

# Rockford's Furniture Industry Resource Packet.



**Compiled by the Midway Village Museum Collections Department.**

## Rockford Furniture Companies

The individual entries are in alphabetical order and each entry follows the following structure:

**Name**

Date founded

By whom

Location

Any unique specialty

Notable Leader

When closed or merged

You'll notice some dates are in parentheses. This is because we are not completely sure of what the date. The dates within the parentheses are estimated.

If there are conflicts of the date of establishment between sources, the earliest primary source or the most reliable source has been cited.

"Furniture Row" refers to the stretch along Seventh to Twelfth Streets, along Railroad Avenue and the Chicago and North Western railroad tracks in Rockford.

Excelsior Furniture Company was located at Seventh Street, Forest City Furniture Company at Eighth Street, Rockford Co-Operative Furniture Company at Ninth Street, Rockford Chair & Furniture Company between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets.

"New Furniture Row" refers to the stretch along Eighteenth Avenue, several blocks south of the old "Furniture Row." "New Furniture Row" was established after the Illinois Central Railway (IC) was built in 1888.

An added note: no furniture factories are listed in the 1926 Rockford City Directory.

The Rockford furniture industry had an impressive and long impact on Rockford, which this compilation of information shows.

A special thanks to Tracy Douthat, whose hard work and dedication made this great resource possible.

**Allen, G. S.**

G.S. Allen is listed as a furnishing goods manufacturer in 1859.

**American Furniture Company**

Established circa 1893

The vacant plant was taken over by Edward J. Hoffman and John M. Goetzinger of the Rockford Frame & Fixture Company in November 1895.

Closed circa 1895

**Atlas Furniture Company**

Established 1930

First appeared in city directory in 1932

Organized by John Kasper, Charles E. Johnson, and Axel H. Wilberg

Location: 801 N. Madison St. where it took over the defunct Premier plant

Manufactured tables, chairs, novelties, and contract woodwork.

One of the company's main products was "rosebud" chairs – Victorian adaptations of upholstered seats with a carved rose on the top rail.

Leaders: Axel Wiberg, President; John Kasper, Vice-President; C.E. Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer

By 1947/1949, Atlas Furniture Company was the only surviving chair manufacturer.

Closed 1970

**J.D. Bell Company**

Established 1917

First appeared in city directory in 1918.

Location: Glucose buildings, shared space with the Rockford Upholstering Company and the Winnebago Manufacturing Company

Was a branch of a San Francisco company that manufactured "Bell's Great Big Mattress Davenport," wall beds, and pillows.

Closed 1918

**Bell, Davenport, & Company**

Established 1919

First appeared in city directory in 1920.

Closed 1919

**Blackhawk Furniture Company**

Established 1921

First appeared in city directory in 1920

Location: 159 Morgan St.

Manufactured bedroom furniture

Before it was the Blackhawk Furniture Company, it was the Illinois School Furniture Company.

Leaders: D.R. Peterson, President; O.E. Landstrom, Vice-President; C. F.

Bollman, Secretary-Treasurer

On August 9, 1938, 40 workers stood in picket lines for three weeks demanding higher wages.

Closed 1952

**Brockman, Joseph**

Joseph Brockman is listed as a furniture dealer in the 1872-1873 directory. He is listed simply under "Furniture" in the 1874-1875 directory.

**Brown, E.**

E. Brown is listed as a cabinetware maker in 1866.

**C.G. Burnap**

Established circa 1876

Location: Tinker's stone building, water power

Closed 1884

**Al Carlson Manufacturing Company**

Established 1879

First appeared in city directory in 1927.

Location: 2107 Kishwaukee Street

Leaders: Al. Carlson, President and Treasurer; John Cronk, Vice-President; O.A. Barrett, Secretary

Closed 1928

### **Central Furniture Company**

Established 1872

First appears in city directory in 1882-1883.

Organized in 1879 by L.D. Upson and E.L. Herrick, along with 46 Swedish worker/shareholders who each contributed \$500.00

Located in the Water Power District at the mouth of Kent Creek.

Robert Bauch was the company's superintendent and designer.

Robert Bauch, an employee, designed the famous "side-by-side" in 1882

*The "side-by-side" was a combination bookcase and writing desk. It was the most popular piece of furniture ever manufactured in Rockford and established Rockford as the "Bookcase Town."*

By 1926, the Central Furniture Company was known as the exclusive manufacturer of dining room suites.

August P. Floberg was at the "helm" of the Company in the early 1880s.

Led by B.A. Johnson, President; L.M. Noling, Vice-President; August. P. Peterson, Secretary; August P. Floberg, Treasurer

1920 Leaders: S.A. Johnson, President; G.A. Salstrom, Vice-President; Oscar Landstrom, Secretary; August Peterson, Treasurer

Closed between 1934 and 1938

### **Climax Slide and Table Company**

Established 1891

Leaders: B.A. Knight, President; E.R. Lahman, Secretary

Closed 1893

### **Colonial Desk Company**

Established 1924

First appeared in city directory in 1927

Location: 1820 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Leaders: Frank Johnson, Vice-President; F.A. Noling, Secretary-Treasurer

Owned by the Lundell family circa 1920s-30s.

Closed 1963

### **Colonial Furniture Company**

Established 1911

Location: 1820 Sixteenth Ave.

### **Consolidated Industries**

Established 1928

First appeared in city directory in 1929.

Location: 11<sup>th</sup> Street corner of 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Leaders: Oscar Landstrom, President; D.J. Fitzgerald, Vice-President; L.I. Johnson, Secretary; A.E. Johnson, Treasurer

In 1937, R.R. Clabaugh became president and Courtney McIntyre, Armer Johnson, and D.J. Fitzgerald all shared the vice-presidency.

Closed 1940 when the company was purchased by Jay Kasler of Toronto, Ontario and Samuel C. Rudolph of Los Angeles for the Free Sewing Machine Company.

### **Continental Desk Company**

Established in 1917

First appeared in city directory in 1932.

Location: 621 Cedar St.

Nels Wall, his brother Martin, and their uncle D.R. Peterson, formed the Continental Desk Company. Peterson served as president, Martin the vice-president, and Nels Wall the secretary/treasurer.

*Nels' family had arrived in Rockford from Sweden when Nels was four years old. Like other Swedish immigrants, Nels found employment in furniture manufacturies. Prior to establishing Continental Desk Company, he had gained experience in administrative positions at Royal Mantel and Furniture Company, Rockford Desk Company, and the Illinois School Furniture Company.*

Nels wife Florence Wall, a graduate of Rockford Business College and previous employee of Mechanics Furniture Company, took over his position after his death in 1924. She handled the company's finances for the next eighteen years, as well as traveling twice a year to Chicago's Merchandise Mart to receive orders for the company's products.

First produced desks, but about two years after the company was established it began manufacturing cedar chests.

Leaders: D. Richard Peterson, President; Nels J. Wall, Secretary-Treasurer

Designer: Martin Wall

Closed 1952

**(Rockford) Co-Operative Furniture Company**

Established 1879  
First appeared in city directory in 1882-1883.  
Location: Railroad Avenue and Ninth Street  
Manufactured library and dining room case goods such as bookcases, buffets, and china cabinets.  
Leaders: Irvin French, President; A.J. Wheeler, Secretary  
1900: name changed to Union Furniture Company.  
1928: name changed to Nilson Co-Operative Furniture Company.  
P.A. Peterson was President in 1891.  
The plant idled since the closing of Nilson Co-Operative in 1930.  
On March 12, 1936, the factory burned to the ground in a "spectacular" fire.

