down' with greater emphasis, looking forward despite the panics, wars, depressions and recessions since 1888.

Today, the company has show rooms in Jamestown, Chicago, High Point, and Los Angeles, Calif., as well as show room spaces in other southern cities, and is continuing its plans to grow with the nation.

No one need to remind one of the depression days of 1929-32 and yet the company entered the 30s in a very comfortable position, but like most small businesses, as the depression days grew, it soon found itself in most serious trouble as furniture was the last thing that people could spend money for in those days.

However, the difficulties of the times helped to stimulate the company. Many of the innovations and originations in the use of materials, established it as a style leader, a reputation which has continued to this day.

At the beginning of the dark economic days of the 30s, the company embarked on the manufacture of oak furniture in living room, dining room and bedroom. Correlating in this manner was itself something extremely new and unheard of in the days of extreme specialization. This started the well known Feudal Oak trend.

In the succeeding years Feudal Oak became a very steady seller and the Jamestown Lounge Company became known as the outstanding manufacturer of oak furniture.

Just a bit earlier than this period, Richard L. Swanson joined the company and soon became Mr. Reilly's right hand man. He succeeded him in the presidency upon his death and soon thereafter acquired major stockholdings.

In order to expand further in

this direction, the company introduced a modern oak line of furniture in 1938. Feudal Oak was the product of several designers, principally Bevelacqua. The outstanding development in the more modern oak, British Oak, was Herman de Vries. British Oak furniture had a long run in popularity.

With the approach of World War II, it was the opinion of the company that it should go into war work and temporarily suspend the manufacture of wholesale furniture. It made bunk and seating installations for Liberty ships, signal corps equipment and most of all gun stocks. It developed this operation to a point where it was shipping 30,000 stocks per month. Company officials felt that it undoubtedly could have prospered more if it had stayed in household furniture during the war as the industry as a whole was not seriously impaired and excellent profits were available.

However, from a long run basis, the company personnel received a new concept of engineering research in quantity production which has proven more valuable probably than the temporary profits would have done. It was not long after the war that the company was able to pioneer in the field of molded foam rubber and improved upholstery methods which have been of lasting benefits to the industry.

Shortly after the war, Jack Vander Molen's Americana Casual, Scandinavian modern oak, was very successfully introduced as was the extensive line of carefully selected and upholstered chairs known as Decorator Chairs. Next in the casegoods field came Colonnade, the creation of Robert Kuykendall which has now made the lounge company one of the style leaders and originators of the present period of Mediterranean and Spanish design. It is a far cry from the 1917 period on through the roaring 20s when the company's extensive production included the so-called "Turkish Rockers". They were Rococco creations of heavily padded chair seats on platform rockers usually made in leather and embellished with braided leather fringe and extensive ornamentation. It required a great deal of skill to manufacture. The high-priced upholstered furniture in the extreme luxury bracket of the commercial trade has vanished from the market.

In observing its 75th anniversary, company officials pay high tribute to the skilled employes as well as to these other salesmen of more than 30 years service besides the Seaburgs, Vollmer, and Goodwill. They include Harry Story Jr. in the New York area (many in the furniture trade will remember Harry Story Sr. who was a representative of the Sligh Desk Company for many years); in the south, Henry Boss; in Michigan and Indiana, Alan Doezema whose family is well known in Grand Rapids furniture manufacturing circles; on the west coast, Lee Steinhauer; in the southwest, Barney Kerr and Bob McDonald; in New York and Ohio, Del Burnett; and in Pennsylvania, Erskine Myers.