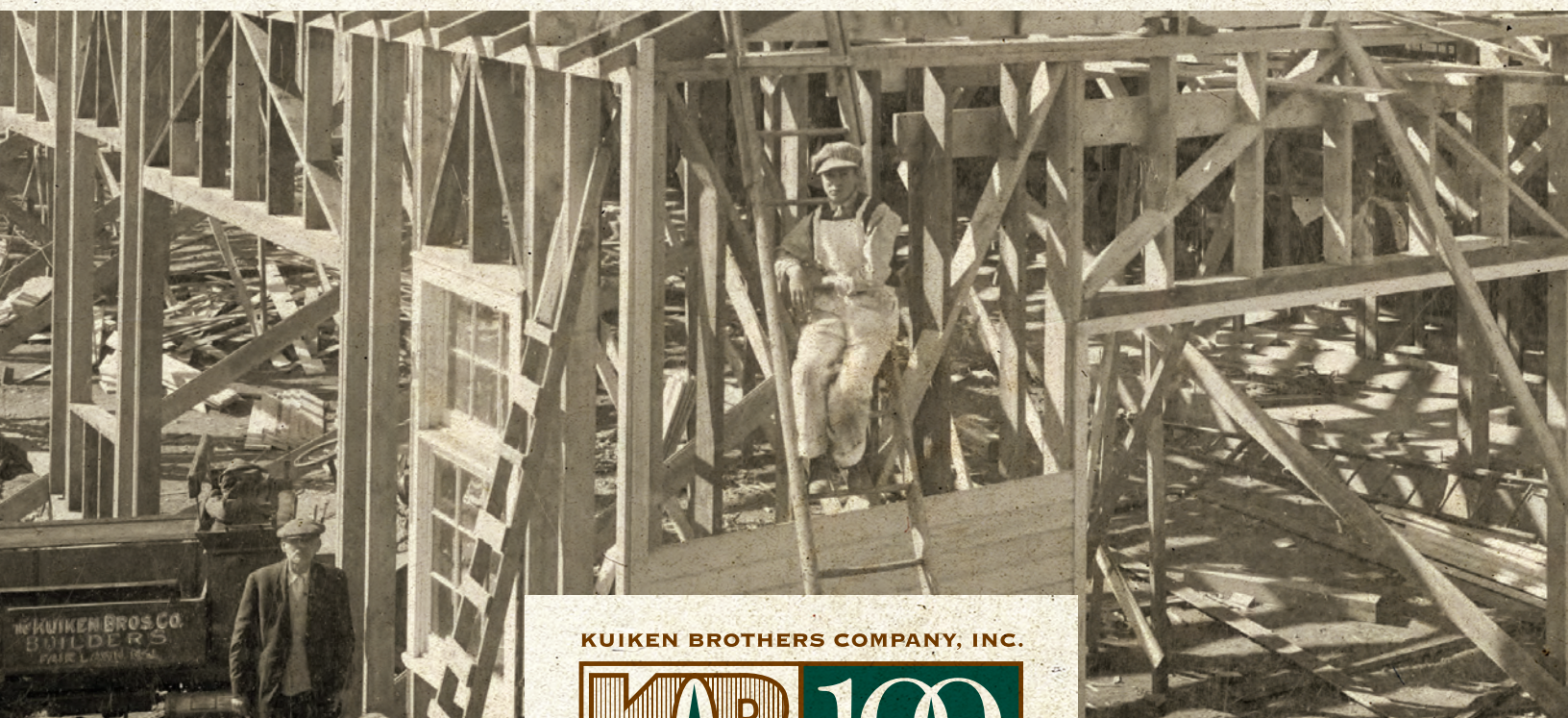


100 YEARS

in the Lumber, Millwork & Building Materials Industry



KUIKEN BROTHERS COMPANY, INC.



RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL BUILDING MATERIALS



*100 Years in the Lumber, Millwork
& Building Materials Industry*

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P R E F A C E

The history of the Kuiken Brothers Company, while not necessarily unique, is truly an American story. It began at a time when many were leaving their homelands in Western Europe with dreams and aspirations for equality, and the promise of a better life. No one thought or assumed it would be easy. On the contrary, they inherently knew and understood it would require many long hours, days, and years of hard work, perseverance, and sacrifice to begin living the American Dream. Nothing was handed to them. There were no subsidies. Life wasn't easy, and there was no such thing as instant success. What the family knew, how they lived their lives, how they had been raised, what they believed in, and the values they shared, would be put into practice and ultimately would be the backbone, moral fiber, and culture of the Company. Honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior in dealing with people were significantly more important than growing a business devoid of those traits.

While it's a fact the business was originally begun by the Kuiken Family, it must be stated that all employees, past and present, who worked side by side with the Kuikens played, and continue to play, an important role in establishing and nurturing the proud legacy of the Company called Kuiken Brothers.

Much of this book depicts the larger and more strategic moves, as well as the timeline of the Company. To some extent it may seem like this industry and this enterprise are, quite simply, not that difficult to grow and manage. Nothing could be further from the truth. On any given day there are a multitude of moving parts and activities taking place. So much so that it's often difficult to grasp. That said, it would be a mistake not to elaborate on those activities just a bit, but more importantly, pay tribute to those who make it all look so easy and effortless.

The complexities and nuances of the operation are made to look easy by a well-educated, and highly skilled professional staff. Of the many positions of employment at Kuiken Brothers, none are any more or less important than another. All are interwoven, and mutually dependent on one another. Only with the full understanding and cooperation of a skilled staff does the operation run efficiently.

While material handling equipment has vastly improved over the years, working in a lumber yard remains a very labor intensive environment. The winters are cold, and the summers are hot, but a dedicated staff works tirelessly through the elements. They are hard working men and women with mental and physical toughness, and they share the same work ethic that was engrained by the founding members of the Company. In addition to those responsible for handling material, Kuiken Brothers also relies on the vast experience of the people that source and procure material, as well as the sales staff that provides consultation and guidance to our customers in product selection. They must be knowledgeable on the latest market trends, conditions, and products in order to stay relevant to a diverse customer base.

To that end we salute the many Yardmen and Foremen, Drivers, Salespeople, Purchasing agents, Service Team members, Managers and Supervisors, as well as our professional Administrative staff.

From the Kuiken Brothers Family to our extended family of employees, associates, friends, and relatives we say, Thank You very much. We wish everyone continued good fortune and success in all that you do, and ask that all younger generations remain true to the core values handed down by our Company's founding members – for this path has truly stood the test of time.

Thank you to all who had a hand in the preparation of this book, or lent items and provided anecdotes pertinent to the story. Your input was so vitally important to the history of Kuiken Brothers, and the outcome of this project.



D O U G L A S R . K U I K E N

President

Kuiken Brothers Company, Inc

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Kuiken Brothers: 100 Years of Business, 100 Years of Family

One hundred years ago a small group of relatives banded together to lay the foundations of a business. Like many people of that era, these men wanted to make a living, support their growing families and set down roots in a rapidly expanding corner of a rapidly expanding nation. In this way, the story of the Kuikens and of the company they founded, Kuiken Brothers, is not unique but, unlike many other businesses of that time and place, what those pioneering entrepreneurs founded has survived and thrived to the present day. Established in what is now Fair Lawn New Jersey in 1912 by the brothers Henry A. Kuiken and Nicholas A. Kuiken, and later joined by their older brother Dirk and their cousin Richard R. Kuiken Sr., this family took the skills that they had as carpenters and craftsmen to make a stable future for them and their families.

Throughout its hundred years of business, Kuiken Brothers has managed times of prosperity and times of economic collapse. It has sent its young men to fight wars and it has helped the United States build during times of peace. It has grown from a small yard employing mostly family and a few friends to a significant business operating out of nine locations and employing over two hundred and fifty people. The company has provided livelihoods for numerous family members, friends, colleagues and co-workers and it has prospered on the basis of the shared values of its members and their commitment to “doing things right.”

This history of Kuiken Brothers is not an attempt to inflate the achievements of the company but rather to tell the story of the people who came together and through hard-work and common sacrifice helped to build a lasting legacy. Truth be told, Kuiken Brothers is not the result of a few visionaries or of rare entrepreneurial luck or genius but rather the result of long-term adherence to the values of integrity, honesty and hard work. What the company has achieved in its one hundred years is the end product of four generations holding to those values and passing them onward.

The changes that have brought Kuiken Brothers from a small, one-location operation to its current status as a market leader in lumber and building supplies is a remarkable one achieved through foresight, business acumen and a bit of luck. But the more interesting part of the story is the aspects of the company that have not changed. The culture, the values and the desire to treat customers and employees the right way is what has carried Kuiken Brothers through its one hundred years. Early on, the founding members of Kuiken Brothers learned that serving the community was not just the right thing to do; it was also good for business. One could focus on the growth of the company and see it as a triumph of marketing, business smarts and a fortuitous reading of market conditions, and all of this is no doubt partly true, but many companies have risen spectacularly and fallen equally fast based on these traits. What has kept Kuiken Brothers steadfast through the ups and downs of the market has been its willingness to do things the correct way, even when that way was not the easy way or the most profitable way.

These are not traits that can be picked up from scratch but ones that have been imbued into the fabric of the company from the very beginning. Therefore, in many ways, the story of Kuiken Brothers’ one hundred year history is not so much a story of change, but of how the culture of integrity carried through and has allowed the company to remain successful no matter the circumstances. This culture of integrity was the product of the people that shaped the early years of the business and gave it its moral foundation.

Thus the story to follow is as much about the people of Kuiken Brothers as it is about the business. These people are a mixed lot as well. Many were and are members of the Kuiken family which by now, after four generations, extends quite far. But many of the people who shaped Kuiken Brothers are also non-family – the other employees, customers or business associates that played crucial roles in making the company what it is today. All of these people are bound together in this story by the common desire to work hard and to make a living. It is from that unremarkable motivation that this rather remarkable history emerges.

1912 – 1928

From the Founding to the Great Depression

*T*HE STORY OF KUIKEN BROTHERS
BEGINS IN A WORLD QUITE
DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN.

Bergen County in the early years of the 20th century was not the suburban sprawl that it would later become but was instead an area full of vegetable farms and dairies. These supplied the great urban locale of the area, Paterson, a thriving industrial center which, because of its silk mills, was known by the name of “Silk City.” The city acted as a magnet to the influx of immigrants from Europe who arrived on the shores of the United States seeking the opportunity to build a better life for themselves. These immigrants quickly found their first step into American life as workers in the dye shops, bleacheries and silk mills of Paterson. One group of recent arrivals from Friesland in the Netherlands who pursued this path was the Kuikens.



MIGRATION TO A NEW LIFE

The Kuiken family migrated to New Jersey in several waves in the late 19th Century. One member of the family, Dirk Klazes Kuiken, was the patriarch of a large family which included over ten children that survived into adulthood, and had the rare distinction of migrating to the United States twice. The grandfather of the future partners of Kuiken Brothers, Dirk K. Kuiken had migrated to the United States some time before 1892 but was forced to return to the Netherlands in order to sign the marriage certificates of his sons, a legal requirement of Dutch law at the time. Perhaps it was during this return to the Netherlands that Dirk K. convinced several of his sons that the chance of a new life in the United States was an opportunity too great to be missed. What is certain is that after his return, much of the family migrated in several waves throughout the 1890's.

It is impossible to know exactly why this group decided to abandon their lives in the Netherlands but it stands to reason that the economic and social situation in their homeland compelled them to seek better opportunities abroad. With a limited voting franchise in the country, the Kuikens would have been among the broad underclass that had no say in the Dutch Kingdom's political life. Similarly, the Kuikens would have had little ability to advance themselves economically or socially in Friesland. The province's economy was almost entirely based on agriculture and fishing, and with such a large family, Dirk K. Kuiken would have found it difficult to afford the land needed to first support and then set-up his children with farms of their own. Jobs did exist in the Netherlands, but these were to be found in the great industrial centers of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. For a Frieslander, a move to those cities would have been nearly as foreign as a move to the United States. Therefore it seems that the lure of the United States, with its job opportunities and a chance to become a citizen in an up-and-coming democracy could have indeed been an attractive option to the Kuiken family.

Yet to come to the United States was no small venture. It was relatively expensive for people of modest means. In fact, the family had to migrate in at least three trips. The first members of the family to make the journey were Dirk K.'s sons Gerrit D. and Dirk D. Kuiken along with their wives Hiltje and Klaasje. The four sailed in 1892 from Rotterdam to New York on the S.S. *Veendam* in steerage with just four bags to their names. The two brothers' father, Dirk K., followed a year later and the family began the process of settling into American life.

...the Kuikens would have had little ability to advance themselves economically or socially in Friesland.

Coming from the small, primarily agricultural village of Sint Jakobiparochie, the Kuikens would have quickly tapped into the already existing Dutch community of the Riverside, in Paterson. The men of the family went to work almost immediately in the dye shops of Paterson. This was back-breaking and dangerous work filled with exposure to hazardous chemicals and unsafe machinery. Yet the family was able to establish itself and begin to put down roots. Dirk D. Kuiken and his wife Klaasje welcomed a son to the family in 1896 named Richard R. Kuiken. Richard would go on to become a member of Kuiken Brothers and, at the time of his birth, was one of the very first Kuikens to be born an American citizen.

The family prospered enough so that in 1898 two more brothers, Pieter and Arjen, were able to make the trans-Atlantic migration. Along with Arjen came three of his sons, Dirk born 1883, Hein (Henry) born 1885 and Klaas (Nicholas) born 1889. These three brothers would all join Richard R. Kuiken as the founding generation of Kuiken Brothers. The new arrivals joined the other Kuikens in promptly seeking out employment. Some went to the mills and shops of Paterson, while others in the family



Patriarch Arjen Kuiken and his wife, Eke Post Kuiken.



Arjen Kuiken's U.S.A. Citizenship document, 1905



Travel Document/Marriage Certificate between Arjen Kuiken and Eke Post, along with their children, Dirk, Hein (Henry), and Klaas (Nicholas). It is believed that this document represented necessary emigration papers.



Founding member Nicholas Kuiken



Founding member Henry Kuiken



Founding member Richard Kuiken



Founding member Dirk Kuiken

such as Arjen Kuiken sought to make their way by peddling fruits and vegetables from the surrounding farms on the way to achieving his citizenship in 1905. These were humble beginnings, but from this foundation, the children of these first migrants—some born in the Netherlands, others newly born in the United States—were able to pursue a better path towards prosperity.

A NEW BUSINESS AND A NEW PATH

The Kuikens were not the only ones prospering, however. Paterson’s growth created new economic opportunities for the areas which surrounded the

industrial powerhouse. Already as early as 1895 an area across the Passaic River, known as ‘the Flats’, was opened to development. This area which today comprises 1st – 6th Streets in present day Fair Lawn received a significant boost with the completion in 1903 of what is now the Fair Lawn Avenue Bridge. The extension in 1906 of the Interborough Rapid Transit trolley line through Fair Lawn only furthered this trend. This is where the story of Kuiken Brothers truly begins. Some of the workers of Paterson, including the Kuikens, looked to the newly developing suburbs for a chance to escape the claustrophobic confines of the rapidly developing city as well as the burgeoning social unrest that would eventually lead to the great Paterson Silk Strike of 1913. But as the area (part of

STATE New Jersey COUNTY Bergen TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY Saddle River Township DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR - BUREAU OF THE CENSUS THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910 POPULATION 145 SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 678 SHEET NO. 6 A ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 51 WARD OF CITY X NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE X NAME OF INSTITUTION X ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 22 DAY OF April 1910. David H. Galt, ENUMERATOR.

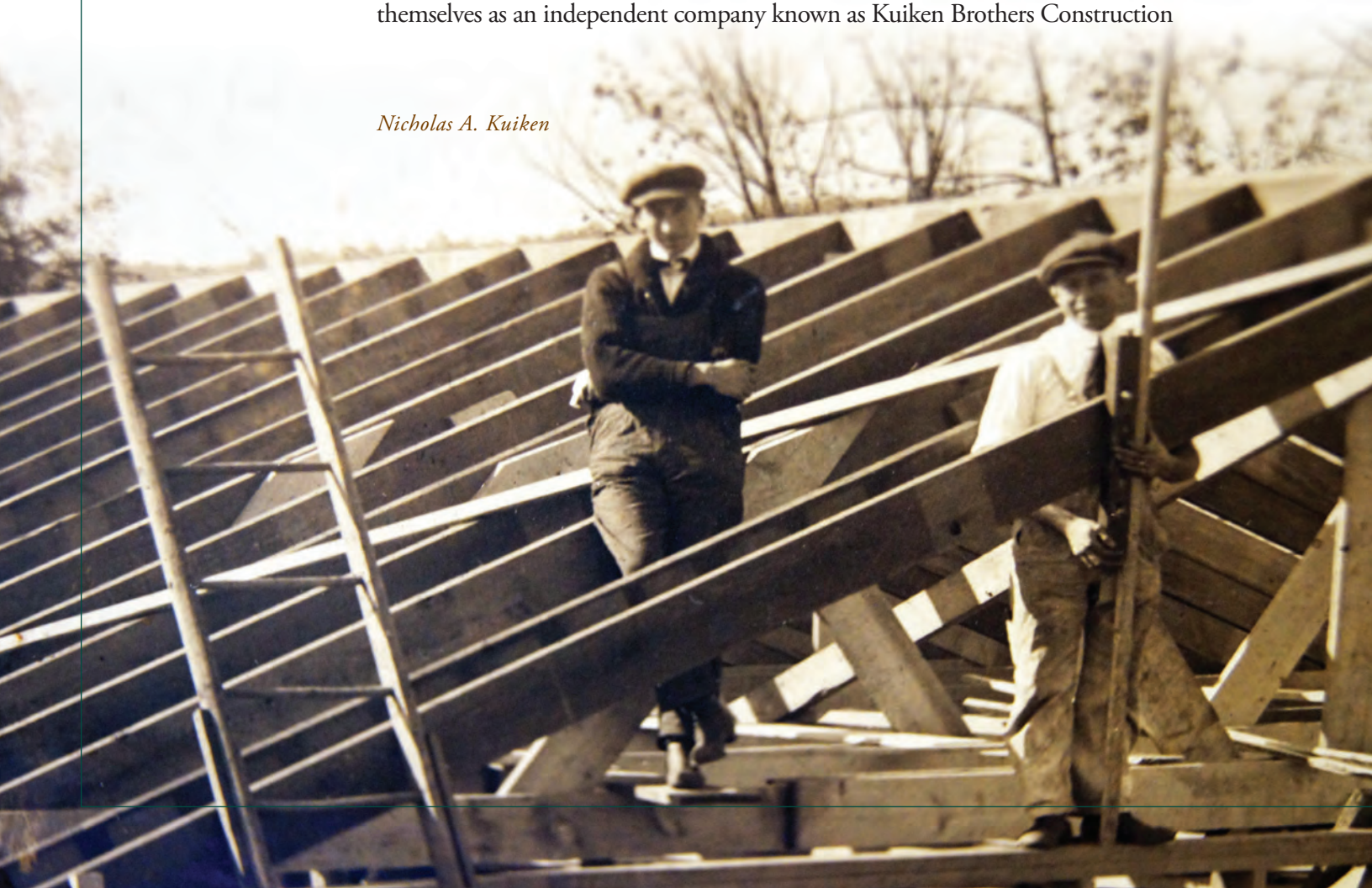
LOCATION.				NAME		RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.					NATIVITY.			CITIZENSHIP.		OCCUPATION.				EDUCATION.		OWNERSHIP OF HOME.									
Street, avenue, road, etc.	House number in city or town.	Number of dwelling house in order of visitation.	Number of family in order of visitation.	Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any.	Relationship of this person to the head of the family.	Sex.	Color or race.	Age at last birthday.	Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced.	Number of years of present marriage.	Mother of how many children.	Place of birth of this person.	Place of birth of Father of this person.	Place of birth of Mother of this person.	Year of immigration to the United States.	Whether naturalized or alien.	Whether able to speak English; or, if not, give language spoken.	Trade or profession of, or particular kind of work done by this person, as spinner, salesman, laborer, etc.	General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which this person works, as cotton mill, dry goods store, farm, etc.	Whether an employer, employee, or working on own account.	If an employee, whether or out of work on April 15, 1910.	Whether able to read.	Whether able to write.	Attended school any time since 1906.	Owned or rented.	Owned, free or mortgaged.	Farm or house.	Number of farm schedule.	Whether a survivor of the Union or Confederate Army or Navy.	Whether blind (both eyes).	Whether deaf and dumb.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	
96	112	Kuiken Arjen	Head	M	N	34	Ir	27				Hol Friesian	Hol Friesian	Hol Friesian	1879	Na	English	Peddler	Vegetables	O.A.			yes	yes								
		E. Ku	Wife	F	N	33	Ir	27	3	3		Hol Friesian	Hol Friesian	Hol Friesian	1879	Na	English	Home					no	no								
		Nicholas	Son	M	N	20	S					Hol Friesian	Hol Friesian	Hol Friesian	1899	Na	English	Carpenter	House	W			yes	yes	no							
97	113	Wild Casper A	Head	M	N	61	Ir	21				Switz German	Switz German	Switz German	1870	Na	English	Helper	Silk house	W	no	U	no	yes								
		Augusta	Wife	F	N	51	Ir	21	4	1		Ger German	Ger German	Ger German	1871	Na	English	Home					no	no								
		Emma	Daughter	F	N	15	S					New Jersey	Ger German	Switz German			English	Washer	Silk	W	no	16	no	no								
	114	Lehman Thomas	Head	M	N	37	Ir	20				Ger German	Ger German	Ger German	1891	Na	English	Helper	Iron house	W	no	0	no	no								

There was little in the way of ready-made materials to be used in home construction. From an early period, therefore, Henry and Nicholas worked at furnishing their own building materials.