**E. H. Davis & Company**

Established 1886  
First appeared in city directory in 1879  
J.H. Davis appears in the 1880-1881 city directory (It is plausible that this could be a printing error in the directory and that E.H. was what was actually meant).  
Closed 1886

**Deyo, H.**

H. Deyo is listed as a cabinet ware maker in 1866.

**Diamond Furniture Company**

Established March 1890  
First appeared in city directory in 1892.  
Leaders: A.F. Judd, President; Robert Bauch, Vice-President; F.A. Dow, Secretary-Treasurer  
Closed 1892

**East Rockford Furniture Company**

Established 1892  
First appeared in city directory in 1892.  
Location: corner of Eighteenth Ave and Thirteenth St.  
Leaders: W.F. Woodruff, President; Chas. Carlson, Vice-President; Otto L. Grantz, Secretary-Treasurer  
Closed 1892

### **East Rockford Mantel Company**

Established 1884

Between 1905 and 1909, P.A. Peterson reorganized the company, and it became the Rockford Cabinet Company.

Closed 1897

### **Ello Manufacturing Company**

Established 1970

First appeared in city directory in 1971.

Closed 1977

### **Empire Manufacturing Company**

Established 1906

First appeared in 1908 city directory .

Location: 11<sup>th</sup> Street near Harrison Avenue

Manufactured cheap combination bookcases before shifting to dining room furniture in the early 1920s.

Leaders: E.D. Reynolds, President; O.A. Hogland, Secretary; N.P. Nelson, Treasurer

1941: became wholesale furniture dealer.

Sold to Weiman Company circa 1940.

### **Excel Manufacturing Company**

Established 1907

First appeared in city directory in 1908.

The Company was established only weeks before the Panic of 1907, but prospered and grew despite the odds.

Located on Seminary Street on the east bank of the Rock River between the Illinois Central and C. B. & W. R. R. tracks.

Leaders: Edward Carlson, President; A.H. Carlson, Vice-President; J.A. Carlstrom, Secretary-Treasurer

Manufactured dining room furniture exclusively.

Produced a medium-grade line of round- and square-top tables and extension tables, using the "Tyden Duo-Style Table Lock," developed by the International Lock Company of Hastings, Michigan, which allowed the top to extend without dividing the pedestal base.

The line of products increased from 25 to 200 patterns by 1909.

*Later the Old Colony Chair Company was organized for the manufacture of dining chair followed by the birth of the Rockford Upholstering Company, manufacturers of bed and davenports and upholstery furniture...also The Rockford Mattress Company is a new tenant.*

Became idle circa 1928 and was picked up by the Winnebago Manufacturing Company in 1938 and operated as its subsidiary.



### **Excelsior Furniture Company**

Established 1881  
First appeared in city directory in 1882-1883.  
“Wholesale Manufacturers of Parlor Furniture.”  
Was the only Rockford furniture factory to produce upholstered furniture.  
Led by J.P. Anderson, President; J. A. Johnson, Vice-President; O.A. Harding,  
Secretary; August P. Floberg, Treasurer  
Closed 1892

### **Fibre Kraft Company**

Established 1920  
First appeared in city directory in 1920.  
Location: 1 Pine Street.  
Leaders: Al. Carlson, President; Fred A. Floberg, Secretary-Treasurer  
Closed 1923

### **Forest City Furniture Company**

Established 1869, Incorporated 1875  
First appears in city directory in 1876 .  
Founded by Andrew C. Johnson and J. P. Anderson, along with thirteen other  
Swedish workmen.  
Located at Seventh Street and Railroad Avenue  
Was Rockford’s “pioneer furniture industry.”  
Was the first Rockford company to use mahogany in its goods.  
Primarily used walnut lumber.  
Floor Space: 150,000 square feet  
Factory and yards cover six acres  
In 1894, Gilbret Woodruff (mayor) was the Forest City Furniture Company  
President and R.W. Emerson served as Secretary and Treasurer.  
Forest City Furniture was “Rockford’s only successful Yankee-controlled  
furniture factory,” and was the first factory on “Furniture Row” – along Railroad Avenue  
and the Galena and Chicago railroad tracks.  
There was worker unrest because Woodruff would continually cut wages in order  
to meet the company’s expenses. Because of this unrest, the Union Furniture Company  
was founded in 1876. It was the first Rockford business to be owned and operated  
entirely by Swedes.  
Known for extensive line of office desks.  
Was the only furniture factory in Rockford to produce chamber suites and folding  
beds after the 1890s.

*Albert Lawson designed Rockford’s first sectional soon after he arrived to take  
over the superintendency of Forest City Furniture Co. In June 1901, Lawson applied for  
a patent on his knock-down design (granted in 1902), and the Forest City Sectional was*

*introduced to the trade at the summer exhibitions. Forest City continued to manufacture the sectional until the company went out of business in the 1920s.*

Survived a serious fire in 1895.

Circa 1901, the company went to an eleven-hour workday instead of ten to keep up with orders.

Merged with Upson and Johnson Company.

Led by O.C.C. Briggs, President; Chas. H. Keith, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed in the 1920s.

### **Fowler, Wm.**

William Fowler is listed as a cabinet maker in 1869.

### **General Wood Products**

Established 1936

Organized by Gordon J. "Golden" Ruel.

Location: the old Rockford World plant on Eleventh Street

Produced bed trays, serving trays, back rests, vanity tables, and kitchen and bathroom stools using both hard and soft woods.

"Playing on the owner's nickname, the company marketed its products as 'The Golden Rule Line.'"

In 1939, the Local 707 union battled with Gordon J. Ruel. Workers went on strike in mid-December and picketers endured sub-zero temperatures (20 degrees F below zero) in January. After five weeks, the company accepted union proposals to rehire 21 strikers.

### **Illinois Cabinet Company**

Established 1905, Incorporated 1906

First appeared in city directory in 1907.

Was a development of the Skandia Furniture Company for the purpose of manufacturing cheaper grades of the side-by-side.

Knute E. Knutsson, a Swedish immigrant, served as Secretary (equivalent of today's chief operating officer) and was one of the leading designers and illustrators in Rockford furniture industry. Knutsson committed suicide in early June 1935, and his son, Roger, took his father's place.

Located on Eleventh Street near Harrison Avenue in the Southeast End.

*Until the 1920s, Illinois Cabinet specialized in the manufacture of "combination bookcases" or "side-by-sides," a product which the Rockford factories introduced to the furniture industry in the 1880s and continued to produce for some 40 years.*

In 1910, 125 people were employed at an annual salary of over \$70,000.

*This company manufactures a general line of furniture. The value of the yearly output being over \$255,000, and represent 1,500 tons and 30,000 pieces of furniture.*

Produced through contract (instead of market) combination bookcases until 1916, when dining room furniture and other types of bookcases and desks were added to the line.

Illinois Cabinet Furniture appeared in Sears' catalogues.

In 1923, the company produced medium- to high-grade bookcases, desks, dining and bedroom suites, and novelty pieces.

In 1927, Prince William of Sweden (Carl Wilhelm Ludwig, Duke of Södermanland) toured the Illinois Cabinet Company.

