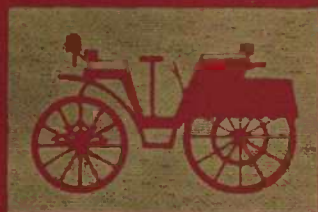


# Mueller Story





# **MUELLER STORY**

**BY**

**O. T. BANTON**  
**Writer and Editor**

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**FRANK H. MUELLER**  
**Collaborator**

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Hieronymus Mueller

## FOREWORD

Architect of this history is Frank H. Mueller, last of the third generation men in the Mueller family. His loyalty to family and the company prompted him to arrange for publication of this book.

Frank recognized that the Mueller Co. grew up with the town, and in the process added greatly to Decatur's growing up; he long had felt that a history of the firm should be written. Last of the Muellers to serve in a managerial role, he realized that unless he got such a history published while his memory spanned much of the company growth period, it never could be done adequately.

Others on the Mueller payroll apparently recognized this too and Frank, over the last several years, was the recipient of many old pictures and documents they "dumped on me," as he related it, for use in preparing such a history. He engaged the services of this writer, who at 83 was retired from a 52-year newspaper career. The writer was familiar with the Mueller Co. and had known several members of the Mueller family. He also had written and edited the 1976 History of Macon County, as well as supervising a second printing of it.

Other members of the Mueller family, on learning that Frank had started work on a company history and was financing it at his own expense, were highly pleased and acted quickly to have it financed by the company. Several Decatur business and professional men, on learning that such a history was being prepared, also voiced encouragement and strong personal interest.

While material in this history deals mainly with managerial and engineering roles of the Mueller men, the Mueller women had a vital part not only in their normal roles but as members of the board and in ancillary functions and activities that included attendance at conventions.

Frank hopes the book will be of interest to the family, the firm's employees and to the many friends of the Mueller Co. The Preface, which follows, describes his purpose in having the book published.

**Oliver Terrill Banton**

## PREFACE

Two people had a major influence on my life. They were my mother and my Uncle Adolph. Both were strong personalities with firm convictions. On certain occasions, my mother would bring our large family together and make some comments that seemed to express the prevailing attitude of the second generation of Muellers. In essence she would say:

"Children, your father and I love all of you equally and regardless of your conduct or how much you please us, each of you always will have our fullest understanding, comfort and support. Moreover, you all will share equally in any material wealth we will have, primarily Mueller stock, which we hope you will treasure for what it represents; the hard work and dedication of the first two generations to build something in which we can take pride. We only ask that you do your best to add to it, preserve it, and pass it on to your children and grandchildren."

I took this very much to heart, and over 25 years ago started an estate plan that has taken an appreciable portion of my income. This action has been more gratifying to me than a more affluent lifestyle would have been.

My father, Philip, died two months after I started full time employment with the company, but I was fortunate to work for and to know Adolph Mueller intimately for 27 years. He was a much misunderstood man and, as I reflect on it, for a strange reason. He reversed the usual practice of dealing with people. His most severe criticism was usually reserved for a time when one was doing well. In essence he was an evangelist whose gospel was that everyone should develop himself to the fullest. To this end he would push, prod and preach to everyone he came in contact with to do better and better, and better!

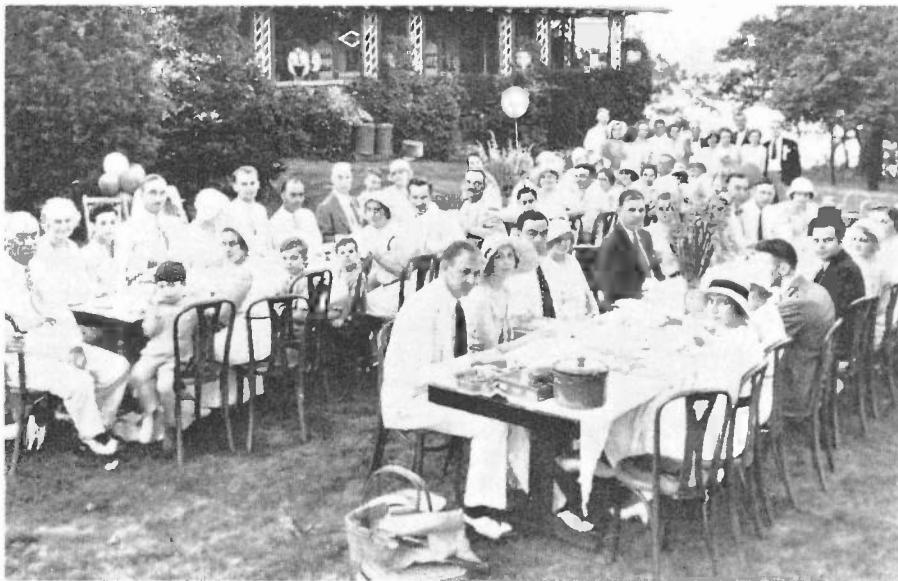
In times of trouble he would rush to your support with all the power at his command and seldom, if ever, rebuke you for your indiscretions or misbehavior. His theory seemed to be that people who can be helped will eventually learn from their own mistakes, and deserve the opportunity to prove themselves. Contrary to what many people thought, he was a patient and compassionate man.

When I introduced him at the Army and Navy "E" Awards ceremony in 1943 I said, "Adolph Mueller is the very 'heart beat' of the Mueller Co." One purpose of this book is that future generations might feel some throbs emanating from this remarkable man and continue this saga beyond the six score and three years it has existed.

While this book focuses primarily on Mueller family members and the parts they played in the company history, it is hoped it will find some interest among the public in general and be of particular significance to the many past and present customers and employees who, regrettably, are too numerous to mention individually. I sincerely thank all for their loyalty, personal interest and important contribution to the company's success. I am proud to call so many personal friends.

I should note that personality clashes and frustrations were encountered in building the company to its present status. These were troublesome but they were resolved, and are chronicled frankly in this history.

### Frank Hieronymus Mueller



Mueller family reunion and dinner was held in 1932 commemorating the 100th birthday of Hieronymus Mueller and the 75th anniversary of the company in business in Decatur. This was on the south lawn of the Lodge overlooking beautiful Lake Decatur.

Long Table — Adolph Mueller, Mrs. Adolph Mueller, Gene Simpson, Wm. E. Mueller, Mrs. Wm. E. Mueller, Fredric Schluter, Ebert Mueller, Robert Mueller, Robert Eugene Mueller, Mrs. Robert Mueller, Mrs. Lee Homebrook, Mr. W. E. Adams, Mrs. W. E. Adams, Mrs. Peters, Mrs. Ora Mueller Blair.

Right Side — John Adolph Schluter, Dorothy Knauss, Fredric E. Schluter, Jr., Wm. E. M. Schluter, Mrs. Fredric Schluter, Bernhardt Mueller, Oscar B. Mueller, Clarence Cozad, Mrs. Philip Mueller, Lee Homebrook, Mrs. Fred Kaiser, Mrs. Will Shorb, Mrs. Paul Needham, Will Shorb, Mrs. A. E. Staley, Jr., Miss McClanahan.

Standing — R. H. Mueller, Betty Kaiser, Eloise Brownback, Joe Brownback, Mary Jane Brownback, Glen Shafer, Mrs. Vere Brownback, Mrs. Frank Mueller, Jane Pluck, Eddie Huebner, Frank Mueller.

First Table (left side) — W. G. Traver, Mrs. W. G. Traver, L. W. Mueller, Mrs. L. W. Mueller, Carlos Lyons, Monte Crawford, Mrs. T. Samuels, Tom Samuels, C. F. Mattes, Mrs. C. F. Mattes.

Right Side — Mrs. H. B. Kenney, Mrs. W. Hornaday, Mr. H. B. Kenney, Mr. W. Hornaday, Mrs. Carlos Lyons, Mrs. Monte Crawford, Mrs. W. Shellabarger, Mr. W. Shellabarger.



## OLD WORLD TO DECATUR

History of the Mueller Co. spans a period of 123 years, going back to just three years after the first railroads came to Decatur. The company has found the city a good place in which to operate, and Decatur owes much to the fact that the firm's founder, Hieronymus Mueller, chose the then village of 3,000 for his home back in 1857.

Decatur at that time offered little other than prospects of growth because of the railroads; its streets were unpaved, stage coach routes and other roads leading out of it were almost impassable in muddy weather except by travel on horseback. The only industries were primitive agriculture and the grist mills and sawmills on the Sangamon river. There were a few merchandise stores and some employment was provided in the county seat offices in the two-story brick courthouse in what is now Lincoln Square. Agriculture had been limited to meat and grain production for local use only, until building of the railroads enabled shipment of surplus produce to distant markets.

Mr. Mueller fitted himself into that community as best he could, through use of the mechanical training he had received beginning as an apprentice in his native Germany. He started his business in a little gun and machine shop in which, in addition to making and repairing guns, he repaired clocks and other household equipment. His inventive genius soon built his business into light manufacturing, and by the time his sons joined him in his enterprises he had a strong program of waterworks, gas and plumbing goods manufacture. His sons and grandsons later expanded this to a degree that for more than a half century the Mueller Co. was the industrial bulwark of Decatur.

Mr. Mueller was born in Wertheim, Germany, on July 16, 1832. He left there in 1849, at the age of 17, after three years of training as a machine shop apprentice in Mannheim, which was 35 miles from his home town.

For some years prior to 1848 there had been a National Movement in Germany to put some mild restrictions on the governing autocracy. Since compulsory military training was one of the points, the young people were deeply involved. They succeeded in forming a commission which drew up a constitution involving these elements, and it was proposed that King William of Prussia, the largest German state, would be asked to accept the position of king of all Germany. This he refused to do and the German youth rose in violent protest.

Hieronymus Mueller apparently was active in this movement. After he and some other youths were accused of trying to blow up a bridge at Mannheim and he had incurred official disfavor by public statements against government policies, young Mueller left hurriedly for Amsterdam, Holland.

Records are conflicting on how long he remained in Holland. One

account states he was in Amsterdam "only a short time;" that would imply he went on to America in 1849 and spent a few years in New York City. The foggy point is whether he spent about three years in Holland or in New York.

Two brothers, Adolph and Henry, had preceded Hieronymus to America and were doing well. There was another brother, Philip, and a sister, Christina, who died as a young girl. His father, John Michael Mueller, died when the children were young and his mother, Ursula Elizabeth Kast Mueller, became head of the family. She had, according to family accounts, restrained the older brothers' departures for America until they were 20 years old, and wanted Hieronymus to wait until he was 20.

Family chronicles tell of his writing his mother to send his clothes and other belongings to Amsterdam for his planned trip to America; she is said to have sent these, along with her blessing.

Clearer records agree that Hieronymus came to the Chicago area in 1853, and spent the next few years working in machine and gun shops in Freeport, Illinois. There he met and in 1856 married Fredericka Bernhardt, a native of Minden, Prussia. He is said to have told one of his brothers, who also was in Freeport, that he wanted to get married and start a business of his own. His coming to Decatur in 1857, as the story has been handed down in the family, was on advice of one of his brothers, who is said to have told him:

"This country out here is going to grow. Pick a good town with a railroad and grow with it. Decatur, a town south of here, is at the junction of two railroads. Go down there and grow up with the town."

On arriving here Hieronymus proceeded soon to build a small machine and gun shop on the south side of the 100 block West Main Street, across the street from where later the city's first firehouse and the C. M. Caldwell livery stable were located. Second story of the gun shop served as a residence for him and his bride. A sign outside read: "H. Mueller, Gun Shop." Wild game was plentiful here in the early days, and the head of nearly every household, as well as some of the sons, had guns. There was plenty of business for a gun shop.

Probably driven by the necessity for capital to build up his small business, he sold his shop and spent about seven months in 1858 in the vicinity of Denver, Colorado, in the "Pike's Peak or bust" gold rush. During his absence Fredericka lived in Freeport with her parents and became the mother of their first son, Henry.

After bringing his little family back to Decatur late in 1858, Mr. Mueller rented quarters in the 100 block North Water Street — in the building which later was occupied by Haerting's Barber Shop. He operated a repair business and manufactured guns and other items his inventive inclinations produced. He repaired clocks, sewing machines and other equipment.

Artistic tendencies he displayed as a youth in Germany gave class to his manufactured products and repair work. This, with stress on mechanical perfection, he passed on to some members of his later family of six sons and a daughter; it added greatly in putting the Mueller Co. at the top in manufacture of a wide variety of waterworks, gas and plumbing goods.

From 1859 to 1872 the Mueller gun and repair business was conducted in a small building on the south side of the 200 block East Main Street. Conforming with a practice of those days, Mr. Mueller had a large wooden replica of a gun mounted outside from the second story windows of the shop to call attention to the proprietor's services as a gunsmith. Mr. Mueller almost from the start had an experimental room as part of his shop, and his inventive genius led him to spend as much time as he could in developing new products. Gradually he built up a small force of helpers who became very loyal to him and whom he treated almost as a "family."

This writer recalls being told that his father, a carpenter contractor and farmer living near Mt. Zion, had Mr. Mueller make a muzzle-loading rifle for him about 100 years ago. Dad supplied an octagonal iron crowbar about an inch in diameter to serve as a barrel for the gun. With his shop equipment the gunsmith bored a hole through the length of the crowbar so perfectly that father, who was an excellent shot, could hit a squirrel in the head in the top of a tree. My brother, Huston J. Banton, has the old firearm on his mantel and values it highly.

The Mueller family whose youngest child, Oscar, was born in 1871, lived for many years in a rented house in the 100 block East Wood Street, just off the southwest corner at South Main Street. Although he had prospered to a degree and could well afford it, Hieronymus never had a home of his own; he lived in rented quarters so he could devote most of his income to building up his business ventures.

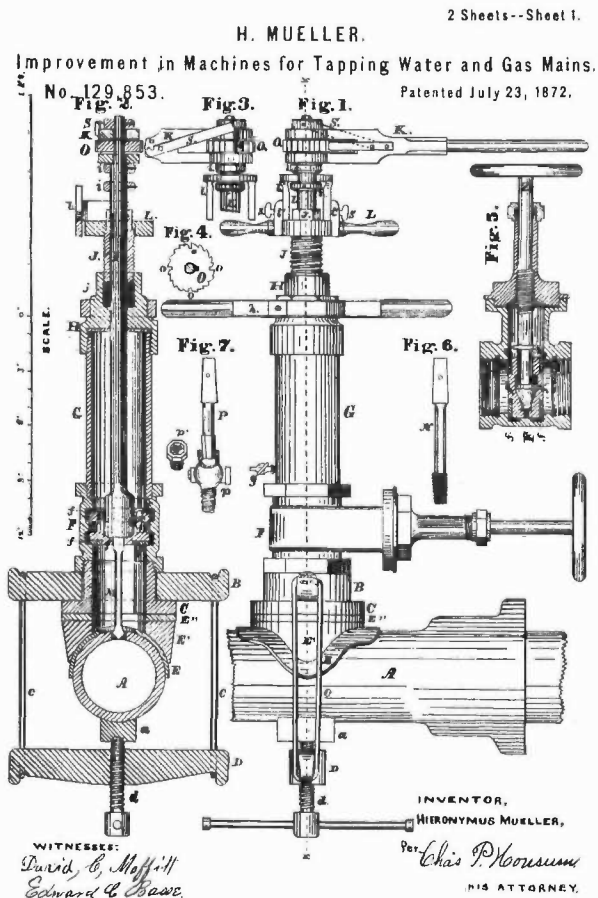
A rolling mill firm that wanted to make iron rails for the rapidly expanding railway lines, sought to come to Decatur in 1869. It needed a site, and stipulated that it required a four-inch stream of water. Wells dug by the city in the vicinity of where East Wood Street crosses the Illinois Central Railroad tracks failed to provide a sufficient supply for the Decatur Rolling Mills plant, which in 1870 was located on 10 acres provided by Richard J. Oglesby. The mill site was in the district long known as the "levee," just east of what later was the location of the two railway depots.

The Rolling Mills operation, where 400 men were employed — by far the biggest payroll in Decatur at that time — brought a residential building boom. The city moved rapidly to develop a waterworks on a hill just north of the Sangamon river, at the site of most of the present waterworks buildings.

## FIRST BIG INVENTION

Mr. Mueller had been appointed city plumber by Mayor Franklin Priest, and one of his chief duties was to tap the water mains for pipes to carry city water into the homes and businesses. He was very displeased with the crude method then used for doing this. It usually meant shutting the water off every time he made one of these connections, and often being doused with escaping water; he called on his mechanical abilities for a "better way."

After considerable work in his experimental room, he produced in 1872 a device ever since known as the Mueller Tapping Machine, which taps water and gas pipes while under full pressure. So well did he make his new invention that it still is being used in all 50 states and some foreign countries, with little change in the original design. This invention proved to be one of the



most important produced in Mueller Co. history, and brought national and international recognition to the firm more than 100 years ago.

Making the tapping machine was not easy. A few who were close to Mr. Mueller at the time worried about his loss of sleep and deep concentration on the project. His son Adolph, later company president, told this story of his father and the machine at a picnic in 1932 marking the 75th anniversary of the start of the Mueller enterprises here:

"Mother once related to us boys father's obsession in perfecting this invention. On one occasion he failed to come home to dinner at his regular hour. Henry, the oldest son, was sent to the shop to remind him of the dinner hour. Henry did not return; then Philip, the second son, was sent as a second messenger. Neither of them returned and brother Fred was sent to call them, but no one came to dinner. So brother Robert was dispatched, with the same results. Finally, though I was only five years old, mother sent me. A little later father, with his then five sons, all interested in the invention, appeared for his noonday meal. He was perfecting part of the tapping machine, and all else was oblivion."

A new challenge to his inventive abilities faced Mr. Mueller as soon as he had perfected his tapping machine. In addition to the necessary tools, a new corporation stop (or cock) connecting the water main to the household water line was required. He developed a new compact design with a special highly tapered inlet thread that made a better pressure-tight joint and reduced the stresses on the water main. This thread was long known in the industry as the Mueller C.C. thread and was later adopted as the standard by the American Water Works Association. His inability to purchase these products to meet his specifications forced him to establish a brass foundry and machine shop to make them himself. By 1885 the manufacture of brass goods was an important part of Mueller production.

Having conquered the water main tapping problem and others related to it, Mr. Mueller turned his attention to developing a water pressure regulator. Normal pressure in water mains at the time was 50 pounds; in case of fire this was increased to 125 pounds or more. Pressure of 125 pounds was hazardous to lead household plumbing. Mr. Mueller's new goal was to invent a device which would receive the water at 50 pounds pressure or more and deliver it at a lower pressure as needed for domestic or industrial use.

Perfecting the water pressure regulator required nearly eight years, and Mr. Mueller's sons often recalled seeing their father spend long hours in the evenings working in the basement of his home on that invention. They told of some of his experiments that would control the pressure as he desired but in doing so created a terrific rumbling and jarring of the water pipes throughout the house. This water pressure regulator was one of Mr. Mueller's most important inventions, and is still an important item in the Mueller Co. line of products.

The mechanical abilities of Mr. Mueller were illustrated by his building an eight-horsepower steam engine from his own patterns when such a piece of equipment was needed in the three-story factory he had built in 1872 at 222 East Main Street. This was across the street from his previous plant; it was at the corner of East Main and State Streets, and occupied the site where the annex at the east end of the Millikin National Bank later was built. This fourth home of the Mueller enterprises also had a large wooden gun mounted at the front of the building.

Mr. Mueller's motor did service at the plant for many years, and he built a 20-horsepower steam engine when growth of his business required it. He designed and built a double barreled, muzzle-loading shotgun for Garrett Schenck of Maroa, who used it for many years until he changed it for a breech-loading gun. Schenck sold the old gun back to the Mueller Co. for exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

It seemed Mr. Mueller's resourcefulness knew no bounds. As his business grew he bought needed new equipment when he found it available, but if it was not, he created devices to perform the work he sought to do. In many instances he improved on the design of equipment he had bought, to increase its usefulness. In his first little shops his equipment consisted only of a simple lathe, drill press, grindstone, and forge.

Along with skilled use of most any kind of tools, Mr. Mueller was possessed of a stern honesty that never failed to impress those with whom he did business. This is illustrated well in a story told of him at a big company picnic in 1932 by A.G. Webber, Sr., longtime legal counsel for the Mueller Co. and who as a boy served for three years as a machine shop apprentice to Mr. Mueller.

"The deepest impression that Mr. Mueller made on me," Mr. Webber said, "was that at the time of delivery of any mechanical work that he had made, he had a look of pride and satisfaction, as if every piece of work was his masterpiece.

"I remember a workman having made repairs to a gun and having allowed the screw which held the barrel to the comb of the gun stock to be at an angle to the axis of the barrel. As Mr. Mueller was about to hand the gun over to the customer he noticed this defect in workmanship and knew it would make removal of the screw difficult. He promptly placed the gun back in the case and said: 'I am sorry, but the work is not finished.' He had the workman correct the error."