Saddle River at that time) was still primarily farmland, new construction would have to be completed to house the overflowing workforce of the factories and mills. Therefore opportunities arose for carpenters to ply their trade in this rapidly developing neighborhood. The 1910 United States Census records Nicholas A. Kuiken working as a carpenter and it is likely that Henry, his older brother, would have already been a craftsman at that time as well. The two young men, both in their early 20’s in 1910, probably would have spent several years working with a master carpenter while they learned the trade.

There would have been much to learn, as carpentry in this era inevitably required a certain amount of skill in millwork, cabinetry and other furniture making. There was little in the way of ready-made materials to be used in home construction. From an early period, therefore, Henry and Nicholas worked at furnishing their own building materials. Thus in 1911 the brothers established a small shop in the garage of a home occupied by Nicholas on what is now 6th Street (1st Street at the time). From this shop, the brothers could manufacture some of the materials that they needed for their carpentry and it allowed them to make a little money on the side by selling to other local builders. A year later, in 1912, the two brothers struck off on their own as builders and organized themselves as an independent company known as Kuiken Brothers Construction

Nicholas A. Kuiken



Company. This was a big step for the two young men, but with the small shop churning out millwork and with several years of carpentry already under their belts they were well-placed to take full advantage of the developing neighborhood along the Passaic River.

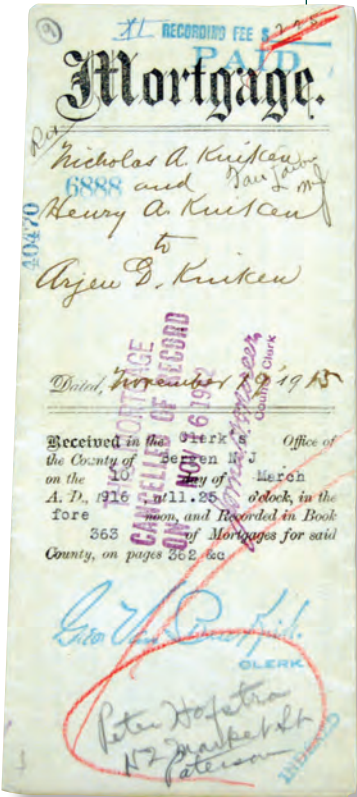
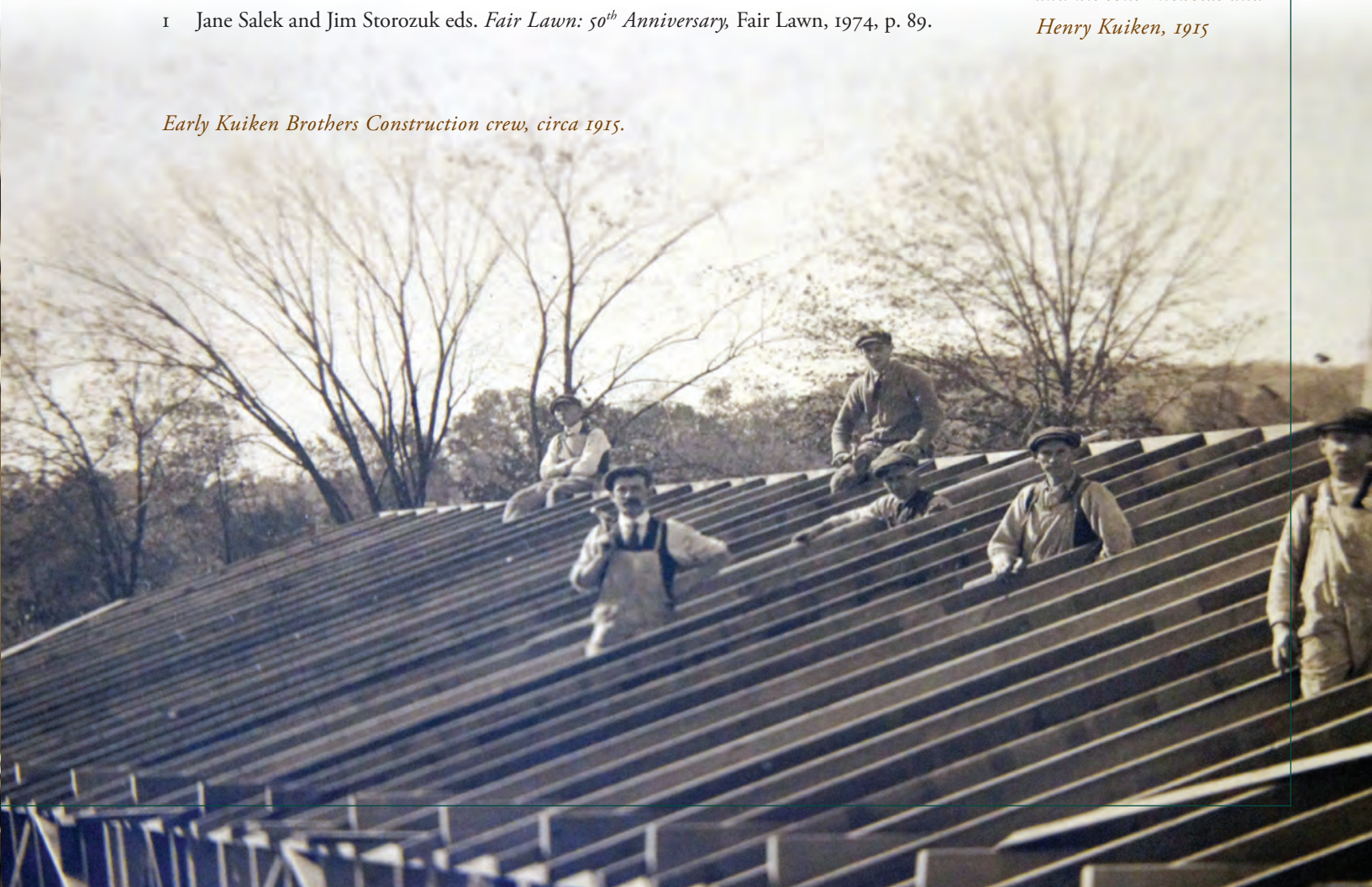
To fully exploit all of the work coming their way, however, Henry and Nicholas needed some help. Therefore, right from the founding of the company the two brothers took on their younger cousin Richard R. Kuiken, then aged sixteen, to work with them as an apprentice on the home-building aspect of their business. Together, the three set about building many of the early houses that would make up Fair Lawn. The group was so prolific that one town historian proclaimed that Kuiken Brothers “might be considered the pioneer builders of the borough.”¹

THE EARLY YEARS

Business in these early years was brisk for the young company. Many of the houses on what are now 6th and 5th Streets in Fair Lawn were built before 1920. With business so good and with the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment

¹ Jane Salek and Jim Storozuk eds. *Fair Lawn: 50th Anniversary*, Fair Lawn, 1974, p. 89.

Early Kuiken Brothers Construction crew, circa 1915.



The mortgage for \$1600 between Arjen Kuiken and his sons Nicholas and Henry Kuiken, 1915

instituting a Federal Income Tax in 1913, it was decided that the loose configuration of the company needed to be revamped. Therefore in 1916 the company was incorporated under the name of Kuiken Brothers Construction Co., the choice of name reflecting the fact that the home-building aspect of the company outweighed the millwork shop in terms of importance.

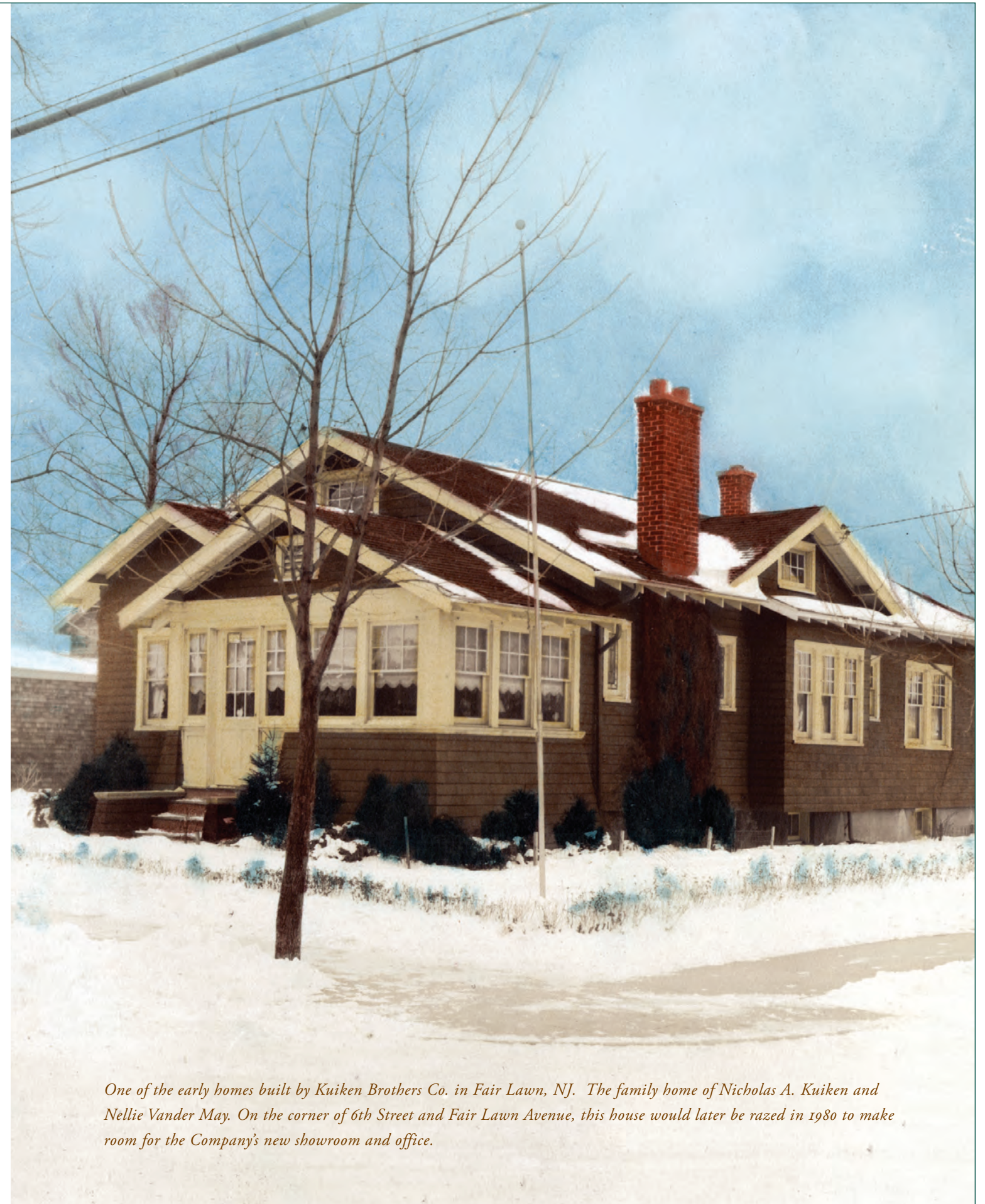
Yet the retail aspect of the business was not entirely neglected. Between 1916 and 1921, a small shop was set up on newly acquired land on 6th Street. The shop primarily dealt in paint, although a small lumberyard was attached. This was mainly for the use of the construction wing of the company, but it also served other local carpenters and contractors.

The problem was that with the construction work taking up much of the time of Nicholas, Henry and Richard it was difficult to have a fully operational shop on top of everything. As a consequence, a third brother, Dirk A. Kuiken was convinced to join the company in the early 1920's. Dirk had previously worked as a butcher and was known around the shop as "Dirk the Butcher" or "Butch." With the inclusion of Dirk into the business, the first generation of Kuiken Brothers shareholders was complete.

It was a propitious time for the business to be expanding itself. The family had made it through the First World War without having to send any of its sons abroad (although Richard did train in the National Guard and was stationed in Virginia for a time; he was demobilized as the war ended before he could be deployed to the Western Front). The war did favor the local economy, however. The United States emerged from the conflict as an even greater power and enjoyed a boom in the 1920's. A new flood of immigrants seeking to flee the chaos of Europe and Russia in the aftermath of war and revolution pushed many of the more-established families out of Paterson and other industrial centers, increasing the demand for housing in places such as Fair Lawn.

To meet this demand, Kuiken Brothers helped expand the areas of the borough under development. One such area was the area that had been part of the Hopper Farm which was owned by Nicholas Vander May, Nicholas' brother-in-law. In a series of purchases, Kuiken Brothers bought pieces of this farm for house construction. The company and Vander May also made provision for Hopper Ave to be extended through the old farm. The homes constructed on this property gave a significant boost to Kuiken Brothers and helped with the expansion of

A new flood of immigrants seeking to flee the chaos of Europe and Russia in the aftermath of war and revolution pushed many of the more-established families out of Paterson and other industrial centers, increasing the demand for housing in places such as Fair Lawn.



One of the early homes built by Kuiken Brothers Co. in Fair Lawn, NJ. The family home of Nicholas A. Kuiken and Nellie Vander May. On the corner of 6th Street and Fair Lawn Avenue, this house would later be razed in 1980 to make room for the Company's new showroom and office.



Kuiken Brothers 1915 at what is believed to be the Little Falls Laundry. Kuiken Brothers was the builder on this project. Note the truck on the left hand side – written on the side of the vehicle, "The Kuiken Bros. Co Builders, Fair Lawn".

the business. It also furthered ties with the community as two of the side streets created by this land development were named Edward and George Streets after Nicholas' two young sons. One history of Bergen County noted that the Company "believes in better dwellings" and that some of their "best work may be seen in the Colonial houses and cottages he has built in and around Fair Lawn."²

Kuiken Brothers did non-residential work as well. One major project was the design of the Little Falls Laundry in Little Falls, NJ. This was not just a building construction but Kuiken Brothers was also involved in planning the layout of

² Frances A. Westervelt, ed. *History of Bergen County New Jersey: 1630-1923*, vol. III (Lewis Historical Publishing, New York) 1923.

the plant and machinery to be used there. When the project was finished, Little Falls Laundry was one of the largest such enterprises in New Jersey.

The swell in population that accompanied this new development also led to pressures within the area for political reform. In 1922 Nicholas was elected to the Township Committee of Saddle River representing what was then just the neighborhood of Fair Lawn. Since Fair Lawn was up to this point part of Saddle River, the local community had little control over the schooling of their children. Saddle River was still predominantly rural, whereas the Fair Lawn area was quickly developing and needing more schools. Therefore in 1923-1924, many local residents decided it was time for the area to secede and form its own borough. As there were few public buildings in the area, the meetings to plan and execute the creation of Fair Lawn occurred in the office of Kuiken Brothers, hence "it could be considered that Fair Lawn was actually born in

Newly constructed Kuiken home, 1915 which is still standing today at 13-08 6th Street Fair Lawn, NJ. Parents Henry and Gertrude Kuiken alongside their children Ed, Rich, Jenny, Edith, Trina, baby Agnes (Nick & Julia not born yet).



Kuiken's store.”³ This fact was simply the beginning of a long history of Kuiken involvement in the affairs of Fair Lawn.

KUIKEN BROTHERS AS A LUMBERYARD

The Kuikens and their employees gladly provided the space as well as the homes to house an ever-expanding Fair Lawn community. This population growth not only increased demand on the building aspect of the business, but on the retail half as well. Throughout the mid 1920's the store expanded slowly but surely to stock more hardware to go along with the paint and lumber already being sold. As other builders came into Fair Lawn, the lumberyard became a more profitable aspect of the business.

By 1926, both halves of the company were doing such good business that it was becoming difficult to manage them as a single unit. It was decided, then, that the two aspects of the company should be split into separate entities in order to facilitate the development of both. Thus Kuiken Brothers Construction ceased to exist, now replaced by Kuiken Brothers Lumber Company and the Fair Lawn Building and Construction Company.

The splitting of the company did not, however, mean the splitting of the four partners. Instead it was determined that all four would be part of both companies, but would split the responsibilities and the shareholding of both. Nicholas and Dirk became the main shareholders of Kuiken Brothers, with Henry and Richard holding fewer shares; the exact opposite arrangement was in place for Fair Lawn Building and Construction Company with the addition of Nick Vander May as a minor partner. This set-up allowed all four men to put in work where needed while also allowing for further development of both halves of the business.

It seemed that an ideal balance had been struck. With building still continuing at a rapid clip, the partners not only built homes but invested in properties as well, adding rentals to the portfolio of activities for the two companies. It is entirely possible that—had events not interfered with the successful development of the two firms—they may have grown apart over time and perhaps taken on completely separate identities. But this was not to be the case.

³ Jane Salek and Jim Storozuk eds. *Fair Lawn: 50th Anniversary*, Fair Lawn, 1974, p. 89.

BOROUGH FATHERS

The Kuikens were not content to sit idly back and allow work to come to them. The partners were intimately involved in many programs to strengthen the community and to encourage its growth. Foremost among these activities was their involvement as volunteer fire fighters. Nicholas Kuiken was involved in the formation of Fair Lawn's original fire company then known as Fair Lawn Volunteer Firemen's Association No. 3, which later became Fire Company No. 1 when Fair Lawn separated from Saddle River. Both Henry and Richard also served as volunteer firemen and leaders of the group.

Early advertising piece from Weyerhaeuser Forest Products. Kuiken Brothers Co. was a 4 Square dealer - which was a high quality product at the time (representative of the class of products that KBCo. was known for).



The connections made through activities like these were not only beneficial to the community but also to the business. The networks forged through the fire company helped Kuiken Brothers establish connections throughout the borough and brought both property deals and construction jobs to the company. In this way, the Kuikens early activity with the volunteer firefighting helped pave a road that guided the company for years to come which was that being good to the community and to your neighbors was not only the right thing to do, it was also good business.

Another example of this was the Kuikens early participation in the banking system of Fair Lawn. As a new borough, Fair Lawn lacked any sort of financial institutions that were committed to developing the community. To have to travel to Paterson or Saddle River for financial services such as loans or mortgages was not a terrible ordeal, but the institutions in these other towns were not interested in Fair Lawn as a community per se. Therefore the partners in Kuiken Brothers, as well as other early community leaders knew that Fair Lawn needed a bank in order to fully prosper along the lines they had envisioned. Therefore in 1927 the Kuikens participated in the founding of the Fair Lawn Building and Loan Association (now Columbia Bank) in order to facilitate the access of new or prospective residents to the financing they would need to buy or build homes in Fair Lawn. Both Nicholas and Henry would eventually hold top positions in the bank in the 1930's. This move had the double benefit of prospective financial gain in the form of profit from the bank itself and also from increased business for Kuiken Brothers and Fair Lawn Building and Construction. Along with this the founding of the bank had the intangible benefit of strengthening the borough to which the Kuikens had become so integral.