Leaders: J.P. Lundell, President; K.E. Knutsson; Secretary-Treasurer

In 1932, the company manufactured dimensionally stable gateleg tables and chairs under a contract with the U.S. Army. This was government's way of helping out during the Depression under Hoover.

The Illinois Cabinet Company lost its contract with Sears in 1932, and so went back to contract work. They produced radio cabinets for Zenith and General Electric.

With the retirement of Oscar Lindgren in 1951, the company became part of General Electric's Electronic Division, and it was renamed the Illinois Cabinet Works of General Electric Company.

### **Illinois Chair Company**

Established 1891

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location: corner of Hancock St. and Fulton Avenue

Leaders: R.L. McCulloch, President; W.H. McCutchan, Vice-President and Treasurer; G.E. Knight, Secretary

A.B. Nickey & Son, a lumber firm from Princeton, Indiana, took over the Illinois Chair Company.

Closed 1897

### **Illinois School Furniture Company**

Established early February 1912

First appeared in city directory in 1914

Founded by W. O. Jones of Owensboro, Kentucky

W.O. Jones reorganized the Standard Woodworking Company into the Illinois School Furniture Company.

Located at 1519 Morgan Street, previous location of the Standard Woodworking Company.

Original capital was \$25,000 and by 1914 it had doubled to \$50,000.

Illinois School Furniture Company manufactured a full line of school furniture.

Leaders: W.O. Jones, President; H.W. Williams, Vice-President; C.F. Bollman, Treasurer; T.E. Jackson, Secretary

Was "eventually" brought into Blackhawk Furniture by the Swedish.

Closed unknown, possibly around 1921 – the establishment of the Blackhawk Furniture Company.

**Imperial Furniture Company**

Established 1916

First appeared in city directory in 1916

Location: began at 1126 Seminary St.

A new factory was built in 1920 on Kishwaukee Street.

Manufactured bedroom suites.

Leaders: Hjamler E. Swenson, President; Edward R. Swenson, Vice-President;

Ernest W. Swenson, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1916

**A.C. Johnson & Company**

Established 1872 confirmed by 1872-1873 city directory.

“Proprietors of ‘Rockford Furniture Factory’ on Water Power.

Leaders: L.D. Upson, A.C. Johnson, and J.P. Anderson.

“All kinds of furniture in the ‘white’ is made here, and sold at lower prices than at many similar institutions.”

Also listed as Rockford Furniture Manufactory in city directory 1872-1873

Closed 1877

**Johnston Furniture Company**

Established 1889

First appeared in city directory in 1889-1890.

Location: N. Second Street, Knight’s division.

Led by O.W. Haegg, President; H.H. Hamilton, Vice-President; Henry Johnston, Secretary and Treasurer

Closed 1890

**Landstrom Furniture Company**

Established 1928

First appeared in city directory in 1932.

Location: 1908 11<sup>th</sup> Street.

Organized by Oscar Landstrom, President.

Courtney S. McIntyre succeeded Landstrom as President in December 1935.

In addition to furniture, Landstrom manufactured veneered panels.

*In April 1938 Furniture Manufacturer reported that ‘Landstrom has had a [Tego-] bonded panel under water for three weeks with no change in the bond or the veneer apparent at the end of that period.’*

In 1939, R.R. Clabaugh, president of Consolidated Industries, succeeded McIntyre as president.

Closed circa 1940.

Reorganized in 1945 from Rockford Superior Furniture Company.

Was originally a contract producer, but gradually added market lines.

Leaders: Amandus T. "Money" Palmer, President; Oscar Landstrom, Vice-President and Treasurer; Edward J. Landstrom, Secretary.

Oscar Landstrom became president after Palmer's death in 1946.

### **Lange Bros.**

Established 1900

First appeared in city directory in 1900-1901.

Location: 630 S. Wyman, water power.

Manufactured "church furniture, stair work, and fine interior."

No longer listed in city directory in 1902.

### **J.B. Marsh & Company**

Established 1856

Began as upholsterer.

Location: 404 East State Street.

Leaders: J.B. Marsh, Ed. Kirk, A. Haines

Closed 1873

There is no J.B. Marsh and Company listed in the 1857 directory; however, a J.B. Marsh of H. Marsh & Son is listed at "n w c 3d Av. And 6<sup>th</sup>, e s" in the 1859-1860 directory.

According to the 1866 directory, Marsh & Son, furniture rooms, is located at "s s State, b First and Second sts, es."

J. B. Marsh & Company appears in the 1869 city directory as a furniture manufacturer and dealer location at 404 East State Street.

### **P.R. Marshall**

P.R. Marshall is listed as a cabinet ware maker in 1859.

### **Master Craft Furniture Company**

Established 1933

First appeared in city directory in 1933.

Location: 1608 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

Leaders: Earl D. Swanson, Clarence V.J. Swanson

Closed 1940

### **Mechanics Furniture Company**

Established 1890.

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location of factory: corner of Seminary Street and Keith Street.

Slogan found in catalogue: "Our line, make it your line."

*Their line of work is advertised as medium and high grade furniture in oak, birch, and mahogany.*

Similar to the side-by-side or combination bookcase, the Mechanics Furniture Company produced "combination buffets," a combination sideboard and china cabinet.

In 1904, the acting president was L. M. Noling; vice president was Emil Engberg; treasurer was A. P. Floberg; and secretary was J. Aug. Johnson.

The Mechanics Furniture Company employed 24 traveling salesmen who reached every part of the United States.

It escaped the Panic in 1893 nearly unscathed, although Jonas Peters had to mortgage his own home to meet payroll.

Leaders: L.M. Noling, President; John P. Ek, Vice-President; Jonas Peters, Secretary, Aug. P. Floberg, Treasurer Designer: Charles F. Tholin.

Closed between 1934 and 1938.

### **Menasha Wooden Ware Company**

Established at least before 1929 in Wisconsin, moved to Rockford 1942.

Location: 1916 Thirteenth St.

Manufactured line of woodenware and furniture novelties as well as barrels and tubs.

Leader: John W. McAndrew, Manager

Made furniture in Rockford until 1945.

### **Mid-State Wood Products**

Established 1945

First appeared in city directory in 1945

Began by Arthur C. Arvidson, foreman at Midwestern Fixture Company

Location: 122 Court Place; third floor of a warehouse on North Court Street, near the water power district.

Manufactured play room furniture.

Leaders: Arthur Arvidson, President; Carl Severin, Vice-President; George Arvidson, Secretary-Treasurer; Arvid Olson, Director.

*In March 1947, just three weeks after Mid-State passed a fire department inspection with flying colors, a fire started in the vulcanizing plant and quickly engulfed the entire complex in one of the most spectacular fires in Rockford's history. Low water pressure impeded firefighting efforts, and the building was a total loss.*

After the fire, the family moved the business to the former Excel plant from  
Midwestern Fixture

Produced sewing machine cases for the Nation Sewing Machine Company in  
Belvidere

In 1952, the company entered the sewing machine business, but instead found a  
niche in the television industry by producing television cabinets to Zenith, Admiral,  
Motorola, and Wells-Gardner.

### **Midwestern Fixture Corporation**

Established circa 1939

First appeared in city directory in 1938.

Owned by Edward and Kathryn Gannon.

Location: 2305 Charles Stree.

Specialized in drug store fixtures.

### **Modern Furniture Company**

First appeared in city directory in 1933.

