

Broyhill Furniture ^[1]

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Broyhill Furniture

by John L. Bell, 2006

Modern-day Broyhill Furniture Industries, Inc. ^[2], grew out of the Lenoir Chair Company, founded in 1926 by James Edgar Broyhill in Lenoir. Broyhill upholstered chairs on consignment, but he believed that he could operate on his own. His chair company was immediately successful, and Broyhill expanded his product line in the early 1940s by buying six small furniture ^[3] plants in Lenoir and nearby towns, organizing them all under the name of Broyhill Furniture Factories. The emphasis in early years was on the production of inexpensive to medium-priced bedroom and upholstered furniture.

A slump in furniture sales in the 1940s and 1950s caused Broyhill to make changes. These included a paid sales staff, modernized factories, the production of more expensive and stylish products, quality control, national advertising ^[4], and the production of plastic and ready-to-assemble furniture. Sales more than tripled to \$265 million in the years from 1966 to 1979. In 1980 Interco, Inc., of St. Louis, a shoe and clothing manufacturer, bought Broyhill, Ethan Allen, Inc., and later Lane Home Furnishings. In 1991 Interco, overextended and seeking bankruptcy protection from creditors, began to concentrate on furniture as its primary product. The company subsequently established Broyhill Showcase Galleries to show and sell Broyhill furnishings. By the early 2000s, there were 340 of these galleries, as well as 475 Broyhill Furniture Centers, around the nation. Broyhill Furniture Industries, Inc., as a subsidiary of Interco's latest incarnation, Furniture Brands International ^[5], remains one of the world's largest manufacturers of medium-priced furniture.

References:

Elizabeth Rourke, "Broyhill Furniture Industries, Inc. ^[6]," *International Directory of Business Histories*, vol. 10 (1995).

William Stevens, *Anvil of Adversity: Biography of a Furniture Pioneer*(1968).

Additional Resources:

Broyhill Furniture website: <http://www.broyhillfurniture.com/> ^[2] (accessed November 8, 2012).

State of North Carolina Governor's Press Office "Gov. Easley Announces Creation of 432 Jobs in Caldwell County: One North Carolina Grant Helps Broyhill Furniture Industries Grow in Lenoir." (press release). State Capitol, Raleigh, N.C. September 11, 2008. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/u/?p16062coll5.9853> ^[7] (accessed November 8, 2012).

"Lenoir Forging Ahead in Quality-Variety Furniture Making." *The E. S. C. Quarterly* 10. No. 1-2. Winter-Spring 1952. p. 28-33. <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/u/?p249901coll22.451986> ^[8] (accessed November 8, 2012).

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UNC Press ^[15]

Authors:

Bell, John L. ^[16]

Origin - location:

Caldwell County ^[17]

From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.^[18]

1 January 2006 | Bell, John L.

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- [6] <http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/broyhill-furniture-industries-inc-history/>
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