This same set of ideas was at work in 1929 with the Fair Lawn-Radburn Trust Company (subsequently acquired by National Community Bank and ultimately JP Morgan Chase). The planned community of Radburn had been conceived in the early 1920's and had been developed by the City Housing Corp. with the goal of creating "a Garden City in America." The ambitious goal of creating an entirely new community in Fair Lawn obviously interested Kuiken Brothers as the company could benefit from the construction project both as builders and as purveyors of lumber and hardware. The Fair Lawn-Radburn Trust Company could also further the traditional development of Fair Lawn which, with the addition of Radburn, seemed poised to continue its prosperity and perhaps even become a model for a new America.

These early years were very good ones for the family, the community and the business. A local newspaper, celebrating the 45th wedding anniversary of Nicholas, Henry and Dirk's father and mother, described the Kuikens as the "pioneers and vanguard of Fair Lawn's most promising industry of today," going on to add that "the Kuiken hand-writing is literally spiked to every new building." The article concluded by proclaiming that "the name of Kuiken and Fair Lawn are welded together and can not be separated as long as Fair Lawn will grow and its name will increase in fame and power the fame of Kuiken Brothers will spread over Bergen County and no Kuiken modesty will be able to stop it."⁴

THE CRASH

Yet these grandiose dreams came tumbling back down to earth almost as soon as they were hatched. Between October 24 and 29, 1929 the New York Stock Exchange experienced its most precipitous set of declines it had ever seen and would see for the next 80 years until the 2007-2008 Great Recession. This event marked the psychological beginning of the Great Depression which would see the United States experience negative or ephemeral economic growth until the beginning of American involvement in the Second World War in 1941. Dried-up credit markets and collapsed banks around the country brought home-building to an abrupt halt. With people unable to obtain mortgages and those already holding mortgages forced into foreclosure through job-loss and rapid interest increases, demand for new homes withered completely.

This reality spelled the effective end of the Fair Lawn Building and Construction Co. The firm would maintain legal existence for several more years, but it had been, for all intents and purposes, struck down by the Depression. The drying-up of construction business not only hampered the Fair Lawn Building and Construction Co., but also the lumberyard itself. With little to no work being done, sales declined and the company faced a very difficult future. The four Kuiken partners would be forced to draw on all of their ingenuity and hard work to survive the approaching decade.

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4 Fair Lawn Paramus Clarion, Aug. 26, 1927, pg. 1

The networks forged through the fire company helped Kuiken Brothers establish connections throughout the borough and brought both property deals and construction jobs to the company.

Many of the first and second generation Kuikens served as firemen with Fair Lawn Fire Company No. 1.
Pictured here, from left to right (bottom row): Harry Bush, Richard R. Kuiken, Karl Sundermeyer, unknown,
unknown, Casey DeRitter, Richard R. Kuiken, unknown. Driver is John Jacobs.

CHAPTER 2

1929 – 1940

Dealing with the Great Depression

*K*UIKEN BROTHERS ENTERED THE GREAT DEPRESSION IN A UNIQUE POSITION; IN SOME WAYS THE COMPANY WAS PARTICULARLY ILL-PLACED TO BE ABLE TO SURVIVE THE PROLONGED ECONOMIC DOWNTURN. The Kuikens were by this point involved in three areas of business that suffered heavily—construction, building supplies and banking—and therefore on the surface seemed to be doomed to failure. But the connections that the business had made throughout the community through its various enterprises were to prove crucial to the continued survival and prosperity of Kuiken Brothers. During times of crisis, communities tend to pull together to work for the common good. In this way, Kuiken Brothers was actually particularly well-suited to be able to ride out the Depression. The Kuikens themselves lived within sight of many of their customers. They had literally

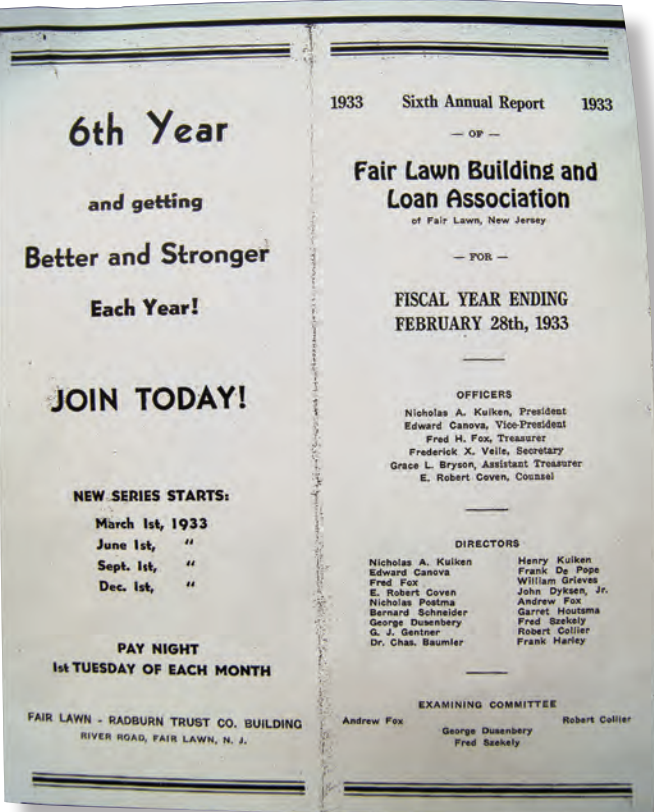
built many of their neighbors' homes. Similarly, through the Fair Lawn Building and Loan Association and the Fair Lawn-Radburn Trust Company as well as the building and construction ventures, the Kuikens owned a great deal of property and were the guarantors of a good many mortgages. The company was tied into the community to such an extent that the fortunes of the two were inextricably linked together.

THE MAYOR

An example of these close community ties can be seen in the fact that Nicholas Kuiken was elected mayor of Fair Lawn in 1930. Nicholas, running as a Republican, defeated his opponent with a resounding 1,517 votes to 490 and took up the reigns of management of the borough. This leap into politics was not altogether surprising. After all, the Kuikens had been integral to the founding of Fair Lawn in 1924 and were already well respected businessmen and active members of the community. Being the mayor did mean, however, that Nicholas' involvement in Kuiken Brothers was curtailed. His duties to Fair Lawn only allowed Nicholas to work part time at the yard and his responsibilities were picked up by the other three partners.

Nicholas Kuiken served as Mayor of Fair Lawn from 1931-1936

meetings, Nicholas heard out the position of the workers and agreed to serve as an intermediary to bring their concerns to the management. In return, the Fair Lawn workers respected Nicholas' call for moderation in their demands, though ultimately they still went on strike. Crucially, however, this strike was peaceful. This was a far cry from what occurred across the Passaic River in Paterson and in Lodi which both saw violent protests that were dispersed with tear gas and police charges. Nicholas was able to keep the strike nonviolent in Fair Lawn and continued, along with the mayor of Lodi to serve as an intermediary between the representatives of the United Textile Workers and the Institute of Dyers and Printers which represented the factory owners. The mediation ultimately proved successful with the workers gaining some concessions and going back to work, allowing Nicholas to proudly claim to have helped keep a vital business in Fair Lawn in operation for the time being.



Fair Lawn Building and Loan Association (later to become Columbia Bank), showing Nicholas A. Kuiken as the President in 1933.

Shopper * News-Beacon, Saturday, March 23, 1974--Page 75

Early Mayors



ROBERT A. SMITH, Fair Lawn's first mayor, served from 1925 to 1931.



NICHOLAS KUIKEN served as Mayor of Fair Lawn from 1931 to 1936.

By all accounts, Nicholas' time as mayor was a successful one. In 1933 he was approached by the owner of the Textile Silk Dyeing and Printing Company of America, located in Fair Lawn, about mediating a labor dispute that had erupted between the management of the firm and the nearly 2,000 employees. Nicholas, along with an official from the United States Department of Labor sought to convince the employees to reject calls from national textile unions to strike. He and the other officials argued that a strike would be in breach of the newly passed National Industrial Recovery Act, a keystone of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program to boost economic recovery, and therefore counterproductive during a time of economic hardship. In several late-night



A LANDMARK, at the corner of River Rd. and Fair Lawn Ave., was the Fair Lawn-Radburn Trust Co., now the National Community Bank. This building also housed the public library as early as 1933 and the Board of Education offices in the 1950's.

Image from an article about the Fair Lawn Radburn Trust Company and how Nicholas Kuiken was its first President

Nicholas’ success as mayor soon won him attention outside of Fair Lawn. In 1933 he won a post as a freeholder in Bergen County, a position he would hold until 1941, and in 1934 he won reelection as mayor. In 1936 he was chosen to be the Director of the Board of Freeholders for Bergen County. He fulfilled all these roles until the end of his second term as mayor, a political workload that prohibited him from fully attending to his duties at Kuiken Brothers. Therefore it was decided by the company that Nicholas take a temporary pay cut commensurate to the amount of time he would miss to fulfill his obligations as mayor and freeholder. It was further decided that Nicholas would give up the presidency of the company since he no longer had the time to fulfill the duties required. Henry was elected president following Nicholas’ resignation from the post.

MAKING DO

While Nicholas was winning plaudits for his political skills, the company plodded along trying to make the best of a bad economic situation. New construction slowed dramatically in the years following the Wall Street crash of 1929. By 1934 even the great experiment in town construction, Radburn, had seen all new construction cease. This slowdown in construction hit the two Kuiken companies very hard. Fair Lawn Building and Construction for all intents and purposes ceased operations sometime in the early 1930’s and Kuiken Brothers saw its business slow to a trickle. The Depression initially developed slowly in Fair Lawn. In 1930 there were only 149 unemployed men in the borough out of a population of 5,938. But the losses began to mount as the decade progressed. The closure of the Textile Dyeing and Printing Company in the summer of 1936 led to a further one thousand job losses in Fair Lawn and added another eighty families to the relief rolls further depressing the market in the town and straining the resources of the government and local businesses to keep demand buoyant.

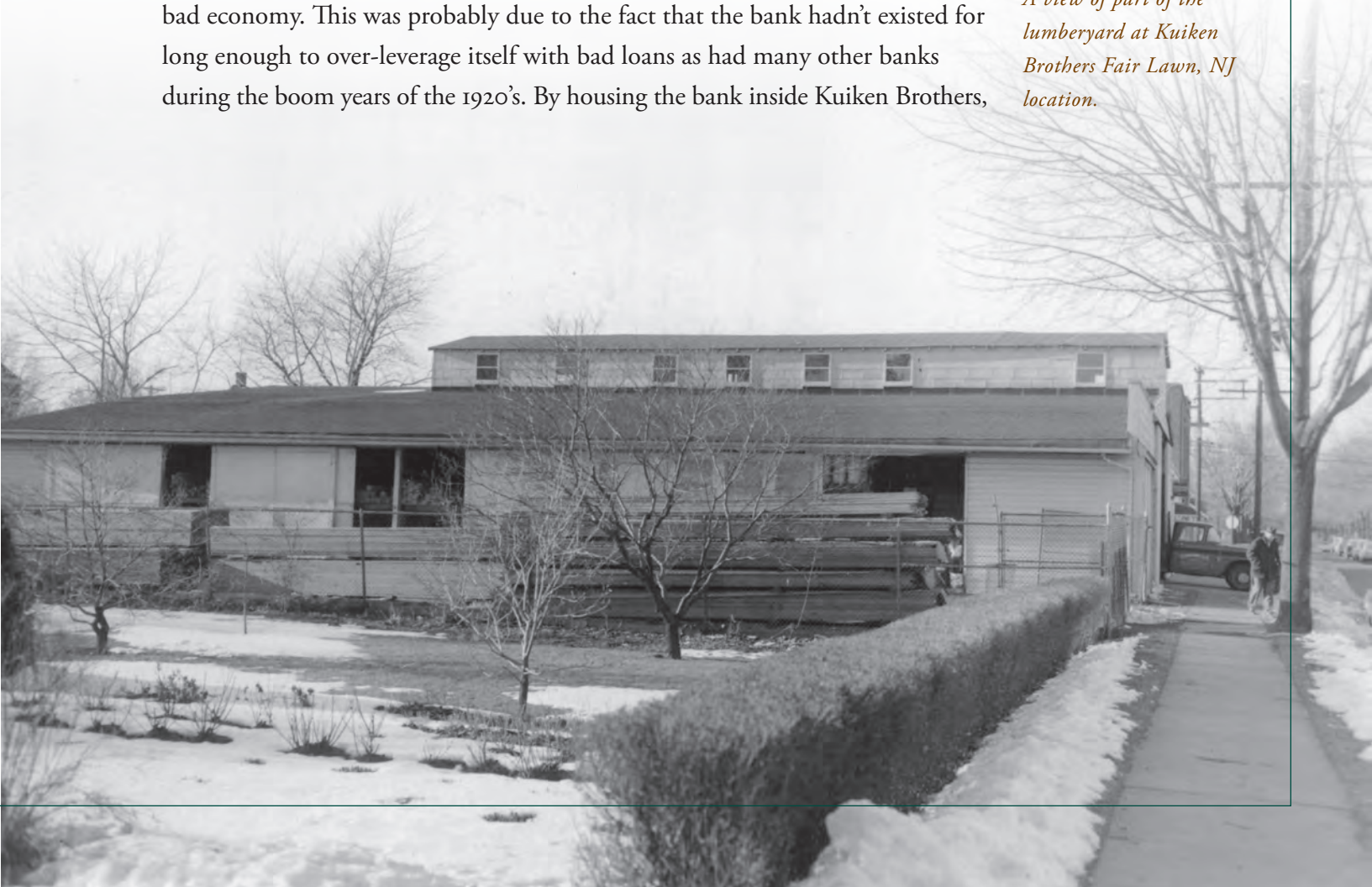
Surviving company records from the period show that the business was forced to withstand an ever-increasing deficit each year during the 1930’s. In 1933, for example, Kuiken Brothers had sales of \$36,789.02 but operated at a loss of -\$5358.15 for the

year. Some of these losses were attributable to the property that the company owned as part of its construction efforts. With the slowdown of home purchases, several homes owned by the company were converted to rentals. But with job losses and creeping poverty afflicting the residents of Fair Lawn, the rents received on these properties were not enough to cover the mortgage and maintenance costs.

Despite this, the Kuikens held on to the properties and, by all accounts, held on to their tenants as well. This again was partly altruistic, but was also central to keeping some semblance of community intact during the difficult days of the Depression. The deep ties of the four partners to the community would have made it an easy decision to continue helping their neighbors through difficult times. Not only was it the right thing to do, it also helped buoy what was left of the property market in Fair Lawn and helped keep the community limping along.

As part of this, Kuiken Brothers hosted the Fair Lawn Building and Loan association inside their offices in 1931. The bank had been a lonely bright spot in the town as it had gained assets and continued to make small loans, despite the bad economy. This was probably due to the fact that the bank hadn’t existed for long enough to over-leverage itself with bad loans as had many other banks during the boom years of the 1920’s. By housing the bank inside Kuiken Brothers,

A view of part of the lumberyard at Kuiken Brothers Fair Lawn, NJ location.



SAVE THIS BILL IT IS THE ONLY INVOICE WE RENDER

ALL BILLS MUST BE PAID ON OR BEFORE THE 10th OF EACH MONTH TELEPHONE CONNECTION

NET CASH

TERMS

KUIKEN BROTHERS COMPANY, Inc.

PAINTS PAINT and HARDWARE DIV. LUMBER

FAIR LAWN, N. J.

Customer's Order No. *R. H. Kuiken* Date *9/7* 193*7*

M. Address

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT
<i>1/2</i>	<i>Brass Hinges</i>		<i>7</i>
<i>1 x 1 1/4</i>			
<i>4</i>	<i>Stove Bolts</i>		<i>10</i>
<i>1/4 x 1 1/2</i>			<i>17</i>

A.H.K.

No. **11069** Rec'd by

PLATEPRINT PRINTED BY L. B. & W. CO., INC. - HAWAII FALLS, N. Y.

Invoice from September 7, 1937. Actually sold to Richard H. Kuiken for brass hinges and stove bolts. The total invoice was 17¢.

the partners were not only helping the institution but were sending a powerful signal that the town and the store were still open for business.

By 1939 all of these efforts had led the company to accrue a deficit of -\$19,701.42 which was held by the partners against the value of their capital stock. The net loss that year had increased to -\$912.75, which reveals that there was not much improvement in the overall situation for the company throughout the 1930's. One point to note, however, was that many of the losses occurred in the lumber yard, which in 1939 showed a loss of -\$3,792.71, while the hardware store returned a profit of \$3,838.54. Thus while people may have been avoiding large costs such as new construction, there was still a market for the hardware products used to do home improvements. This type of retrenching behavior was common during economic slowdowns and the hardware store's brisk sales helped keep the company afloat.

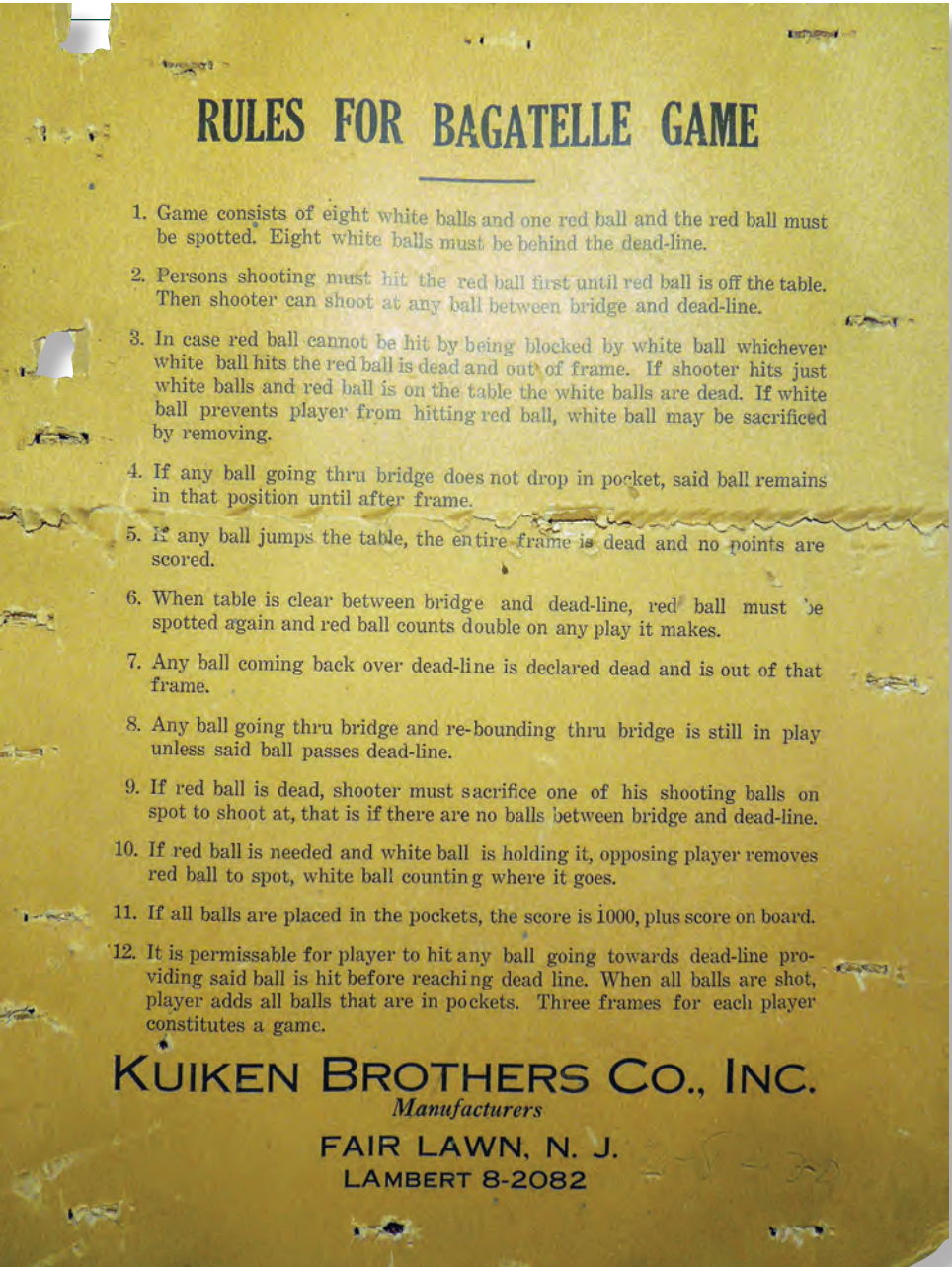
CREATIVITY AND SACRIFICE

The lumber yard was not completely without purpose during these years, however. While sales of actual building materials might have slowed, other services were still in demand. Chief among these services for Kuiken Brothers were the products that the company could manufacture in its shop. Richard Kuiken was particularly adept at carpentry and while Nicholas worked the political field, Henry the yard and Dirk the hardware store, he worked away in the shop crafting whatever products were needed, and more importantly items that would sell. Cabinetry, windows and other small furniture construction was a staple of the company during these lean years. Richard went so far as to use his own kitchen as a display room to show off Kuiken Brothers' cabinetry to prospective customers. This business kept the shop going, but perhaps one of the most important sellers for Kuiken Brothers was a less utilitarian object, the bagatelle table.