Location: 1133 Railroad Avenue.

### **Monarch Chair and Furniture Company**

Established 1914

First appeared in city directory in 1915.

Location: west side of Pine Street.

Produced chairs, kitchen cabinets, and library and kitchen tables.

Leaders: Warren Gilmore, President; E.K Golding, Vice-President; Edward  
Carlson, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1915

### **National Chair Company**

Established 1927

First appeared in city directory in 1932.

Organized by Winfield Anderson, Gilbert Johnson, G. Amos Stockhus, Frank I.  
Johnson, A.A. Carlson, John H. Lindblade, and Martin Kjellgren.

Leaders: G.W. Johnson, President; Arthur Johnson, Vice-President; Thomas  
Dunn, Secretary-Treasurer

Location: 1827 Broadway.

The 1928 tornado severely damaged the National Chair plant.

Following Weiman Company's lead, workers sat-down in the plant on strike in  
1937.

Supplied chairs to hotels in the late 1930s.

Closed 1942 due to the migration of workers into the metalworking plants.

**Nilson Cooperative Furniture Company**

Established 1928

First appeared in city directory in 1928.

Location: 905 9<sup>th</sup> Street.

Closed 1930.

**North End Table & Chair Company**

Established 1927

Organized by Gust Larson.

Location: Fremont Street.

Manufactured small wood novelties.

Closed 1929

**Northern Illinois Furniture Company**

Established 1929

First appeared in the city directory in 1929.

Leader: Burt Allen, President; Arthus Johnson, Vice-President; Thomas Dunn, Secretary-Treasurer

Location: Ford Avenue

In 1933, Maurice P. Wager, Emanuel E. Meyers, and Homer S. Grossman took over the company.

Closed 1938

Onli-was Fixture Company took over the plant in 1936.

**Old Colony Chair Company**

Established 1911

First appeared in city directory in 1915.

The company was formed by Al Carlson and J. August Carlstom (also with Richard P. Skog and John Kasper) to make matching chairs for Excel Furniture Company's tables.

Location: near Excel in the Glucose Hollow complex.

Produced chairs for both dining and dressing tables, upholstered and not.

Leaders: Al. Carlson, President and Treasurer; J.A. Skoog, Vice-President; A.R. Floberg, Secretary

Closed between 1934 and 1938.

**Onli-wa Fixture Company**

Established 1936

Organized by brothers Asher and Joseph Finkel.

Location: Ford Avenue

Manufactured store fixtures and in 1940 added sewing machine cases for Free Sewing Machine Company.



**Palace Furniture Company**

Was established by a group of stockholders headed by Anton E. Carlson after the Palace Folding Bed Company closed.

Produced combination bookcases, library furniture, buffets, and china closets.  
Lasted at least to 1927.

**Palace Folding Bed Company**

Established 1892

First appeared in city directory in 1894-1895.

Location: intersection of Fourteenth Street and Woodruff Avenue.

Manufactured folding beds.

Notable leader: Swedish tailor Anton E. Carlson, who reorganized the Palace Folding Bed Company, but failed after being operated by both the Rockford Chair and Furniture Factory and Central Furniture Factory.

Became the Rockford Palace Furniture.

Closed 1895

**Palco Manufacturing Company**

Established 1939

First appeared in city directory in 1939.

Leader: Geo. B. Baxter

Closed 1940

**Palmer, Chas. H.**

Chas. H. Palmer is listed as a cabinet ware maker in 1859.

**People's Mantel and Furniture Company**

Established 1891

Closed 1891

**Pettengill, J. W.**

J.W. Pettengill is listed as a cabinet ware maker in 1859.

**Phoenix Furniture Factory**

Established 1890

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location: corner of Fulton and Latham Avenue, North End.

Leaders: W.A. Stanley, President; Geo. F. Penfield, Vice-President; Cas. E.

Cohoe, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1892

### **Pierson Furniture Company**

Established 1927

First appeared in city directory in 1927.

Location: 836 Cedar Street.

Leaders: Carl W. Pierson, President; Chas. Pierson, Vice-President; J.A.

Swenson, Secretary-Treasurer

1930: changed name to Pierson Radio Company as it began manufacturing radio cabinets, like many other furniture factories during the Depression.

1933-1937: Modern Furniture Company (Division of Pierson Radio Company) established; later Pierson Furniture Company changed to retail

Modern Furniture Company is not listed in the city directory after 1937.

The company switched gears in 1940, moving from manufacturing to retailing under Carl W. Pierson, son of the founder. The business was now Pierson Factory Showrooms.

### **Premier Furniture Company**

Established 1920

First appeared in city directory in 1920.

Location: N. Madison, northeast corner of Caroline St.

Leaders: Edward R. Swenson, President; Ernest W. Swenson, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1920

### **Reproduction Furniture Company**

Established 1935

Organized by cabinetmakers Carl Eksten, H.R. Parkson, and Carl Johnson.

The *Morning Star* reported:

*Not only will the new firm undertake to make exact copies of any antique or to match an antique with a companion piece, but it will produce for the retail trade dinette sets, lamps, commodes, rockers and other pieces of furniture patterned after styles several hundred years old... A dinette set in solid walnut [patterned after] tables and chairs used in Swedish homes 235 years ago is the first item turned out on a production basis by the new firm.*

### **Roberts, C.**

C. Roberts is listed as a cabinet ware maker in 1866.

C. Roberts is no longer listed in the 1879 city directory.

### **Rockford American Furniture Company**

Established 1920

First appeared in city directory in 1920.

Location: 2501 Latham

Closed 1920

## **Rockford Cabinet Company**

Established 1880

First appeared in city directory in 1889-1890.

Location: 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 12<sup>th</sup> street.

Rockford Bookcase Company was established in 1909

Rockford Bookcase first appeared in the city directory in 1909.

Location: factory at 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue and corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

Rockford Bookcase formally merged with Rockford Cabinet in 1924.

In 1905, Rockford Veneer and Panel Company was installed as a subsidiary on Eighteenth Avenue.

The Rockford Cabinet Company supplied Camp Grant with 400 dressers on two weeks notice in 1917.

Set a new industry record for speed in 1925 when the Rockford Cabinet Company supplied the new Sherman Hotel in Chicago with 165 bedroom suites on 24 hours notice.

Patented the Automatic sheet music cabinet possibly during the 1920s.

*Our "A" interior is an "Automatic," noiseless, durable and substantial. We mean that it will not get out of order, but in a quiet way, will automatically, with the opening of the door, draw out each shelf, so that the contents are in full view, and the music found with little trouble.*

*In addition to this, the shelves and door will remain in any position they are paced and will not close of their own accord.*

*We say this patent is durable from the fact that since shipping the first Automatic two years ago, we have yet to hear of the first one getting out of order. It is undoubtedly, for this reason, [that] 90% of all orders for music cabinets specify "A" interior.*

During the summer of 1924, along with the Rockford Peerless Furniture Company, the Rockford Cabinet Company bought out sections of Twelfth Street and Nineteenth Avenue, which were then vacated for the companies use by order of the City Council. The Rockford Cabinet Company paid \$2,903.83 (City Ordinance, 1924, File: Rockford Peerless Furniture Company). Part of this land used to house the Rockford Light Furniture Company.