Hieronimus Mueller was not only a mechanical genius, he was a good father and devoted much time to what he regarded as proper upbringing of his children. Some of his techniques provided favorite stories told by his sons at company annual picnics in later years. His son Adolph — at the time president of the company — told this story at one of the picnics:

"Father was a disciplinarian in the factory, and in his home. He enforced

discipline, however, with moderation and toleration that left no sting. He believed that boys and young men needed counsel and guidance of an older and experienced man. He believed that a boy should work for a boy's wage.

"When he learned that our brother Fred had obtained a job with the late B. Z. Taylor at \$10 a week, he did not approve of it. At that time wage rates in all lines were very low. Father, no doubt, was proud that Fred could get that wage when a mere boy, but with him that was not most essential. He said it was too much money to pay a boy and insisted that Mr. Taylor cut the wage to \$4 a week.

"Father realized that a boy with \$10 of his own money every week would be facing temptations which might prove his ruin. Fred did not like it, but he obeyed; he had been taught to obey."

Robert Mueller, the fourth son, contributed this story at one of the company's picnics:

"Father was a pronounced disciplinarian. But he believed in corporal punishment only when the offense merited extreme measures. Order was a first law with him. When bedtime came, we boys placed our shoes with toes against the baseboard, and we put our hats or caps in a certain place. Our toys had a place assigned to them. If all these things were not in their regular place, we were called to order and made to put them where they belonged.

"Father did not, as many parents do, threaten us with punishment if we repeated an offense. And he avoided whipping one of us when we committed an offense and he was angry; he promised the punishment later, and always kept his promise. Looking forward to the whipping really was tougher for us than having it happen right away. I recall only one incident of corporal punishment, about which we have laughed in later years. Mr. Pahmeyer lived a block east of us on Wood Street. He had a cherry tree in his yard and the branches hung heavy with tempting fruit. So tempting was it that Brother Adolph and I could not resist, try as hard as we could to do so.

"One evening about dusk we made a sortie from the alley and helped ourselves. Unknown to us, we had been observed by Mrs. Pahmeyer and she carried the news to father. Trespassing on another's property and helping ourselves to fruit without an invitation was an offense in father's eyes which called for more than a reprimand. We were asked to meet him in the basement, where father talked to us with a wooden paddle on certain portions of our anatomy which were keener of understanding the purpose of it all than a boyish mind could have grasped a lecture on deportment."

In a long picnic talk Robert on one occasion gave many further interesting sidelights on the home life of the Mueller family.

"There were six of us boys and a daughter," he related. "In our earlier lives all the boys, unless by special concession, were in the house at dark. Newspapers and magazines were not so plentiful in those days, but we always had reading matter. St. Louis and Chicago papers, in German and English, were available. In addition there were story papers.

"When lamp lighting time came, mother gathered us around a table and read stories to us. Frequently they were continued stories and in her reading she interjected enough dramatic power to keep our interest alive. Other evenings she would tell us stories. Father was very much a home man. Our family circle always was complete, which was not an exceptional picture of home life in that period."

The Mueller parents believed in letting the children develop themselves in a wholesome way insofar as this course came naturally, Robert related. If any of them had a taste or inclination for music, athletics, hunting or fishing, that child was encouraged in his desires.

"Henry and Philip," Robert recalled, "were inclined to band and orchestra music, and they were given instruction by Professor Andrew Goodman, whose name is familiar to all Decatur people for the band which he founded and led for so many years. Henry played the flute and Philip the French horn.

"As boys we were sent on stated evenings to the Turnverein Hall for regular instruction in turning and tumbling. All parents of German antecedents considered this a necessary part of a boy's education. All of the Mueller boys were encouraged in outdoor life and for hunting, fishing and skating we were provided with the necessary equipment."

Mr. Mueller's strong devotion to his family always included his mother, whose comfort and happiness were a deep concern to him. He had her come to America and one of his greatest satisfactions was to make her declining years full of peace and contentment. She made her home with the Muellers at their Wood Street residence.

As often is the case with men of accomplishment, Hieronymus had a few interesting idiosyncrasies.

He greatly disliked his name, and is reported to have sputtered about it occasionally in conversations with friends. He never permitted his six sons and daughter to name a grandson for him, although they produced several and would have liked to name one of them for grandpa. This was circumvented by Philip, father of the only grandson born after Hieronymus' death. Philip named his youngest son, born in 1903, Frank Hieronymus Mueller. By strange coincidence, those who knew the second and third generations well, appear to be in agreement that while four of the founder's sons inherited his inventive and mechanical genius in generous degree, Frank Hieronymus rates next to his grandfather in this inheritance.

Hieronymus also had an aversion to neckties, and while he wore a stiff white collar on many occasions, he refused to wear a tie. He also disliked shoes, and always wore handcrafted boots instead. Whether due to his unpleasant boyhood experiences or because he was so absorbed in his business that he didn't want to take the time, he never returned for a visit to his native land. Some other members of the family made such a journey in 1929, visiting Wertheim, and had their pictures taken in front of the house in which Hieronymus was born.

Those making the trip were Adolph Mueller, then company president; his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Mueller, their son Ebert, and Mr. A. G. Webber, Sr., legal counsel for the Mueller Co. The Muellers found in Wertheim many blood relations.



## FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF HORSELESS CARRIAGE

One group of Mr. Mueller's inventions made him a pioneer in development of the automobile. While many were poking fun at mechanics who were trying to produce a "horseless carriage," his intuition told him that such a conveyance had future possibilities.

In 1895 he imported a Benz wagon from Germany, one of the first two or three brought to the United States. In this he had two purposes. He wanted to inspect the Benz machine, which he was convinced was superior to any that had been developed in this country. In addition, he regarded horses as unreliable and dangerous, and welcomed a means of transportation that would free him from having to use horses.

It is interesting to speculate on how Mr. Mueller, living in a small American city, could have known about development of the Benz car in time to buy one of the first few sent to this country. Some who have pondered this believe that he corresponded with friends in Mannheim, where he served his apprenticeship years, who told him about the work Karl Benz was doing in building horseless carriages. There had been extensive experiments around the world in building motor-driven carriages, but mechanics engaged in this were building a single vehicle. Benz was first in the world to start factory production of automobiles for sale — in 1895.



Photo of Mueller car in route to Indianapolis. Fred Mueller standing at right rear of car.  
NOTE: One of the first radiators ever installed on a motor car.

Mr. Mueller was quick to perceive defects in his Benz wagon, some of which were manifested at most inopportune times. Two of these were its sudden refusal to proceed at times, and its inability to ascend grades. He took the machine completely apart, and applied himself to correction of some of these weaknesses. By the time the car was entered in a racing contest several months later, it was in reality a Mueller machine. Mr. Mueller had added a third forward speed, reverse shift, radiator and some less important new parts.

In this transformation there was no infringement on the Benz patents, Mr. Mueller having improved on fundamental rules of power and its transmission which had been basic principles of all former efforts to develop a self-propelling vehicle. The best motor vehicle constructed in this country at that time was the Duryea self-propelled wagon developed in Springfield, Massachusetts.

The Mueller-Benz and the Duryea cars figured in the first auto races held in the United States. In 1895 the Chicago Times-Herald, inspired by a similar race in France, arranged for automobile races in the Chicago area. The first race occurred on November 2 of that year and Mr. Mueller's car won, although it later was demonstrated that the Duryea was the faster car. It had pneumatic tires and a two-cylinder engine, while the Mueller-Benz car was equipped with hard rubber tires and had a one-cylinder engine. In the first race Stephen Duryea ran into a streetcar and broke his steering gear. The Benz car completed its trip to Waukegan and back at an average speed of 10 miles per hour and won a \$500 prize. This was the first auto race in America and the Decatur car won it, but the Chicago paper called it a "consolation" race because it wanted another race with more cars entered.

A second race was scheduled for Thanksgiving, three weeks later. A week before this race a foot of snow fell in Chicago, and with removal equipment inadequate for such a heavy fall, most of it was still on the streets on Thanksgiving day — with a temperature range of 30 to 38, the racing cars battled deep slush most of the way.

Six cars started in the race, with the Duryea getting underway at 7:18 A.M. The Mueller-Benz was last, leaving the starting point at Midway and Jackson Park at 10:06. Three of the entries were electric-driven and these, unable to cope with the snow, dropped out early in the race. The other car, which also had a Benz engine, was driven by Frederick C. Haas, who had been driver of the car that won the Paris-Bordeaux race in France the previous June. After his car went out of commission Haas, in a horse-drawn cutter, followed those still in the race.

The Mueller entry carried three men, Oscar Mueller, driver; Charles B. King, umpire, and Charles G. Reid of Chicago, identified in some early records as "observer" and in some instances as assistant driver. The Duryea

car was driven by J. Frank Duryea, head of the Duryea firm, and his brother Charles accompanied him.

Actual time elapsing between the time the Duryea car started the race and its finish was 10 hours and 20 minutes, and comparable figures for the Mueller-Benz car 10 hours and 7 minutes. But the Duryea car finished the race at 7:15 p.m. and the Mueller machine at 8:53 P.M. Rules of the race included a complicated system of allowing time out for delays forced by traffic and other conditions, and the judges announced the average running time speeds as 5.05 miles per hour for the Duryea car and 4.87 MPH for the Mueller machine. At the Rush Street bridge Duryea used up 55 minutes in forging and repairing a steering arm at a blacksmith shop after it broke while crossing the bridge.

The race attracted much interest, and big crowds greeted the racers at the Auditorium Hotel on Michigan Avenue and several other places along the 55-mile course from Jackson Park to Evanston and return. At the Lake Shore Drive entrance to Lincoln Park the racers were cheered by a football crowd (at a University of Michigan and University of Chicago game). Crowds of boys throwing snowballs were encountered several times, and a few delays were caused by frightened horses.

Oscar lapsed into unconsciousness about an hour before the end of the race and King, who later became well known as a builder of automobiles and marine motors, drove the car across the finish line. Reid had collapsed at the end of 35 miles and was transferred to a sleigh. First prize of \$2,000 went to Duryea and the \$1,500 second prize to the Mueller entry.

Most assumed Oscar's condition resulted from the strain of the contest, but what really happened to Oscar in that race was revealed several years later by his wife to Frank Mueller, her nephew.

"He wasn't sick; he was drunk!" Mrs. Mueller said. "He never was a drinker; he didn't drink anything. But he was so nervous about that race he couldn't eat breakfast. It was cold weather and he didn't have enough clothes and they got stuck in a snowdrift 50 yards from the starting line. They had to get down and shovel this out and then go on, and when they got stuck in another snowdrift it was by a saloon. Oscar was complaining about his condition and some guy said, 'I'll fix that,' and went in and got him a half glass of whiskey. Drinking it on an empty stomach put Oscar out of business for the rest of the race."

The Benz car created quite a sensation when it arrived in Decatur, and it stirred up clouds of dust as it was driven down the unpaved streets. It was given a "country drive" by Mr. Mueller and his son Oscar, to the Illinois State Fair at Springfield. It made the trip over in an "amazing five hours." It required six hours for the trip back. This was described vividly in a news story that appeared in the September 29, 1895 issue of the Decatur Review.

"Stops amounting to a total of two hours," the report said, "were made on the way. Many teams of horses were met. When a team came along, the carriage was stopped and turned to one side of the road. Sometimes four or five teams in a quarter of a mile would be coming. Then a stop would be made until all got by. In that way sometimes 15 minutes would be used. The people were all pleasant and accommodating, and interested in the carriage. They did anything they could to help.

"On some of the hills west of Decatur the carriage had to be run at slow speed, and on one or two Mr. Mueller and his son walked a little. Mr. Mueller demonstrated that under ordinary circumstances the carriage can be run for a cent a mile. On the way back just  $4\frac{1}{2}$  gallons of gasoline were used. This can be bought at a little less than 10 cents a gallon."

The car attracted much interest in Springfield, and was described by one who saw it at the State Fair as "much more interesting than the Fair." On the way to Springfield, Mr. Mueller had several young men riding bicycles ahead, to give warning that the car was coming and to take care of horses that might be encountered on the way.

Mr. Mueller was a Democrat, and took a great interest in the political fortunes of President Grover Cleveland. In his 1896 campaign William Jennings Bryan came to Decatur and was met at the railway station by Mr. Mueller and his horseless carriage. Bryan and his wife were driven to Central Park where he was to make a speech at the grandstand. The crowd was so great that the car couldn't get through, and Bryan had to speak from Decatur's first automobile. It was the Bryans' first ride in an automobile, and they were very appreciative of the opportunity. Oscar Mueller drove the car that day.



Bryan Day in Decatur, October 23, 1896. Mr. Bryan and Mr. H. Mueller in front seat, Mrs. Bryan, Mr. Bryan's secretary and Mr. M. C. Irish in rear seat of Mr. Mueller's motor wagon. Oscar Mueller standing behind the car.

Frank M. Lindsay, longtime publisher of the Decatur Herald and later co-owner of the Herald and Review, recalled that he was one of six boys picked to run alongside the car, to push it to the park grandstand in case anything happened to its motor.

Greatly impressed with what he believed he saw as the future of the automobile, Mr. Mueller began to devote most of his time to making improvements on many parts of the Benz car. Two patents granted to him in 1897 covered improved design on these parts:

- Variable Speed Transmission
- Steering Gear and Body Suspension
- Water Cooling Radiator
- Variable Speed Transmission  
in which disc was used

In the same year two of his sons, who also had become keenly interested in automobiles, obtained patents. Oscar's covered the earliest form of spark plug, which was identical in principle with spark plugs used on cars in later years. Philip got a patent on the "make and break," distributor head used in all automobile engines until recent years.

One day in 1900 while experimenting with carburetors using high test gasoline, Mr. Mueller departed from his usual caution and lighted his pipe. The explosion that resulted instantly set his clothes on fire. He started to run, and the men who had been working nearby chased him; one of them, Wilbur (Billy) Simpson, a long-time employee and later a member of top management of the company, caught him and threw him down, and with the help of others covered him in such manner as to put out the flames. Simpson is said to have run behind the horse-drawn ambulance to the hospital, crying all the way. The company founder was so badly burned that he died a week afterward, on March 1, 1900.

At the time Mr. Mueller had under construction the working parts of three distinct automobiles. Had he lived, some members of the Mueller family and many other business men here believed that Decatur might have become "another Detroit." The sons decided not to undertake auto manufacture, and the auto parts and patents were sold. Oscar is said to have received \$500 for his spark plug patent, and Philip \$500 for his patent.

The sons' decision is believed to have been due at least in part to the fact that the founder's widow, Fredericka, blamed his death on the automobile, and wanted nothing further to do with such a machine. Whether that attitude had anything to do with the fact the Mueller-Benz auto was not kept as a relic, is a matter of speculation by present members of the family; it now would be a most valuable museum piece and doubtless would have a place of honor in the lobby of the Mueller Co. home office building in Decatur.

The sons' shift of interest from the automobile back to production of

brass goods likely was not difficult, as their interest in the horseless carriage was not so great as their father's. They recognized that the Mueller Co. operations were on sound footing; quality manufacture had given the firm's products an edge nationwide over most of their competitors, and business volume and profits were growing. It is estimated that Mueller Co. sales in 1900 amounted to approximately a half million dollars, with a profit of \$100,000 or 20 per cent. The boys naturally would think twice before shifting from this to a new product where they would have to neglect a seemingly sure thing for a new line in which competition was certain to be rough. Later history of the company may have shown that to have been one of the wisest decisions of the second generation of the family.

Following German tradition, Henry, the oldest son, was made the president of the company.

For some years, housing the expanding foundry and machining operations together with other business lines had been growing increasingly difficult. By 1885 the 13-year-old multi-purpose plant at 222 East Main Street had become badly overcrowded and relief measures taken included moving the gun department to 138 Merchant Street. A full line of sporting goods was added and Fred B. Mueller, the third son, placed in charge. He already had shown marked sales abilities.



A view of the fourth factory of Mueller Co. constructed in 1872 at 222 East Main Street.

## PARTNERSHIP TO CORPORATION

In 1886 Hieronymus converted his business into a partnership, with sons Henry, Philip, Fred B., Robert, and Adolph as members, and with him at the head. In 1887 the increasing demand for Mueller brass fixtures forced a further division of operations, and the plumbing business was shifted to 249 East Main Street. The plumbing business grew, and in 1891 Mueller had a three-story building erected at 257 North Main Street to house the Decatur Plumbing and Heating Co. business, which was incorporated and included some non-family owners. The building later became the Decatur Herald plant. The gun store in 1892 was moved to 134 Prairie Street and enlarged.

In 1893 it was decided to incorporate the business, and the H. Mueller Manufacturing Co. was organized with a capital stock of \$68,000. Mr. Mueller was made president and three sons held the other offices; Henry was vice president and mechanical expert; Adolph secretary and Robert treasurer.

Business, principally brass goods manufacture, was still being carried on at the factory on East Main Street, but orders were coming in at an overwhelming rate. The superior quality of the corporation cocks, then the principal product of the company, was recognized by many users, and when one company asked for assurance that it could be supplied with 10,000 of these cocks annually, it was obvious that there had to be more plant expansion.

A new and extensive site was purchased at the corner of West Cerro Gordo and North College Streets in 1895. On April 1 of that year ground was broken for a new factory building and on September 7 the company moved into its new quarters. The ever-increasing demand for the firm's brass goods had pushed the plumbing and gun business into secondary consideration, and in 1896 the plumbing business was disposed of and the gun store was sold in 1897.

The youngest Mueller brother, Oscar, was made a member of the company in 1896. Fred was called back into the manufacturing business when the gun store was sold.

Mr. Mueller spent considerable time in determining how to divide stock in the corporation. He sought to allow the sons the same interest they had had in the business when it was a partnership, but during that period Oscar had not been a partner. In giving him a share equal to that of the other sons, Hieronymus decided to keep one third of the stock and give each of the sons one-ninth.

However, on advice of his longtime counsel, A. G. Webber, Sr., that he retain controlling interest in the firm, Mr. Mueller made the following stock division:

Hieronymus Mueller

344 shares

Henry Mueller	56 shares
Philip Mueller	56 shares
Fred B. Mueller	56 shares
Robert Mueller	56 shares
Adolph Mueller	56 shares
Oscar Mueller	56 shares

Each son gave the father a note for \$5,600, which they paid off later from their salaries and share of company profits.

At the time of the father's death his will provided that his shares of stock be held by his widow, Anna F. Mueller, for later distribution to the children on the basis of 49 shares going to each of the six sons and 50 shares to his daughter, Leda Mueller Cruikshank.

This distribution, with the 56 shares each brother had bought, gave them 105 shares each. The daughter and her husband, F. W. Cruikshank, objected strenuously to this outcome, contending she should have had the same as the sons. The brothers defended their shares on the grounds they had bought from their father more than half of them.

Fred B. Mueller, who never married, contributed to the construction of the Cruikshanks' large stone home on the south side of the 800 block West William Street, so as to include an apartment for his use when in Decatur. It is said that the Cruikshanks had expected Fred, who was very fond of his sister and had given her some shares of company stock in 1923, would in his will give Leda enough shares to make her equal to the brothers in ownership of the company. But Fred's will provided for an equal division among his sister and brothers.

Events prior to Fred's death could have changed his mind. When he was sent home from Mayo Brothers in the fall of 1926 with terminal cancer, he anticipated living out his life in his own apartment, but the Cruikshanks were using it to entertain house guests and refused to change their plans. Mary Mueller, Philip's wife, took him into her home and with the help of a nurse, cared for him until his death in January 1927.

The Mueller brothers' talents varied greatly, and this was fortunate for the company because both technical and managerial abilities were needed for operating the rapidly growing business their father had left. Henry and Philip were mechanically inclined. Adolph, although he was given mechanical training as a youth as were all the boys, had studied engineering and business administration at the University of Illinois and had some business college instruction; this prepared him for an administrative role. Fred had excellent sales talent, and Robert had a personality suited to a public relations role and contact man in employee relations. Oscar, who came into the firm last, was possessed of a high degree of technical, managerial and sales abilities, but sometimes was inclined toward a lower standard of



business ethics than his brothers.

Henry, though he had inherited the company presidency, had no interest in administrative work, and almost refused to function in that capacity. Adolph was having to look after most of the business details and after two years rebelled, demanding that, if he had to carry that responsibility, he be made president. That was agreeable to his older brothers and he was elected president in 1902. Oscar was not pleased with this, and collided with Adolph's authority frequently over a considerable period.

The other brothers recognized the difficulty, and it was decided to open a sales branch in New York City, to get better eastern distribution of Mueller Co. products than had been possible through sending the goods from Decatur. Oscar was put in charge of the New York operation and did very well with it.

Soon Oscar was shipping a considerable volume of goods to Canada from the big New York warehouse. By 1912 Oscar had convinced his brothers to build a Canadian factory to meet needs of Mueller customers there, and a site was chosen in Sarnia, Ontario. The same things were manufactured there that were produced in the Decatur plant, and the Canadian business grew steadily.

Mueller management's attention was absorbed to a considerable degree in 1915 and 1916 in litigation that grew out of settlement of Henry Mueller's estate. Henry died on August 13, 1910 and his widow, Ora B. Mueller, and his brother Adolph were made co-executors; Lenore was the only child, and Henry's will divided the properties equally between her and her mother.