Bagatelle, a billiard game developed in France during the 18th century, was widely played during the Depression era in bars and saloons. A bagatelle table was about seven to ten feet in length and roughly two to three feet wide. The game involved hitting billiard balls with a cue through a small bridge with slots denoting different point levels and into holes also with different values. These tables were valued pieces in the bar scene of Northern New Jersey and beyond,

as Prohibition had seriously hampered the appeal of these locales to their patrons. Therefore, the Kuikens were able to keep busy manufacturing these tables in their shop for sale in Paterson and elsewhere. Along with these full tables, Kuiken Brothers also manufactured smaller table top versions of the game that could be used in regular homes. All of the work, including the felting of the tables, was done inside the shop, sometimes with the help of Richard's son Richard Jr. The business was good enough that the company had an official rule card printed up with the title of "Kuiken Brothers Co. Inc. – Manufacturers" proudly printed at the bottom.

However successful these tables were, they were not enough to keep the company profitable. With sales consistently falling below expenses, the partners were forced to keep Kuiken Brothers going by paying bills out of their own pockets. They did this both by depreciating their capital as well as foregoing pay until such time as the company could afford to meet their salaries. In May of 1937 a special board meeting was held to discuss the firm's financial problem where it was decided to decrease the pay of the three partners actively engaged in the company. It was also decided that Nicholas, who by this time was devoting all of his time to his political activities, would be eliminated from the payroll entirely. These moves prevented the company from having to lay off any of the other employees and also gave Kuiken Brothers the financial flexibility to meet any unexpected projects that came their way.



The official rule card that was packaged with each Bagatelle board manufactured by Kuiken Brothers during the Great Depression.

THE MEN

This sacrifice would not have been surprising to the people who knew the four partners. They were by no means perfect individuals, but they all shared a common determination to keep the company going, for themselves, for their families and for the community. This was especially important since they each had growing families which they needed to support. They were also very different from one another, in ways that sometimes clashed but more often complimented the smooth running of the operation.

Much has already been said of Nicholas Kuiken as a politician and community servant. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that he has been remembered as a charming person with great personal skills. Friendly and outgoing, Nicholas was the type to quickly make acquaintances feel like friends. He also had a hot temper which was shown when he tried to have five members of the borough council arrested in 1936 for overriding his veto of the purchase of a new fire engine for the town. But his work as a mediator for the silk strikes, as well as the fact that he was later instrumental in helping Fair Lawn acquire grants from Franklin Roosevelt's Work Projects Administration despite being a Republican,



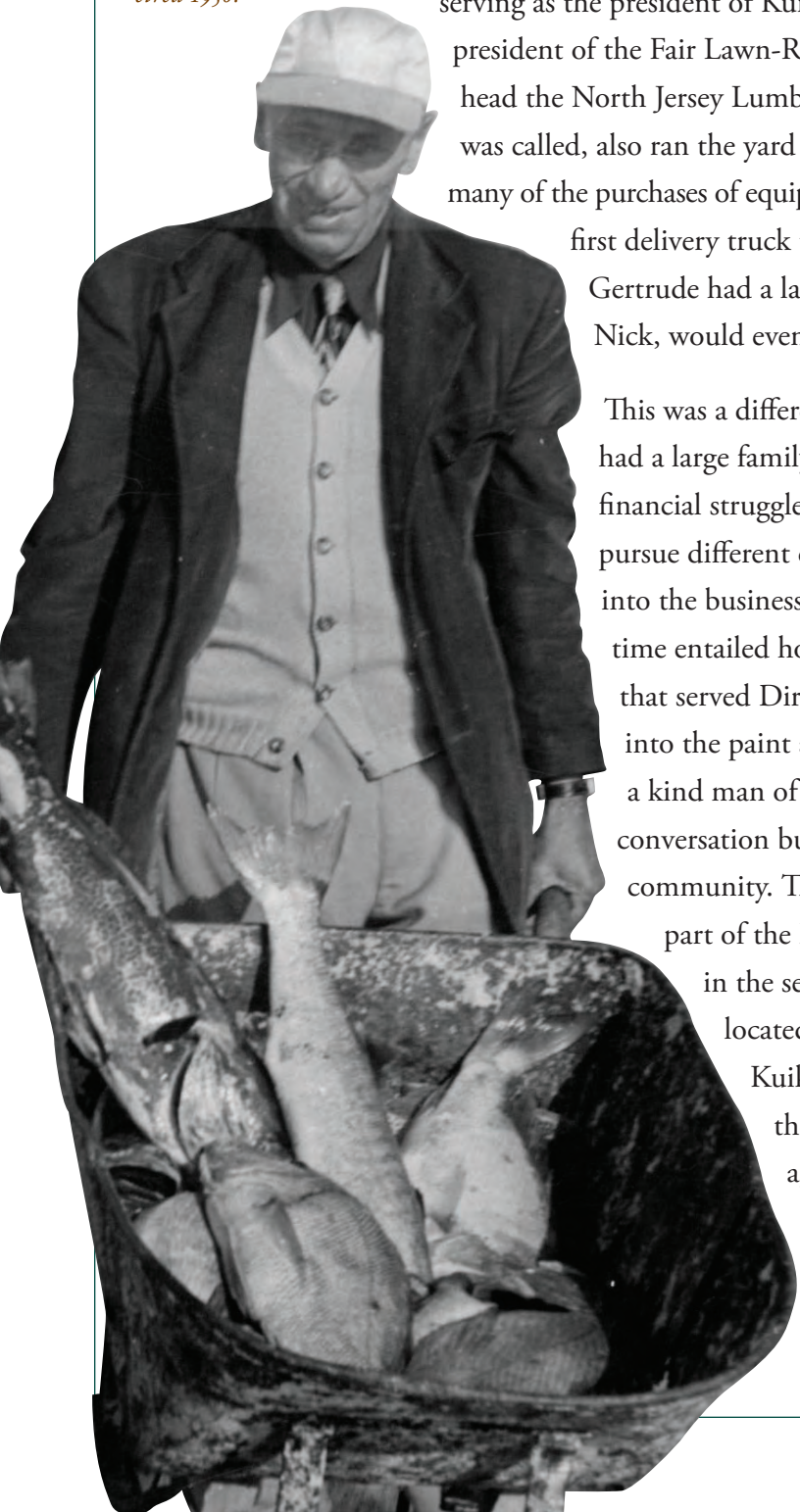
Richard Kuiken, Nicholas A. Kuiken, Steven Van Handel, Henry Kuiken



Back row: left to right unknown, Evan Kuiken, Frank Dykstra, Unknown, Nicholas Kuiken, Unknown

Front row: left to right unknown, unknown, Henry Kuiken, Steven Van Handel, Nicholas A. Kuiken, Richard R. Kuiken, unknown

*Henry Kuiken,
fishing in Florida
circa 1950.*



shows that his conciliatory side won out more often than not. Nicholas, along with his wife Nellie, also presided over a burgeoning family of three boys, George, Edward and Evan and two girls, Ada and Emma. The entire family were active members of the Fourth Christian Reformed Church in Paterson.

Henry was similarly involved in both the church community and in civic engagement in Fair Lawn. Not as gregarious as Nicholas, Henry eschewed politics but served the community in other ways nonetheless. On top of serving as the president of Kuiken Brothers, Henry also acted as the vice-president of the Fair Lawn-Radburn Trust Company and eventually elected to head the North Jersey Lumber Dealers Reserve Supply Company. Hen, as he was called, also ran the yard and along with Richard, he was responsible for many of the purchases of equipment for Kuiken Brothers including the company's first delivery truck that ran on solid rubber tires. Henry and his wife Gertrude had a large family of eight children. One of his sons, Nick, would eventually join the company.

This was a different story from Dirk who, with his wife Jennie, had a large family as well. Dirk's children, perhaps seeing the financial struggles of the company throughout the 1930's, chose to pursue different career paths. Dirk himself had, of course, come into the business from his previous work as a butcher which at that time entailed home deliveries of meat products. The same skills that served Dirk as a butcher and delivery man translated well into the paint and then hardware store. By all accounts he was a kind man of great vision who not only loved to have a good conversation but was also quick to fill needs he saw in his community. This spirit of service led him to be an instrumental part of the Riverside Christian School in Paterson as well as in the setting up the Christian Health Care Center, now located in Wyckoff, NJ. Being the oldest of the three Kuiken brothers he also had spent the most time in the Netherlands and spoke fluent Dutch into old age. For a heavily Dutch community like Fair Lawn in the 1920's and 1930's, this was a valuable skill and helped make the Kuiken Brothers hardware



Henry Kuiken, unknown, unknown, Richard Kuiken, Wayne Kuiken (sitting on his grandfather's lap), George Kuiken.

store a hub of conversation for many new, and not-so-new, immigrants and community members.

While Dirk was the oldest of the four partners the youngest was Richard Kuiken. Richard was also the only non-brother of the group being the other partners' first cousin. He quickly proved his worth, however, through his skilled carpentry. He augmented those skills further by putting himself through International

Correspondence School where he learned surveying and architecture. Richard put these talents to good work surveying and designing many of the homes that Kuiken Brothers and later the Fair Lawn Building and Construction Company built in Fair Lawn as well as other buildings such as the Little Falls Laundry and several houses further afield in Wyckoff and elsewhere. This good and hard work won Richard a great deal of respect both from his fellow partners and from the community where he lived with his wife Tillie and son Richard Jr. and which he served as the fire chief of the Fair Lawn Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 from 1932-36 and again from 1944-1948, a position in which he earned much praise.

This community service, combined with the service provided by the other partners made the Kuikens a very well-respected family within the community. This served them well as the Kuikens’ concern for Fair Lawn and the surrounding area during the Depression was reciprocated by other community members. A local newspaper had described the Kuikens as a “prominent Fair Lawn family” in 1927 and this same estimation held true throughout the difficult years of downturn.¹ Surviving the Great Depression showed all the members of the First Generation of Kuiken Brothers that putting the welfare of the community first—followed by that of the company second and then of themselves as individuals last—was not just the right thing to do but was an excellent model for running a business. These values were also instilled into the next generation of Kuikens during the 1930’s. The company had benefited from the cheap and sometimes free labor of Nicholas’ boys George, Edward and Evan as well as Henry’s son Nick and Richard’s son Richard Jr. The lessons imbibed by these young men during the difficult years would leave a lasting impression on them and help to shape how the company was viewed and was run following the Second World War.

RECOVERY

The tight bond with the community and with each other saw Kuiken Brothers through the worst of the economic downturn, but even so they were not ideally positioned to benefit immediately from the recovery that eventually came. The slowdown in the property market had wiped out many small builders, including the Fair Lawn Building and Construction Company and when the real estate

market began to recover in 1937 it was the large property developers from New York that were able to take advantage of the cheap land in New York City’s rapidly developing suburbs. The Kuikens were unable to take advantage of this situation to restart the construction aspect of the company as they were simply too leveraged on the properties they already owned and, with Kuiken Brothers so far in deficit following years of losses, they were unable to get the loans they would need to become property developers once again.

This was not entirely a bad thing however as the new developments, primarily nestled around what is today Route 4, needed to be supplied with building material. This new avenue of business sealed Kuiken Brothers’ future as a hardware and lumber yard and ended the firm’s role as a construction company. It also helped to spark the beginning of a financial recovery. Sales in 1940 still fell into the red, but the increase in property values on the four properties the company owned meant that the deficit in assets owned by the company shrank significantly. By 1941 sales were once again back in the black and the financial footing of the company began to improve.

The future seemed to be getting rosier. Business was improving and the families were prospering. Several of the partners’ children received good jobs outside of Kuiken Brothers with Henry’s son Nick serving on the Fair Lawn police force. Nicholas’ son Edward worked at the Little Falls Laundry and Richard’s son Richard Jr. worked as an airplane engine mechanic at Wright Aeronautical Company in Paterson. With the property market booming and the suburbs of New York City growing steadily, it seemed like the company would be able to finally enjoy a period of prosperity. But these dreams were delayed for four very long years with the announcement on December 8, 1941 that the United States had entered the Second World War.

¹ Fair Lawn Paramus Clarion, Aug. 26, 1927, pg. 1

The company had benefited from the cheap and sometimes free labor of Nicholas’ boys George, Edward and Evan as well as Henry’s son Nick and Richard’s son Richard Jr.

Left to Right – Edward, Evan, and George with their proud father, Nicholas A. Kuiken.

1941 – 1945

Kuiken Brothers at War

*W*HEN WAR ERUPTED IN EUROPE IN THE EARLY DAYS OF SEPTEMBER 1939, THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THAT AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN WOULD BE JOINING THE FIGHT ANY TIME SOON. Isolationism was a powerful force in many parts of the United States and even those who viewed Nazi Germany as a threat to American interests hoped that the nation could remain an outside observer of the struggle. But for the first two years of the war, tensions grew as it became more apparent that the United States was being drawn closer to openly siding with the Allied Powers. In March 1941, Nicholas Kuiken's son Edward was the first of the Kuikens to be drafted into the US Army, which had already begun ramping up its force numbers in preparation for the coming conflict.

But despite the gathering clouds of war, life in Northern New Jersey would have been barely affected for most people other than in the worry many Americans felt for family members over in Europe. The majority in the area were concerned about issues much closer to home such as helping the economy as it pulled slowly out of the Great Depression. The construction boom of the late 1930’s had carried over and Fair Lawn was once again growing. Yet war was inescapable and when it was declared on December 8, 1941, the people of Fair Lawn and the men of Kuiken Brothers were ready to meet the many difficult challenges ahead.

CARRYING ON

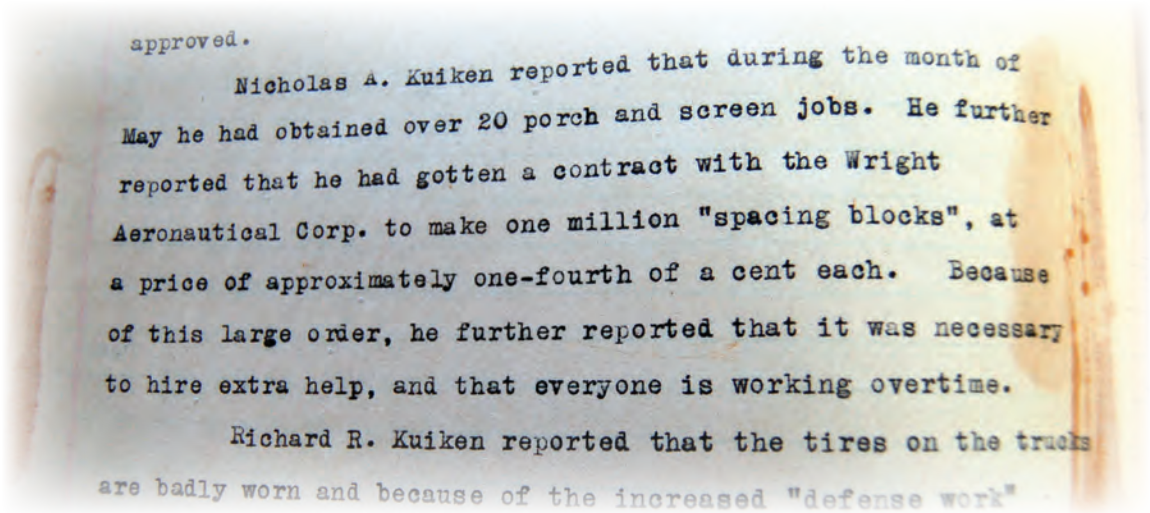
In the waning days of 1941, before the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, the three active partners of Kuiken Brothers spent their board meetings working over several small problems such as how to reintegrate Nicholas back into the business when his time as a Bergen Country Freeholder expired on January 1, 1942. Business had picked back up following the darkest days of the Depression and there was little concern that they would be able to keep the former Mayor busy. The uptick in business also necessitated a reassessment of pay to Henry, Dirk and Richard. This time, happily, the pay was increased rather than foregone. The other order of business was replacing some of the equipment that had been over used or worn down during the 1930’s. This was partially accomplished by the purchase of a GMC truck in 1941.

Even after war was declared, there was still optimism that the home-front would remain relatively unaffected. In fact, as the company minutes record, the partners believed there was a “very favorable outlook” for 1942, which was shown by the fact that “the officers of the company often work until 10 o’clock each evening and all day on Saturday.”² Their optimism was such that they once again voted themselves a small raise while welcoming back Nicholas as an office manager and contact sales-man, a role that would greatly benefit from his connections in the community.

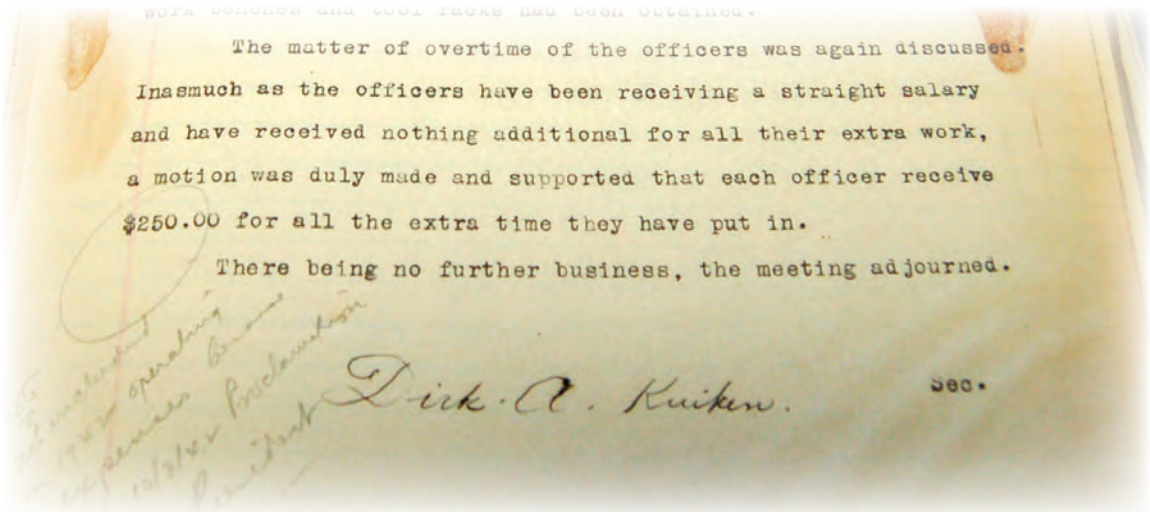
These moves were initially rewarded as the building boom continued through the first half of 1942. One area in which the company made a great deal of headway was in providing the materials and installing screened-in porches on many of the newly constructed homes in Fair Lawn. But no sooner had Kuiken Brothers tapped into this market than it was snatched away. The War Production Board (WPB), the government agency created to transform America’s peacetime economy into the so-

² Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 4 March, 1942.