After the Panic of 1907, the Rockford Cabinet Company grew larger and in the fall of 1905, it produced a new long line of case goods for the library, dining room, and bedroom, plus shaving stands, piano benches, and music and record cabinets. This line was the longest produced in Rockford.

In 1927, a sawdust explosion "lifted the roof, blew out a brick wall, and severely burned a worker.

Led By Robert Bauch, President; G.L.Wennerstrom, Vice-President; Chas. H. Porter, Secretary and Treasurer

Bookcase Co. leaders: P.A. Peterson, President; A.E. Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer

1920 Leaders: Oscar Landstom, President; Anton Larson, Vice-President and Superintendent; A.A. Carlson, Secretary; Armer Johnson, Treasurer.

1920 Bookcase Leaders: P.A. Peterson, President; P. August Peterson (known as "the other P.A. Peterson"), Vice-President; Winfield L. Anderson, Secretary-Treasurer.

Cabinet Co. closed 1927  
Bookcase Co. closed 1930

### **Rockford Carving Company**

Established 1922  
First appeared in city directory as "Rockford Carving Works" in 1922.  
Location: 1504 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Closed 1925

### **Rockford Cedar Furniture Company**

Established 1911  
First appeared in city directory in 1912.  
Organized by a group of former employees of Haddorff Piano.  
Location: behind Rockford Standard Furniture Company on "Furniture Row."  
Produced cedar chests.  
Leaders: Adolph Olin, President; Casper Hallberg, Vice-President; John Erickson, Secretary-Treasurer  
Closed between 1934 and 1938.

### **Rockford Chair & Furniture Company**

Established 1882.  
First appeared in city directory in 1883-1884.  
Two factories were built: the first was location on Railroad Avenue, the second was located on south Kishwaukee Street.  
Young Swede Robert Lind was hired as manager when the plant opened.  
The Rockford Chair & Furniture Company never actually manufactured chairs.  
Manufactured buffets, bookcases, desks, combination bookcases, and china cabinets  
In 1897, the Company took over the abandoned People's Mantel and Furniture Company plant on People's Avenue (this was Factory B).  
In 1928, a tornado blew through Rockford, crumbling the Rockford Chair & Furniture Company. Eight workers were killed and damages amounted to \$200,000.  
In 1904, the Register Gazette reported that the Rockford Chair and Furniture Company was able to produce more furniture than any other Rockford furniture company.  
Initially, Robert C. Lind stated that he would refuse to do business with any mail-order house such as Sears, Marshall Field, and Montgomery Ward, but changed his mind in 1898. Business with mail-order houses allowed the goods to be shipped directly from the factory, which saved the company money on freight to Chicago.  
Led by Andrew Kjellgren, President; Robert Lind, Secretary; August P. Peterson, Treasurer  
Pehr August Peterson had a hand in keeping the Chair & Furniture Company out of debt.  
Closed 1949

### **Rockford Desk Company**

First appeared in city directory in 1899.

Location: N. Second Street, Knightsville.

In 1907, a fire destroyed the Rockford Desk Company building.

Leader: Willard A. Brolin

Owned by the Lundell family in 1933.

Merged with the Rockford Furniture Company in 1925.

### **Rockford Desk and Furniture Company**

Established 1891

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location: 1102 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

Five union carvers went on strike in July 1891 because of the introduction of piecework. The strike was not successful and was called off after ten and one-half weeks.

Company failed in September 1895.

Leaders: A.P. Floberg, President; Robert Bauch, Vice-President; O. Berquist, Secretary and Treasurer.

Closed 1928

### **Rockford Eagle Furniture Company**

Established 1922

First appeared in city directory in 1922.

Originally incorporated as Rockford Eagle Cedar Company.

Location: North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street near Skandia and Rockford Desk Companies.

Produced cedar chests and occasional tables.

Mrs. Calvin Coolidge received a cedar chest purchased from the Rockford Eagle Furniture Company in the summer of 1925, and it was filled with 150 pounds of candy from the National Confectioners' Association.

Leaders: G. A. Lager, President; Oscar Bergstein, Vice-President; J.W. Hallberg, Secretary-Treasurer; Casper Hallberg, Superintendent and General Manger

By the late 1940s, Rockford Eagle was no longer making chest, but producing open bookcases.

Closed 1951

### **Rockford Folding Bed Company**

Established 1892

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location: "New Furniture Row," between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets.

Closed 1893

### **Rockford Frame and Fixture Company**

Established 1889 and incorporated in 1901.

First appeared in city directory in 1899.

Location: intersection of Thirteenth Avenue and Twenty-second Street.

Took over the vacant American Furniture Company plant in November 1895.

The Cream City Mirror Plate company was a separate firm, but shared company officers, and the Rockford Frame and Fixture Company furniture featured Cream City mirrors.

Had a unique new line of novelties in 1896, including hanging hat-racks, fancy toilets [i.e., dressing table], and parlor cabinets.

When President A.G. Hoffman died from injuries endured from a bicycle accident in 1904, his widow, Anna, took over the role as President of both Rockford Frame and Fixture Company and Cream City Mirror Plate. She became “the first woman known to serve as an officer of a Rockford furniture company.”

Superintendent-designer Edward Carlson and J.A. Carlstrom “promoted the company’s line of novelty furniture to the trade by advertising it as the “Eff & Eff” line, playing on the factory’s initials.”

*Between 1914 and 1917, the secretary and general manager of Rockford Frame & Fixture was Marion E. Garmory, one of the few female lawyers in Illinois at the time and a leader in the women’s suffrage movement; she had apparently taken control of the factory as a receiver.*

Leaders: Edward J. Hoffman, President and Treasurer; Andrew Gilruth, Vice-President; Edward Carlson, Secretary and General Manager.

Closed 1897

### **Rockford Furniture Company**

Established 1904.

First appeared in city directory in 1916.

Located at 1008 Peach Street.

Leaders: J.H. Camlin, President; E.C. Jacobson, Vice-President; C.J. Lundberg, Secretary-Treasurer

Also led by Willard A. Brolin.

The Rockford Furniture Company was formed from the Rockford Burial Case Company, which was formed in 1881.

1908: merged with the Dust Proof Furniture Company of Rochelle, Illinois.

1925: Took over Rockford Desk Company as Plant “B,” operated separately

Around 1925, the daughter of Mexico’s president purchased a Rockford Furniture dining room suite through a Los Angeles retailer.

In 1931, the company supplied bedroom, dining room, and miscellaneous dimensionally stable walnut furniture to U.A. Army officer’s quarters in the Philippines for a contract of over \$250,000. This was the government’s way of helping out during the Depression under Hoover.

Was purchased by A.C. Lynch Corporation in Chicago in April 1945.

Closed 1951

## **Rockford Furniture and Undertaking**

Established 1856 as A.C. Burpee Furniture & Undertaking.

Founded by A.C. Burpee.

Store Location: 108 West State Street

*No other house in Rockford presents such an attractive and well-assorted stock of high-grade and medium-priced furniture.*

Alpheus Crosby Burpee also owned a funeral parlor in Rockford.

Jonas Peters and his parents arrived in Rockford from Sweden around 1854. Two years later, Peters' parents were victims to a cholera epidemic, leaving him an orphan. Burpee took him in, and taught him the valuable furniture business. Peters became a founding member of the Union Furniture Factory.

*The Furniture Journal* names Rockford Furniture and Undertaking as the oldest furniture store.