That gave each of them 52½ shares of Mueller stock. On July 16, 1915, Adolph bought Ora's shares, and on the following August 2 he sold 8¾ shares each to his four brothers and sister, retaining an equal amount for himself. Purpose of this purchase is believed to have been Adolph's deep interest in keeping all Mueller Co. stock in possession of the family and his fear that his sister-in-law might sell her share or, if she remarried the stock might be sold.

Also while the co-executor status still prevailed, Ora's interest in 18 of her husband's recent patents was assigned to the company, in compliance with a practice that had been established in 1907 by vote of the company stockholders. This provided that patents on inventions of Mueller employees would become property of the company after payment of \$2, unless the company within six months did not signify its desire to use them. During his lifetime Henry had so assigned his interest in 29 patents, and this had been the practice of other of the Mueller brothers.

On February 10, 1916 Ora married Dr. J. Byron Blair of Winnipeg, Canada, and soon afterward was made sole executrix of Henry's estate. Knowing that she and Adolph had assigned the 18 patents to the company

without sanction of the court, she apparently threatened to start litigation to void this action. As executrix she claimed the right to assign or retain the patents.

This prompted the Mueller Co. to bring actions in circuit court to force Ora to assign the patents to the company, as Henry had done with his first 29 patents. A. G. Webber, Sr., and C. C. LeForgee were attorneys for the company and Ora engaged James A. Henson as her counsel. The cases were heard by Carl N. Weilepp as master in chancery. After extended hearings Weilepp ruled that assignment of the 18 letters of patent to the company by the joint executors had been without court sanction and was illegal.

But in a ruling handed down on November 27, 1916, Weilepp found in favor of the company as to the handling of employee patents in accordance with the 1907 policy established by the stockholders.

"Equities in the case," Weilepp ruled, "are with the complainant and interest of the parties are as set forth in the bill of complaint. I find it has been the practice since 1907 for such handling of patents by employees of the firm. Patents should be so assigned to the company so other members of the firm may have the same rights as Henry's heirs.

"All other members of the corporation have assigned to the corporation all their patents. Ora B. Blair should be ordered by decree of this court to deliver to the company all title to above-mentioned letters of patent so as to vest absolutely the title to all said letters to the corporation."

Weilepp's ruling was based in part on testimony given by witnesses for the company, including J. W. Wells, patent attorney for Muellers. Wells testified that Henry Mueller had been vice president and master mechanic in charge of the company's tool and patent department, at a salary of \$400 a month. It was Henry's "special duty," Wells told the court, "to experiment, improve and perfect goods made by the company, invent new and useful articles and machinery which the company desired to manufacture and sell."

During the course of the litigation, family members who had purchased the stock sold it back to Mrs. Blair.

Apparently, this lawsuit created some animosity within the family. Ora had been a director since the death of her husband in 1910 but was not elected to the board in 1916 nor again until 1928 when all was forgiven and family peace restored. Her second husband, Dr. Blair was killed in an automobile accident in 1920.

In the early 1900s the Mueller Co. began a search for an engineer to redesign and modernize its line of pressure regulators. It found such a man in the person of A. W. Cash, a Boston engineer who had made his reputation by developing pressure reducing valves for the Boston Pneumatic Street Car Co. which operated its cars from tanks of high pressure compressed air.

Cash designed a new line of pressure regulators that included, for the first time, a line of large valves. In 1913 this led to an order from the United States government for 95 large special valves to protect the lock gates in the Panama Canal from being damaged by ramming of ships unable to stop as desired. On each of them was a diamond-shaped trademark which said: "H. Mueller Mfg. Co., Decatur, Ill."

Mr. Cash went on to start at least two companies in Decatur and one in Iowa. In his last years he was re-employed by the Mueller Co. to develop a fast-opening relief valve and one that would operate from excessive temperature as well as pressure. He was a remarkable man, remaining active and alert well into his eighties.

In 1917 the first World War was on, and the Decatur plant took a government contract to make Mark V detonator fuses for the 75 millimeter high explosive shell. Brass rod to make the detonator fuse was in short supply, and the contract couldn't be fulfilled. Oscar sought to come to the rescue. He said he could build a brass rod mill in Port Huron, Michigan across the St. Clair river from Sarnia, Ontario, and in six months be supplying the needed brass rod.

The brothers agreed, the operation was called Mueller Metals Co. — later Mueller Brass Co. — and the plant started producing brass rod. But by the time they got the brass rod mill operating and the Decatur plant got machining problems in making the munitions cleared, the war was over and money was lost on the contract.

World War I brought considerable trouble to the H. Mueller Mfg. Co. because its owners and operators were of German descent. The federal government and many newspapers had built up a great hatred for Kaiser Wilhelm, who was commonly pictured as a devouring ogre. This animosity toward the Kaiser spilled over extensively to businessmen and others with German names.

President Adolph recognized that some Mueller competitors were using this against Mueller products, and sought to counteract the propaganda. At the Mueller annual picnic in 1918 he made a lengthy speech, in which he dealt with the subject thoroughly. He had the speech published in the Mueller Record; the company magazine went to all customers of the company, and they were the ones he sought to reach.

In the speech Adolph called attention to the fact that sons of Mueller stockholders who were eligible for military service "are now in the Army and Navy in service of their country." He also called attention that the founder of the Mueller firm had come to America to escape repressive measures Germany was then taking against a youth movement designed to make the government more democratic. Muellers also were heavy buyers of Liberty Bonds, Adolph pointed out; the company had bought \$277,450 in the first bond drive and its Canadian branch \$155,000. He also assured that any

future Liberty Bond drives would be met by the firm with equal generosity.

The Mueller Brass Co. had to look for products to replace its brass rod business which was now in oversupply. Oscar developed a complete new line of copper tubing and compression flared fittings especially sized for water services and, in the most popular sizes, furnished in coils for easy installation. The Mueller Co. made the fittings, corporation stops and the necessary tools. It equipped a demonstration truck that covered the United States and Canada to introduce these new products. In four years the majority of waterworks in both countries were using copper for their services. Mueller Brass Co. was also developing brass forgings and finished products made from brass rod.

In 1927 Oscar proposed to his three remaining brothers that he trade his interest in the Mueller Co. for the Mueller Co. interest in Mueller Brass Co. This was done and he achieved a lifetime ambition to have a business of his own, in which he was very successful.

In 1924 the name H. Mueller Manufacturing Co. was changed to Mueller Co., and some important changes began to take place. Due to plumbing jobbers coming into the plumbing service field, the plumbing products manufacture became a poor business. But the Mueller Co. continued it because of the investment they had in it; it employed a large working force and the management didn't want to throw them out of work, so it was decided to expand its plumbing business into some new fields. The firm in 1925 built a vitreous plant on the south side of Decatur to make toilet bowls, lavatories and drinking fountains. At the same time there was a heavy investment in a plan to make a steel bathtub at a plant in Ohio.

In addition to the other problems in the plumbing business the largest manufacturers were beginning to buy up the best plumbing jobbers. This closed important outlets for Mueller goods, particularly in the high quality market. To meet this the Mueller Co. built branch warehouses in San Francisco and Los Angeles in 1923, in Dallas in 1927, and Atlanta in 1929. The investments proved unprofitable because Muellers' best customers started relying on buying what they needed in small lots from the warehouses rather than direct from the company as they had in the past.

By 1932, although Muellers had replaced their original kiln with the most modern kiln that could be bought, the cost of an ordinary toilet and lavatory they turned out was well above its sales price. The kiln was shut down before operating really got underway, and the steel bathtub never was successful because it was found impossible to keep enamel on it. Steel expands and contracts more than cast iron, and the enamel would craze.

Some of the plant executives and department heads believed the vitreous plant could have been made profitable, had President Adolph not insisted on such a high degree of quality. Other vitreous ware firms sold what they called "B" grade vitreous ware (ware that had tiny imperfections in the

glaze) at lower prices than their "A" ware. Adolph refused to do this, warning that "if we sell a second grade vitreous ware it will reflect on the quality reputation of all Mueller products."

By 1933 the firm had lost heavily on the vitreous ware and steel bathtub investments, but continued to manufacture brass plumbing goods at little or no profit until the second World War when copper and manpower became so scarce all plumbing items were discontinued and never resumed in Decatur. The loss in business was replaced by the profitable and rapidly increasing demand for high pressure gas equipment and supplies developed by Mueller engineering over the previous 15 years.

Recognizing a business error and recouping losses by shifting to manufacture of new products long has typified Mueller Co. performance. This policy can be seen in force back in the years when Hieronymus was in control.

In 1884 during the roller skating fad Fred Mueller was granted a patent on a roller skate which the firm called the Crown Roller Skate. The next year his brother Henry got a patent for some changes in the model and Hieronymus Mueller and Lowber Burrows, one of the first bankers in Decatur, formed a partnership to make the Crown Roller Skate. At the peak of operations on the item, 300 skates a day were being made. But by late 1886 the roller skate craze had collapsed, and the Muellers dropped the skate business at a big loss.

Sometime before 1906 Robert Mueller co-signed a large note for a relative by marriage who invested the money in the Decatur Fountain Co. When the note came into default that year, the fountain company was bought by the Mueller Co. Adolph Mueller made all the brothers sign a paper that they never would commit themselves to any contingent liability that would endanger their Mueller stockholdings, as they had no right to jeopardize their brothers' position without their approval. The same oath was taken by members of the third generation.

The Decatur Fountain Co. was operated during the era when ice cream sodas were very popular. The name was changed to the Mueller Fountain & Fixture Co. in 1919 and to Mueller Fixture Co. in 1926. This business was sold in 1937.

The Mueller Heights Floral Co. was formed in 1922 and sold in 1926. In 1927 the Mueller Iron Foundry Co. was incorporated. It was dissolved the next year and its plant at Eldorado and Twenty-second Streets became part of Mueller Co. It was known as Plant 2 in the firm's Decatur operations.

## ORGANIZATION STUDY

One of Adolph's most significant accomplishments as president was convincing the board of directors in 1927 of the need for having a consulting firm study the setup of top management of the company. He had become concerned about the overall effect on the Mueller organization of continuing older family members in positions and at salaries that they no longer were justifying by their efforts. His worry also included members of the third generation of Muellers who had been advanced more rapidly than their experience and performance might seem to have warranted.

Ebert Mueller, only son of Robert Mueller, and Philip Cruikshank, only son of Leda Mueller Cruikshank, were both managers of a Mueller Co. division in less than five years after leaving college. Frank H. Mueller, youngest son of Philip Mueller, was denied employment as an engineer after graduating from Cornell University in 1927 with a M.E. degree and after more than seven full summers working in various departments of the company.

The St. Louis consultant firm of Ernst & Ernst, accountants, was engaged to make the study Adolph had envisioned. Philip Mueller, Frank's father, who had for some time delegated his authority over manufacturing operations to others in order to devote his time to experimental work and developing new products, was the key to the plan that later was recommended. Adolph wanted his older brother to give up his authority and take a cut in salary as the beginning of a reorganization plan. This was agreed to late in 1927 and Frank Mueller then was employed on a permanent basis that November. Philip Mueller died January 23, 1928.

In his president's report to the stockholders in January, 1928, Adolph spoke at length on the subject of organization, which was summed up in this paragraph:

"The family members should not occupy positions of large salaries and great responsibilities unless they are capable and with fidelity and efficiency render satisfactory service to the company. Favoritism of this kind discourages and undermines the loyalty and efficiency of other men in the organization, who are seeking and working for promotions and a better future. The shibboleth of the organization should be that: 'He who, by his good services, deserves promotion, shall be promoted.' To do otherwise weakens organization and retards success of the company."

To extend President Adolph's plan, high-level committees were created that included a goodly portion of non-family members; new executive positions were established and every effort made to convince the organization that, in the future, anyone would have opportunity for top level jobs.

On January 14, 1929, the stockholders approved the reorganization plan recommended by Ernst & Ernst. It provided for a president, four vice

presidents, a treasurer and assistant treasurer, and a secretary and assistant secretary, as executive officers. It also established a pay scale commensurate with the positions (in the past all of the second generation brothers drew the same salary), and provided for a bonus when earnings exceeded a specified amount.

From the standpoint of family relations, the most important change was the reduction of the board of directors from nine to seven. Accordingly, Ebert B. Mueller and Philip H. Cruikshank resigned from the board on February 13, 1929. Ernst & Ernst had recommended that no more than four family members serve on the board. This put the Cruikshank family with its minority stockholdings in a weak position to have a significant influence on the future of the company, and this probably was a factor in their decision to sell their Mueller stock.

Ebert Mueller resigned as manager of Plant 2 in Decatur in 1928 and Philip Cruikshank left as manager of Plant 3 (the vitreous ware plant south of the Sangamon river) in 1929. Early that year the Cruikshank family offered all of its Mueller Co. shares of stock to the public through a broker in Peoria. The first recorded transfers were made on May 28, 1929, and by March 5, 1930, the Cruikshanks had disposed of approximately 16 per cent of their stock. The Mueller Co., in conjunction with three Mueller families, purchased all of the remaining Cruikshank stock.

The public sale of the Cruikshank stock alarmed Adolph Mueller. To protect the ownership in the future he invited the four Mueller families to join in a voting trust. All except the Henry Mueller family accepted and formed such a trust on March 3, 1929. This trust was extended every 10 years until 1959.

Prior to the expiration of the trust in 1959 Frank Mueller, a trustee at that time, wrote the members of the trust asking if they were interested in extending the trust for another 10 years. Not receiving any replies he concluded the trust members felt it unnecessary now that the stock was more widely dispersed and the company less vulnerable.

After 1947 the women members who controlled about three fourths of the Mueller Co. stock dominated the board of directors although they had given most of their powers to a three-man Executive Committee.

In 1957 Franklin Schmick, a financial executive and husband of Lenore Mueller, was elected to the board of directors and Frank Mueller immediately sought his support in cancelling the authority that had been given to the Executive Committee. Further board changes occurred in 1959. Joe Gardner, owner and president of a successful company in the water and gas field, was sponsored by Frank Mueller and added to the board membership. Richard Pritchard, a retired vice president of the Harris Trust and Savings Bank in Chicago, the trustee for a number of individual family trusts, was

replaced on the board by Harold Sherman, executive vice president of Morgan Guarantee and Trust Company of New York and a designated trustee for the Robert Mueller family in a new voting trust being formed. He was chosen by Mrs. Robert (Addie E.) Mueller, long time board member who died in March, 1959.

These activities and board changes were largely instigated by the Henry and Philip Mueller board members in an effort to make the board an effective entity. The Robert and Adolph Mueller families who together controlled roughly 52 per cent of the stock, quietly organized a voting trust. This was enough under cumulative voting, mandatory for Illinois corporations, to elect the majority of the board when composed of an odd number but not an even number assuming adequate representation of non-trust stock. It may well have been only coincidental that the board was increased from 10 to 11 in 1959.

The secrecy with which the trust was formed and the fact that two of the three trustees named in the trust instrument were from the same family (apparently giving potential control to the owners of only about 26 per cent of the stock) was resented by some members of the Henry and Philip Mueller families. For the next few years there was no action or pressure by the trust to use its power, the ill feeling faded away and the family rapport returned to normal.

The agenda for the new 1963 board, to be elected at the shareholders meeting, included the election as president, or the dismissal, of Jackson Kemper who had been employed on a three-year trial basis as executive vice president and potential president. Before the shareholders meeting, some family members who belonged to the trust were indicating strong support for the election of Kemper while the Henry and Philip Mueller families were so opposed they were considering challenging the validity of the trust if its trustees actually supported his election. A nose count at the time indicated that the implementation of this objective might have been difficult and awkward by placing the incumbent president in the position of casting the key vote.

The whole problem became moot when President Webber announced at the shareholders meeting that he had recently reviewed the voting trust membership and concluded that the trust instruments for some of the individual trusts which were included in the voting trust did not grant the trustee the authority to join a voting trust. This effectively nullified the 1959 trust, Kemper was denied election to the board and, thereby, to the presidency. No effort to organize a voting trust has been made since.

At the time the Mueller board authorized purchase of the Cruikshank shares, it set aside 7,000 shares to be sold at a price of \$34.12 per share to a selected group of employees not members of the Mueller family. This was a



further attempt to de-emphasize the family and to give important people in the organization a sense of ownership. By the time of the 1931 annual meeting, 57 per cent of the allotted stock had been sold to 28 employees who represented a wide range in the organizational structure. Apparently the stock was sold under a rather loose agreement regarding re-purchase rights of the company because in one case, at least, legal action was threatened to recover some stock.

As dividends dropped in the 1930s, demands for the stock diminished but by 1939 they had improved to the point that an additional 500 shares were offered. In November of 1945 the shares available were increased to 10,000, and at some point in this period the stock selling plan was changed. A formal Employees Stock Purchase Agreement was drawn up to formalize the purchase and re-purchase options; the price of the stock was reduced to \$25 per share with a guaranteed return of five per cent. The eligibility list was increased to include very low levels of the organization.

By 1951 the increasing dividends were making this stock so attractive management revised the eligibility list allowing, over a five-year period, the purchase of 1,500 shares by each member of the Executive Committee, 400 shares by each vice president, 200 shares each by five people just below this level and 100 shares each to division managers, foremen and salesmen. This plan anticipated the issuance of 14,600 shares if fully implemented.

In November of 1954 the eligibility list was reduced to nine people; the three Executive Committee members being allotted 2,000 shares each over a five-year period, the factory vice presidents 1,000 shares each, the Eastern sales vice president 400 shares and the company secretary 200 shares. A retiree, J. L. Logsdon, was allowed 800 shares, a carryover from a previous allotment.

By this time it was obvious that the original purpose of the stock sale plan had been circumvented and reduced to a very expensive way to give upper management more income — expensive because dividends are not deductible for tax purposes as are salaries. The attractiveness of the stock is illustrated in the following table:

YEAR	DIVIDENDS	INVESTMENT	PER CENT RETURN
1955	\$ 7.00	\$25	28
1956	7.00	25	28
1957	8.00	25	32
1958	10.75	25	43

At a September board meeting in 1958 it was agreed to re-purchase all shares held by employees under the stock purchase agreement and substitute a new and very much improved pension plan for salaried employees. The new plan improved Everett's 1942 plan in general but, most importantly,

removed the \$20,000 salary limit it contained. The company would recoup part of the increased cost by eliminating the unattractive aspects of the stock plan.

In the original Ernst & Ernst reorganization plan, a bonus was to be paid management when the company earned over \$3.50 per share. When this became ridiculous, the plan was changed to provide a bonus after the company had earned five or six per cent on its net worth. During the last half of the 1950s when the company was making good profits and had a very low depreciation, management often had earned its maximum bonus after the first three or four months of the fiscal year (the worst months for the Mueller Co. business). This was not changed when the stock was re-purchased, but eventually bonuses were determined by the board's best judgment, and finally in recent years by a carefully worked out plan that includes many factors which measure management's actual performance, providing a real incentive for its best efforts.

Control of the company during this same 1950s period was in the hands of management people outside the Mueller family, a situation unique in the company's history.

Everett Mueller's sudden death in 1947 created a serious problem in the management setup. The only other third generation male members of the Mueller family then were Robert H., Lucien W. and Frank H., sons of Philip, and Ebert B., son of Robert. Lucien, who had carried the nickname "Duke" since his older brother, Robert H., started to call him that in boyhood, was recognized by the family as very capable and probably the best qualified for the presidency.

But the perception of him as very aggressive and inclined to take big risks in dealing with business matters was a factor of considerable concern to some members of the company's board of directors which then consisted of Addie E. Mueller, Lenore M. Staley, J. W. Simpson, Albert G. Webber, Jr., Lucien W. Mueller and Robert H. Mueller.

A top officer of the Harris Trust Co. of Chicago, the Muellers' main banking connection and, along with A. G. Webber, Jr., trustee for a number of Mueller family trusts, contacted at least one of the major Mueller stockholders with advice that Mr. Webber be chosen as the new Mueller Co. president.

A special meeting of the board of directors to elect a new president was called to order on October 21, 1947. Those attending the meeting were the above mentioned members and, by invitation, Charlotte M. Schluter and Pauline V. Mueller. The four women represented approximately three-fourths of the outstanding Mueller Co. stock.

The presidency was first offered to J. W. Simpson who firmly refused to accept it on the grounds that his lifelong experience, mostly in sales, was not broad enough to qualify him for the position. After further discussion, a

resolution was offered and passed to fill the vacant offices with Lucien W. Mueller as chairman of the board and Albert G. Webber, Jr., as president. J. W. Simpson was elected to a newly created office of executive vice president. Albert G. Webber, Jr., had been company legal counsel since the retirement of his father, Albert G. Webber, Sr., from that position in 1942.

The newly elected officers soon were made an Executive Committee and given most of the powers of the board. Although it had extensive power, it was geared toward a conservative business philosophy of keeping the corporate ship "steady as she goes," in the persons of Webber and Simpson. This evidently reflected the desires of the majority stockholders.

After the death of Simpson in 1951 and Lucien in 1953 the Executive Committee was composed of all non-Mueller family members. Under these conditions the vast authority that had been given the Executive Committee was viewed with deep concern by some members of the family, who sought to get company control back in the hands of the board. The problem was solved by a 1957 act of the Illinois Legislature denying the right of an industrial firm's board to give away its essential powers and responsibility to any committee. But during the period from 1953 to 1957 the Executive Committee, which included no family members, had complete control of the company.