...the partners believed there was a “very favorable outlook” for 1942, which was shown by the fact that “the officers of the company often work until 10 o’clock each evening and all day on Saturday.”



From the minutes of the Board of Directors, Kuiken Brothers obtained 20 porch and screen jobs, as well as a contract to make one million "spacing blocks" for Wright Aeronautical.



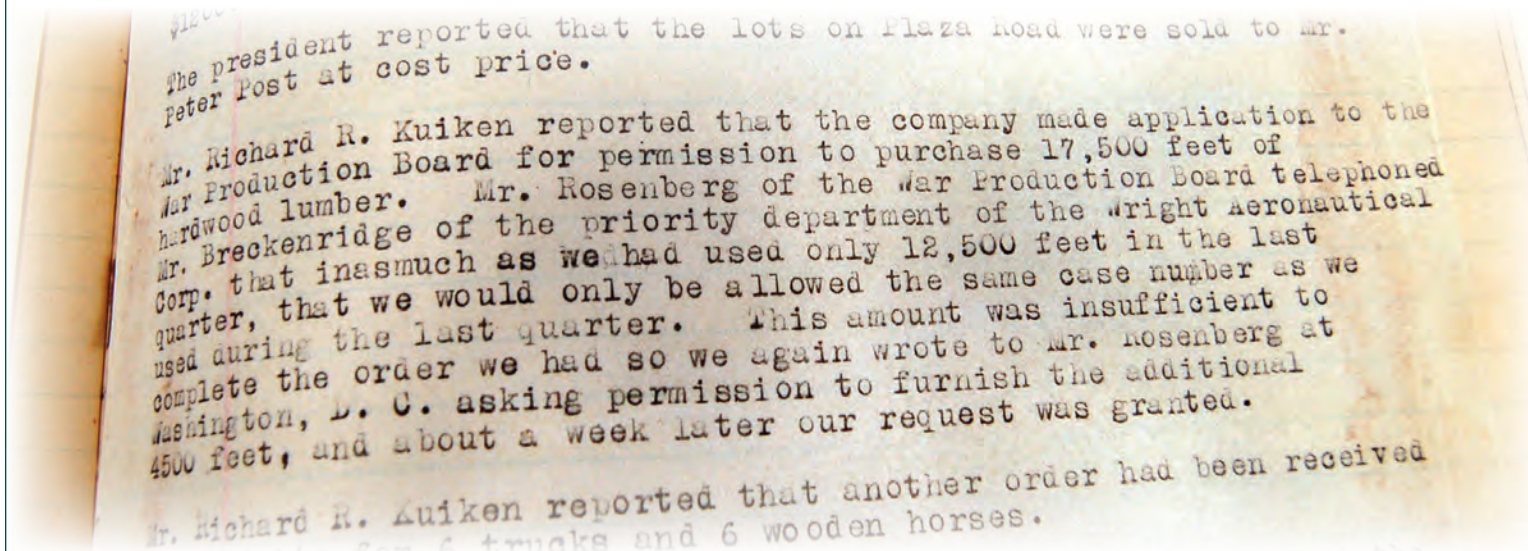
Each officer received an additional \$250 for all of the extra time that they have put in to deliver the Wright Aeronautical orders

called “Arsenal of Democracy,” used its powers to allocate and requisition many of the materials necessary for the war effort. Among those materials was the metal screening required for the screened-in porches that Kuiken Brothers had been installing. This was just the first taste that the company would have of the wartime restrictions on building materials but it would not be the last.

Luckily for the Company, however, the wartime economy gave as well as it took. Among the biggest beneficiaries of the war was the Wright Aeronautical Corporation, based in Paterson, which put its factories into full production to produce airplane engines for the United States’ bomber fleet. This massive endeavor required many bit players to contribute small (and not-so-small) contract work to keep the flow of engines moving unimpeded. Much of this work was small carpentry tasks, an opportunity that Kuiken Brothers quickly jumped at.

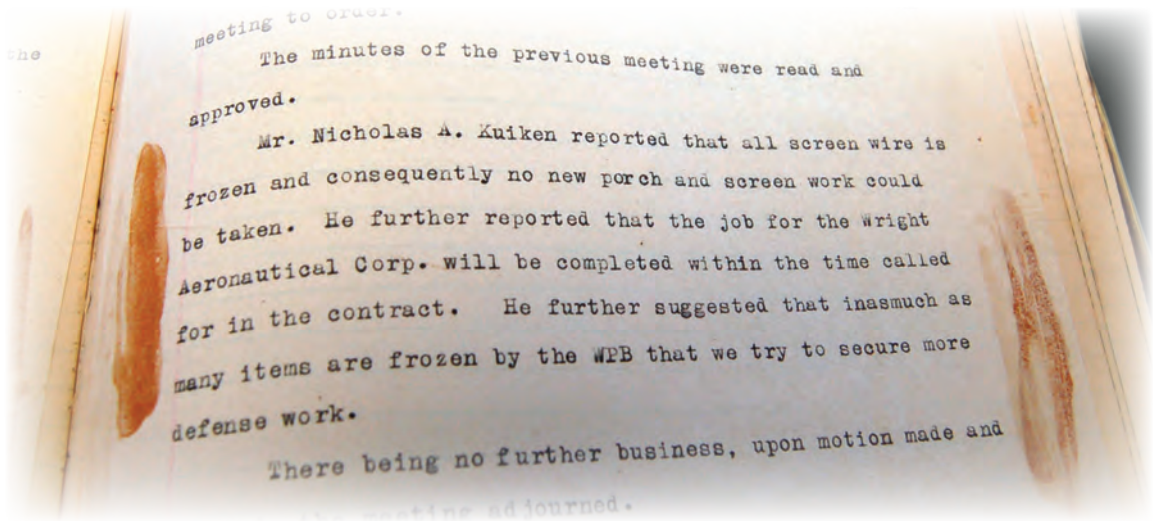
The Company had an inside connection with Wright's since Richard R. Kuiken Jr. was working there as an airplane engine mechanic. Nicholas, acting as the Kuiken Brothers' main salesman won several major contracts, contracts that helped to keep the company going despite the restrictions of the WPB. Nicholas reported this to the board and noted that "inasmuch as many items are frozen by the WPB," the Company needed to "try to secure more defense work."³ In June 1942, Wright's put in an order with Kuiken Brothers for one million spacer blocks. These spacer blocks were small wedges used by Wright's to secure and protect the delicate fins which adorned the cylinders of the bomber engines that Wright's was producing. The massive order was soon joined by other projects contracted out by Wright's for tool cribs, tool boxes and work benches. The work was so much for Kuiken Brothers that extra help was required.

This was no easy task either. With the war draining the labor market, it was increasingly difficult to find young men to work in the yard and shop. In fact, Kuiken Brothers lost several employees to the service; George Kuiken and Seymour "Red" Fopma were both taken into the service, further depleting the staff. The Company had been fortunate to hire Frank Dykstra in 1940 to work in the hardware store and as he was unable to serve in the military for health reasons, he became an invaluable part of the staff during the war, performing most of the essential mechanical tasks in the shop and on the trucks. Little did the partners of Kuiken Brothers know that by hiring Frank Dykstra in 1940, they would be hiring the longest-serving employee in the Company's history. When Dykstra retired in 2005, he had worked with four generations



August 8, 1945 - Richard Kuiken reports that the company had made an application to the War Production Board for permission to purchase 17,500 feet of hardwood lumber. Initially denied, they put in a second request, informing the board that they could not complete their order with Wright Aeronautical and were approved.

³ Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 1 July, 1942.



All screen wire was taken due to the War and Kuiken Brothers could no longer take any screen jobs.

of the Kuiken Family and was one of the most beloved members of the staff. But this was all far in the future, of course. In 1940, Dykstra joined other new employees like Steve and Tunis Van Handel, Andrew Sonderfan, and bookkeeper Edith Pielaet in helping Kuiken Brothers work from eight o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night for six days a week.

By the end of 1942, Nicholas Kuiken had procured orders to the tune of \$19,000 from Wright Aeronautical. This kept the men of Kuiken Brothers working hard the entire year. In recognition of the hard work, and the profitability of the company, Christmas bonuses were awarded to all the employees. 1942 had been one of the best years financially in the Company's history and in March of 1943, the partners were finally able to repay themselves for the wages they had foregone during the Depression.

DARK DAYS

The success of 1942 was to prove somewhat of a high water mark for the war years, however. As the war continued to drag on, it began to prove impossible to acquire any stock for the lumberyard and even paint and other hardware supplies became increasingly difficult to procure. This meant that the retail branch of the company slowly dried up leaving war work and other odd jobs as the only significant source of income. Added to this was the burden of increased taxation to pay for the war effort. On top of the regular taxes due from the Company, Kuiken Brothers now also had to pay a "Victory Tax" each year. This was not begrudged by the partners, but it made an already difficult situation even harder.

Luckily, Nicholas was able to procure another large contract with Wright's at the beginning of 1943, which kept the shop busy for several months. The Company's fortunes began to turn in late



At one time the facade of the warehouse on 6th Street was used as the store sign to promote Kuiken Brothers and the materials they sold. Over time the siding was covered and larger doors were installed to make room for the growing business.

March, however, when Nicholas was taken ill and forced to convalesce in Florida. Nicholas had built up good connections at Wright's and his absence was to make it more difficult for Kuiken Brothers to win new contracts for several months. To make matters worse, Nicholas was almost immediately hospitalized upon his return from Florida in May. Richard Kuiken Sr. took it upon himself to fill Nicholas' role while the latter recovered and soon won several small contracts from Wright's.

But even with these contracts, business was still tightening. Even Nicholas had not been able to get the same prices from Wright's as he had in the past and the diminishing payments for services rendered meant that the finances of the Company began to descend from their lofty 1942 position. To make up the difference, Kuiken Brothers began to sell some of the many properties it still owned across Fair Lawn. This process had begun in 1942 with the sale of one of the Company's rental properties to another member of the family, Edward H. Kuiken, and it continued in 1943 with the sale of several empty plots of land. The money from these sales, since it could not be used to buy lumber or other stock, was put to paying off the mortgages held on the other rental properties with the caveat that

"When Government restrictions are lifted and the company is again able to replenish its stock," the Company would "borrow the money from the bank for that purpose."⁴

But such an easing of restrictions did not seem likely any time soon. The WPB's control on both hardwood and softwood meant that Kuiken Brothers could not even build storm sashes, cabinets or any of the other small projects that had sustained them during the Depression. Stocks dwindled so low that in September 1943, Henry Kuiken noted that he was "trying to obtain a reduction in the fire insurance rates"⁵ since the property was effectively no longer a lumberyard.

By the end of 1943, the state of the lumberyard was not the only concern facing the Company. The re-hospitalization of Nicholas meant that Kuiken Brothers had to turn to the more pressing task of making legal arrangements for the future of the Company should one of the partners die. With the help of the Company's attorney, Peter Hofstra, a plan to dispose of the stock of a partner was worked up. It allowed for the widow of the deceased partner to either hold the stock herself or to sell it to her sons. Or, if the partner's widow chose, the stock would be purchased by the company and held as treasury stock. A final provision was that Kuiken Brothers would continue to pay the deceased partner's salary for three months. The plan was accepted at a board meeting on December 1, 1943.

The timing of the agreement was fortuitous because on January 3, 1944, Nicholas A. Kuiken passed away at the age of 54. Since Nicholas' sons were all serving in the armed forces overseas, his widow, Nellie decided to hold the stock of the company herself. The loss of Nicholas demoralized the remaining partners and added to the gloom about the future prospects of Kuiken Brothers. It was recorded somberly that "it seems as not many more jobs from the Wright Aeronautical Corporation will be forthcoming, and due to the shortage of many materials, it was thought that business for the year 1944 would be less than the previous year."⁶

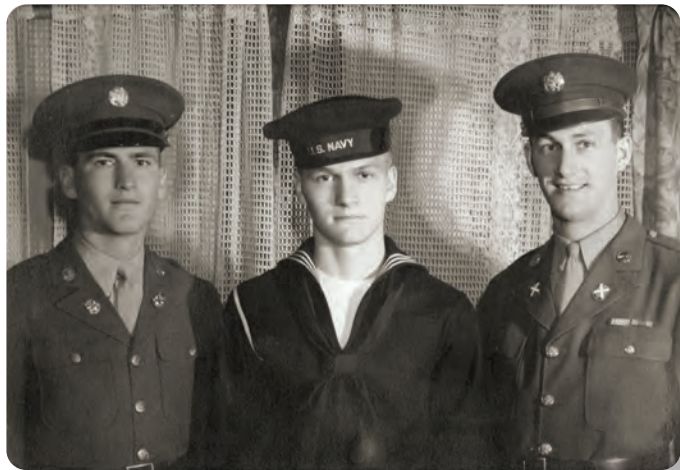
While the void left by Nicholas' death was immense, the remaining three partners attempted to fill it as best they could. Richard was elected to fill the post of vice president as well as his position as treasurer and he did much to continue the job Nicholas had been doing. He did this first by continuing to win a small but steady stream of contracts from Wright's for more spacer blocks as well as tool boxes and work cabinets that helped keep the staff busy during the winter and spring of 1944.

⁴ Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 7 July, 1943.

⁵ Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 1 September, 1943.

⁶ Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 11 January, 1944.

Despite the slowdown in business, the partners agreed not only to give Christmas bonuses but to hold a dinner for the entire staff in honor of the hard work they had been doing.



Edward, Evan, and George Kuiken in their military uniforms



Cox'n Evan H. Kuiken, Instructor at Camp Peary, Virginia. December 1943 (first row, center).

Despite the slowdown in business, the partners agreed not only to give Christmas bonuses but to hold a dinner for the entire staff in honor of the hard work they had been doing. The type of work that had kept Kuiken Brothers going was exhausting and often times tediously repetitive. There were periods where there was little to do punctuated by brief episodes of intense work. Altogether it was a difficult environment for the employees, and the partners did their best to make them feel appreciated. Steve Van Handel and Frank Dykstra were also rewarded for their increased responsibilities with raises to their weekly salary.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

The year 1945, which was to prove the last year of the Second World War, began with a deep gloom hanging over Kuiken Brothers. Even though 1944 had been a better year financially than 1943, the first board meeting of the year concluded “that the future doesn’t look too bright because it is very difficult to obtain material, especially in the line of hardware and paint.”⁷

Henry also reported that “the War Production Board had made it more difficult to procure all hardwoods even for defense work.”⁸

But, with the war reaching its zenith, war-work once again began to pour into the Company. In February, Kuiken Brothers received an order for another 1.2 million spacer blocks along with sundry other small items from Wright’s. The Company was also able to sell two more houses on Bergen Avenue for a tidy sum. Since very little of the cash on hand could be used to restock the lumberyard and hardware store, it was decided to put the money into war bonds to continue helping the effort to finish out the war. A further investment was made in the Fair Lawn Savings & Loan Association, perhaps with an eye to profiting from the anticipated post-war real estate expansion.

⁷ Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 3 January, 1945.

⁸ Company Minutes, recorded by Dirk A. Kuiken, 7 February, 1945.

The ending of the war in Europe in May 1945 brought some psychological relief as well as a slight reduction in the restrictions on softwoods, which allowed Kuiken Brothers to get back to making screens, storm sashes and minor repairs to people’s homes. But the bulk of the work continued to come from Wright’s. Another order for a million spacer blocks was received in June, along with the approval of the WPB to use 8,500 board feet of hardwood for the completion of that project. This order was followed up in July by two more requests from Wright’s, one for 1.75 million spacer blocks and another for 2 million. This work was certainly welcomed, but it led to many long days and nights working at the saw. In such an environment accidents were inevitable and Richard injured his hand on a shaping saw while trying to complete the order for Wright’s. The injury was serious but did not keep Richard away from the shop for very long. Soon he was back at the saw and even offered the company the \$177.14 check he received from the Great American Indemnity Company to make up for the time he had lost; the offer was politely refused and Richard was allowed to keep the money for himself. Part of the massive order from Wright’s would be cancelled when the war ended in August but all told, Kuiken Brothers completed 6.8 million spacer blocks along with many other small carpentry projects for the airplane engine manufacturer.

With the war drawing to a close, the partners of Kuiken Brothers had an altogether different problem to tackle. Many of the sons of the four original partners were serving overseas and would be returning home following the peace. One of Nicholas’ sons, Edward, had already returned after being honorably discharged and had joined the company in July 1945. Whether the other sons would want to join the company needed to be resolved in order to avoid a long drawn-out process. But before that, “the boys” needed to finish their service to their country.

THE BOYS

The Second World War had flung representatives of the Kuiken family to the four corners of the earth. The Kuiken boys, who would later join Kuiken Brothers, served in both the European and the Pacific theaters. Their experiences were varied, some positive others negative



Silver Star Conferred on Tech. Sgt. Ed Kuiken

The Silver Star for “gallantry in action in Germany” was recently awarded to Technical Sergeant Edward N. Kuiken, formerly employed in our Wash Room.

The official citation reads as follows:

“By direction of the President, under the provisions of AR 600-45, Sept. 22, 1943, as amended, the Silver Star is awarded to Tech. Sgt. Edward N. Kuiken 32063268, Infantry, Company X 13th Infantry Regiment, for gallantry in action on Feb. 28, 1945 in the vicinity of Germany.

“When the enemy counter-attacked the Erft Canal bridge-head with infantry and tanks supported by intense artillery and mortar fire, Sergeant Kuiken went forward and relocated his machine gun section to better meet the attack. He then established communications with the mortar platoon and directed accurate fire on the enemy.

“Throughout the action, Sergeant Kuiken continually exposed himself to direct enemy fire, to move among his men and encourage them on. His gallant actions and inspirational leadership were directly responsible for the repulsion of the enemy and the security of the bridgehead.

“Entered the military service from New Jersey.

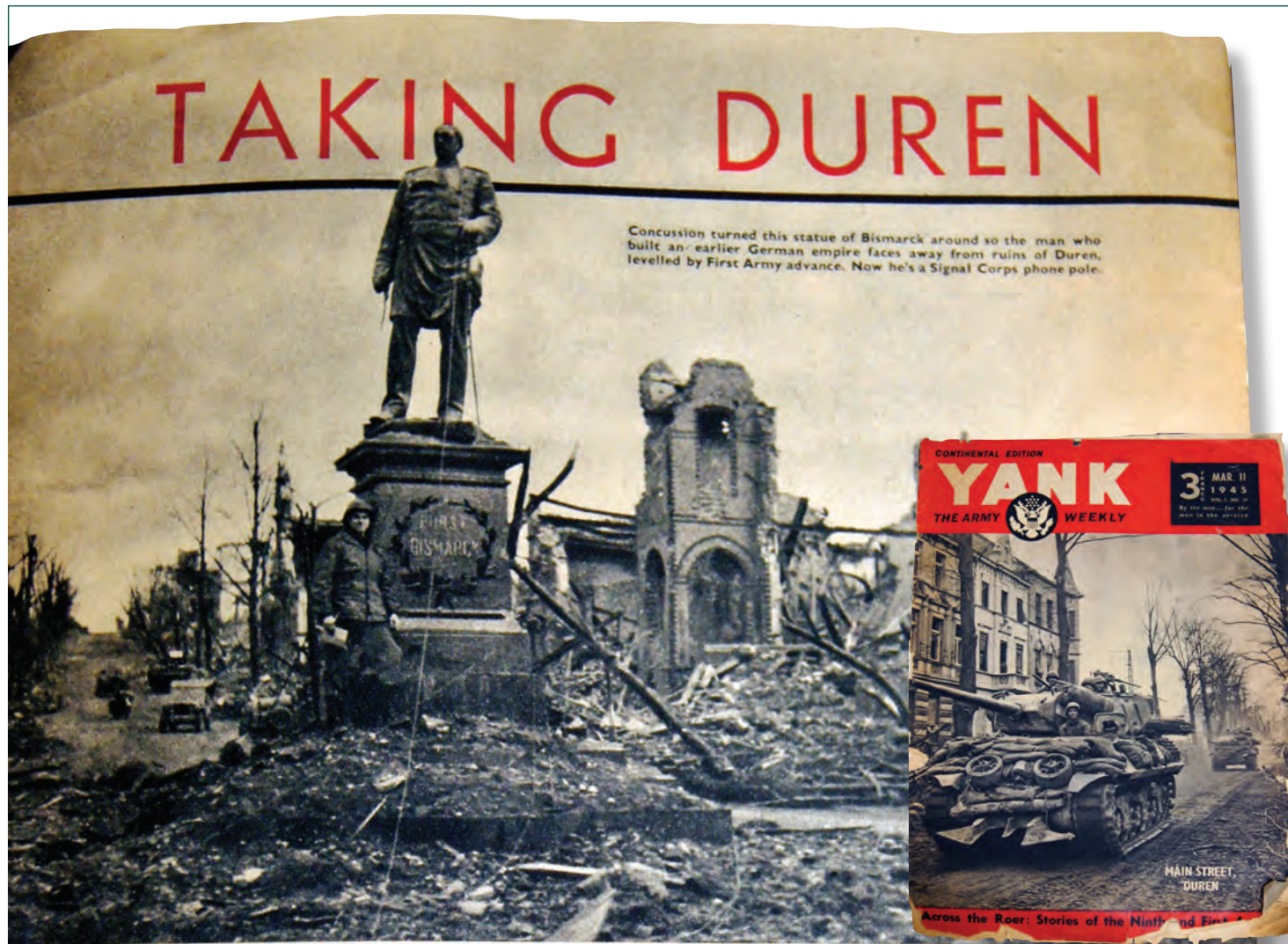
“By command of Brigadier General Moore.”