The original business was located at 110 West State Street. After it was nearly destroyed by a fire in 1910, it was moved to 108 West State Street where it continued, but only to provide funeral service.

Located at 518-520 Seventh Street.

Gust E. Blomquist, a RF&U employee, patented the "Blomquist Short Rail" in 1907. This was shortened side rail for beds to save retailers and exhibitors display space at the furniture markets, allowing headboards and footboards to remain upright while only a few inches apart.

A.C. Burpee is listed in the 1857 city directory as a joiner, who has been in the city for two years. Another E. Burpee (relation unknown) is listed as a chairmaker who has also been in the city for two years. However, there is no mention of A.C. Burpee Furniture and Undertaking.

According to the 1859-1860 city directory, Burpee and Groneman was a cabinet furniture manufacturer headed by A.C. Burpee and Theo. Groneman. Henry F. Burpee (unknown relation) was the company's clerk. Location: "s s State b Wyman and River, w s."

According to an advertisement in the 1869 city directory, Burpee and Groneman, located at 108 and 110 State Street, are "manufacturers and dealers in fine and comer furniture, mattresses, and spring beds; also metallic and wood coffins constantly on hand."

From the "Prominent Businesses" section of the 1869 city directory: "In 1857 the senior member (Burpee) of the above named firm engaged in the furniture business in Montague's building on State street, near the city bridge, his partner being the late William Werner, who had been in the trade for a number of years. The partnership continued about two years, when Mr. Werner's interest was purchased by Mr. Theodore Groneman, who, as a skilled practical workman in the various branches of cabinet and furniture manufacture, has no superior in this city. By degrees the business of the firm expanded until more room became imperatively necessary for its accommodation, and in 1864 Messrs. Burpee & Groneman erected the building now occupied by them, which is

44x70 feet on the ground, built of Milwaukee brick, and four stories in height, including the basement.

The First of Basement story is occupied exclusively for manufacturing purposes, where the rough lumber is converted by the skillful labor of cunning workmen into articles of utility, comfort and beauty. The next floor is used as a packing and sales room for the common grades of furniture. The office of Messrs. Burpee & Groneman is located on this floor.

Proceeding up one flight of stairs we next come to the rooms wherein are kept the better qualities of parlor and chamber furniture. Here we find many beautiful and costly chamber sets of unique designs and excellent workmanship. Here also are some of the finest specimens of upholstery work in Parlor suites to be found in the West, the production of Messrs. Burpee & Groneman; and an eloquent testimonial to the artistic talent of Mr. Hendelmann, who is at the head of that department. On this floor are also beautiful samples of the workmanship of the establishment in parlor and dining room tables, mirrors, book cases, what-nots, etageres, etc., etc. We noticed especially one very handsome parlor suite of the style known as Louis XIV., and a Turkish easy chair which would seem to be the very *ne plus ultra* of its kind.

In the fourth story we found immense numbers of chairs of various patterns and qualities. A portion of this floor is occupied by the upholstery room in which as fine work is done as can be found anywhere in the country. Mr. Burpee informs us that the demand for the costly and fashionable styles of furniture is constantly on the increase, and that the firm find their present spacious ware-rooms too contracted for their growing trade. It is their intention to enlarge their present facilities as fast as practicable, to keep pace with the growth of our city. Our readers will find both pleasure and profit in a visit to their establishment.”

According to an advertisement in the 1872-1873 city directory, A.C. Burpee was established in 1857 and manufactures “marble top tables, chamber sets, parlor sets, etc.” as well as “coffins, metallic cases, and caskets.”

According to the 1899 city directory (1890-1898 are missing), Harry B Burpee, mention earlier as clerk, is now listed as furniture dealer at 108-110 West State Street. Rockford Furniture and Undertaking is also listed as dealer, at 420-422 Seventh Street.

### **Rockford Light Furniture Company**

Incorporated May 1, 1911

First appeared in city directory in 1914.

Organized by Frank O. Lind, William Person, and A.C. Abramsom

Located at Nineteenth Avenue and Eleventh Street.

Produced novelty and accessory items, piano benches, cabinets, and floor and table lamps.

Specialties: “Blue Seat Quality – The line of a Hundred Masterpieces,” the “Maid,” and “Flood-O-Lite” lamps, portable and floor lamps, and domes.

Leaders: C.J. Lundberg, President; G. Adolph Peterson, Vice-President; L.A. Lundren, Secretary

Bankrupt in 1916.



### **Rockford Lounge Company**

*Little is known of this company, except that it was a short-lived separate entity within the Glucose Hollow complex (Old Colony, Rockford Upholstering, Excel, and Winnebago). Joseph D. Bell Co. supplied the lounge factory with the mechanism that converted the davenport into a bed, and the upholstery firm completed the piece.*

### **Rockford Mantel and Furniture Company**

Established 1890

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location: 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue, corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street

In 1904, the Register Gazette reported the Rockford Mantel and Furniture Company to have “one of the most modern and substantial plants in the city.”

Leaders: Alex. Johnson, President; P.A. Peterson, Vice-President; Louis Sandine, Secretary-Treasurer

1894: name changed to East Rockford Mantel Company

Between 1905 and 1909, P.A. Peterson reorganized the company, and it became the Rockford Bookcase Company.

Closed 1892

### **Rockford National Furniture Company**

Established 1907

First appeared in city directory in 1908

Location: 2300 Kishwaukee Street

Thanks to the installation of the sprinkler system that quickly became prevalent in furniture factories, a fire that began in a waste barrel on the fourth floor was quickly put out, although the water did several thousand dollar's worth of damage.

Leaders: C.F. Johnson, President; P.H. Palmer, Vice-President; August P. Peterson, Secretary; G. Adolph Peterson, Treasurer

In August 1938, 60 Rockford National workers went on a strike that lasted for three weeks.

Closed 1970

### **Rockford Novelty Furniture Company**

Established 1923

First appeared in city directory in 1923.

Location: 2434 Fremont.

Leaders: Oscar Johnson, President and Secretary; Joseph Johnson, Vice-President; Boyd Easton, Treasurer

Closed 1928

**Rockford Office Furniture Company**

Established 1902

First appeared in city directory in 1902.

Location: Grant Avenue on the corner of Fulton.

Closed 1902

**Rockford Palace Furniture Company**

Established 1897

First appeared in city directory in 1899.

Adding the wardrobe-chiffonnier pattern (a side-by-side wardrobe and chest of drawers) to the line in the fall of 1908.

Leaders: Anton E. Carlson, President; J. G. Grant, Vice-President; Otto Grantz, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1934 and 1938.

**Rockford Peerless Furniture Company**

Established 1917

First appeared in city directory in 1918.

Location: 1936 Eleventh Street.

During the summer of 1924, along with the Rockford Cabinet Company, the Rockford Peerless Furniture Company bought out sections of Twelfth Street and Nineteenth Avenue, which were then vacated for the companies use by order of the City Council. The Rockford Peerless Furniture Company paid \$2,378.73 (City Ordinance, 1924, File: Rockford Peerless Furniture Company). Part of this land used to house the Rockford Light Furniture Company.

Leaders: C.J. Lundberg, President; G. Adolph Peterson, Vice-President; John Wester, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1976

**Rockford Reed and Fiber Company**

Established 1922

First appeared in city directory in 1922.

Location: 620 S. Main Street.