## BRANCH PLANTS

In the early 1930s the Mueller Co. established branch manufacturing facilities in Chattanooga and Los Angeles. The West Coast plant was set up at Robert Mueller's insistence to meet the needs of the rapidly growing water and gas plants there and to save costs in shipping the Decatur plant products to that region. Ground was broken for the Los Angeles plant on August 19, 1933, and in early December the branch plant was put in operation. As business in the West grew, several additions to the Los Angeles plant were made.

Negotiations to acquire a plant in Chattanooga got underway in 1933, and it was decided to purchase the Columbian Iron Works there. That firm, organized in 1908, was producing fire hydrants, gate valves, sluice gates and other water and sewage control equipment. Mueller Co. plant personnel were already familiar with iron foundry procedures, and the products made at the Columbian plant would round out the Mueller waterworks line.

Expanding and modernizing the Chattanooga plant required heavy expenditures and included replacing the old frame machine shop with a modern brick building 90 by 315 feet in size and putting in an engineering and production control system. By mid 1934 full scale operation was resumed. Several technical and other personnel were transferred from the Decatur plant to Chattanooga, and during the development Everett and Lucien Mueller, Decatur plant executives, lived in Chattanooga a few years.

The Chattanooga factory was operated under the name of Columbian Iron Works for several years, but that name later was dropped and the Chattanooga property transferred to the Mueller Co. in 1950. There has been further expansion of the plant, including moving into a new building in 1966 and fitting it with the most modern equipment available.

The plant in Sarnia, Ontario, which had started operation in 1912 under the name H. Mueller Mfg. Co. Ltd. (later Mueller, Ltd.), has prospered over the years and produces items for an extensive Canadian trade. Plant facilities there have been expanded several times. A subsidiary plant was acquired in 1966 at St. Jerome, Quebec, near Montreal. It is an iron foundry, and does some machining work.

In 1940 the Canadian and Chattanooga plants began production of munitions for the government in World War II. Mueller Ltd. made a highly classified high explosive timer, a brass rod product that exploded the shell at a set time after firing. The Chattanooga plant was making 105mm high explosive shells, but after a few years the plant in which these were being made burned down.

The Decatur plant got its first war contract in 1941. It started with making 37 and later 57mm projectiles; still later the 155mm high explosive shells were made. It was on a special 57mm projectile that the company helped the army in a crisis that contributed to the shaping of world history.

The German General George Rommel with a heavy tank force was moving rapidly in North Africa, threatening to invade Alexandria, Egypt, and jeopardize the Allied Army's sources of oil in the Arabian peninsula area. The Germans had developed a face-hardened tank armor that made the conventional 57mm projectile ineffective; the Decatur plant was asked to produce a projectile that would penetrate face-hardened armor plate and reach the inside of the tank intact. Its spinning around inside would be fatal to the tank's personnel.

Mueller engineers came up with a process that would make the projectile consistently perform as required, and the first batch of the new projectiles was flown to North Africa. There they were effective in slowing down Rommel's army in the battle of Casserine Pass and other engagements.

This performance was recognized by the government in 1943 by awarding Muellers an Army and Navy "E" flag, which was presented to Board Chairman Adolph Mueller at a well attended ceremony in the then downtown Decatur High School. Frank H. Mueller, youngest of the third generation of Muellers and leader of the team that developed the 57mm projectile, was master of ceremonies. A star later was added to this flag, for continued excellence in performance on the war contracts.



## RARE BRAND OF PATERNALISM

In this history of the Mueller Co. there already has appeared evidences of a rare brand of paternalism that grew out of the homespun friendly treatment of Hieronymus' employees by that fine old gentleman employer. This paternalism was greatly expanded by his fifth son, Adolph Mueller, who served as company president for 37 years. It was so pronounced and so widely known that it was made the subject of a study in 1948 and 1949 by a research team of four men from the University of Illinois Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. It was one of the first such studies in the country in which economists, sociologists and psychologists pooled their concepts and methods.

Persual of the team's voluminous report could easily lead one to surmise that it regarded the paternalistic system employed by the Mueller Co. as possibly unique in the United States. The group also was obviously convinced that this system helped lay the groundwork for a comparatively easy transition to collective bargaining through a labor union.

This chapter of the Mueller Co. history chronicles the drama as the U. of I. team saw and analyzed it, from the buildup of paternalism in the firm's Decatur plant force over a period of 86 years to its fadeaway in 1943.

As mentioned before, Hieronymus Mueller, founder of the company, regarded his slowly growing labor force almost as a "family." He did all the hiring of his help, and interviewed each man extensively. This included inquiring into previous work he may have done, his religious inclinations, education and special interests or ambitions. Mr. Mueller worked alongside his men in the early Mueller machine shop, regarding them more as fellow workmen than as employees. He maintained intimate friendly relations with them, and yet retained their respect for his authority. They were encouraged to discuss their business and personal problems with him, and he tried to be helpful when any of them faced business or family difficulties.

His employees stayed with him through thick and thin. Although company records do not provide a date, a story handed down in the family tells of a business depression in the late 1800s that put Mr. Mueller into a financial crisis. He called his little shop force together and laid the cards on the table. He proposed that, insofar as they could, they take only the part of their weekly paychecks their family needs required, and leave the rest in the business; also that working hours be cut so all the employees could be kept on the job. The employees, knowing his integrity, trusted him and agreed to both proposals. This enabled his business to weather the depression and his men later got their money. He and his sons joined in this program.

After Mr. Mueller's force grew to a goodly number, he granted each one 10 minutes in the mornings and afternoons for relaxation and leisure; this

could be classed as the Company's first movement into fringe benefits.

Not only did Mr. Mueller strive to improve his business and add inventions that served the public in many practical ways, he was watchful of opportunities to help his workers improve their skills. W. B. Ford, oldest salesman in the Mueller organization in the 1950s, told the story of how Mr. Mueller stopped at his bench — in earlier days when he was a member of the shop force — to show him the correct way to use a file. Mr. Mueller assumed that responsibility for his workers' progress was as much his as theirs.

One Christmas Eve shortly before his death some of the older employees arranged to present Mr. Mueller with a Christmas gift. Their intent was to surprise him, and as a part of the technique the master of ceremonies remarked that some of the men had not been treated fairly. In a characteristic outburst Mr. Mueller promptly interrupted with a flat denial that he ever intentionally mistreated an employee. When the astonished spokesman for the little party could resume, he made clear the purpose of the gathering and gave Mr. Mueller a handsome chair. The guest of honor was deeply touched by this evidence of good will and the tears that came to his eyes as he sat in the chair were eloquent beyond all words.

His quickness to resent an insult was told by an old companion. During the Civil War Mr. Mueller was an ardent supporter of the Union. An equally intense Southern sympathizer, knowing his sentiments, sought to belittle him before a crowd by a derogatory remark about his nationality. Mr. Mueller was a man of powerful physique, and although the Rebel sympathizer was a large man he was seized bodily, raised in the air and thrown about 20 feet, rolling down a hill and unable to rise.

The same strong paternalistic interest and influence that the founder of the Mueller Co. had shown was applied to a far larger employee force by his son Adolph, the firm's third president. The image of the founder as a self-made man who personified the American dream — the Horatio Alger story — was kept before the company employees in many ways. It even was included as late as 1948 in a booklet containing the text of the labor union agreement, which had gone into effect in 1943. The sketch said in part:

"The life of Hieronymus Mueller, founder of this company, should be an inspiration to every man entering this organization. . . . He came to Decatur in 1857, a young mechanic, a foreigner and a stranger, unfamiliar with the English language — a tremendous handicap. Did this deter him? Not in the least. The town was small, the prospective business limited, but he was determined to win his way. . . . stuck to his job and every year saw him a little better off than the year before. . . . He was self-reliant, thrifty, industrious and determined to win. He improved his leisure hours in studying subjects allied to mechanics. He made friends by being fair, square and aboveboard with his fellow men. . . . Today you have the chance of doing the same

thing. Self-reliance, self-denial and self-study will help you."

The character of the company founder was well recognized, and many times attested to by old time employees. The following account was given by a man who worked for Hieronymus in the early days:

"It was Mr. Mueller that hired me. He wanted to know all about me. He wanted to know why I wanted a job, and I told him that we boys had to support our mother. . . . You know he would come and ask me every day how my mother was. He would always tell me, 'now you take good care of your mother.' He asked me what church I belonged to and what I was doing for work (before I came to the metal products company). You know he was going to build homes for us — his children; he always called us his children — and see to it that we were well provided for. He was interested in people. He couldn't fire anybody. I remember an argument he had with his youngest son. It was about one of the men. The son told him that they just had to fire this one man — he wasn't any good at all. 'Ja, I know,' Mr. Mueller said, 'I'll go and have a talk with him.' Well, he brought the man around."

The research team found Oscar, the brother who quarreled with the family and ultimately headed his own business, "one of the most able members of the family." In their report of the group said of him:

"He seemed to have both the inventive ability and business skill of his father. The invention of streamlined pipe fittings, now universally used, was attributed to him. He was credited with inventing the prototype of the modern gasoline engine spark plug."

The report gave extensive space to Adolph Mueller, third president of the company, who was described as personifying thrift in operation of the business, as well as seeking the goodwill of the employees through his paternalistic policies. He was also pictured as exceedingly industrious and as working long hours. One comment in the report quoted an employee who said of him:

"He had to be doing something all the time. He also thought that everyone in the plant should be like he was, and should also be doing something all the time. He walked over other people's lives in his eagerness to show people what was right. He was always wanting to make speeches — he wanted to instruct as many people as he could. You see this idea of the controlled family in which he had been raised was transferred to his method of operating the company."

Another employee was reported to have said that:

"If you went out of the plant at noon and left the light on above your machine, why you'd hear about it in a hurry. Mr. Mueller would walk through the plant at noon, turning out any lights that were left on. . . . You'd get your check at the end of the week and they'd take a dime out of it."

Local ownership and management were regarded by the long-time



Mueller president as far preferable to absentee owners of an important industry; he sought to make his employees and community conscious of this. In a 1916 speech he said:

"It is preferable from the standpoint of civic welfare. There have been many times in the past 10 years that the family could have closed the plant down from four to six weeks and made big money by doing so. We would have escaped big payrolls and other expenses of operating a big plant. Business ethics would have justified the closing, but that is not our way of doing business. There were families depending on our family for the necessities of life. These human considerations outweighed the financial gain."

The researchers were both critical of some of President Adolph's attitudes on management paternalism and had high regard for his obvious belief that industrial ownership should be accompanied by direct responsibility for the welfare of the employees. They cited his apparent view that paternalism should be repaid with unwavering loyalty by its recipients. He was quoted as having written in 1922 in the company magazine, *Mueller Record*:

"Getting off a streetcar the other day before Christmas an employee with his ham was saluted at the Transfer House by an acquaintance who said, 'What you got? Christmas ham given out by the Mueller Co.? Well, I guess you paid for it many times over.' Beautiful Christmas thought, don't you think!

"Coming to work the other morning we passed three men. 'Let's go on out,' said one. 'What for?' asked the others. 'They'll put you to work ahead of time, if you do.' Fine attitude, don't you think? It's too bad that so many men have mistaken ideas about their work and their employers, which are stumbling blocks to their own advancement. . . . They refuse to credit an employer with any honest or sincere interest in their welfare. Every move by an employer is actuated by selfish motives, as viewed by certain employees. . . . Business is not built on animosity these days; it is built on friendship, cooperation and teamwork from the office boy to the president."

The U. of I. study report listed many examples of how the Mueller paternalistic philosophy was implemented. In 1897 a mutual benefit association that paid sick and disability benefits was organized. A vacation plan was instituted in 1921 as a reward for perfect attendance, and was gradually broadened until by 1940 it contained standard provisions of unionized shops. In the 1920s a number of oldtime employees were given vacations with all expenses paid to visit their birthplaces in Europe.

Awards were made to long-service employees, customarily a cash sum — often as much as \$500 and ranging up to \$1,000. As early as 1911 each employee was given a Christmas present of food or magazine subscriptions. A profit-sharing plan was started in 1936 and continued almost to the time the employees were organized into a union in 1943.

One employee benefit, and one which deserves special mention in the life of the Mueller Co., was the founding in 1910 of the Mueller Record magazine, which also had great value to the company. Its importance was due almost entirely to the rare personality and enterprise of its founder and editor for 35 years, Charles N. Wagenseller. A former part owner of the Decatur Bulletin, a weekly newspaper in Decatur, "Charlie," as he was widely known here and to customers and friends of the company all around the U.S., had been a reporter for the Decatur Herald from 1899 to his employment by Muellers in November 1906.

Mr. Wagenseller edited a special booklet put out in 1907 by the company in commemorating the 50th anniversary of its founding. Three years later he induced the company to start the magazine, now the oldest such publication in the country. The magazine was stamped indelibly by Mr. Wagenseller's personality, wit and philosophy, and many Mueller Co. customers looked forward to receiving it. The editor also helped set up exhibits for conventions at which the company displayed its products, and was a popular figure on many such occasions.

Other employee benefits included a cafeteria, established at the Mueller plant in the 1930s, and a technical library set up in 1911 for employees' self-improvement. It was customary as far back as the 1920s to present wedding gifts to newly married employees.

Interest in the children of employees was displayed in a practice, initiated in the early 1920s, of depositing money in the name of a newborn baby and matching the parental contribution to the fund for the next 10 years. Another gift program was adopted at about the same time for employee children graduating from high school. A custom started about 1928 involved the purchase of 50 baby cribs; President Adolph loaned these cribs to employees for use during their children's first year. Easter egg hunts, Christmas parties, and a dancing class for employees' daughters were other elements of the comprehensive benefit program.

Annual picnics long were a big event with the Mueller Co. They were heavily attended by employees and their families, along with numerous friends of the company and the plant force. For many years they were held in Fairview Park, but after the lodge and amphitheater were developed at Mueller Heights in the 1930s the picnics were held there. A few were out of town, and the most important of these was the firm's 50th anniversary party at a park in Mechanicsburg in 1907.

The biggest celebration of all was on the company's 75th anniversary in 1932, which also was the 100th anniversary of the birth of the founder, Hieronymus Mueller. This one, attended by between 3,000 and 4,000, was held at Mueller Heights and included two concerts by the long famous Goodman Band. The Mueller Heights buildings and grounds were decked

out gaily for the occasion, including multi-colored electric lights which added much to the evening events.

A special attraction was the replica of Hieronymus Mueller's original gun and machine shop, which had an interior display of tools such as he had used — some of them originals. The shop display included plumbing and water service devices and equipment which the company founder had invented. On display also was a collection of guns loaned by Lawrence Rotz, including some curious specimens.

The replica of the old shop was thronged constantly with people, both on Saturday during the picnic and on Sunday when a public reception was held and another band concert was given on the lodge lawn.

Festivities began at 10 a.m. Saturday with pony rides for the children and the annual golf tourney of Mueller employees — at Sunnyside Golf Course. There were 12 ponies, and children under 12 were given free rides. All Mueller employees had access to free rides to the picnic grounds and free tickets for the refreshment stands. The total number of tickets deposited during the day was approximately 20,000.

Throughout the afternoon athletic contests were in progress in different parts of the Mueller Heights grounds. These included children's games, a horseshoe tournament, archery, baseball, catching chickens, catching a greased pig, and climbing a greased pole.

The evening program included addresses by Mueller Co. officials and J. J. Maloney, president of the Decatur Association of Commerce. Mr. Maloney paid high tribute to the leading role that the Mueller Co. long had played in industrial development of Decatur. A. G. Webber, first legal counsel for the company, recalled the years when he, from age 16 to 19 years, was a mechanics apprentice to Hieronymus Mueller. He praised Mr. Mueller's civic attitude of "seeming to consider the general interests of the community as of special concern" to him.

Adolph Mueller, then company president, traced growth of the firm in Decatur and in branch plants outside the city, and praised his father for his insistence on high quality of products the company made. Robert Mueller, another of the founder's six sons, gave an intimate description of family life in the Mueller household. Lucien W. Mueller, a grandson of the founder and at the time a company vice president and works manager, offered a "look into the future" for the firm that earlier members of his family had built.

Mueller Co. annual picnics were held for several more years, but their suspension during World War II proved to be their end. The company lodge and other facilities at Mueller Heights, however, have continued to receive use by both employees and management of the company.

Recreation programs for the employees included a band which played under the firm name. Company athletic teams were sponsored as far back as

1910. There were many hikes to the company park, where on some occasions meals were prepared for the employees by President Adolph.

In its appraisal of the long list of the company's employee benefit programs, the researchers' report commented on how it covered many aspects of the lives of the employees.

"One of the most important expressions of the personnel policies and philosophy of the management," the report said, "was a strong belief in personal contact and communication with both the plant foremen and the workers. The president himself provided probably the best example of this. Almost every day he would walk through the plant on his way to the office and often would discuss problems with the workers. More formally, President Adolph would speak at departmental meetings. He also, as had his father, would interview almost every new worker in person.

"The foremen received training courses in communication and human relations and were encouraged to maintain constant personal contacts with the men working under them. Workers were encouraged to take personal problems to the personnel department. It should be clear that paternalism came to mean, in the Mueller Co., a host of welfare activities grounded in personal relations between management and workers and not in impersonal rules and regulations. Employee loyalty was presumed to flow from the gifts and benefits of an enlightened management.

A good measure of employee loyalty was generated by some of the worker benefit programs, as is indicated in experiences recalled by a 70-year-old Mueller employee who retired in 1971 as Tool Room foreman, after 45 years with the company.

"I applied for a job at Muellers' in 1926," he said, "after graduating from the eighth grade at St. John's Lutheran school at the age of 15. Dad was in the grocery and meat business, and was in a pinch because many of his customers were in a protracted strike at the Wabash shops and couldn't pay their bills. I thought I ought to go to work and help him.

"Mr. Adolph Mueller, who talked to me when I applied, told me I was too young to go to work, that I ought to go to high school, or learn a trade. When I told him why I wanted a job badly, he gave me a little book about the Mueller Co. which dealt with company policy and methods of operation. He told me and a few other boys who also were trying to get jobs, to read that book awhile and he would talk to us.

"We read the book awhile and he asked us some questions about it. He apparently was pleased with the response of some of us. He told me: 'Go into the office and see Mr. (E.H.) Langdon. He'll make out papers; I think you have a job.' Mr. Langdon hired me and some of the other boys and we were put to work in the machine shop, tool room and pattern shop. Mr. Mueller told us that if we did well he would start a school to train us for promotions to

foremen in various departments.

"I started work in the polishing room, and spent about six months polishing what they called 'low downs' — a type of water faucet — and small models of those faucets made of brass and coated with chrome. The latter were given by our company salesmen as souvenir paper weights. For the next year I was shifted around to get experience in the machine shop, tool room and pattern shop.

"In early 1928 I think it was, Mr. Mueller started the school he had promised. He employed a Mr. Cornelius — I can't remember his first name — but he was a graduate of the University of Illinois School of Engineering. There were 20 of us in the school; we worked four hours in the morning and went to classes four hours in the afternoon. Mr. Mueller bought all our books, and hired two members of the U. of I. faculty to come over once or twice a week to instruct us in algebra, trigonometry, mechanical drawing and related courses. Classes most of the time were held in the back room of the personnel office on the second floor of the main plant, but occasionally in the lodge at Mueller Heights. Sometimes classes were shifted for a time to forenoon, and we worked in the afternoon, but all was on company time.

"After about three years the plant's work program was cut heavily because of the Great Depression, and classes were discontinued for quite a period. When business improved, classes resumed and in 1934 the course was completed. Of the original class of 20 there were 14 who finished. Nearly all of us stayed on at Muellers, but some later took supervisory jobs with other firms. Five of us stayed with Muellers until retirement — 45 to 50 years.

"Everything I have I owe to the Mueller Co. Particularly to Mr. Adolph and his interest in us young men whose mechanical abilities he made possible through the schooling he gave us. He was so pleased with the results of that school that he likely would have extended the program had not World War II come along. And during that war the plant was unionized. Six of us fellows who had been in the school were picked to serve as ushers at the ceremonies in old Decatur High School in 1943 when the company was awarded the Army and Navy "E" flag for excellent performance in munitions production."

In employee benefits the company was ahead of usual industry practice on several items. These included its introducing a shorter work week and paying wages for overtime. In 1918 it inaugurated an eight-hour day and a 48-hour week, with time and a half for additional hours. In the late 1920s the company provided vacations with pay, six paid holidays, and a guaranteed 50-hour week. This agreement was canceled in 1931 during the Great Depression to provide employment for as many workers as possible. Several of the above provisions were written into the contract when Mueller employees later were unionized.

## MUELLERVILLE DREAM

Recreation was an important part of the employee benefit program. In about 1912 the company bought 72 acres of land in the Allen's Bend area south of the Sangamon river. This included the site of the castle of Captain David Allen, an early day businessman and community benefactor. The Allen home had a tower, and was the most imposing residence in Decatur. It stood just across the drive from the present Mueller Heights lodge.