Sergeant Kuiken entered service March, 1941, and was sent overseas December, 1943, first to Ireland, France, and now Germany. He also holds the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

Sergeant Kuiken attended Eastside High School. He has two brothers in service, Evan, coxswain with the Seabees in the Marianas, and Tech. Sergt. George, with the infantry in Alabama.

Edward Kuiken during basic training.





First Army doughts foreclosing the mortgage on this key Roer city had to cross 40 yards of swirling, angry river to do it.

By Sgt. Ed CUNNINGHAM
YANK Staff Correspondent

DUREN, GERMANY—This is the city that lived on borrowed time for three months. Its first brush with doom came late last November, when American troops drove to the west bank of the Roer River, just 40 yards away. Already shattered by Allied air attacks, Duren—key city in a road net leading to the Cologne plain—looked like a comparative push-over for the hard-driving First Army forces.

Those 40 yards were a slim lease on life but it was sufficient for the time being, thanks to the dam system which regulated the flow of water. The dams controlled 160,000,000 cubic feet of water and the Germans controlled the dams. By blowing the two main dams, the Schwammanauel and the Urftalsperre, they could inundate the river valley and trap any Allied troops attempting a crossing of the Roer. Duren could not be taken until the dams were captured or neutralized. So First Army units attacked toward Schmidt, key to the defenses of the liquid Sword of Damocles which the Nazis held over us. That, in turn, stayed the sword which we held over Duren.

Duren's second reprieve came in mid-December, when Von Rundstedt's forces crashed through the Ardennes. That automatically stymied the Allied thrust toward Schmidt. It was not until late in January, when the German counteroffensive had been rolled back beyond Belgium's borders, that we could resume the push toward the dam sites.

First Army troops took Schmidt on Feb. 8 and moved on toward the Schwammanauel Dam, largest of the four dams. Two days later, before we could secure the dam, the Germans opened the flood gates and blew the control gates. The roaring waters rushed west toward Duren, raising the river level eight feet, flooding the lowlands and doubling the speed of the current. An assault crossing under such conditions was all but impossible so the First and Ninth Armies had to sit back and wait for the flood level to subside.

But on Feb. 23 the First Army's Eighth and 104th Divisions changed Duren's luck.

COMPANY K of the 13th Infantry, Eighth Division, had chow at midnight. It was steak, potatoes, bread, butter, coffee and doughnuts. Some of the men ate it while standing around in the mud and rubble of the skeletonized village of Gurzenich. Others carried it back to their billets in the cellars, where they could eat in comparative comfort. There was still an hour to wait before moving out for the battalion assembly area on the west bank of the Roer River, opposite Duren.

"That was a pretty good meal," one K Company man said as he came back for seconds.

"It oughta be," somebody in the mess line said. "If those motors break down tonight, we'll have to paddle across that damned river, and you'll need plenty of energy. The Army's got that angle figured out. What else do you think they're feeding you steak for?"

Some members of the assault teams were giving the cooks a few last-minute instructions.

"Don't make the coffee too sweet tomorrow morning," one said. "And let's have some sunny-side-ups for a change," another man suggested. "Stop beating hell out of the eggs and serve 'em up the way the hen lays 'em."

"You guys'll be lucky if those krauts give you time enough to eat a D ration, let alone hot food," one of the cooks replied.

A couple of rounds of Jerry artillery landed

on the other side of the village, rattling the teetering walls of Gurzenich's shattered houses.

"Jerry must be getting nervous," someone said.

Inside one of the shattered houses, the second platoon of K Company was waiting for 0100. T/Sgt. John Demeduk, the platoon sergeant from Ramsey, N.J., and the platoon leader, a second lieutenant, were testing the release valves on their life belts. Pvt. Francis (Doc) Marone, the platoon medic from the Bronx, N.Y., was stretched out on a Jerry mattress on the floor, whistling "I'll Walk Alone." Several others were smoking.

T/Sgt. Edward Kuiken of Fairlawn, N.J., the mortar platoon sergeant, came in. "Ready, willing and able?" he asked.

"Ready and able, anyhow," someone replied. "Say, Ed," the lieutenant said, "I believe we're going to run into trouble at the corner of that Sportpalast. The Jerries probably have a strongpoint there. So be ready to lay some in".

"You let me know when you want it and I'll plaster hell out of them," Kuiken assured him. "Well," he continued, "guess I'd better shove. It's 10 of. Take it easy, you guys".

He turned to the lieutenant and put out his hand. "Good luck, Johnny, I mean, Lieutenant. Hell, I keep forgetting you're an officer now."

"Don't let it bother you," the lieutenant said. "Good luck, Ed, see you over there."

They shook hands firmly, like two men who enjoyed knowing each other. It was a token of mutual respect that knew no rank, a respect that came from fighting together and knowing just what the other could do in a tight spot.

Kuiken and the lieutenant were "old" K Company men. They joined it together back in 1941, as privates, at Fort Jackson, S.C. Both were platoon sergeants when the Eighth Division came into France. Johnny got a battlefield commission for leadership at Brest when his platoon leader was injured and he had to take over. He also got wounds there that hospitalized him for four months, until two weeks ago.

and still others of such intensity that they were unable to be shared or expressed for the rest of their lives. The struggles of a small lumberyard in Northern New Jersey paled in comparison to the great endeavor that these young men became of a part of and that each contributed to in their own way.

Edward N. Kuiken, or Ed as he was known, was the first to join the service, being called up before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was assigned as a sergeant specializing in mortars and heavy machine guns to the 13th Regiment of the 8th Infantry Division, the "Golden Arrows." After completing their training in Northern Ireland, the 8th was sent to France. They landed on July 4, twenty-eight days after D-Day and almost immediately engaged with the enemy. Ed's unit was involved in heavy fighting around the French port of Brest. For his bravery during that battle, Ed received a Bronze Star. His citation states that "Sergeant Kuiken repeatedly

moved before his own lines in order to maintain communication with combat patrols and on several occasions gave invaluable assistance to the patrols by directing accurate fire from his mortar section...His courage and devotion to duty were instrumental in the ultimate success of the battalion."

Following this victory in France, Ed and the 8th Infantry were sent to participate in the attempt to smash the German defenses known as the Siegfried Line and engaged in some of the heaviest fighting experienced by American forces during the war. Ed's unit participated in the vicious Battle of Hurtgen Forest and later in several offensive operations designed to relieve the pressure on American forces battling the massive German counter-attack that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. The final push into Germany was equally difficult. Ed's company crossed the Roer River and engaged in heavy combat around a factory complex in the city of Duren. Holding

- 9 Headquarters 8th Infantry Division APO #8, U.S. Army, "Award of Bronze Star Medal to Staff Sergeant Edward N. Kuiken, 32063268, Infantry, United States Army."

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Edward Kuiken was featured in the Yank, an Army Weekly publication for his involvement in the battle at Duren, Germany, World War II.



Richard Kuiken

this position was essential to secure the precarious bridgehead that the regiment had created. Ed and his company fought tenaciously to hold their position and he was wounded in the process. By the time reinforcements arrived, Ed was one of only seven men left defending the position. This wound barely slowed Sgt. Kuiken down, however, as he participated in the drive towards Cologne and across the Rhine River. It was during this series of engagements that Ed received the Silver Star, the third highest service medal awarded by the U.S. Military. His commander recorded that Ed's "gallant actions and inspirational leadership were directly responsible for the repulsion of the enemy and the security of the bridgehead."¹⁰ Later on in his life, Ed would sum up his service record by simply saying "I was there, I did my share."¹¹

Ed was not the only Kuiken involved in combat operations in Europe. His cousin Nicholas H. Kuiken left his position with the Fair Lawn Police Department as well as his wife Janet and two young children to enlist in the infantry in 1944. He was also assigned to a mortar unit which saw action in Europe.

Richard R. Kuiken Jr. had a very different experience from his cousins. When the war began, Richard was working as an airplane mechanic at Wright Aeronautical Corporation. His job was an essential part of the war effort since Wright's was one of the major producers of bomber engines for the U.S. Military. This meant that Richard was technically exempt from service. This did not, however, prevent him from enlisting in 1943 and leaving behind his fiancée Jeanette as he set off first for basic training and later for deployment in England as part of the 8th Air Force.

Once in England, Richard was stationed at Burtonwood Airfield near Warrington. There he worked long hours every day stripping down flak-damaged bomber engines, salvaging the undamaged parts and rebuilding them. These engines played a vital part in the B-17 bomber force that pummeled Germany's war industries and population centers during the great bombing campaigns of 1944 and 1945.



Edward Kuiken

¹⁰ Headquarters 8th Infantry Division, Public Relations Office #62813.

¹¹ Interview with Ed, Nick and Rich Kuiken, Khyros Media, September 17, 2008.

One comforting connection to home for Richard was his close friendship with the Shand family who lived on the Wirral near Liverpool. Mr. Shand's brother had migrated to the United States before the war and had settled in Fair Lawn where, during his service as a volunteer fire fighter, he came into contact with Richard's mother and father. This Fair Lawn connection turned into a wonderful friendship overseas as the address of the England-based Shands was forwarded to Richard at Burtonwood. Richard soon received an invitation to visit the Wirral. His friendship with the Shands provided some welcome relief to the homesickness of being stationed so far from home and deepened into a lasting friendship with the Shand family members that endures to this very day.

Evan and George Kuiken, two other sons of Nicholas A. Kuiken and future members of Kuiken Brothers, also participated in the war effort. Evan enlisted directly out of high school as a member of the famous Seabees working on engineering projects for the war effort in the Pacific. Meanwhile, George's unit was stationed stateside until the war was over.

All of these experiences profoundly marked the so-called 2nd Generation of Kuiken Brothers. Their wartime service made each of them acutely aware of the value of home and the value of family. When they each returned home from this life-changing set of circumstances, they all had to make a choice about their future. Would they attempt to go back to the way things were before the war? Or would they band together as a part of Kuiken Brothers to work towards building the company and helping to build the post-war United States of America?

Richard Kuiken and his bride, Jeanette Rienstra, August 22, 1945. Groomsmen left to right – George Kuiken, Aaron Van Vliet and Ed Kuiken (best man). Bridesmaids left to right – Clair Reinstra, Janet Van Hook and Gladys Hagerdorn



1946 – 1961

Supplying the Boom

*T*HE ENDING OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR MARKED THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

FOR THE UNITED STATES. The War had broken the Depression and economic expansion loomed on the horizon. The millions of young men returning home were to be helped by the GI Bill to get educations, buy homes and start families. The future looked extremely promising for the nation.

The return of Richard, Nicholas, Edward, Evan and George from the service meant a new beginning for Kuiken Brothers as well. “The boys” had worked various jobs before the war, but the death of Nicholas A. Kuiken in 1944 and the declining health of some of the other partners made it imperative to begin to plan the future of the Kuiken Brothers. It was therefore decided by the three remaining partners to offer the chance to their sons to enter the business. These decisions would add new blood to the company and prime it to take advantage of the long economic boom that lay on America’s doorstep.

Edward N. Kuiken circa 1950, standing in front of the days’ work ahead. Mills would deliver bulk loads of lumber which would then have to be sorted and hand-stacked.

ALL IN THE FAMILY



Nick Kuiken and Henry Kuiken in the 1940's

The choice of whether to enter Kuiken Brothers was not an easy one for the young men coming home from war. Richard could have returned to being an airplane engine mechanic while Nick had the chance to resume his job as a member of the Fair Lawn police department. Kuiken Brothers was not exactly a completely enticing prospect in 1945, either. The Company had come through the War well but was hardly in a stellar financial position. But the returning servicemen saw the potential to work and to build something of their own.

Ed was the first to rejoin Kuiken Brothers in June of 1945. After his arrival home on "R&R" for forty five days, he went to work in the shop helping to finish the final few orders for Wright Aeronautical. George was the next on board, resuming the job in the yard that he had left to join the service.

When Richard returned home, his first order of business was to pick up where he had left off with his fiancée

Jeanette, whom he married in August of 1945. With a new wife to support, Richard was faced with the choice of joining his father, uncles and cousins at Kuiken Brothers or trying to get his old job back at Wright Aeronautical. One thing that made his choice easier was his close relationship with Ed. Ed had served as Richard's best man and the prospect of working together was enough to lure Richard away from airplane engines and into the store.

Nick, on the other hand, first tried returning to the police department. He was given his old position and was soon back out on the beat. But after just a short while with the police force, Nick decided that policing was no longer for him and resigned. Later that same day he came to his father, Henry, for a job at Kuiken Brothers. Evan, the final member of the "Second Generation" would join the company later after completing a degree at Pace University in Accounting and Finance, paid for with the help of the GI Bill. This achievement made Evan the first Kuiken to earn a university degree. Along with the Kuiken boys, the Company also welcomed back Red Fopma to join the other employees. With these

additions the staff was ready to tackle the coming boom that would help propel Kuiken Brothers to a respectable level of growth over the next several decades.

POST-WAR READJUSTMENTS

The post-war boom began almost immediately following the end of hostilities. Pent-up demand for goods and homes meant that customers would be lining up at Kuiken Brothers. Frustratingly, however, it took quite a long time for the supply chains that had been disrupted by the War to be worked out. From 1945 until at least early 1947 it was still difficult to secure enough lumber to keep the yard stocked. This was partly due to brisk sales continually depleting what stock could be brought in.

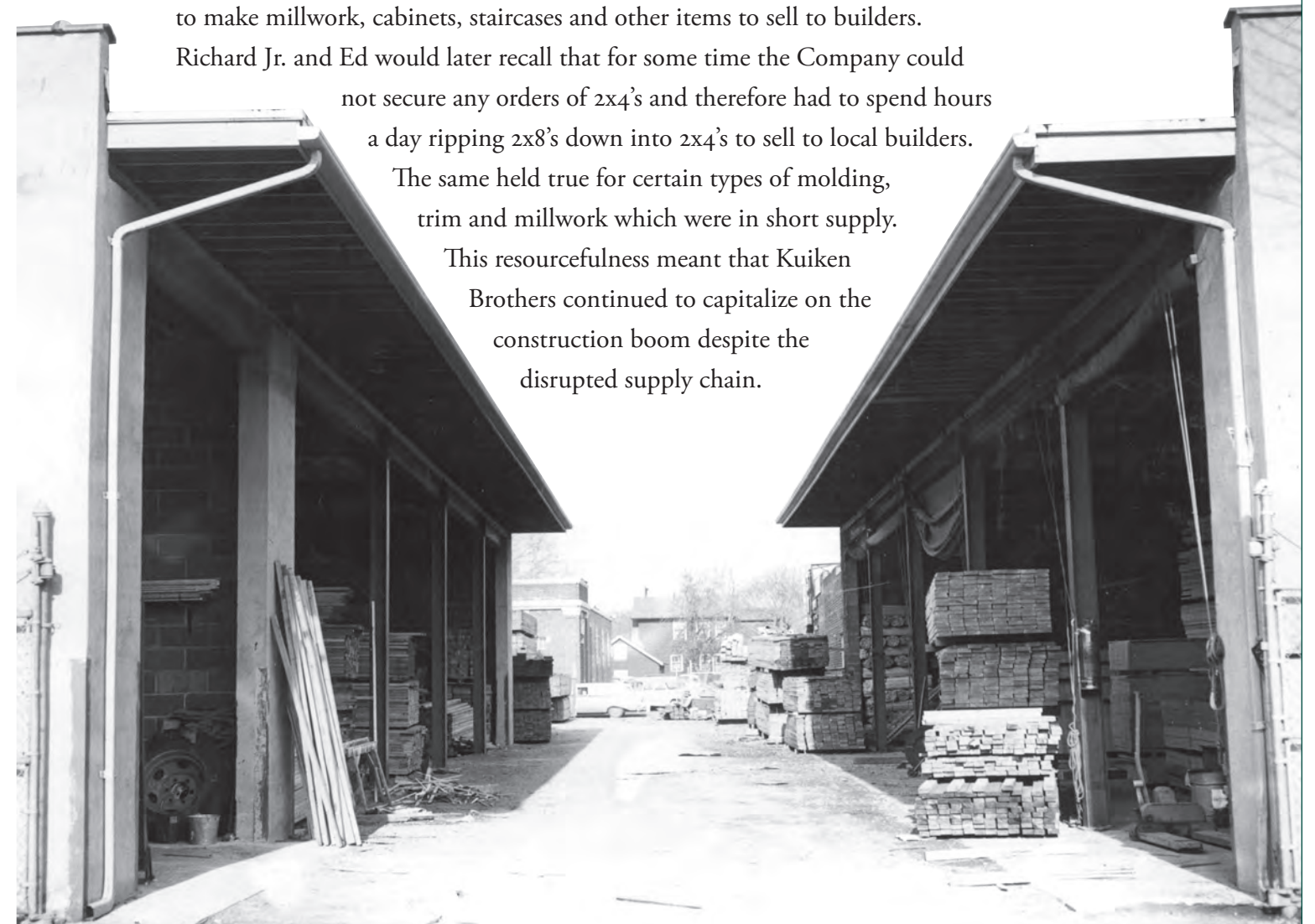
To overcome this inability to get the lumberyard back to full speed, the Company turned to the types of jobs it had always used to make ends meet. The shop went back to manufacturing the materials that could not be purchased, and continued to make millwork, cabinets, staircases and other items to sell to builders.

Richard Jr. and Ed would later recall that for some time the Company could not secure any orders of 2x4's and therefore had to spend hours a day ripping 2x8's down into 2x4's to sell to local builders.

The same held true for certain types of molding, trim and millwork which were in short supply.

This resourcefulness meant that Kuiken Brothers continued to capitalize on the construction boom despite the disrupted supply chain.

Kuiken Brothers Fair Lawn, NJ lumberyard before it was fully enclosed in the late 1980's. You can see through to River Road.



The building boom was due in part to the need to house the returning GI's. Kuiken Brothers jumped into this opportunity and took up, briefly, its old role as a building company. The Company took on the building of two new homes for sale to war veterans. Richard Sr. strapped on his old carpenters belt to lead the construction and Kuiken Brothers made a tidy profit on the new homes that simultaneously benefitted the community while also helping the Company to dispose of two empty lots that they had held during both the Depression and the War.