Leaders: Fred. A. Floberg

Closed 1924

**Rockford Republic Furniture Company**

Established 1918

First appeared in city directory in 1919.

Organized by A. H. Carlson and J. A. Carlstrom – “Rockford Swedes.”

Reorganized in 1933.

Location: Broadway and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street

*Rockford Republic marketed a variety of suites patterned after Italian, Spanish, French, and English Renaissance styles.*

Used primarily walnut wood.

Leaders: A.H. Carlson, Manager; J.A. Carlstrom, Secretary-Treasurer; S.

Lindquist, Superintendent

Following the Weiman Company's lead, Rockford Republic workers went on strike in 1937.

Reorganized in 1946 by George Peterson.

Closed 1970

**Rockford Showcase and Fixture**

Establish date unknown

Found noted during World War II era among other companies contracting for the government through the involvement of the Rockford Furniture Manufacturers Association in the War Industries Association.

Also among the Wood-for-War members.

**Rockford Sideboard and Furniture Company**

Established 1894

First appeared in city directory in 1894-1895.

Location: Twentieth Avenue.

Closed 1895

**Rockford Special Furniture Company**

Established 1945

Organized by carver-designer Robert Lengquist and former Winnebago Manufacturing employees.

*Lengquist's group took over the machinery and equipment of the Da-Sa Products Co., which had been making photograph frames in part of the Pierson Co. building on Furniture Row, the former Forest City Furniture Co. factory.*

Produced photograph frames, record cabinets, sewing cabinets, and coffee tables.

Closed 1976

### **Rockford Standard Furniture Company**

Established 1887

First appeared in city directory in 1889-1890.

Located at Eleventh Street and Railroad Avenue.

Telephone: Main 579 (Fan, File: Rockford Standard Furniture Company)

Was called the “most prosperous” during 1912.

Refused to do business with mail-order houses such as Sears, Marshall Field, and Montgomery Ward.

Carvers and cabinetmakers went on strike in 1890 over the power to hire their own helpers and apprentices.

Leaders: J.A. Lundren, President; Gust Gottfred, Vice-President; D.R. Peterson, Secretary; G.A. Wanstrom, Treasurer Designer: Elof Carlson.

P.A. Peterson was President in 1909.

Closed 1927

### **Rockford Steel Furniture Company**

Established 1926

Leaders: E.S. Ekstrom, President; C.E. Swenson, Vice-President; Levin Faust, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1930

### **Rockford Superior Furniture Company**

Established 1910

First appeared in city directory in 1911.

Purchased by Oscar E. Landstom in 1941.

Location: 7<sup>th</sup> St. and 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave.

Named changed to Landstom Furniture in 1945.

Made brass coins (32 mm) – One side reads “Rockford Superior Furniture Company, Visit our Exhibit at Grand Rapids – Other side reads “Membership Emblem of the Good Value Club,” and contains the swastika along with a horseshoes, rabbit’s foot, wishbone, and four leaf clover.

Leaders: P.O. Ugarph, President; N. Sandberg, Vice-President; A.W. Mann, Secretary-Treasurer

Closed 1959

### **Rockford Upholstering Company**

Established 1915

First appeared in city directory in 1919.

To keep up competition with Chicago upholstering companies, Rockford Upholstering had to import trade specialists for their expertise in order to get the company off the ground.

Manufactured side chairs, rockers, and davenports that opened into beds; upholstered with leather, imitation leather, tapestry, velour, and mohair.

Location: moved from the Old Colony plant into the Glucose Hollow and shared space with the Winnebago Manufacturing Company and the Joseph D. Bell Company.

Leaders: Gust Anderson, President; J.H. Lindblade, Secretary; W.A. Brolin, Treasurer; Al. Carlson, Manager

Closed 1922

### **Rockford World Furniture Company**

Established 1915

First appeared in city directory in 1916.

In October 1915, Rockford World Furniture Company was incorporated by Rockford Cabinet's Ernest W. Swenson, Hjalmar E. Swenson, and J. Godfrey Grant.

Location: Eleventh Street and Twenty-third Avenue in the Southeast End.

Produced primarily dining room furniture.

Rockford World Furniture Company began producing upholstered chairs to match their tables. "Mary Hoffman, niece of C.A. Jonson of the Rockford Varnish Co., recalled that as a young girl, she and her friends would stand outside Rockford World asking for upholstery scraps. 'Throw down some velvet! Throw down some velvet!' they would yell to the workers inside. When they received bundles of scraps in response, they would use the material for doll clothes; their mothers would make pillow covers from any large remnants."

Leaders: Otto Grantz, President; Albert Lawson, Vice-President; E.W. Swenson, Secretary; C.J. Lundberg, Treasurer

Closed between 1934 and 1936 before the abandoned plant was taken over by General Wood Products.

### **Royal Mantel and Furniture Company**

Established 1892

First appeared in city directory in 1899.

Location: "New Furniture Row," Southeast End

The Royal Mantel and Furniture Company never actually produced mantels.

The Swedish immigrants laborers went on strike in August 1895, but failed against the powerful manufacturers in 1898.

Leaders: R.C. Lind, President; F.G.Hogland, Vice-President; W.A. Brolin, Secretary-Treasurer

Following the Weiman Company's lead, Royal Mantel workers went on strike in 1937.

Closed fall of 1937.

### **Scroll Products**

Established 1933

First appeared in city directory in 1932.

Leader: H.G. Blomgren

Location: 801 N. Madison Street in the defunct Premier plant.

Manufactured wall brackets and other scroll-sawn specialties.

Was in business until just after World War Two, circa 1940s.

### **Skandia Furniture Company**

Established 1889

First appeared in city directory 1889-1890.

Building erected 1888.

Factory buildings located at south edge of Sinnissippi Park's sunken gardens

Located on North Third Street.

B. A. Knight promoted outlying industrial development; found that by building a factory within walking distance from homes, suburban development moved faster; because of this success, Knight went on to organize the West End Furniture Company and the West End Railway Company to build up the subdivisions.

*For many of the young immigrants who came to Rockford from Sweden in the 1890s and the early 1900s, the Skandia Furniture Company became their first place of employment.*

Torn down to make way for six-lane North 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, from Whitman Street to Loves Park.

In 1904, the Register Gazette reported the Skandia Furniture Company to have the largest single plant.

Produced mostly combination bookcases.

“The most successful and widely marketed Rockford sectional was the ‘Viking,’ manufactured by Skandia Furniture Co.” which was produced until 1925.

Leaders: Horace Brown, President; Chase Bjprklund, Vice-President; O.H. Woolsey, Secretary-Treasurer Designer: Knute E. Knutsson.

P.A. Peterson led a reorganization of the company when Swedish stockholders ousted the “Yankee” officers in 1890.

Following Blackhawk Furniture and Rockford National workers, 100 Skandia workers make up the picket line on August 17, 1938. The strike lasted for three weeks.

Closed 1942 after filing for bankruptcy.

Superior Sleeprite Corporation, which manufactured furniture and bedding, purchase the Skandia plant in October 1942.

**Square Deal Furniture Company**

First appeared in city directory in 1935.

Location: 836 Cedar St.

Was no longer listed in the 1936 city directory.

**Standardized Chair Company**

Established 1926

Organized by Al Carlson, et al.

Location: took over the abandoned Fibre Kraft plant on Pine Street.

Manufactured medium grade dining room and "odd" chairs.