Further land purchases in the next few years brought the Mueller acreage to 600, of which 114 acres later became Lake Decatur frontage. The land was rolling, and much of it wooded. As part of an elaborate plan for future development, the company had 1,500 evergreen trees planted, along with other kinds of trees. Flowers also were planted, including 3,000 columbines. A lake for fishing and other uses was built.

The park-like tract soon acquired the name Mueller Heights, and the buildings there were used by both employees and management for parties, picnics, and general recreation. In 1920 a barracks that had been used by the Student Army Training Corps (S.A.T.C.) at Millikin University in World War I was purchased, moved to the park, and used to build what is now known as Mueller Lodge. It was worked over to develop a lounging room, kitchen, baths and 12 bedrooms. An addition to the Mueller Heights buildings was the replica of Hieronymus Mueller's first gun shop. The company has since given it to the Macon County Historical Society, and it is to be moved to the society's museum grounds at the old Excelsior School.

President Adolph had a grand plan for the south shores land. He remembered that his father had talked to his employees about sometime building homes for them. A concrete example of what such a project might be had come to Adolph's attention through the Mueller Co.'s business collaboration with the Kohler vitreous ware firm near Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

During that period the Mueller and Kohler companies were bidding jointly on big projects for business and industrial buildings. The Kohler Co. was furnishing the bathroom and other vitreous ware equipment, and Mueller Co. the brass goods. This program was terminated in the early 1920s when Kohlers started manufacturing their own plumbing fixtures.

Walter J. Kohler, head of the company and one-time governor of Wisconsin, had developed Kohler Village, a model residential area near Sheboygan where many of the Kohler plant employees lived. An employee, after he had saved enough for a 10 per cent down payment on one of the attractive homes, could move his family in and pay off the rest on easy terms. The village became nationally known and was visited extensively by people from outside the state.

Adolph, with his brothers taking almost equal interest, planned a Muellerville Village for the company employees. With this in mind, more land was bought until the company owned over 1,500 acres, extending from Highway 48 to Sand Creek and encompassing most of what is now known as South Shores.

President Adolph envisioned a big new Mueller plant being built south of the river, partly surrounded by employee homes. Terms for purchase of the houses were to be similar to those used at Kohler Village. But two events came along that wrecked the grand plans for Muellerville.

One was the Canadian government's cancellation of a contract with the Mueller Co. to make World War I munitions at the firm's Port Huron, Michigan plant. The contract was dropped as soon as it was evident the United States was going to enter the war. Apparently the Canadians thought that their rich ally to the south could supply the needed munitions. Voiding the contract left the Muellers' Michigan plant with several hundred thousand dollars worth of munitions equipment and more than a million dollars in raw materials on hand. To recover from this, it was recognized, would take more than had been planned for development of the employee village.

All thought of ever developing a Muellerville was abandoned after a bitter strike at the Kohler plant in 1934 during unionization of the company's large force of employees. This was attended by bullets being fired down Kohler Village streets, other serious violence and heavy damage to buildings and equipment.

Several years after plans were dropped for the model village the Mueller Land Improvement Trust began selling off the South Shores acreage. In 1948 Borg Warner Corporation leased and later bought about 600 acres, including the site and buildings of the Mueller vitreous plant. Borg Warner still is operating its Marvel-Schebler Tillotson and York Divisions there.

Later sales of the South Shores land have reduced the company holdings to about 17 acres. The lodge it still used, and recent improvements to it have included air conditioning and storm windows.



## PLANT UNIONIZED

Mueller employment policy toward labor unionism grew out of many things, starting with early life of the company. The unusual program of paternalism developed by the founder reflected his attitude of responsibility for the welfare of his employees; he obviously in that period gave no thought to protecting himself from their ever becoming unionized.

It was not until after Hieronymus Mueller's death, and 45 years after the company was founded, that the first union demand on the company was made. It was in 1902, when the Decatur plant's core makers asked for higher wages. This was refused by Adolph Mueller, then in his first year as company president; he issued a statement that relations between Mueller Co. management and its employees had been harmonious, and he wished to keep it that way. At that time a number of machinists and polishers, also asking for higher wages, beat the core makers to a strike. These men were given their final paycheck and dismissed by the company.

President Adolph appealed to the remaining employees to be reasonable, but the situation worsened and the company resorted to a lockout which began on January 23, 1903. A notice placed on the door of the factory said:

"The Mueller Co. will close down their plant beginning tomorrow morning pending a settlement of the unionization of their factory. Any committee representing our men will gladly be received at any time."

On February 5, 1903, an agreement for a union shop was announced. It had been negotiated by President Adolph and a group of craft unions of the American Federation of Labor. Newspaper stories at the time indicated that business agents for the various unions entered into the agreement with the company without any plant workers being represented in the negotiations.

The contract was announced at a general meeting of all employees, and was represented as giving tremendous advantages to the workers; it was presented jointly by the union business agents and company management. It provided for a union shop, a 9-hour day, 54-hour week, time and a half for overtime up to midnight, double time for specified holidays and after midnight, a minimum scale of wages for all crafts, brief apprenticeship regulations, reductions in operating costs to be made by cutting hours of work and not wage scales, a grievance procedure, and use of union labels. The agreement was to be in force from March 1, 1903 to December 1, 1904.

At that meeting a letter was read presenting management's viewpoint. It was signed by President Adolph, but read by his brother Oscar in the president's absence. In the letter Adolph referred to things that had been said and printed by both sides concerning the labor situation at the factory "that resulted, perhaps unintentionally, in drawing a line between the employees and the employer, making it harder for them to get together in an agreement."



Apparently not all the factory employees would be represented by the craft unions with whom the agreement had been reached. In treating this the president's statement said:

"When the question of recognizing organized labor was presented, we found that we could not be a success in a business way and have part of our shop organized and part of it not organized, as there would always be more or less friction between the men if our shops should be run that way. In trying to do this we ran against a great many snags, and I am indeed very glad to say that all the seeming difficulties between you and our firm have been eliminated and it is our desire that this factory should run in perfect peace and harmony.

"We are only too glad to give a proposition a fair trial, if it can be demonstrated to us that by organizing our factory we can conduct a successful business in this manner year after year. . . . I sincerely hope that these employees, as well as employees and employers throughout the country can point to our factory as a model plant, where the employees and employers live in perfect harmony and according to the Golden Rule."

This gave the Mueller employees a union, just as they had been given employee benefits before and as they were to be given more in later years. But what could be given also could be taken back.

On May 13, 1903, about 30 core makers went out on what apparently was a wildcat strike in support of a demand for an eight-hour day. About 300 men were thrown out of work. On May 17 the plant resumed full operations, the male core workers having been fired and replaced by women. Some of the male core workers remained on the job.

Because of this and other difficulties, the company announced on October 23, 1904, that after the Union Contract expired, December 1, the company would operate on the open shop principle. A notice to this effect was placed on the company bulletin board. According to a newspaper account of that day, a company representative said:

"We had no desire to increase the number of hours of labor. If we can arrange it, we will be only too glad to do our work in eight hours. We do not intend to make a reduction in wages; if the men attend to their work and do the right thing, there'll be no reduction at present, nor at any time, unless competition forces us to make a reduction in cost of our products. At present no such conditions exist, and I do not believe the time will come when we shall be forced to make a cut in wages."

On December 1, 1904, each employee who wished to continue to work had to make out an application for employment with the company. Thus ended the only successful unionization of the Mueller Co. employees for 40 years. The only real change made in the employee picture was that a sizable number of women had been added to the plant force. With this precedent Muellers continued to employ women, and during World War II a large number of women were hired.

Between 1904 and 1943 — when full scale unionization of the plant force was effected — there were a few unsuccessful attempts at unionization.

In February, 1910, the brass finishers went on strike demanding an increase in wages from 34 cents an hour to 40 cents, and recognition of their union. President Adolph refused to see representatives of the Metal Polishers, Buffers, Brass and Silver Platers Union of America. A newspaper account stated that company officials took the stand that only five per cent of the Mueller plant forces were affected by the walkout, which did not constitute a strike. This apparently ended the affair.

In May, 1919, the Decatur newspapers reported "a quiet effort is being made to organize the factories of the Mueller Co." This was in a period when wages generally were being increased, and workers were making an issue of low wages and increases in the cost of living. Leaders among employees at Muellers' Decatur plant claimed that other firms in town were paying higher wages for comparable work than prevailed at the Mueller factory.

These not so quiet efforts to effect unionization at the Mueller plant built up until, early in September, company officials closed down operations. After a two-week shutdown President Adolph on September 15 announced to the press:

"When we closed down we employed 670 men. This morning there were 492 employees back in their old places."

The two-week shutdown had been an effective lockout, and for the next 24 years the company's Decatur plant was operated without any further serious attempts to unionize its employees.

Owner paternalism in Mueller Co. operations began to be considerably less pronounced when in 1939 Adolph retired and his son Everett was made president. Everett had been trained in finance, and had been company treasurer for 13 years prior to his taking over the presidency. Probably due in part to his lack of any extensive technical knowledge of plant operation, the new president made no effort to have the personal contacts with members of the plant force that had so characterized his father and grandfather's regimes.

Adolph, who had been made chairman of the board, still was boss in the company management, but he was becoming less active in personal contact with the employees, and was viewing with mixed feelings the spread of unionism in many industrial plants, including a few in Decatur. But he apparently shared the belief of the rest of Mueller management that the firm's voluntary benefit programs — which embodied most of the fringe benefits written into standard union contracts and some not found in such standard contracts — had generated a loyalty among Mueller workers that would keep them from unionizing.

It had been true that for a considerable period there were no benefit programs in other Decatur industries comparable to Muellers' paid vacations, profit-sharing, merit awards and long-standing pension plan. But by the 1940s some of the other Decatur firms had similar fringe benefits in operation.

With the advent of World War II and Mueller Co.'s war contracts, the plant force had been greatly expanded — almost doubled — and the new employees had little knowledge of the firm's benefit program. Mueller management personnel knew that organizers for the United Automobile Workers union — later the United Auto Workers (UAW) — were making contact with their employees, but they continued to believe that the workers would turn the union down if there was a vote for organizing.

It was with more surprise than dismay that, on September 24, 1943, the Mueller officers received word of the employees' vote of 321 to 184 in favor of the union, with 45 not voting. Most of the officers had assumed that sooner or later the plant would be unionized, but they had not expected it on the first vote. Unionization of industry had been in the air, and had been made much easier by the New Deal policies of then President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Mueller union vote was certified by the National Labor Relations Board on December 24, 1943. The U. of I. researchers gave the company credit for not at any time during the union organization period adopting a militantly anti-union position.

Unionization of the company's employees came about a year before Adolph Mueller's death, and there was evidence he took it with more pathos than any other member of management. A foreman told the U. of I. interviewers that the chairman of the board "went around among the men and said: 'I didn't think you'd ever do this to me, boys.' He really took it to heart as though the men were showing their dislike for him personally. I don't think that was the case at all."

It took 17 months of difficult bargaining to get a union contract that both sides would sign. In March 1944, negotiations reached a deadlock, and a three-day strike took place. Negotiations then were resumed and in February 1945 a conciliator from the United States Department of Labor came to town to assist in closing the contract on a few points which still were in dispute. He explained that submission of the points in dispute to the War Labor Board would cause a delay of several months before final determination in the case could be reached.

In view of this the union suggested that the various matters that had been agreed upon be put into effect. The company refused to sign a partial contract covering only agreed-upon points and accused the union of withdrawing from an agreement that the complete contract would be reduced to writing before signature. A strike over this was called by the union.

This brought War Labor Board and Army Ordnance representatives to

town in an attempt to break the deadlock. There was some ill feeling in the city because of a strike during wartime, and the possibility was publicly discussed and admitted by both company and union officials that the Army might take over operation of the plant so that production of vital war materials might be resumed. These pressures led to a union vote to return to work; both sides signed papers stipulating that all union contract points not still in dispute be put into effect.

These covered seniority, plant grievance committees and grievance procedure, procedure for layoffs, new classifications, promotions, overtime and premium pay, paid holidays and vacations, hours of work, and handling of military furloughs and leaves of absence. Points in dispute that were sent to the Labor Board included wage adjustments, maintenance of union membership, seniority of committeemen and shop stewards, and the expiration date of the contract. The WLB won agreement in 1945 on all points in dispute except the union security issue, which was not resolved until 1948.

Wage increases granted by the WLB under the contract ranged from 5 cents an hour to 40 cents. The wide range of these adjustments by the WLB indicated its belief that a number of inequities in wages had been in operation.

Contract negotiations after November 30, 1945 — when the first contract expired — brought these further changes:

In January 1946 the company agreed to a union shop provision for all new employees after they had served 30 days. However, old employees who were not union members were not required to join the union. Contract provisions defining seniority were greatly elaborated, and refinements made dealing with vacations, shift premiums and the system of bidding for open jobs.

In January 1947 there were many changes in details of most of the contract clauses, but mainly in clarification of union security and managerial rights. The company was given the right to assign persons in training for sales or engineering jobs to work on jobs included in the bargaining unit, without such persons being subject to contract provisions. The checkoff of union dues and initiation fees was written into the contract.

In July of 1948 the employees voted for a union shop by a majority of 554 to 8. This was so conclusive that the union shop clause in the contract was rewritten to eliminate the provision which previously had allowed old employees to stay out of the union.

In 1949 there was a noticeable shift in the character of the company bargaining approach. Up to that time the company had left the initiative in union hands. The union usually chose the issues for bargaining approach, and then there was negotiation on the union-suggested points. But in 1949 contract negotiating the company prepared a series of proposals in advance

of receipt of union demands. The company demanded and got clarification of some seniority clauses, guarantees of medical check on sick leaves, and limitations on grievance processing.

Management's position was strengthened in 1950 by inclusion in the contract of a clause that gave the company the right to declare a lockout when the grievance system had been exhausted. Previously the contract had given the union the right to strike over unsettled grievances but had stated nothing about company rights.

The company agreed to a premature opening of negotiations on wages in December 1950, in order to forestall a threatened governmental wage freeze. The union was not satisfied with the company offer of 5 cents an hour wage increase and took a strike vote. The company then added a \$130 cost-of-living bonus. The union officers were still unsatisfied with this, but the membership accepted the offer.

The local union was represented in bargaining by a five-member bargaining committee and the union president, with the assistance and supervision of one or more regional representatives. The experienced regional representative usually acted as spokesman. The union constitution made it necessary to submit each contract to a check, theoretically by the international president but practically by the regional office. Any strike action also was submitted for regional and international union approval. In practice the local union usually handled negotiations. The regional representative was available as advisor or troubleshooter, but appeared only when important grievances were being negotiated or when grievance negotiations seemed in danger of failure.

The U. of I. study team was generous in its praise of both the Mueller Co. and the union for the comparative ease with which unionization was consummated.

"The achievement of stability under unionization within seven years," its report said, "was a remarkable accomplishment when viewed against the background of an open shop philosophy. A fundamental transition was made between two quite different systems of ideas and behavior with only three days of work stoppage. Such an evolution in so brief a period could only have been accomplished in the context of a management which already was developing in the direction of professionalized practice and was composed of persons who had no personal stake in the maintenance of paternalism."

This comment referred both to the short-time president, Everett Mueller, a methodical businessman who served as head of the firm from 1939 until his death in 1947, and to his successor Albert G. Webber, Jr., who for several years had been company legal counsel. Webber's training and experience had been in the law and he had been little involved in the company's previous employee benefit programs.

The transition from paternalism to unionization was made easier by a company official who was not a member of the Mueller family. He was J. W. Simpson, an employee of the company for more than 50 years and who had a leading role during much of the early union negotiations. Simpson had started with the firm as a messenger boy to Hieronymus Mueller, and served in important roles during Adolph's regime as president. The employees trusted and respected him to a degree that he became the key figure in management goodwill. The door of his office always was open to any employee who had a problem, in the same manner as had been the practice under the first and third presidents.



## FAMILY MEMBER ROLES

Any history of the Mueller Co. should include individual treatment of the roles played by members of both the second and third generations of the family who were active in company management. This chapter deals with the management and technical contributions of Hieronymus' six sons and five grandsons.

### Henry Mueller



Henry Mueller

"Never pushed himself forward, but always doing for others," was the impression Henry Mueller made on many friends who knew him well. And they often would add that he "never passed up an opportunity to push Decatur to the front."

Henry was oldest of the six sons of Hieronymus Mueller, and inherited his father's genius as an inventor and mechanic. Among his 48 patents were products that aided greatly in expanding the manufacturing program of the Mueller Co. He was born in Freeport, Illinois, while his father was in the Colorado gold rush in 1858.

Henry was instructed as rapidly as possible in everything his father knew about machining and mechanics. He was reputed to be

the best machinist in the area and was closely identified with his father and brothers in designing and inventing items in the plumbing and water distribution field, and became rated as one of the best in his line of work.

When the H. Mueller Mfg. Co. was incorporated in 1893, Henry was made head of the firm's experimental department. In that capacity he designed many new products and made improvements on others the Muellers had been manufacturing.

As the oldest son, Henry was made president of the company in 1900 after his father's tragic death in an experiment connected with his interest in automobiles which were then in the earliest stages of development. But

Henry had no taste for administrative responsibilities, and in 1902 his brother Adolph who had college training in that field was chosen company president. Henry then carried the title of vice president, and was closely associated with his brother Philip in management of the factory. His judgment was relied on heavily until his sudden death in 1910.

Henry was endowed with artistic talents that added to both beauty and quality of the products he designed. As a young man he was a member of the longtime famous Goodman Band, in which he played the flute. He also was active as a Volunteer Fireman until company business got so heavy he had to drop out of that and also the band.

His death at age 52 was a shock to many in Decatur, who had viewed his rise to national recognition as an inventor. His short career was acclaimed in public statements made by some of his friends. One of them said:

"He was one of the most unassuming prominent businessmen in Decatur. As a citizen he always was on the side of every good work for the upbuilding of the city. Not only was he a great mechanic, but a great artist. Perhaps he was the first man in this country to give beauty to design and pleasing effect to his line of manufactured articles. Anything out of harmony to the eye grated on his sensitive nature."

These rare distinctions had made Mueller goods popular nationwide, and Henry in large measure was responsible for that quality. His inventions and improvements kept the goods well ahead of those of competing firms. He demonstrated these inventions at many national conventions of the plumbing industry, and was recognized as an authority in his field.

This recognition in no way diminished the camaraderie Henry long had enjoyed with the men he worked with in his experiments. He mingled with them daily, calling them by first names and being called by his first name.

Henry was not robust, but enjoyed hunting and fishing and made many trips after game with Joe Michl and Charles Traver. Scarcely anyone in town did as much fishing as Henry did, and apparently he was a good fishing companion. In eulogy one of his fishing pals said of him:

"I never saw a more pleasant man to take a trip with, and never heard a harsh or impatient word from him."



## Philip Mueller



Philip Mueller

The second son of Hieronymus Mueller, Philip was connected with Mueller enterprises 41 years. He was born in 1859 and like all of the Mueller sons served an apprenticeship; his was in plumbing and gas fittings.

In 1885 he was admitted to partnership in the H. Mueller plumbing shop at 249 East Main Street — he was the first of six sons to be made a partner with his father. In 1891 the Decatur Plumbing & Heating Co. was formed, with some non-Mueller family ownership. The firm grew rapidly, and did work in several large cities including Indianapolis, St. Louis and Chicago. Philip directed the large staff of plumbers.

Philip served as plant manager for many years, and later as works manager. When the H. Mueller Mfg. Co. was incorporated in 1893, replacing the former partnership, the firm was headed by Hieronymus, with his sons Henry, Philip, Fred, Robert and Adolph as members. During that period Philip designed many products, including production machinery, and improvements in handling equipment in the factory. Possessed of a high degree of inventive ability, he received 206 patents, the most of any member of the Mueller family.

For many years Philip represented the Mueller Co. at trade conventions, where his rare personality and thorough knowledge of the plumbing business made him thousands of friends. He was an organizer of the Illinois Master Plumbers Association, and its first treasurer.

Like his father, Philip was very precise in his manner of engaging in any activity, particularly any dangerous activity. He taught his sons to be deathly afraid of the front end of a gun and always to handle it as if it might go off unexpectedly. Guns always had to be completely unloaded except when actually engaged in hunting. As a result, even with all the hunting that was done by him and his family, there was never a gun accident.

It was his nature to shun ostentation, and he was not interested in executive offices in the company. He lived well but modestly, and was a lover of the outdoors. Hunting and fishing were his hobbies. He lived many

summers in a little cabin near Mueller Lodge, spending his spare time fishing in the Sangamon river and later Lake Decatur.

In his early years Philip was much interested in music, and at the age of 10 was a member of the first orchestra established by Professor A. Goodman. Later he played the French horn in the original Goodman Band. He often described as his "greatest disappointment" his not being allowed, at the age of 14, to take a national tour with the band.

### **Fred B. Mueller**



Fred B. Mueller

Encouraged by his father to develop the talents with which nature had endowed him, Fred B. Mueller, third oldest of the six Mueller brothers, at an early age became engaged in sales activities. He also was interested in sports.