All of these moves helped Kuiken Brothers get back into a good financial position. The first three years of the post-war era had each been very good financially and with the young employees settling in—both family and non-family—it seemed that the Company under the steady leadership of Henry, Richard and Dirk was ready to move confidently into the future.

Evan and Edward Kuiken alongside the company's first forklift.



As part of this, the directors decided that the younger Kuikens should be given the chance to gain some experience in management. Dirk and Henry were both in their sixties and Richard Sr. himself turned fifty in 1946. At the stockholders' meeting in June of 1947, it was therefore decided to invite Edward, George, Nicholas, and Richard Jr. to sit on the board, as non officers, with the three partners.

This was a timely decision, as Dirk Kuiken fell seriously ill in early 1948. His absence left a large hole in the company both in the hardware store and in the boardroom. Dirk had been the Company's secretary for nearly thirty years and had helped to build the hardware store from scratch. He was to be replaced as secretary by Ed Kuiken. Two further changes occurred within a few short years. The first was the untimely death of the Company's bookkeeper, Henrietta Leyman, in 1949. The second was the decision made by Henry Kuiken to cut back his hours in 1950. Henry, now sixty-five, wanted to spend part of the year in Florida where he could pursue his love of fishing. Unfortunately for Henry (but fortunately for the company), he was unable to follow through with this plan for a year and continued to work full-time because of a huge uptick in business.

The Kuiken Hardware News – a promotional publication for homeowners.



SUPPLYING THE BOOM

This increase in business was due in large part to the continued post-war boom in home construction. Along with the rapid growth in home construction and home ownership came the age of “do it yourself.” This meant that Kuiken Brothers customer base began to shift slightly away from almost exclusively professional carpenters and more





Evan Kuiken presenting Republican Presidential Candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower with a cake and a key to the Borough of Fair Lawn during a campaign tour, 1952.

towards everyday homeowners. As part of this, there were several discussions to expand the hardware store in the late 1940's but it was decided to hold off for the time being. The Company did, however, begin to publish a small catalog called the *Kuiken Hardware News* for distribution around town. The publication advertised the products and sales occurring at Kuiken Brothers and encouraged the growth of home owner business in both the store and the yard.

With Dirk stepping down following his illness, the running of the hardware store was handled by George and Richard Jr. along with the help of Frank Dykstra and a young man named George Wiseman. This arrangement was not to last long, however as George left the company in 1951 following his inheritance of his own hardware store in Little Falls. George Kuiken took George Wiseman with him, for a short time, but their departures were balanced out by the inclusion of Evan Kuiken into the company in the early 1950's. As a member and commander of the American Legion Post 171, and later as a member and



The front of the Kuiken Brothers Hardware Store entrance on Fair Lawn Avenue. An addition would later increase the size of this space.

president of the Rotary Club of Fair Lawn, Evan made many connections throughout the community and, like his father, used these connections to steer business towards Kuiken Brothers.

Another addition to the Company in the early 1950's was the hiring of Chris Schroeder. Schroeder had worked for several years as a piano maker and was a skilled craftsman who took up residency in the shop alongside Richard Sr. It was in this shop that many of Kuiken Brothers' largest projects were put together. For along with the sale of lumber and building materials to contractors, the Company had a thriving business in the 1950's and 1960's in the production of architectural millwork. Schroeder and Richard Sr. would produce these items in the shop and would also make custom orders. Schroeder would literally form the shaper and molding knives himself to create the desired profile and then produce what was required. Family members would later remember the two men as being constantly covered with sawdust from these endeavors.

Kuiken Brothers then helped spur along the project by donating \$100 to the building fund of the church, a move that was part of the Company's broader support for the different houses of worship throughout Fair Lawn.

Much of this work was done for residential projects and for new home builders, but there were several special larger projects worth noting. The first of these was the work Kuiken Brothers put into the fabrication and assembly of all the various millwork required for the construction of the Van Riper Ellis Memorial Church (now known as Van Riper Ellis Broadway Baptist Church in Fair Lawn). Several of the Kuikens first participated in this project by helping in their capacity as volunteer firemen to conduct a controlled burn of the home that was on the sight of the future church. Kuiken Brothers then helped spur along the project by donating \$100 to the building fund of the church, a move that was part of the Company's broader support for the different houses of worship throughout Fair Lawn. The construction of the church building was handled by Kuiken Brothers' biggest client, John Minnema. Minnema ordered all of the molding, doors, windows and a millwork package from the Company's shop as well as the steeple of the church. This massive project was begun in the shop but had to be completed out on Sixth Street due to its large size. The finished steeple was shipped to the building sight on a flat-bed truck and hoisted into position by a crane.

Other similar projects fueled the company's steady business throughout the 1950's and 1960's. During this time, Kuiken Brothers became a catch-all store where people could buy anything from windows and cabinets, paint, nails and bolts, all the way to lumber and other building materials. The Company even sold prefabricated garages. These sales were supplemented, as they had always been, by odd jobs that the company came across. These included building the wooden frames used by the textile manufacturers and dye shops that still populated Paterson at that time. It also included the production of surveying wedges and stakes used by the surveyors laying out the new building projects and road construction that was fast turning Northern New Jersey into a suburban juggernaut.

FAMILY MEN

The company was still, however, primarily a family affair. When Henry stepped down from everyday involvement in the running of the Company, he continued on as a type of honorary president of the company. In 1951 Richard Sr. was elevated to the position of executive vice president while Nick became vice president, Ed the secretary, and Richard Jr. the treasurer.



Group photo at an early Fair Lawn Old Timers Dinner. Seated (left to right) Don DeBruin, Evan H. Kuiken, Richard R. Kuiken, Richard (Dick) Kuiken. Standing (left to right) Bill Reiner, Nicholas H. Kuiken, Floyd Josten, Edward N. Kuiken, Edward H. "Captain" Kuiken, Unknown.



Early Company Christmas party. Henry Kuiken (front left), and Richard Kuiken (with cigar).



The Fair Lawn, NJ lumberyard. These units were all delivered and then stacked by hand by the Kuiken Brothers staff. Note that the stacks were on a slight tilt. This was done to ensure that water ran off the boards since this space was not covered.



Warehouses on 6th Street.



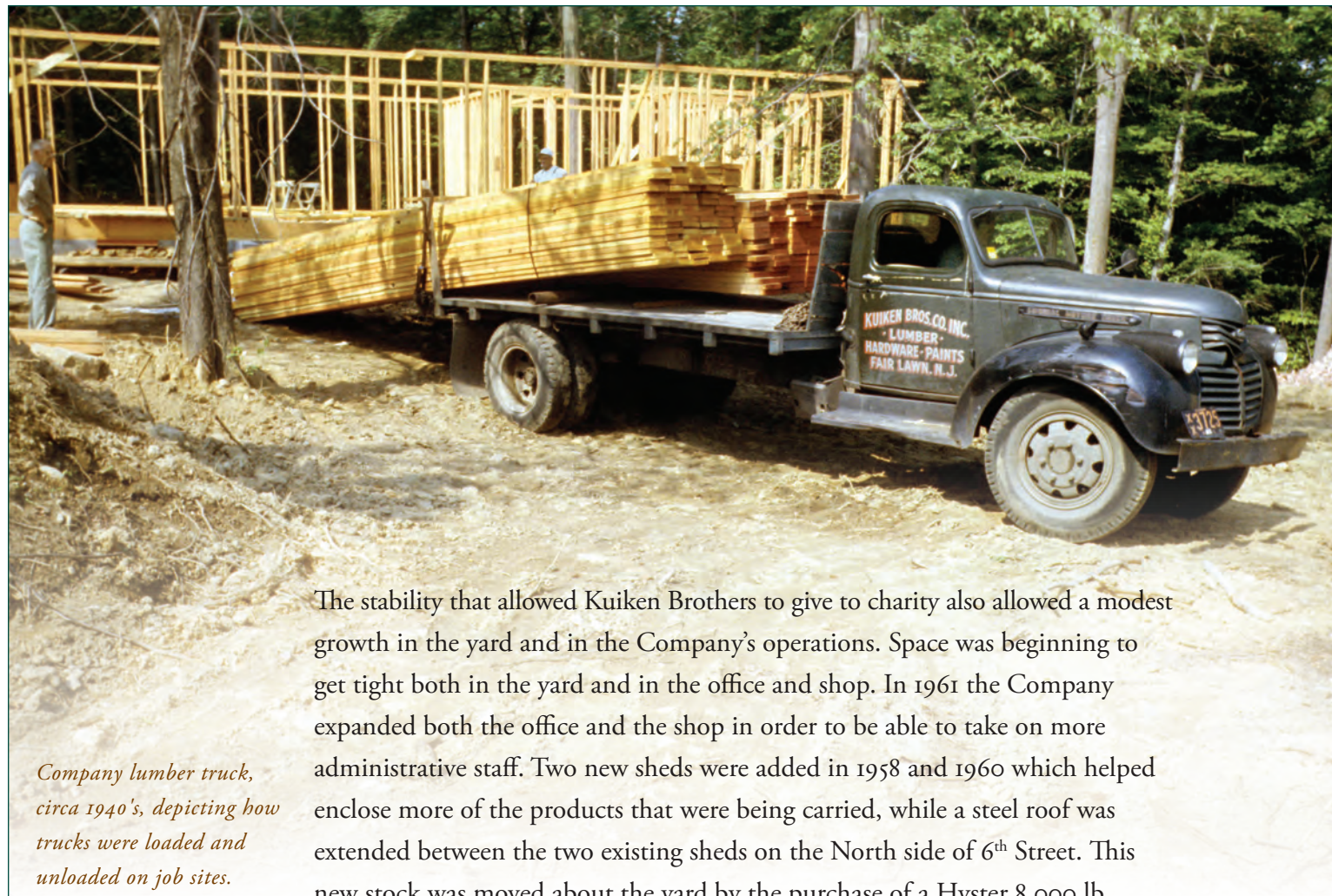
Early GMC flatbed truck.

This arrangement lasted just a year, however, as in January 1952 Henry Kuiken was finally able to make good upon his long-term plans to retire. Henry reflected upon his long career with the Company in his resignation letter, writing that “We have had our struggles, good times and bad, but after the depression of the early and mid thirties, which almost wiped us out, as it did so many other concerns, we came back slowly, but surely.” He added that “Today this has become a good prosperous business again, enjoying a tremendous amount of good will in our trading area. God has blessed us richly and let us never be unmindful of that.”¹

The Company sought to assure the continuation of those ethics and business practices by conferring the presidency upon the final member of the First Generation, Richard R. Kuiken Sr. that same year. Richard’s tenure as president, which lasted ten years, was a time of remarkable stability for the company. Business hummed along at a steady pace, hardly varying year to year for nearly a decade. This steady business allowed Kuiken Brothers to become a partner to many other organizations throughout Fair Lawn and northern New Jersey through regular donations. The Company gave to a wide range of organizations such as sports leagues, youth programs, and even paid for disadvantaged youths to attend summer camps. Kuiken Brothers also supported the many different religious institutions in Fair Lawn and the surrounding area. Church-going men themselves, they did not discriminate in their giving, supporting the many Christian and Jewish groups in the area. Such moves won the Company a tremendous amount of respect in the rapidly changing community of Fair Lawn.

The Company gave to a wide range of organizations such as sports leagues, youth programs, and even paid for disadvantaged youths to attend summer camps.

¹ Company Minutes, recorded by Edward N. Kuiken, 14 January, 1952.



Company lumber truck, circa 1940's, depicting how trucks were loaded and unloaded on job sites.

The stability that allowed Kuiken Brothers to give to charity also allowed a modest growth in the yard and in the Company's operations. Space was beginning to get tight both in the yard and in the office and shop. In 1961 the Company expanded both the office and the shop in order to be able to take on more administrative staff. Two new sheds were added in 1958 and 1960 which helped enclose more of the products that were being carried, while a steel roof was extended between the two existing sheds on the North side of 6th Street. This new stock was moved about the yard by the purchase of a Hyster 8,000 lb. fork-lift in 1955 and the expansion of the Company's shipping fleet with the purchase of three new trucks in 1957 and another large flatbed in 1960. As a mark of this expanding role in the market, Kuiken Brothers joined the New Jersey Lumberman's Association in 1956.

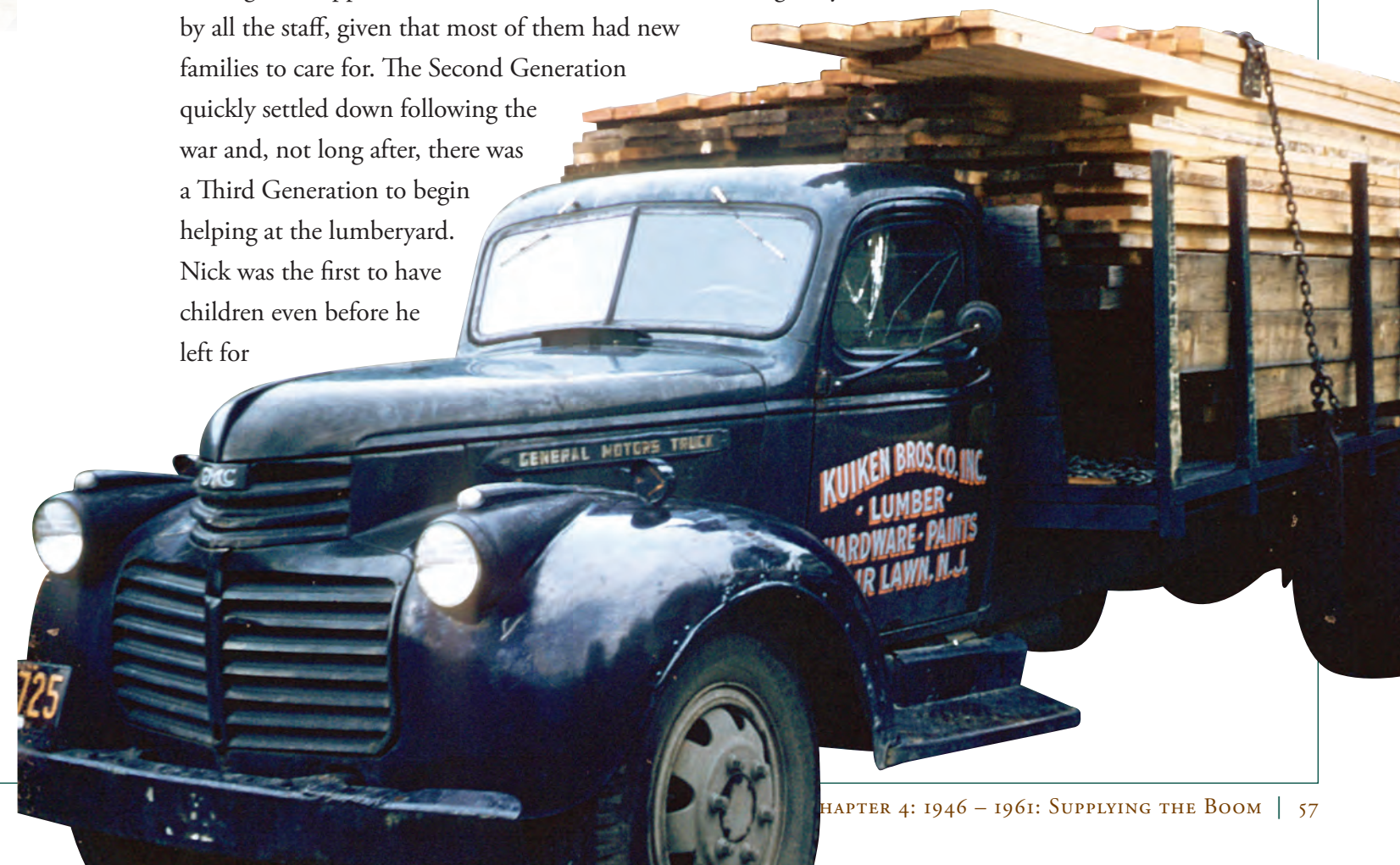
Such associations helped solidify the Company's position in the region, a fact that was especially important during the time of transition which gripped the family throughout the 1950's. This decade saw the passing of two more of the founding members of Kuiken Brothers. The first was Dirk Kuiken, who died in 1952 after a long illness. Dirk's death created a bit of a conundrum for the Company since none of his children were involved in the business. According to the bylaws, the stock passed to Dirk's widow, Jennie, who had the option of passing on the stock to any of her sons who wished to join Kuiken Brothers. As it turned out, Dirk's children all took up careers outside the Company and in 1962 the board of directors bought back Dirk's share of the stock and retained it as treasury stock.

In 1956 the firm suffered another loss with the death of Henry Kuiken. Henry had remained an active member of the company even after his retirement, attending many board and stockholder meetings when he was not in Florida on one of his many fishing trips. It was while he was in Florida that he died, leaving Richard Sr. as the final original partner to provide leadership and experience to Kuiken Brothers.

This Richard Sr. did for the pivotal decade when control of the company firmly transitioned into the hands of the Second Generation. Richard Sr. continued to manage the day to day operations and still worked in the shop, but also served a more statesmanlike role for the Company. Whenever big customers like John Minnema arrived at the yard, Richard Sr. would always take the time for a chat and perhaps a quick Manhattan at the local bar, Mickey's, across the street or the Fair Lawn Café just up the street (these were different times). Richard Sr.'s final few years working at Kuiken Brothers have been fondly remembered by other employees and family members who like to note that Richard often supplemented the Company's Christmas bonuses out of his own pocket as a token of his gratitude for the hard work being accomplished by all the employees.

Small gifts of appreciation such as these would have been greatly valued by all the staff, given that most of them had new families to care for. The Second Generation quickly settled down following the war and, not long after, there was a Third Generation to begin helping at the lumberyard. Nick was the first to have children even before he left for

Whenever big customers like John Minnema arrived at the yard, Richard Sr. would always take the time for a chat and perhaps a quick Manhattan at the local bar, Mickey's, across the street or the Fair Lawn Café just up the street (these were different times).



the war, with his daughter Muriel being born in 1940 and his son Henry born in 1943. Another son, Nicholas, was born after the war in 1950. Nick, like his father Henry, also served the community in various ways, most notably as the chairman of the board of directors of Columbia Bank.

Richard Jr. similarly wove his family into the fabric of the community by continuing to serve as a volunteer firefighter for Co. 1 in Fair Lawn. He also was a member of the American Legion Post in town. He and his wife Jeanette began their family soon after the war with the birth of Wayne, their first son, arriving in 1947. Their second son, Richard, followed in 1952.

Ed followed a similar path as his cousins. Upon his return from Europe and his joining the Company, Ed married his sweetheart Marjorie in 1946. His first son Edward was born in 1947 and was followed by Doug in 1950 and Robert in 1952. Like Richard, Ed also served in Co. 1 as a volunteer firefighter and joined his cousins at the American Legion post as well.