Destroyed by fire in October 1927.

The fire was said to be the most devastating as it destroyed 3,000 finished chairs and walnut lumber for 3,500 more, resulting in the total loss of \$100,000.

**Star Furniture Company**

Established 1890

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Location: corner of Eighteenth Avenue and Fourteenth Street.

In March 1890, a windstorm destroyed the half-completed building.

Leaders: Frank G. Hogland, President; A. Stenholm, Vice-President; N.E.

Swenson, Secretary; August P. Peterson, Treasurer

"Would later become Rockford Bookcase Company."

**Stennet, John**

John Stennet is listed as a cabinet maker in 1869.

**Stevens & Deuel Manufacturing Company**

Established 1890

First appeared in city directory in 1900-1901.

Location: Seventh St. and Railroad Avenue

Closed 1890

**Teague, Wm.**

William Teague is listed as a cabinet maker in 1869.

**Troxell & Bro.**

Troxell & Bro. is listed as a cabinet ware maker in 1859.

### **(Rockford) Union Furniture Company**

Established 1875

First appeared in city directory in 1877.

Organized by P.A. Peterson.

Founded by John Erlander.

John Erlander married Jonas Peters' sister, Stina Kajsa Pettersdotter, in 1855. She died shortly after, and in 1857 Erlander married Peters' other sister Ingrid Stina.

In 1875, Jonas Peters along with 23 others broke away from the Forest City Furniture Company to form the Rockford Union Furniture Company.

Location: intersection of Eighteenth Avenue and Ninth Street.

Circa 1901, working hours were extended into later in the evening, with a "lunch of hot coffee and toast" provided, due to the growing economy and explosion of new orders.

During the 1920s, Union featured three generations of cabinetmaking Kjellstroms in their advertisements.

The eastern half of the factory was destroyed by the 1928 tornado, and two workers were killed when the rooftop water tower collapsed.

Leaders: John Pierson, President; John Erlander, Vice-President; P.A. Peterson, Secretary; Jonas Peters, Treasurer

Closed between 1934 and 1938.

### **Upson and Herrick Company**

Established 1876

Believed to be the first real furniture manufacturer in Rockford.

Location: "s. e. cor. water power."

Closed 1877

### **Upson, Johnson, and Company**

Established 1868

Is listed in the 1874-1875 directory as proprietors for the Rockford Furniture Manufactory. In the previous year, the Rockford Furniture Manufactory was owned by A.C. Johnson & Company, which leads one to believe that power changed hands between Johnson and Upson between 1873 and 1874.

Manufactured chamber sets, bureaus, wash stands, extension tables, stands, commodes, and bedsteads.

Leaders: L.D. Upson (financer), A.C. Johnson (cabinet maker), and E.L. Herrick (businessman).

Closed 1875

Burned down in 1877.



## **Weiman Company**

Established circa 1933.

First appeared in city directory in 1933.

Organized by Maurice P. Wager, Emanuel E. Meyers, and Homer S. Grossman.

“Weiman” is an amalgam of the organizers names.

Location: 2578 Eleventh St.

Manufactured high grade end tables, drum tables, and accessory pieces.

*[The company's] success is particularly noteworthy in that it marked the first time that non-Swedish outsiders had established a viable furniture enterprise in Rockford.*

Leaders: H.S. Grossman, President; M.P. Wager, Secretary-Treasurer

On April 7, 1937, 170 workers began a “sit-down” strike against the company’s contract system. The strike was triggered after Grossman fired brothers John and Adolph Daxis from the crafting department after a disagreement over a contract. Backed by Upholsterer’s Union of North America (UIU), the workers made demands for higher wages and shorter hours (they were currently working sixty hours per week). They also wanted to replace the company’s sketchy contract system with a factory-wide union contract. That weekend, workers evacuated the plant and by that Monday morning they were on the picket line.

*The union demanded reinstatement of all striking workers and the Daxis brothers ‘without discrimination;’ a five day, 45 hour week with time and one-half for overtime; a minimum wage of 50 cents per hour and an across-the-board 20 percent pay increase; recognition and acceptance of the union as the sole bargaining agent for employees; the even distribution of available work among all employees; and recognition of seniority in lay-offs and rehiring.*

Bought Empire Manufacturing Company circa 1940.

Produced leather-topped occasional tables post-WWII.

Opened a branch in North Carolina and closed the Rockford plant January 1967.

## **West End Furniture Company**

Established July 7, 1890.

First appeared in city directory in 1892.

Swede John Herman Lynn was the organizer and majority stockholder.

Location: corner of Factory Street and Johnson Avenue.

Company motto: “correct designs, correct construction, correct finish, correct price.”

Refused to do business with any mail-order house such as Sears, Marshall Field, and Montgomery Ward.

Actor and “most beloved villain” Wallace Berry visited the West End Furniture Company in 1927. As the friend of Amos Stockhus, the company’s Vice-President, Berry wanted to fill his new house with Rockford West End furniture.

Leaders: Austin Colton, President; F.G. Hogland, Vice-President; J.H. Lynn, Secretary; Paul T. Schuster, Treasurer  
Following the Weiman Company's lead, workers set up a picket line outside of West End Furniture Company in 1937.  
Closed circa 1942.

**Wetzel P A & Company**

First appeared in city directory in 1914.  
Location: 1126 Seminary  
Also appeared in 1915 city directory; however, was no longer listed in the following years.

**Wickwire H C Company**

First appeared in city directory in 1919.  
Location: 803-811 N. Madison.  
Was no longer in city directory in 1920.

**Winnebago Manufacturing Company**

Established 1915  
First appeared in city directory in 1919.  
Location: Glucose Buildings on Seminary Street and shared space with the J.D. Bell Company and the Rockford Upholstering Company.  
Possibly organized by J. Herman Lynn.  
Manufactured high grade bedroom furniture and veneered panels, also produced radio cabinets to pick up slack during the Depression.  
Leaders: B.A. Wilson, President; H.F. Truesdell, Vice-President; George A. Larson, Secretary-Treasurer  
Also led by Willard A. Brolin.  
Reorganized in 1934.  
In 1928, Winnebago Manufacturing took over the idle Excel Manufacturing plant, where it operated as a subsidiary.  
During WWII (specifically 1944-1945), the company made boxes for ammunition and radar equipment. According to one worker, John Gaines, the number of employees dropped from 300-400 to about 15 during the war.  
Reorganized in 1946 by James H. Dunn, Jr. as the Winnebago Cabinet Company.  
In July 1948, the company purchased the former Rockford World plant from General Wood Products to produce television cabinets.  
Closed 1965

**Wright Desk Company**

Established 1920  
First appeared in city directory in 1920.  
Location: 2578 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Closed 1921

## References

The contents of this Research Packet were compiled using the research collections at Midway Village Museum and the Rockford Public Library as sources.

To do further research, contact:

Midway Village Museum  
Laura Furman, Curator of Collections  
815-397-9112 ext. 108

The Rockford Public Library  
Local History Room  
815-965-7606 ext. 622

The Rockford Public Library has Rockford City Directories of the following dates:

1856  
1859-1860  
1866-1869  
1872-1877  
1879-1884  
1886  
1888  
1890  
1892  
1894-1897  
1899-1905  
1907-1909  
1911-1912  
1914-1923  
1925-1929  
1932-1942  
1944-1945  
1947-1952  
1954-