Hieronymus Mueller had started his business in Decatur with a gun and repair shop. From a service operation, this soon included sales of items made in the shop and in purchased sporting goods. At an early age Fred began handling sales, and in later years as the Mueller operations were expanded to occupy other locations, Fred was made manager of the gun and sporting goods shop. From East Main Street it had been moved to Merchant Street and later to Prairie Street.

Fred's interest in athletics led him into active roles in the Decatur Volunteer Firemen's organization. As a member of the Hose Company "running team" he helped bring home to Decatur several trophies won by this team in national competition. The team became national champion in the 1880s.

The gun shop was the center of sports activity in the 1890s, and Fred was a promoter of the Three I baseball league's Decatur team.

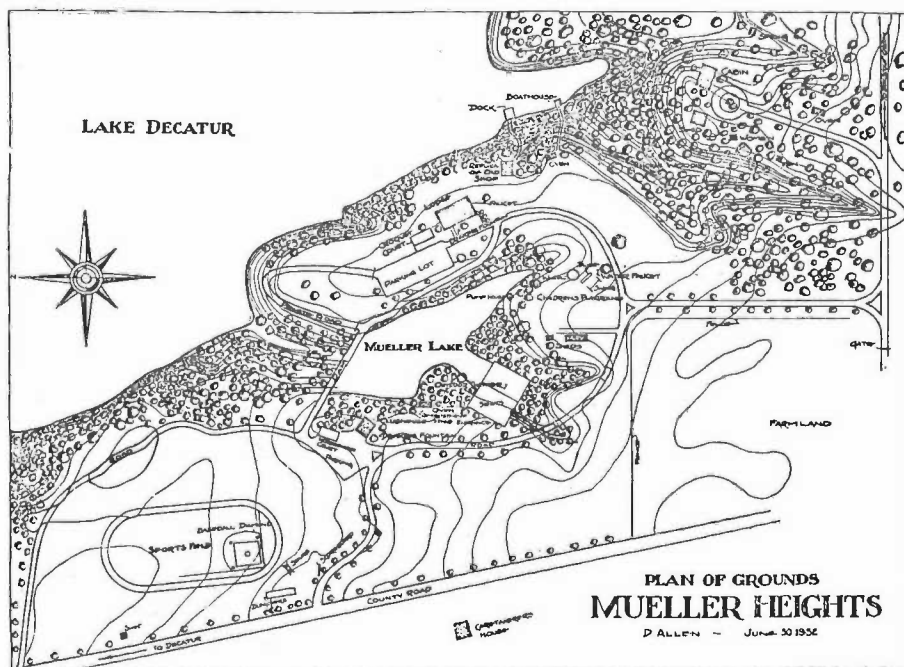
The gun shop was sold in 1897, when Fred's sales talents were needed in the other Mueller enterprises. As assistant secretary and vice president of the Mueller Co. in charge of sales, Fred for many years traveled all over the country. He developed a wide acquaintance in the water, plumbing and gas

fixtures field. His travels in those years took him to every city of importance in the U. S., and aided greatly in building up business for the Mueller plants. Handsome and of splendid physique, he was popular and well known nationally in the Mueller products field.

His personal prestige in industrial sales work aided him in attracting to the Mueller sales staff star salesmen of other firms he met in his travels. His sales force came to be regarded as the best in its industry; this quality tended to perpetuate itself, and the Mueller Co. sales staff is still rated at the top in its field.

After his road duties lessened, Fred spent more time at his hobbies, which were Mueller Lodge and development of Lake Decatur. He led in the family's program of landscaping and beautifying the Mueller Heights grounds. He kept in touch with surviving members of the old fire department's running team, and entertained them annually at Mueller Lodge.

His many charitable acts were mainly kept anonymous. He aided several old friends who had not prospered as he had, and sometimes entertained them at the lodge. Fred was the only member of the family of six brothers and a sister who never married; he died in 1927 after an illness of two years.



## Robert Mueller



Robert Mueller

Lacking the mechanical talents of his brothers Henry, Philip and Oscar, Robert Mueller was possessed of a personality that made him an effective goodwill ambassador for the family enterprises, and it was in such a role that he was cast.

With his older brothers he was admitted to partnership in his father's enterprises in 1886, and became a member of the board of directors when H. Mueller Mfg. Co. was organized in 1893. He served as treasurer and later as secretary for a considerable period. For most of his career he was vice president in charge of public relations — starting in 1929.

In 1917 he was made wartime chairman of the Red Cross when the Decatur chapter was organized. He was an early member of the

Country Club of Decatur and served as president of the Decatur Club in 1907. He also belonged to the Decatur Fishing Club, predecessor of the South Side Country Club. Other interests were the Decatur Art Institute, and the earlier Municipal Art League.

For six years Robert served as Class B director of the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago. He was on the Salvation Army board for some years, and served on committees to eliminate grade crossings in Decatur. More than any of his brothers, he was a world traveler.

## Adolph Mueller



Adolph Mueller

Much already has been said about Adolph, fifth of the six Mueller sons, but his 37-year regime as company president requires further treatment here.

Not many realize it, but American industry has produced few top executives with a personality as many faceted and interesting, and in some respects as contradictory, as his. His phenomenal business success and insistence on directing operations to the smallest detail led many to regard him as a hard master, yet the personal interest he displayed on many occasions in the welfare of individuals under him left no doubt that there were two distinct sides of his nature. He himself recognized this, but there seemed to be little he could do about it. This anomaly is illustrated in a story told

by a man who worked under him for a long time:

"He tried to tell you how to do just about everything. I remember one departmental meeting — he was talking to us about voting and passed around marked ballots for us to look at. The next day he came in the cafeteria and stopped at our table and said something about Roosevelt — this was the second time Franklin D. Roosevelt ran — I didn't vote for him the first time. I didn't say anything, but I must have had a queer look on my face because Mr. Mueller looked at me and said: 'You're going to vote for Roosevelt. I can tell it by the way you look.' I still didn't say anything and he said, 'Go ahead and vote for him; it's none of my business,' and walked away.

"The next day he came up to me and apologized for what he had said, and told me he shouldn't have said it. I told him, 'I found some money to buy a home and under Roosevelt — it's costing me 4 per cent interest. Before Roosevelt came in I would have paid 6 or 7 per cent. I'm going to vote for the man that votes for me.' He told me he wasn't able to make as much money under the Democrats as he was under Republicans and that's why he was a Republican."

The Mueller Co. president went far out of his way to make himself what often has been called a "hail fellow well met," and mingle on the most intimate terms with those under him. Examples of this were weekend trips to the family's woodland retreat near Vandalia for fishing, hiking and other relaxation, to which he would invite his subordinates and sometimes other plant personnel. He would insist on doing the cooking and a share of the other chores. He would tell off-color stories and laugh heartily at those told by his guests, and in every way try just to be one of the gang.

But at the same time he couldn't refrain from seeing that every detail worked out just as he had planned it. A good time in which everyone in the party could feel relaxed and do as his inclinations prompted was impossible for him.

The long-time president's antipathy to smoking — and its obvious hazard in a factory — led him to ban all smoking in the plant. This resulted in many of the employees chewing tobacco, and a half century ago there are said to have been "probably a thousand cuspidors" around the plant.

"There was a cuspidor at every drafting table, alongside every machine, and in the corners of all the rooms," it is recalled by Frank H. Mueller, Adolph's nephew, who says he learned to chew at about age 15 while working in the plant summers back in the 1920s. "My father (Philip Mueller) noting that chewers liked to spit in corners, designed a three-cornered cuspidor, with rounded front side, for placement in room and stairway corners to accept the tobacco juice. They had a crew of two or three men who spent their full night shift cleaning the cuspidors. I remember seeing them going around with two metal barrels on a hand pull truck; they dumped contents of the cuspidors in one barrel and used water from the other to rinse out the cuspidors."

President Adolph's personality was analyzed frankly but sympathetically in the following article published in a Decatur newspaper at the time of his death in 1944:

"While he had a big part in building the industrial city that we know today, it was his misfortune to be very commonly misunderstood and his motives misconstrued. Nobody knew this better than he, and he often tried to overcome this misconception by going out of his way in tolerance of critics, and a social affability that was difficult for him because it simply was not his nature.

"His impulses always were friendly and public spirited but he needed somebody to interpret them to the people, and the right man was not always at hand. . . . It was he who was the businessman in the family; he had the vision and the daring to turn a small family shop into a great industry. He did it by daring to borrow large sums of money at a time when the business was small and struggling. He aimed from the beginning at a big success rather than a small success, and he lived to see his faith confirmed.

"When his own position was secure, he turned his interests largely to the welfare of his associates, his employees, and the young men of the city. He was one of the first industrialists to see that security of employment, the annual wage, is a more vital matter for a worker and the worker's family than hourly wage scales. When a depression came and there was no market for plumbing goods, he proved his devotion to the ideal by making work of one sort or another for regular employees, at the sacrifice of family and company profits.

"His gifts to community enterprises and philanthropies are greater than can be found out. He was one of the first and most enthusiastic donors for the foundation of our (Millikin) university, and has remained a great friend of the college through the years. . . . The Salvation Army has lost one of its most generous friends. And so, as a matter of fact, has the entire city. He saw his own most enduring monuments erected."

Besides the Salvation Army, Adolph Mueller's known philanthropies aided the Y.M.C.A., Boys Opportunity Home, and Girls Welfare Home. In 1941 he was instrumental in having the Mueller Co. give the Industrial Arts department at Millikin University \$20,000 worth of equipment for its instructional program in that field; later that gift was boosted to \$100,000. These gifts may have been a landmark in gifts by industries to private colleges; certainly they were among the first of any size. Adolph personally gave generously toward construction of the Community Center building at Southside Park on South Broadway.

Too busy to take an active part in civic activities of the community, he did serve on the boards of a few large Decatur firms, including the board of directors of Millikin National Bank. He was active in the National Association of Manufacturers, and in 1925 was named by then Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover as member of a committee to visit and report on the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Art in Paris. On the same trip Mr. Mueller represented the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as a delegate to the International Chamber of Commerce convention in Brussels, Belgium. He was offered an appointment as a Class B director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago but had to refuse because of other commitments.

In 1923 Adolph was made captain of Decatur's Company No. 14 of the Minutemen of the Constitution, with Ralph Tenney as first lieutenant. This took place at a dinner meeting at Mueller Lodge at which General Charles G. Dawes was speaker.

Walking, and raising fine tomatoes were Mr. Mueller's favorite hobbies. With his boyhood friend and later longtime counsel for the Mueller Co., Albert G. Webber, Sr., he walked as much as five miles a day several days a week, usually up and down the railroad tracks toward Boody. For 35 years he spent much of his spare time in his garden, where his 50 tomato plants produced

bushels of fine tomatoes that he distributed generously among his friends.

An ardent advocate of the proposed international highway from northern U. S. through Mexico and Central America to the South American continent, his interest in that project dated back to 1928.

President Adolph's all absorbing loyalty to the Mueller family and company was illustrated well in his manner of handling an embarrassing event that attended the firm's 1938 annual picnic. His nephew, Frank, who was struggling to build up his physique after his bout with polio, had spent the day watching the company golf tournament at old Sunnyside Park (now Scovill Golf Course), and drinking beer.

Frank showed up at the family dinner at Mueller Lodge that evening in very poor shape; he tried to make a speech to the family, which was seated at a long table. All were painfully embarrassed and Adolph told him: "Frank you go home and come to my office Monday morning."

Frank spent most of the next day wondering what might happen to him, and if Uncle Adolph might fire him. When he reported to the president's office Monday morning, Adolph seated him at the directors' table and said:

"Frank, I don't know what's troubling you and causing you to do some of the things you do. But I do know one thing. You are a Mueller, and you are going to solve your problem. Now go back downstairs, and get about it."

Deeply moved by this display of confidence in him and his uncle's obvious belief that he had the ability to continue to be a valuable asset to the company and credit to the family, Frank followed Adolph's admonition and after some lapses, conquered his drinking problem. His role with the company over the last 40 years has been a most valuable one.

At no time was the Mueller program of paternalism, and the sincerity of its application in a manner to shield the firm's employees from economic hardships so well demonstrated as in the middle years of the Great Depression.

It was with some trepidation that the plant force gathered for a meeting in the Mueller gymnasium on November 3, 1932. It looked like a bad winter ahead, and some employees had been falling behind in their payments on homes they were purchasing. Their fears were quickly dispelled. Optimism was voiced by Robert Mueller, vice president in charge of public relations who opened the meeting with an address of welcome.

Then Lucien W. Mueller, works manager, spoke at length in reviewing difficulties the company had surmounted in the last three depression years. It was a difficult undertaking to keep the plant force together with demand for goods at low ebb, but it had been done. He told how President Adolph, in a recent directors' meeting, had told him to make plans of work for winter which would give every employee a certain amount of work each week; Adolph had said, "We must take care of our people."

Lucien reported that a careful survey had been taken of homes being



paid for in installments and a record made of homes on which payments were behind and the buyers in danger of losing their property.

"Don't let that worry you," Lucien admonished those feeling such a financial pinch, "because the company has determined to stand behind you. Arrangements will be made whereby you will be enabled to meet your payments and you will not lose your homes."

President Adolph, smiling and optimistic as always, was the last speaker. He gave assurance of the company's intention to go the limit in furnishing employment during the winter months. He did not minimize the bad business conditions, but said:

"We will do our usual bit for organized charities in Decatur, and in addition we are going to look after our own people as we have done during the last two winters, and see to it that they do not suffer. This company in past years began building a surplus and it's mighty lucky for us and for you that we did. We've cut into it during the last two years but there still is some of it left, and just as long as it holds out you are going to be kept employed and those of you who need help will get it.

"The company feels an obligation to protect your interests just as far as the company is financially able to do so. We've had an appraiser looking up homes that employees might lose, and we will work out a plan that will prevent any such misfortune."

On October 27, 1932 this action by the Mueller Co. was commended strongly in an editorial in the Decatur Herald, written by Sam Tucker, longtime editorial writer for the Decatur newspapers. Tucker contrasted the Mueller policy with that of the U.S. Steel Corporation, which the day before had closed down its plants and laid off the workers.

Like the Muellers, Tucker pointed out, U.S. Steel while business was good had built up a heavy surplus. But instead of using it to keep the factory workers on some kind of company work, the steel company had opted to use the surplus for the benefit of its stockholders, "leaving its labor force to shift for itself — possibly starve except for a dole at taxpayers' expense."

Sale of plumbing goods must have dried up proportionately as had the demand for steel, Tucker suggested, with only 12 new houses having been built in Decatur in the past year in comparison to 800 in a good year.

"A policy of rugged individualism," Tucker wrote, "would have meant these last two years more ease and luxury for a few individuals named Mueller, and catastrophe for a thousand other Decatur homes, with a secondary catastrophe for all Decatur taxpayers and businessmen. Instead of rugged individualism the Mueller directors have chosen a policy of social responsibility. The Mueller surplus thus has served, not only to pay wages to the unemployed capital, but also to pay wages to the workers for whom the company felt responsible. Everybody in Decatur has reason to be profoundly grateful for this enlightened policy."

## Oscar B. Mueller



Oscar B. Mueller

As the youngest, Oscar B. Mueller was the last son to be brought into the Mueller enterprises. But his aggressiveness and combination of technical, managerial and sales talents enabled him to advance rapidly.

As mentioned before, it was he who, in 1912, induced the company to open a branch factory in Canada. The plant was built in Sarnia, Ontario, under the firm name of H. Mueller Mfg. Co. Ltd. Relinquishing his position as head of the Mueller Co. sales offices in New York City, he moved his family to Port Huron, Michigan, across the St. Clair river from Sarnia. Oscar served as president of Muellers' Canadian company until he sold his interest in it to the parent firm.

In 1917 Oscar induced his brothers to develop another plant, in Port Huron, Michigan, to manufacture brass rod for munitions for the Decatur factory in World War I. This operation first was known as Mueller Metals Co., but was changed to Mueller Brass Co. in 1924.

Oscar came into full possession of the Port Huron plant in 1927, when he transferred his interest in Mueller Co. for the parent firm's interest in Mueller Brass Co.

Business of Mueller Brass Co. was expanded rapidly by Oscar, who in 1933 bought the assets of Sky Specialty Corp., one of several acquisitions to add to products Mueller Brass Co. was marketing. During this period Oscar was building an impressive list of products. He developed a hot process in forging brass fittings for electrical refrigeration that was used in pipes and couplings that would not leak. For this purpose only forged parts would be secure. An official of Frigidaire Co. described the Mueller Co. as the greatest factor in the success of its refrigerators.

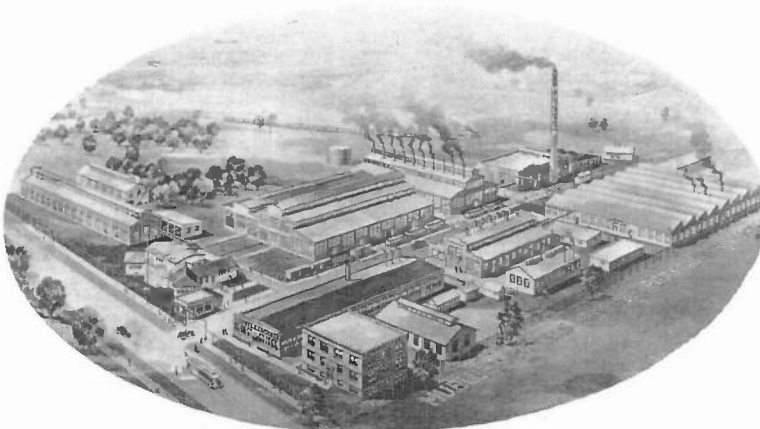
Oscar believed in, and in his business applied Henry Ford's theory of raising wages without raising price of manufactured products. More wages mean more buying power, which increases the market for goods produced, he was convinced.

In 1935 Oscar sold his controlling interest in Mueller Brass Co. to the Atlas Corp., an investment company, and in 1936 announced his retirement as president. He commented that he had been "in harness a long time and wanted to get out of active business and do some fishing."

As a resident of Port Huron Oscar engaged extensively in civic activities. He served on the board of the Y.M.C.A., and led in promotion of the building of a new hospital and in developing the Black River Golf Club.



Mueller, Ltd., Sarnia, Ontario



Mueller Metals Co., Port Huron, Michigan

## Robert H. Mueller



Robert H. Mueller

Oldest son of Philip and eldest of the third generation of Mueller sons, Robert H. Mueller started work at the Decatur plant in 1901 at the age of 16, with pay of five cents an hour. He left his work in the polishing room in 1903 to attend Millikin University, later becoming a full time member of the plant force.

Starting in the assembly department, he moved to the tool room and then to the office for some training in accounting, billing and sales. In 1913 he was sent to Sarnia, to be in charge of setting up the machinery and opening the firm's Canadian plant. From January to September of that year he served as a salesman in Ontario. He made the journey to Sarnia by motorcycle. There were no paved roads, and the trip proved to be a

near nightmare; he was thrown off the cycle several times. He came back to Decatur by automobile. On his return to the Decatur plant Robert H. was made foreman of the regulator department. During World War I he was in charge of munitions output at the plant. In 1919 he had charge of tools and machines in the engineering department, and in 1920 he became superintendent of equipment. In 1922 he was made a board member, serving on the board and as chief engineer until his retirement a quarter century later.

As chief engineer Robert H. developed many machines and pieces of equipment, acquiring 43 patents.

He was one of the first automobile drivers in Decatur, operating his father's steamer car as a young man. A trip Robert H. made with the family's steamer car illustrates the manner in which Mueller family members complied with formalities required of others on the company payroll. Philip one time told Robert H. to write to President Adolph for a permit to take a day off work to take him hunting in the steamer car. Robert H. got a formal reply from Adolph granting the requested permission. Earlier his grandfather, Hieronymus Mueller, took Robert H. for rides in the Mueller-Benz car, stationing him in back to keep boys from hanging on and forcing the car to stall.

Hobbies of Robert H. were golf, hunting, fishing and especially gardening. He was an early devotee of trapshooting and had a close relationship with Chauncey (Chan) Powers, one of the pioneers in this sport and a member of the American team that went to Europe to engage in the first international trapshoot. He was a skilled machinist and while attending Millikin made most of the athletic equipment including baseball bats turned on Mueller Co. machines from old wagon tongues.

In 1951 Mr. Mueller's life was almost miraculously saved by giving him 22 pints of blood over 72 hours during and after surgery. A rare type of blood was required, and 288 Mueller employees volunteered blood — only 12 of them had the right type. His wife Louise, long in charge of the Red Cross blood bank program in Decatur, directed the search for donors during the operation.

Unpretentious, but outspoken and giving little thought to the impression he left, Robert H. Mueller was recognized widely as one of Decatur's most solid citizens. He made a good recovery from his health crisis, and lived 12 more years.



Robert H. Mueller, a member of the Board of Directors of Mueller Co. from 1922 to 1949, was presented a silver bowl as an award for his services by officers and directors of the company. Seated from left to right: Frank H. Mueller, Vice President-Engineering; Robert H. Mueller; Mrs. R. H. (Louise) Mueller. Standing from left to right: Leo Wiant, Administrative Vice President; Dan R. Gannon, Vice President and General Sales Manager; Frank A. Speer, Vice President of Manufacturing; Jackson Kemper, Executive Vice President; and Mrs. W. E. (Pauline) Mueller.

## William Everett Mueller



William Everett Mueller

Everett Mueller, as he was generally known, was the first of the third generation of Muellers to occupy a top office in the company. He became president and treasurer of the Mueller Co. on December 16, 1939, when his father Adolph, longtime president, was made chairman of the board.

As his father and uncles had done, he worked at chores and apprentice operations around the plant as a boy in grade and high school. After graduating in 1917 from Yale University, where he majored in economics, Everett joined the Navy. He took officers training and served for a period as an ensign. Upon leaving the Navy he spent two years in Canada, managing extensive landholdings of his father. He joined the Mueller

Co. management in 1922, when he became a member of the board and was placed in charge of sales.

In 1927 he was made company treasurer, and continued to handle those duties after he became president. His civic activities included being president of the Decatur War Fund in 1943, and a member of the board of directors of the Illinois State War Chest in 1942.

The Salvation Army, which his father had supported so generously, was one of Everett's civic interests. He was active on the agency's board for a considerable period, and helped greatly in building the first Salvation Army Temple here. A statement he made at a meeting of Masonic Temple bondholders resulted in nearly all of them giving their bonds to the Masonic Temple association.

On June 11, 1930, the Mueller board of directors approved a complicated pension plan that was apparently never implemented because of insufficient funds. However, Adolph Mueller personally financed a temporary plan at that time, using funds due him as executor of Fred Mueller's estate. Thirty-five employees were retired in June, 1930 with an allowance of \$30 per month for as many months in each case as the number of years of service. This was the initial Mueller Co. pension plan.

In 1942 Everett developed and activated a pension plan that was widely hailed as a giant step forward in employee relations. The plan was unusual in that all contributions were made by the company, and benefits were not integrated with Social Security. It was a far better plan than any in this area at the time, and equal or better than those negotiated by strong unions throughout the country. Thus a pension plan was not a factor in the negotiations that took place when the company was unionized a year later.

During the remaining war years Everett devoted his efforts almost exclusively to a plan for moving all of Muellers' Decatur manufacturing facilities into a new plant to be built south of the river on land adjacent to the vitreous ware plant which was to be used for the brass and iron foundries. He had completed extensive drainage and grading work on the land by the time of his father's death in 1944.

Despite the opposition of Lucien and many of the other knowledgeable production people in the company, he pushed ahead with his plan to build a complete new factory and office building with warehouse and shipping facilities. He even contemplated resurrecting the plumbing business but, in this case, he obtained a professional feasibility study which was negative.

Everett personally undertook the planning for the remaining projects, spending endless hours in the plant engineering department poring over the detailed plans even to the point of placing the machinery. In 1947, just prior to his sudden and untimely death on September 22 while riding to work on a bus, he had signed contracts for the major part of the construction.

At a special meeting of the board of directors on October 14, 1947 attended by only four of the remaining six directors, namely: Lucien W. and Robert H. Mueller, J. W. Simpson and Albert G. Webber, Jr., a motion to cancel all unshipped orders on these contracts, to sell the \$40,000 worth of sewer pipe already delivered, and to put Plant 3 in condition for storage purposes was unanimously approved.

The convictions of the majority of the board must have been very firm because they had to borrow over a quarter of a million dollars to cancel these contracts, and in 1948 they first leased and then sold the 600 acres that included Plant 3 to the Borg Warner Corp. despite the fact that the foundry and warehousing situation was so desperate alternative plans were the major concern of management and the board.

The reasons for this sudden change in direction are not known but many questions had been raised, such as: the adequacy of the plans, the vast sums of money needed, the approval of the city for a foundry in that location and a guarantee of an adequate water supply. It was a very bold and high risk plan that would have had a major effect on the future of the Mueller Co. for better or worse.

## Lucien W. Mueller



Lucien W. Mueller

L. W. Mueller, much better known as "Duke," was the second son of Philip, and one of the most dynamic members of the Mueller family. His liking for mechanics led him to enjoy the routine training in the factory that was part of the bringing up of all Mueller family boys.

During his engineering training at Cornell University, Duke became a widely acclaimed football star. He was varsity fullback on the team there in 1915, and was captain in 1916, his senior year. After the Harvard game in 1915 in which Cornell won 10 to 0, the Eastern newspapers hailed Duke as "one of the greatest finds of the year in varsity football." He scored 60 points in 1916, tenth in the U.S.

After his Army service as a second lieutenant in the Ordnance Department in World War I, Duke started work in the engineering department of the Mueller Co. He was elected to the board of directors in 1927. In 1928 he was made vice president in charge of factories, and later vice president and works manager. He had a leading role in developing and putting into operation the branch plant Muellers had acquired in Chattanooga in 1933. He modernized Mueller operations by personally writing a book on Mueller Co. standard practices, established job evaluations and classifications and introduced an incentive system for production workers.

In 1939 Duke proposed that Adolph be made chairman of the board and Everett president, probably with the expectation this would establish clearly defined areas of authority for each. Everett didn't see it this way and their fractious relationship deteriorated. It was rapidly becoming a replay of the antagonisms that developed between Adolph and his brother Oscar during the early years of Adolph's presidency. While Adolph was still active he was able to keep the two aggressive cousins pretty well in line.

Beginning in 1941, the Mueller business was becoming more and more the making of war material which was primarily a production problem and under Duke's jurisdiction. In 1941 he was appointed deputy chairman of the



Shell Integration Committee of the Chicago Ordnance District. Under his direction the production of 37 and 57 mm projectiles was so successful the Mueller Co. was awarded the Army and Navy "E" in May of 1943 and Duke took charge of the ceremonies, pointedly denying his cousin any participation in them.

By the time of Adolph's death in May of 1944, war production was winding down and Duke was faced with the problem of trying to establish some kind of satisfactory relationship with his cousin in the executive office. His brother, Frank, had been living with him for two years while seeking a divorce that was proceeding at a snail's pace. Duke suggested that Frank take a leave of absence and move to a state that would grant a divorce in a reasonable time. In the meantime he would ask the board to make him vice president of sales and administrative engineering which would be a structure over Frank's department and permit the manufacture of products that had been held in abeyance by the sales department.

Duke became as enthusiastic about the prospects for the high pressure natural gas potential as Frank had been for over 10 years. When Frank returned from Arkansas in 1945 with a divorce from that state as well as Illinois, a complete promotional plan was worked out with a coined name "NO-BLO" assigned to the line and plans for a demonstration truck to travel throughout the country. For about 10 years Mueller Co. enjoyed a preeminence in this field and a very profitable business that more than replaced its discontinued plumbing brass business.

After the death of his cousin Everett in 1947, Duke was made chairman of the board of Mueller Co. He served for many years as a member of the board of Mueller, Ltd. His community activities included service for many years on the board of directors of the Citizens National Bank. A lifetime sports devotee, his hobbies were golf, fishing, trap shooting and hunting.

At his country home, Du Clair Farm on the Mt. Zion Road, he had a Guernsey herd that in 1948 won a blue ribbon at the Illinois State Fair in the shippers' bulk milk class. Duke served as president of the Decatur Milk Association in 1949.

## Ebert B. Mueller



Ebert B. Mueller

Ebert B. Mueller, the only child of Robert Mueller, like all of the other male members of the third generation worked in various departments of the Decatur factory during summer vacations from school.

After graduating from Yale University in 1923 he started working full time and rapidly advanced to be placed in charge of the Mueller iron foundry, a separate production facility located in the 1800 block East Eldorado Street and known as Mueller Plant 2. This plant employed about 300 people and included the galvanizing department and some machining operations.

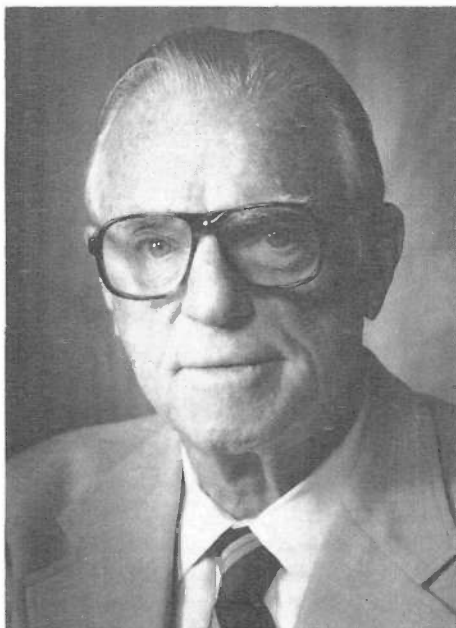
Ebert was elected to the Mueller Co. board of directors in 1928. He resigned from the board

on January 23, 1929 to implement the recommendations of the Ernst & Ernst reorganization study that required the board to be reduced to seven members. Later he resigned as manager of Plant 2 to take positions in the cost and accounting departments of the main office and, for a time, was in charge of correspondence and customer service.

In 1935 Ebert transferred to the Mueller, Ltd. plant in Sarnia, Ontario, and in 1938 became a member of that firm's board of directors. He held the position of assistant merchandise manager of the Waterworks Division of Mueller, Ltd. until he retired.

Ebert was again elected to the Mueller Co. board of directors in 1960 after the death of his mother, Addie E. Mueller, a position he held until his own death in 1968. While with the Sarnia branch of Mueller operations, Ebert and his family lived in Port Huron, Mich.

## Frank H. Mueller



Frank H. Mueller

As mentioned before, Frank was given his grandfather's name of Hieronymus. Born in 1903, three years after the company founder's tragic death, his naming did not come under a ban by his grandfather, who greatly disliked the name Hieronymus.

Frank's training with the company, like that of the older Mueller boys, was "from the ground up," and started at the age of 14. He spent eight full summers in the factory, foundry and office. In 1927 he graduated from Cornell University at Ithaca, New York with a B.S.M.E. degree.

Late in 1927 Frank was employed by his uncle Adolph in the engineering department. During three years in this work he often encountered frustration because,

whenever other important things required immediate attention, his research work was shoved to the background until the other problems could be handled. He finally got a chance to complain about this to the company president.

"One day back in 1933," he recalled, "Uncle Adolph and I were walking back to the office from the cafeteria and I said to him: 'Our product engineering and development suffers from being part of a larger engineering group because other kinds of engineering have to be done frequently and research is pushed onto the back burner. We need a separate division of product research and development, whose staff would stay on that job.'

"He turned around, pointed his finger at me and said: 'You're right, and you're it. One bit of advice — never make a product you don't put your name on, and never put your name on a product you are not proud of.' I stuck to that advice over the many years I was research engineer."

Frank's promising career with the company was interrupted when in October of 1934 he was stricken with poliomyelitis. He was given a leave of absence with pay, and spent a year and a half in Warm Springs, Georgia, where he was given treatment in the spa of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which had been founded through the efforts of Franklin D.

Roosevelt. Mr. Roosevelt, then serving his first term as president, spent short periods at Warm Springs while Frank was there.

"I talked with him several times," Frank recalled. "He was a most charming fellow and obviously popular with the press correspondents, with whom he had a press conference nearly every day at the Little White House. I got well acquainted with several of these newsmen, and in my wheel chair would often listen to the questions they would ask the President. The press conferences were informal, and they would ask him anything. Many of his answers were 'off the record,' and the newsmen always observed that.

"I enjoyed these contacts so much that one day I told Mr. Roosevelt I was getting in danger of his changing me from a Republican to a Democrat. He laughed heartily and suggested that might not hurt me."

Frank, who with his wife had rented a private home in Warm Springs, was sufficiently improved by June, 1936, that he returned to Decatur and after two operations resumed his former position at Muellers. The surgery enabled him to walk with crutches, and for six months he directed his program from a wheel chair. A sports enthusiast, he kept rebuilding his physique until, after 10 years, he was able to walk and play 18 holes of golf; there were no carts to ride in at that time. Despite an inescapable unsteadiness on his feet, his game improved until, in the best summer conditions, he sometimes could play 18 holes in the 70s. He even got back to bowling, but with about a 140 average score.

From his start with one helper, Frank built his research engineering force up to more than 50 men — draftsmen, engineers, machinists, testers, and clerical staff. His title in 1943 was changed to research and development engineer. Later he was made director of engineering, and finally vice president for engineering, with membership on the Mueller Co. board.

During his active lifetime he either redesigned or replaced most of the major product lines of the company and introduced a number of new products that were recognized as superior in their field, a position many of them continue to hold. His list of 162 patents was second longest in the family, exceeded only by his father's.

One of Frank's important accomplishments as research and development engineer began in 1941 with the assignment to develop a heat treating process for the 37mm projectile. He assembled a staff that included professor Harold L. Walker, head of the metallurgical department at the University of Illinois, Walter J. Bowan, Earl Cline, Bill Doharty and others from the engineering department. A process was soon developed using Muellers' own equipment and many specially designed homemade fixtures to meet the delivery schedule demanded by the government.

In 1942 the Mueller Co. was awarded a contract for the 57mm projectile, a far more difficult project because it had to penetrate intact, the new 3 inch

thick face hardened armor plate the Germans had developed for their army tanks. Frank was given complete authority to do whatever was necessary to accomplish this in the shortest possible time.

He and his crew "spent seven days a week and until 10 o'clock at night or later much of the time," he said, but within a reasonably brief period, using as much available equipment as possible and specially designed fixtures, came up with a process that produced a projectile which not only met the severe ballistic requirements but was of such uniform high quality it was selected by the government to determine the ballistic limit of the armor test plates. Mueller engineers also developed an improvement in the design of this projectile, which was proved out and adopted by the government.

Frank was made vice president in charge of engineering in December 1950, and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1968. He was a member of the board for 29 years, including seven years as chairman. He served as chairman of the Executive Committee 10 years. In 1978 he was elected chairman emeritus of the company, a title he still has.

As a young man Frank had participated in many sports, but after his employment by the company in 1927 he concentrated on golf, achieving a solid 3 handicap before being stricken with polio. He has continued all his life to promote his favorite game, particularly its tradition of "golf by the rules." He served as president of the old Sunnyside Golf Club and later president of the South Side Country Club. Until old age took its toll he was an avid hunter and trapshooter, and was president of the Decatur Gun Club when its modern facilities were built at Faries Park. Unlike most of his family, he never cared for fishing.

He was active in community affairs, serving three separate terms on the Association of Commerce board, nine consecutive years on Decatur Memorial Hospital board, and terms on Millikin University's Advancement Program and Campaign Cabinet for Building. He was also president of a small shopping center for a number of years before selling out his interest, and chairman of Mayor Robert Grohne's Water Resources Committee.

A civic activity that grew out of his polio treatments at Warm Springs and his contacts there with President Roosevelt, a fellow sufferer from the malady, was his service for many years in the local chapter of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis; this service continued to the time the Salk vaccine was perfected.

## NON-FAMILY EXECUTIVES

Death of William Everett Mueller brought a great change in Mueller Co. management. For the first time in 90 years the president of the company was not a member of the Mueller family. Since this change in 1947 there has been a succession of four non-Mueller family presidents.

### Albert G. Webber, Jr.



Albert G. Webber, Jr.

Albert G. Webber, Jr., became assistant to his father as general counsel for the Mueller Co. in 1934, and was made chief counsel in 1936. He was elected to the board of directors in 1944. In 1947 Webber was elected president and chief executive officer of the company.

The board recognized that Webber's only professional background was in law — he had obtained his law degree in 1919 — and he was chosen as a “care-taker” president. Webber's limited range of expertise presented no problem in either manufacturing or development of new products, since other of the company officers were experts in those fields. Lucien W. Mueller, who had been made chairman of the board, was a heavy contributor to new products and

experienced in factory management. J. W. Simpson, who had the role of executive vice president, was a veteran of many years in sales and management operations of the company.

These two were well supported by the back-up abilities of Frank H. Mueller, younger brother of Lucien, who for a long period had been research engineer for the company, which in the early 1950s was producing a long list of products on which he had obtained patents.

The picture changed greatly with the deaths of Simpson in 1951 and Lucien Mueller in 1953. Although the board recognized that Webber had grown into extensive general knowledge of company operation, it started looking for a president with experience in factory management.

The search moved slowly, due in part to the fact that company management had been shifted heavily from the board to an Executive Committee of three members, which had been organized in late 1953 with Lucien Mueller as chairman. The other two original members of the committee were Simpson and Webber. Simpson was replaced on the committee by William H. Hipsher, who had been employed several years before by President William E. Mueller to liquidate the Mueller Land Improvement Trust acreage south of the Sangamon river, and who in 1951 had been elected to the board of directors and later became executive vice president. Lucien Mueller was replaced on the Executive Committee by Leo Wiant, a longtime Mueller Co. employee and who was made a member of the board in 1952. He later became administrative vice president.

Late in 1959 or early 1960, two of the board members, Franklin B. Schmick and Harold M. Sherman thought they had found a suitable prospect for the Mueller Co. presidency in the person of Jackson Kemper, a reportedly successful executive from the eastern United States. He was hired as executive vice president for a three-year trial after which time he would either be made president or dismissed.

His penchant for what he called "bucket shops" (small isolated production units) proved unsuccessful even when he incorporated the idea in the new Brea factory. His downgrading of some of the company's respected executives displeased some board members and in due time even his sponsors had become disenchanted with him. Although some of the family still thought well of him in 1962, he was not elected president at the end of his trial period and the board began to look for a new presidential prospect.

From the first, all Executive Committee members were also members of the board; the committee's function, as originally outlined by Lucien, was to enable speedier action on many matters that might otherwise have to wait for a meeting of the full board.

After some of the Mueller family members became concerned over what they regarded as arbitrary and self-serving procedures employed by the committee, which included setting their own salaries and perquisites without the approval or knowledge of the board, some of the board leaders undertook to restore top authority to the board. Among other Executive Committee policies that some disliked was its ruling that no fourth generation Muellers should be employed by the company. This policy still holds — at least unofficially — and has come to be recognized as having tacit family approval. Job applications by at least five Mueller family sons of members of the board were rejected.

A 1957 act of the Illinois Legislature relating to management control of corporations enabled the Mueller board to regain control, and at no time since has a non-family group had almost complete power to take any action it desired.

By the late 1950s Albert Webber's conservative policies had resulted in a large surplus that was not being used in the business. Some criticized this policy but its purpose soon became clear. In 1959, he constructed a complete new engineering building that housed all of the engineering divisions in one very modern, coordinated work space which greatly increased the efficiency of the closely related operations. Suitable offices and the best drafting and record keeping facilities were installed. A new research and development laboratory and model shop with the most advanced test equipment and machinery were provided. This was done at just the right time as the rapid increase in specifications and standards for Mueller type products were making these improvements necessary.

The original factory and office buildings had not only become fully depreciated; they were inadequate, inefficient and in a bad state of repair. Webber in 1961 replaced the old factory with a modern structure that vastly improved operations, particularly in the areas of warehousing and shipping. The new office itself was his crowning glory. Its magnificence seems to reflect an aura of all that Mueller stands for, an impression that endures undiminished.



Mueller Co. Corporate Headquarters, Decatur, Ill.

Webber's role was shifted to chairman of the board after John F. Thurston was brought in as president and chief executive officer in 1963. Webber, who had been president for 16 years — longer than anyone except Adolph Mueller, continued to serve as board chairman until 1971, when he was replaced by Frank H. Mueller.



## John F. Thurston



John F. Thurston

On May 1, 1963 John F. Thurston was chosen new president and executive officer on recommendation of the Mueller Co.'s longtime accounting firm of Arthur Anderson & Co. For several years Mr. Thurston had been senior vice president of General Dynamics Co., a conglomerate with a wide variety of manufactured goods. He had joined General Dynamics Liquid Carbonics Division in 1955, and became its president.

In the early 1950s Thurston had served as civilian consultant to the Secretary of the Army on military parts and supply problems in the U.S., Japan and Korea. He served in the Air Force in World War II and rose to the rank of major.

Possessed of poise, dignity and the ability to make fine

speeches and write excellent business letters, Mr. Thurston had many of the best tools of the trade. He was amiable and friendly, and was credited with enhancing the Mueller image with contemporary firms in business and industry. But he soon encountered formidable difficulties in trying to improve the Mueller Co. program.

The state of Tennessee had dealt the firm a low blow in running a highway through Chattanooga in such a way as to cut the grounds of the Mueller fire hydrant plant there about in half. The company then purchased a splendid new government building that had never been used. The structure was not particularly suitable for a foundry, but careful design permitted the installation of the latest and best foundry and machining equipment.

The problems of moving the operations from the old plant into the new and the difficulties of training the force to operate the new plant were so badly underestimated that production was practically stopped for a year or more and many valued customers were lost. Much of the criticism was leveled at the lieutenants Thurston had put in charge of the job.

In 1968 Harlan A. White, a highly regarded veteran of the firm, was put in full charge of the Chattanooga operations. Within two years he had put it on a

profitable basis and was made a vice president of the company and general manager at Chattanooga. Thurston never recovered the confidence of the board after the Chattanooga disaster. Although he was highly regarded in the community and served in several important civic roles including chairman of the board of trustees of James Millikin University, the Chattanooga experience continued to plague him and in 1971 he resigned from the company.

### Harlan A. White



Harlan A. White

Important progress was made by the Mueller Co. under the regime of Harlan A. White as president. He was elected top executive on February 1, 1972, after having been with the company since 1955, when he was employed as assistant to the administrative vice president. In 1961 he was made manager of manufacturing, and moved later to controller in the company's finance department.

Background for this role had been acquired as a certified public accountant; he for some years had been with the Decatur accounting firm of Gauger & Diehl, with whom he became a partner. White's rapid advancement at Muellers in the 1960s was due to his recognized abilities in finance, and to his having become very knowledgeable in

manufacturing during his years with the firm.

In 1968 White had been made vice president and general manager — Chattanooga operations of the Mueller Co. At that time the Chattanooga plant was suffering severe losses; by 1970 it was back on a profitable basis. By the middle of 1971 when White returned to Decatur as vice president for operations of Mueller Co. the Chattanooga plant was a major contributor to profits of the firm.

When White took over the company presidency he found what he has described as three major problems — insufficient production facilities for the products made at the Chattanooga plant, inadequate profits from the Canadian operations at Sarnia, and inadequate return on investment in a new plant in Brea, California.

Plans for discontinuance of plumbing products at the Sarnia plant were formulated and project "shrinkdown" started. The Canadian management carried out these plans well, and there was a repatriation of about \$3 million to the parent company.

During his assignment at Chattanooga, White had become convinced that the market for fire hydrants was sufficient to warrant building a specialized production facility that could enable Mueller Co. to capture a larger share of the market in which it already was doing well. He proposed to the board of directors the construction of a new plant in Albertville, Alabama for production of fire hydrants only. The plant would include an iron foundry, machine shop, assembly area and shipping facilities. The board authorized the borrowing of \$13 million in industrial revenue bonds toward construction of the new plant. Construction, which took more than a year, was completed in 1976.

During that period White proposed the closing and sale of the Brea plant. Although relatively new, it had failed to yield an adequate return on investment, primarily because production facilities there were not sufficient to make economical runs at competitive prices on the products manufactured. On completion of the plant at Albertville, the board approved phasing out production at Brea and transfer of this production to Albertville, Chattanooga and Decatur. A warehouse to service West Coast customers then was opened in Sparks, Nevada.

White had warned that the shift from fire hydrant production in Chattanooga to the new Albertville plant would be accompanied by a dip in company profits. This was made worse by a business recession that pulled housing starts from a national figure of two million to about a million; by 1977 they were back above the two million level. White's resignation as president, submitted in 1977, became effective in September of 1978.

An important change in accounting procedures which other officials of the Mueller Co. have given White credit for was shifting from what accountants call FIFO inventory valuation to LIFO valuation. This has proven of important financial benefit to the company.

Following his leaving the presidency, White stayed on for two years as a consultant, to round out 25 years of service with the Mueller Co.

## Edward D. Powers



Edward D. Powers

The Mueller Co. took about a year in finding a new top executive. In September 1978, the position of president and executive officer was given to Edward D. Powers, who had had extensive managerial experience. He had been employed for eight years by the ITT Grinnell Corporation, a division of International Telephone & Telegraph Co., and for five years he had been president of its ITT Grinnell Valve Co., Inc., of Elmira, New York, a subsidiary firm manufacturing valves and fire hydrants.

Mr. Powers has degrees in marketing and in chemistry. His professional career started with Lever Brothers, Inc., New York, in 1956, where he occupied management roles in production, purchasing and materials. From 1966 to

1970 he was with Universal Oil Products, Chicago, where he was hired to establish a corporate purchasing department.

During nearly two years with the Mueller Co. Powers' abilities in financial management have provided a new dynamism that has pleased the board, and in 1979 the firm's sales and earnings set record levels; this was in the face of a decline in housing starts. The new president has extensively reorganized the company's management setup, adding some departments, each headed by a company vice president. This has continued the transformation of the Mueller Co. from a family owned and managed firm to a professionally managed company.

The Mueller Co. ranks high in the manufacture of valves, fittings and controls for water and gas distribution systems, and is the world's largest manufacturer of fire hydrants. Capacity for some of this was expanded in 1979 through the investment of \$3,907,000 in additional property, plant and equipment.

In the last year many new products were introduced. The Resilient Seated Gate Valve was successfully launched, the new Mueller Leak Repair Clamp was developed for industrial applications, and the engineering phase of the Butterfly Valve program was completed. During 1979 a \$6,500,000

Butterfly Valve plant was erected on a 52-acre tract at Clinton, South Carolina, and was scheduled to begin operation during 1980.



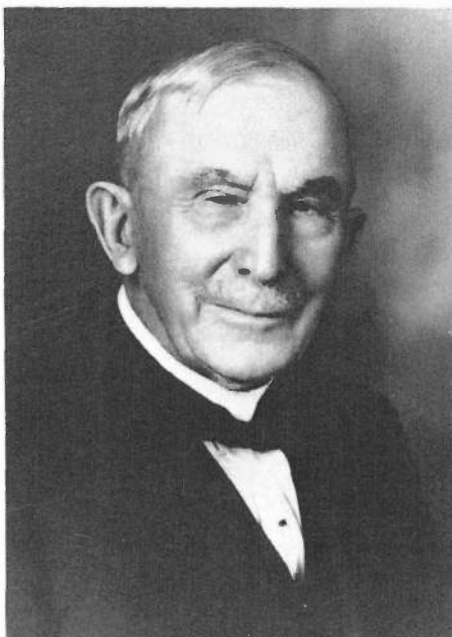
Butterfly Valve Plant, Clinton, South Carolina

Facilities at the plant in Albertville, Alabama, were expanded in 1979 by constructing and equipping a new \$1,275,000 Mueller Clamp facility there. It will produce a new line of non-pressure rated clamps. After its start-up the new plant also will produce the Adams line of pressure rated clamps currently produced in Decatur.

Also committed in 1980 was \$2,600,000 for new machinery and equipment to produce resilient seated gate valves at Mueller Co.'s Chattanooga plant. The resilient seated gate valves complement both the firm's standard gate valve line and the new butterfly valves. The Mueller Ltd. plant in Sarnia, through expanding its product lines and pooling of manufacturing facilities with the parent company, also had a good year in 1979. Summarizing this progress in his annual report, President Powers stated:

"Your company regained leadership in the marketplace. Over the past years we were unable to serve our key markets because of our inability to deliver products on a timely basis. During the year of 1979 our lead times on key products, such as hydrants, valves and ground key were reduced from an average of 40 weeks to eight or 10 weeks. This was accomplished through productivity increases in our plants and improvements in our production control and material handling systems."

### Albert G. Webber, Sr.



Albert G. Webber, Sr.

An early aide in guiding the destinies of the Mueller enterprises was Albert G. Webber, Sr., who was hired by Hieronymus Mueller in 1871 as general helper; Webber later called it an apprenticeship — from age 16 to 19. During the period young Webber helped install gas pipes in several North Water Street buildings that still are in use. The apprentice role started a relationship with the Muellers that lasted for three generations.

Also a native of Germany, Albert came to America with his mother in the late 1860s; his stepfather, a sergeant in the German army, came over in 1862 to serve in the Union army during the Civil War.

As a young man Webber spent five years as a telegrapher, at Taylorville with the Wabash Railroad. Later he served as conductor with the Rock Island Railroad on a run between Des Moines and Keokuk, Iowa. During the latter period he read law books in offices in Des Moines and Keokuk, until he quit the railroad job to study law at Drake University in Des Moines.

In 1879 Webber returned to Decatur and in 1893 did his first legal work for Muellers. In 1900 he was retained as the firm's legal counsel and served in that capacity until his retirement in 1942, after practicing law for 64 years. He died in 1947, at age 93.

## J. W. Simpson



J. W. Simpson

Long regarded almost as a member of the Mueller family and on the company force for more than a half century was J. W. "Billy" Simpson who was born in Latham. At age 15 he started in 1899 as errand boy to the company founder, Hieronymus Mueller, with pay of \$3 a week. Forty-eight years later he was executive vice president of the company.

In 1900 young Simpson became messenger boy for the firm. From that he moved up through several stages — work in the filing department, order clerk, pricing clerk, sales correspondent, and assistant to President Adolph Mueller. In 1917 Simpson became sales manager; in 1928 he was made a member of the board of directors, and the next year vice president in

charge of sales. He continued in that capacity until 1947, when he became executive vice president.

Simpson's sudden death in 1951 was a shock to other members of the company management and to the employees, with whom he long had been highly respected and popular. He was the last link between the Mueller organization and the company founder. Lucien W. Mueller, then chairman of the board, said of him:

"Billy Simpson was always considered a member of the Mueller family, and many times throughout history of the company was the 'go-between' among members of the family, straightening out our quarrels and misunderstandings. As younger members of the family grew up, Billy guided them and interceded for them with their fathers and uncles when they needed help. To me Billy was equally as close as any brother. While no one person is so important that a large company cannot do without him, if ever a person approached that possibility it was Billy Simpson of the Mueller Co."

## FIFTH QUARTER CENTURY

In the last quarter century the Mueller Co., under top executive officers that included no members of the Mueller family, has further increased plant output and acquired auxiliary enterprises. These have added importantly to the firm's line of waterworks, gas distribution products and equipment. During that time, however, the company has continued to be 97¼ per cent family-owned and a third generation Mueller inventor, Frank H. Mueller, has played an important role in developing new products and improving old ones. He also served on the board of directors 29 years and for 7½ years was its chairman.

Most important item of growth in recent years was the building of a \$15 million plant in Albertville, Alabama, in 1975. It probably ranks as having the most modern foundry and machining facilities in the world for the manufacture of fire hydrants. The firm had been in the hydrant manufacture since 1933 at its Chattanooga plant, but with building of the new factory most of this operation was moved to Albertville. About the time the Albertville plant went into operation the firm's entire line of hydrants (the CENTURION® Hydrant line) was redesigned. This was done in such way as to make maximum use of common parts in fabricating the different types of Mueller hydrants.

At the Decatur plant the most important change in recent years was constructing the new office building and factory at West Eldorado and Monroe Streets in 1961. The building houses the headquarters offices of the Mueller Co. as well as offices of the local management. The \$6 million building also houses the new factory, with improved facilities, shipping quarters and inventory storage.

Prior to erecting the multi-purpose building in 1961 the company had, in 1959, a new engineering building constructed on the west side of Monroe Street between Eldorado and Cerro Gordo Streets. This was a complete engineering building, and had the most modern facilities for product research and development. This new laboratory made the company capable of doing any tests required by the federal and state Departments of Transportation in handling of hazardous materials.

In 1964 the Muellers' Los Angeles factory was sold. Its operations had been moved in 1963 to a new plant the company had built at Brea, California. This larger and more modern plant included an iron foundry and facilities for manufacturing fire hydrants and gate valves. The Brea operation was closed out in 1977, and a warehouse established in Sparks, Nevada, for servicing of sales in the West Coast region.

Warehousing in the West was discontinued in 1979, with closing of the Sparks operation and establishing a sales office in Irvine, California. This center handles Mueller sales in the western states, but the merchandise and



equipment are shipped direct to customers from the firm's plants in the Midwest and South.

There is some distribution of Mueller products in the West and other parts of the U. S. from the firm's Sarnia plant, although as was originally intended, it serves mainly the Canadian customers. Sales in Canada also include some items and parts from Mueller plants in the United States.

In 1965 Muellers bought the Adams Clamp Co., a firm near Los Angeles which was the developer and leading manufacturer of flexible leak repair clamps. This business in 1980 was being moved to the Albertville plant.

Chattanooga operations in 1966 were moved into a large new structure that had been built by the government but never used. Molding and machine equipment that had been installed at the time completely modernized and revamped production facilities. This building continues to serve most of the plant needs at Chattanooga, where since moving fire hydrant production to Albertville the major production item is the making of waterworks gate valves; the new resilient seated gate valve production has been expanded.

Many new and important products have been added to the Mueller line over the last 25 years. Frank Mueller's last project before retiring in 1968 was the design of the CH-24 Drilling Machine, a machine capable of removing coupons as large as 48 inches from mains under 1,000 pounds or more pressure per square inch. The first enclosed machine of this type with telescopic construction was designed by him in 1932 and the design criteria developed over the next 35 years resulted in the prototype of this very large machine performing as expected.

Some of the important products developed in this period are:

1. The first complete redesign of the original Mueller Water Tapping Machine in 1958.
2. The MUELLER/107® Fire Hydrant incorporating many new and unique features.
3. The CENTURION® Fire Hydrant line with additional improvements.
4. The further development of the LUBOSEAL® Gas Stop.
5. The introduction of the ORISEAL® Valve line.
6. An improved self-perforating gas service tee (AUTOPERF® Tee).
7. Improved designs of leak clamps.
8. The Resilient Seated Gate Valve.
9. Butterfly Valves and Operator Mechanisms.

The Decatur plant of the Mueller Co. has lost less work time through labor strikes in the last quarter century than most factories of its size. The first of any consequence was called on May 24, 1965, when the contract of the Allied Industrial Workers, Local 838, (successor to U.A.W.) expired before agreement could be reached on a new one. The shutdown lasted 44 days.

The second strike lasted from October 8 to October 20 in 1968, and was

over two unresolved grievances that later were settled by an arbitrator who was mutually selected by the company and the union; he ruled in favor of the company. The last strike was brief — from October 6 to October 13, 1979 — and was over a discharge grievance. The arbitrator ruled in favor of the union on that one.

Strikes have been few also at all of the other Mueller Co. plants except Chattanooga, and nearly all of them were in recent years.

The first at the Chattanooga plant was in 1946; it was called by the Steelworkers Union and was nationwide, with no local issues. It lasted three months. The plant's Machinists Union was on strike from December 1 to December 10, 1958, over a wage dispute. The Steelworkers Union was out from September 1, 1961 to September 26 in disputes over job classifications, length of contract and incentive allowances.

From June 1 to July 5, 1965 the Machinists Union was on strike over incentive work, automation and job placement, and time study procedures. Jobs were changed from non-incentive to incentive. The Clerks Union went out from September 1 to September 6, 1965 — no issue; apparently a general strike. In disputes over wages, vacation and allowed time the Steelworkers Union was out again from June 7 to September 3, 1970. The last strike at the Chattanooga plant was over wages, and the Machinists were out from September 2 to October 17, 1976.

The Muellers' second oldest plant, at Sarnia and which dates back to 1912, has had two strikes. Prior to the first strike — which was in 1947 — the plant's employees had been organized but not affiliated with a union; there was a general working agreement between the company and the employees' union. The United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 680 organized the plant force in 1947 and sought these agreements:

1. Company recognize the union
2. General increase in pay
3. State holidays with pay
4. The company was changing some of the hourly paid jobs in the foundry to incentive. The employees wanted that stopped.

The company agreed to 1 and 2, and made a concession on 4. It agreed to put the jobs on incentive and guaranteed the employees wouldn't lose any pay the first two weeks after the settlement.

Second strike at Sarnia shut the plant down from August 24 to September 24, 1972. The union asked these changes:

1. General increase of 5 cents an hour for day workers and skilled employees
2. The plant chairman and LUBOSEAL® Stop testers be given an hourly increase of 22 cents
3. Increase insurance weekly indemnity from \$70 to \$85

4. Increase retirees' life insurance \$500
5. An additional day of vacation for employees with 25 years or more of service

The records show the company agreed to all these demands.

Local 680 of the UAW also represents employees of Muellers' foundry in St. Jerome, Canada.

There have been two strikes at the Albertville plant, which went into operation in 1976. The first lasted for 10 weeks, from November 16, 1976 to January 28, 1977. This took place while the plant was being unionized by the International Molders and Allied Workers Union (AFL-CIO-CLC).

A second strike at Albertville started on January 29, 1980 and was still in progress at the time this book was printed.

At the time this history was written, Mueller Co. enterprises employed a total force of 2,419. Employee enrollment by plant was:

Decatur	931
Chattanooga	753
Albertville	420
Sarnia, Ontario	172
St. Jerome, Quebec	87
U. S. Field managers and salesmen	52
Irvine sales office	4
	<hr/>
	2,419

The plant at Clinton, South Carolina, under construction in 1980, is expected to employ about 50 when in full operation.

But while the Mueller family still has control of the company's board of directors, no Mueller is now employed by the firm. Only partial exception to this is 77-year-old Frank Mueller, last of the third generation to have a part in management; he has been made honorary chairman and board member and is available for consultation on technical matters involved in developing new products.

Lack of any fourth generation Muellers in the company's employ has been a matter of much interest and some concern both inside and outside the family for some time. A possible feeling of resentment might be sensed in the comment of one of the Mueller women that "they won't hire Muellers any more."

That policy, she indicated, was adopted during the period when Albert G. Webber, Jr., was president. While this may have been true, there is strong indication the policy was, with possible reluctance, generally accepted by the last of the third generation officers. They could see that finding managerial positions for those of the large number of fourth generation Muellers who might want them would be a very difficult task for the board, and might result

in tumultuous disagreements occasionally. And so, it apparently has been generally agreed, both the family and company interests can be better served with "outsiders" as management officials.

This was recognized by Frank Mueller, who in a speech before the Illinois Section of the American Water Works Association at the Decatur Holiday Inn on July 21, 1977, had this to say:

"No non-Mueller family president could operate as Uncle Adolph had done, and fire any employee he thought should be fired including family members. If he did that or failed to promote a Mueller son, he'd soon be looking for another job. This would be disruptive to the company in ways that would be detrimental to its best interests. Besides, there are so many boys in the fourth generation — last time I counted there were 15 or 20 — it would be difficult to pick from among them."

Apparently most of the present generation of Mueller boys don't find the idea of getting on the company payroll attractive. One of them voiced it in this manner:

"I would like to come in there if I could be treated fairly, but I don't think I would be treated fairly. I'd either be discriminated against or discriminated for, and most likely against. I'd have to be twice as good as anybody else so that everybody around would recognize that I was a whiz, to get any kind of advancement in the company. I can do better than that in the outside world."

Frank concluded his remarks on the subject by saying he doubted if there ever will be Muellers in active management of the company again. But then he indicated he hoped there some day might be an exception to this company policy.

"There may be," he said. "They could come in there (as company officers) if they developed ability in the outside world that was needed in this company and they were recommended for the job the same as anybody else. That could happen; I hope so."

Many of the fourth generation of the family have good positions in business and industry, and several have been outstandingly successful in business for themselves or in management positions with important firms.

A glance back over the 123-year history of the Mueller Co. could hardly escape reminding one of the debt America owes to Germany, whose overdose of military requirements helped send many of her talented young men to our shores in the nineteenth century. Decatur was indeed fortunate that Hieronymus Mueller, one of those young German mechanics, chose this town for the building of his career.

## Postscript

During the long life span of the Mueller Co. it has successfully avoided most of the afflictions that befall privately-owned companies. The direct descendants of the founder, Hieronymus Mueller, still own 97 ¼ per cent of all of the outstanding stock divided in approximately equal parts among the families of Henry Mueller, Philip Mueller, Robert Mueller and Adolph Mueller. The owners have never seriously considered offers to merge or sell out. Forced stock sales from estates have been few and minor in importance and even those that have occurred resulted in the sale of the stock back to the company.

In one area it has followed a common pattern. Owner-management gave way to a mixture of owners and non-owners and, after more than 90 years, to complete professional management. For a time this transition was handled badly and the owners did not exercise their prerogatives as they should have. Fortunately, they did not lose them and as the fourth generation became active on the board, began to regain them.

In 1974, Arthur D. Little, Inc. was employed to make a study of the company's present status and its future prospects. In a nutshell it concluded, "Mueller is a mature company in a mature industry. Its prospects are very unexciting if the company continues to confine itself to its present area of endeavor and practices."

When Harlan White, who had moved the company forward during his presidency, unexpectedly resigned late in 1977, it was decided this was the time to make some meaningful changes. First it was decided to appoint a "search committee" to hunt the country over for the best available chief executive officer, who might be expected to put new life in the old company while maintaining its most cherished traditions. Secondly, the board would be reduced to a more workable number and be composed only of people who could contribute materially to its performance.

The board elected Adolph Mueller II, Philip M. Mueller, John S. Mueller, A. E. Staley III, and Robert V. Krikorian (board chairman) to the search committee with the proviso that any decision had to be unanimous. The committee hired a prominent recruiting firm and interviewed a large number of prospects before settling on Edward D. Powers after about one year of work.

At the 1979 annual shareholders meeting, it was decided the shareholders would determine the number of board members and this number was reduced from 12 to 7 in order to eliminate the necessity for an executive committee. It was decided that each of the four families would elect a "family designated member" who would represent that family, and in addition there would be two qualified outside directors and the president. The shareholders also stipulated that no action of the board was valid without the agreement of three of the four "family designated members."

With this arrangement, the four family members acting together have full control of the company and can take any action not reserved by law or the by-laws for action by the shareholders. This may be a situation unparalleled in the United States for any family owned company of substantial size that is 123 years old.

This story relates some incidents that might have resulted in much more serious consequences than actually occurred; if heeded, they could prevent repetition. Certainly family shareholders should strive to maintain a fair, open and harmonious relationship with each other, and be eternally vigilant in exercising the prerogatives of ownership so that their innate power in respect to the management and control of their property is not eroded by neglect and indifference.

**Frank H. Mueller**