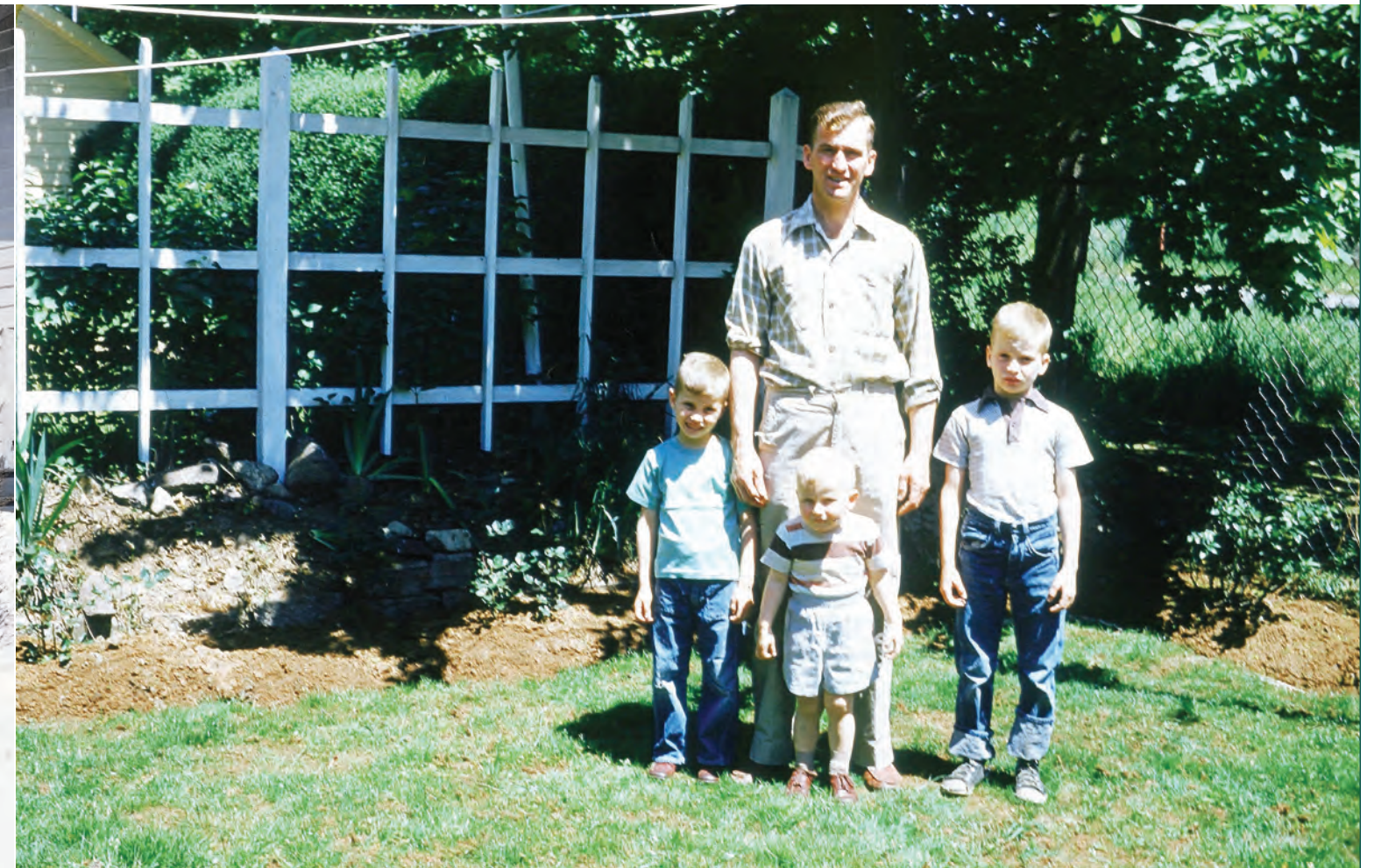
These children were brought into the Company as extra help almost as soon as it was legal to do so. Each of the sons spent many of their afternoons after school and their Saturdays sweeping floors and cleaning up the yard. The first of the Third Generation to officially become part of the Company was Nick's son, Henry, who joined Chris Schroeder in the shop in 1957.

While Evan and his wife Evelyn did not have any children, they combined with the other Kuikens to make the Company feel like a family endeavor for all involved. Being as small as it was at the time, the employees all worked cheek-by-jowl with the family and in many ways became just as much a part of the operation as the men whose name was on the building. This camaraderie was cultivated by the true friendship and mutual respect that grew between the different people working at Kuiken Brothers.

A good example of this is illustrated in the official company minutes of 1951. While discussing future business prospects and the possibility of purchasing important new equipment, time was taken from the meeting to officially



Marjorie Kuiken and son, Douglas, in front of Grandma's house (Nellie Kuiken), circa 1957.

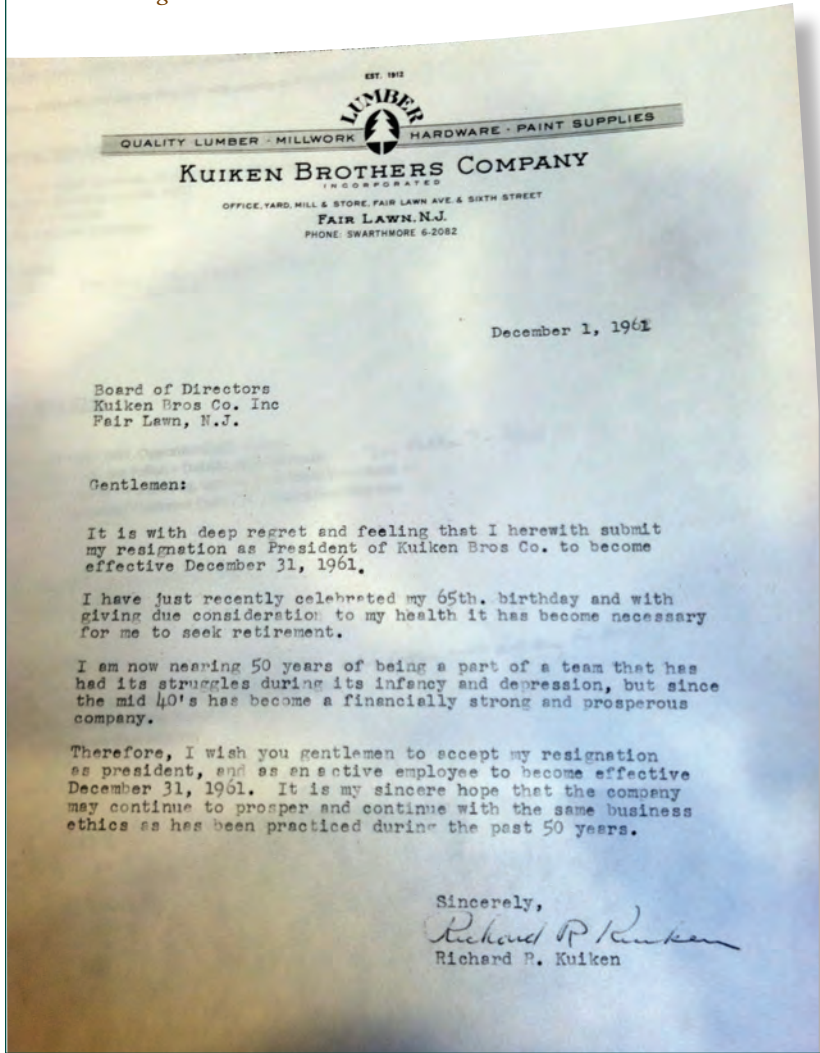


Edward N. Kuiken and his three boys (left to right), Douglas, Robert, and Edward Jr.

delegate to Ed and Richard Jr. the very important task of planning a bachelor party for Frank Dykstra. This type of friendship was not surprising since most of the men and women at Kuiken Brothers lived within a few blocks of each other, while many also attended the same church.

The Company also bonded each year during a much beloved tradition that began soon after the War. Every Columbus Day Monday, the Company would charter a fishing boat and take the entire staff out for the day. Other small gestures such as the Company purchasing Thanksgiving turkeys for all employees, a tradition begun in 1957, along with the annual Christmas dinner held for the staff and their spouses, went a long way to cementing the status of Kuiken Brothers as a true family-run business in the broadest sense.

Richard Kuiken's letter of resignation on Kuiken Brothers letterhead, 1961. The document features an early version of the Kuiken Brothers logo.



THREE GENERATIONS

As the 1950's gave way to a new decade, Kuiken Brothers continued as it always had. It acted as a lumberyard, hardware store, carpentry shop, and performed just about any other function that it could to make a profit. With the slow incorporation of the Third Generation, the future of the business was secured and, with a committed and close-knit staff, it seemed that the Company was finally in a position where it could enjoy a few years of stability and prosperity.

The comfortable position of the Company gave Richard Sr. a perfect opportunity to retire. He had guided Kuiken Brothers through the transition from the First Generation to the Second. As the last living member of the First Generation, he remained an important elder statesman for the business and, in early 1962 at age 65, he finally decided that it was time to take a step back. But the Second Generation was not quite ready to strike

out on their own and while the board “accepted with regrets” Richard Sr.’s resignation, they requested that he stay on a few more months in a new position as Chairman of the Board of Directors.²

In March, 1962 at the meeting of the Board of Directors Richard was nominated to serve as the Chairman for another year

but this request was “declined for reasons of health.”³ It is not surprising that the men of the Second Generation wanted Richard to stay on as a mentor and guide. The men of the First Generation of Kuiken Brothers had laid the foundation upon which the entire enterprise was built and instilled the values upon which the Company operated. Losing the final connection to the Company’s foundation meant that the responsibilities of the future rested upon the Second Generation alone. In his resignation letter, Richard Sr. gave some words of encouragement and advice to the four men who were about to take up the reins of Kuiken Brothers stating that “It is my sincere hope that the company may continue to prosper and continue with the same business ethics as has been practiced during the past 50 years.”⁴

Upon Richard Sr.’s retirement, Nick assumed the presidency of the Company and Edward the vice-presidency. Together Nick, Edward, Richard Jr. and Evan sought to fulfill Richard Sr.’s sincere hope and attempted to model their business practices and vision on that of their fathers. This meant that the era of stability at Kuiken Brothers would continue as the Second Generation continued to value hard work and constancy over quick gains and rapid expansion. By doing this, the men of Kuiken Brothers hoped to be good stewards of what was bequeathed to them and to pass along a strong company to their sons who were rapidly coming of age and coming into the business.



From left to right, Edward N., Richard R., Nicholas H., and Evan H., attending the grand opening of the new hardware store and warehouse on Fair lawn Ave., 1976.

2 Company minutes, recorded by Edward N. Kuiken, 8 January, 1962.
3 Company minutes, recorded by Edward N. Kuiken, 12 March, 1962.
4 Richard R. Kuiken Sr., Resignation Letter, 1 December, 1961.

The Second Generation (left to right), Evan H. Kuiken, Richard R. Kuiken, Edward N. Kuiken, and Nicholas H. Kuiken.

CHAPTER 5

1962 – 1984

Stewardship of the Second Generation

*B*Y THE MID-1960's,
KUIKEN BROTHERS HAD
FINALLY ACHIEVED THE

TYPE OF STABILITY THAT THE
FOUNDERS OF THE COMPANY
HAD LONG DREAMED OF.

Business had settled into a comfortable pattern and the yard became a local fixture for contractors, builders and do-it-yourselfers. The constant ups and downs that had marked much of the Company's first fifty years were more-or-less smoothed out. The men of the Second Generation, brought up during the dark years of the Depression and forged by the trauma of war and separation from family, made it their mission to be good stewards of what they had inherited and to keep the Company strong during their watch.



But by the end of the Second Generation's careers in the 1980's, things once again began to change. New threats loomed on the horizon. These threats were less fearsome than Depression and War, but were in some ways more dangerous to the model of operations at Kuiken Brothers. New competitors in the form of large home improvement stores would creep into the area by the early 1980's and confront the staff of Kuiken Brothers with the uncomfortable reality that business as usual would no longer guarantee the long term survival of the business.

SLOW BUT STEADY

But in 1962 these pending shifts were far in the distance. That year saw both the retirement of Richard Sr. and the official assumption of leadership by the Second Generation, but it was a year that also saw the fiftieth anniversary of the Company. In typical fashion, the Kuikens took an understated approach to the momentous occasion, with Richard Jr. offering a 15% sale on items in the hardware store. Despite this low-key approach, the business was right where the Second Generation wanted it to be. After nearly a decade of remarkable

consistency in yearly sales, the Company was poised for some slow but steady growth. Kuiken Brothers' financial strength had never been healthier and its reputation remained sterling throughout the community.

The Company was even offered a chance to expand its hardware business with two separate prospects being offered to them in September 1962. The two stores, one on Saddle River Road and the other in Franklin Lakes, would have dramatically expanded the Kuikens profile in the area. After some discussion, however, it was decided that such a move would be unwise given the fact that Kuiken Brothers' strengths lay in the lumber yard, with the profit margins being much tighter in the hardware division. This decision was typical of the mindset of the Second Generation. A meeting with the Company auditor in 1965 reflects this, when a response to queries about capital plans to prepare for potential growth was simply that "there is no plan made for expansion at this time."⁵ Expansion was an idea foreign to them, since their overall priority was to build upon the

⁵ Company minutes, recorded by Evan H. Kuiken, 1 February, 1965.



Nicholas Kuiken on a mill tour with Edward Kuiken (photographer) of the Farley & Loetscher Mfg. Co. in Dubuque, Iowa. This was once the largest mill working plants in the world, manufacturing sash, doors, blinds, mouldings, brackets and stairs.



Nicholas Kuiken surveys the inventory of the Farley & Loetscher Mfg. Co.



Hunting and fishing were a favorite pastime of the Kuiken family. They would often take trips together and bring along customers.



Doug Kuiken perched on what would become a venison dinner for family and friends circa 1955.



*Kuiken Brothers Christmas Party, 1971. **Front row** (left to right), Chris Schroeder, Seymore "Red" Fopma, Terry Josten, Wilma Furler, Florence Ruodabush, James Banta, Edward Kuiken Jr. **Back row** (left to right), Richard A. Kuiken, George Wiseman, Wayne Kuiken, Henry Kuiken, Frank Dykstra, Doug Kuiken.*

foundations that they had in Fair Lawn and to increase the store to its full potential. Any added responsibilities would have simply been a distraction.

To that end, the board of directors continued their tried and true methods of improving the yard and the shipping fleet while continuing to build relationships with their customers, the community at large and, most importantly, with their employees. Special engagements were specifically arranged for customers such as a contractor fishing outing, venison dinners during the hunting season and beefsteaks every year around Christmas. These outreach programs were supplemented by continued advertising in the local papers as well as the informal advertisement gained through charitable donations to many of the non-profit organizations of the area.

But it was in continuing to strengthen the relationships between the employees and the family that the Second Generation truly made its mark. The tradition of buying turkeys at Thanksgiving, the annual Columbus Day fishing trip, and yearly Christmas parties were all important morale boosters and were important ways of bringing the families of the directors and staff together. In many ways it was easy for the Kuikens to want to take care of their employees since the staff was exceptionally loyal to the Company. In 1964 and 1965 Kuiken Brothers celebrated the 25th anniversary of employment for Red Fopma and Frank Dykstra, respectively, with gifts of engraved watches. By this time the two men were the



George Wiseman, handwriting an order for customer, John Pisor of Clifton Roofing, on a carbon copy machine. Photographed in the new office on 6th Street, circa 1970.



Site of the original lumber and millwork sales office. This building was renovated in the 1960's.

longest-serving members of the Company, having worked longer at full-time than any of the Second Generation. The directors similarly sought to take care of another long-time employee, Steve Van Handel, whose increasingly ill-health made it difficult for him to continue working a normal schedule. The Company helped Van Handel with time off and even encouraged him to seek medical treatment and helped with his hospital bill.

Kuiken Brothers also had another set of unique, if more transient employees. Throughout the 1960's and into the 1970's, the Company filled gaps in the yard and in the store with members of the Fair Lawn Police Department who worked part time to supplement the pay packages they received from the town. Along with the part time officers were the various women who helped keep the office, and the business, running smoothly. These women, including people such as Florence Ruedebush and Terry Josten, did much to keep things in line and organized; skills that the Kuiken men were not always in full possession of.

Of course not all of the relationships between the owners and employees were good ones. There were the usual disagreements about pay and other tensions that sometimes marred the tranquility of the business, but on the whole the situation was a friendly one, or at least one of mutual respect. No employee was ever expected to work harder than a Kuiken. This sometimes led to the older Kuikens being unnecessarily hard on the younger generations in an attempt to openly enforce this maxim. Yet the system worked and the disputes between ownership and staff remained few and far between. This general goodwill was on show when Richard Kuiken Sr. passed away in early 1968. Several people who attended the funeral recalled family and employees openly shedding tears at the death of the beloved former president, a show of emotion not common among that generation.



Casey DeRitter, George Wiseman, Ed Kuiken Sr., standing outside of "The Shed" in Fair Lawn.

As a part of this mutual respect, the directors decided to tie the fate of themselves together with their employees through a profit-sharing plan. Beginning in 1969 this plan helped both the Kuikens and their employees prepare for retirement by distributing shares of the profit. This was no idle gesture since it benefitted the employees as well as the directors through lowering tax rates. With the steady growth in profits there was also more and more to go around.

NEW BLOOD

Through the efforts of the family and employees, Kuiken Brothers began to experience steady growth year on year beginning in 1964. Business had gotten so good that, by mid 1966, Ed Kuiken began to complain that the lumber yard was

“operating with too little help.”⁶ Luckily for Ed and the others there was a ready-made group to step into this gap. The sons of the directors were all beginning to come of age by the late 1960’s and the increase in business meant that there were places for some of them. In fact, with the many sons being born to Ed, Nick and Richard, it had at one time become a concern that Kuiken Brothers would not have a place for all of them. Initially several members of the Third Generation expressed no interest in working at the yard. But circumstances changed and a few crucial decisions were taken by both the Second and Third Generation that would shape the future of Kuiken Brothers.

As has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, the first member of the Third Generation to officially join the company was

Nick’s son, Henry. Henry began working part time in 1957 while he attended a vocational high school learning carpentry. In 1960, after graduating high school, he joined the

⁶ Company minutes, recorded by Evan H. Kuiken, 9 May, 1966.



Henry Kuiken upstairs in the new office in Fair Lawn.



Ed Kuiken Jr. upon graduating from basic training, 1967.

Marine Reserve for a brief period before returning to the Company at the end of the summer. With his carpentry training, Henry was sent into the shop where he worked under the supervision of Chris Schroeder.

A few years later, Henry was joined by his cousin Edward, the oldest son of Ed. Edward began working at the yard immediately following his graduation from high school, in 1965. He quickly became a fixture working side by side with his father, spending much of his time driving deliveries in the flatbed truck. In 1967, Edward was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Vietnam where he continued driving trucks as part of a supply convoy. There he witnessed some heavy fighting and was eventually transferred to a position as a gunner on the escort vehicles that shepherded the supply trucks through the



Ed Kuiken Jr. standing by his convoy vehicle in Pleiku, S. Vietnam, late 1968.



Doug and Wayne (forward facing) on a fishing trip. Close friend of the family and Company, Jack Dalton, also on board.



George Wiseman helps a customer at the Fair Lawn lumberyard.

jungles of South Vietnam. Edward was discharged in 1970 and returned to his old position in the yard of Kuiken Brothers.

While Edward was overseas, several other members of the family returned to the business. One was Edward's younger brother, Doug, who began working full time at the yard in 1969. Doug's entry into the business was not guaranteed initially. After high school he had gone to study at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan where, despite decent grades, he felt he was not getting the most out of his education. Therefore after a short time he decided it would be better to return to New Jersey and to begin working. This decision infuriated his father Ed, who wanted Doug to finish his education. Ed gruffly announced that there would be no position at Kuiken Brothers for his second son since the only open position would soon be filled by the return of Edward. Doug duly looked



Back row, Ed Jr., Doug, Henry, and Wayne. Seated, President Evan H. Kuiken. In the Fair Lawn Board room, circa 1984.

elsewhere for work and received an interview and a job offer from Otis Elevators in New York City. At this moment it seemed that Doug would set off on a different course, and perhaps he would have, had it not been for the intervention of his uncle, Evan. Evan reminded Ed that the Company was short-staffed and that it would be foolish to allow Doug, who had spent many summers working at Kuiken Brothers, to go—while having to train any new employee from scratch. Evan's cajoling eventually convinced Ed who reluctantly allowed Doug to come and work at the lumberyard.

While Doug almost began a new career outside of Kuiken Brothers, another family member actually did work at another job for before returning to the business. Richard Jr.'s son, Wayne, had moved to Iowa in 1965 after high school to attend Northwestern College in Orange City. There he met his wife, Betty, a



The lumberyard on Sixth Street Fair Lawn, NJ circa 1969

Midwestern girl from Minnesota. The two sought to make a life for themselves in the Midwest and after graduating in 1970, Wayne took a job in Iowa as an insurance salesman. It might have stayed that way had his father not needed temporary help for the summer of 1970. Richard Biggs, a long time employee in the hardware store, had departed Kuiken Brothers leaving Richard Jr. short-handed. Richard “requested consideration for extra help in the store” and a phone-call to Iowa attracted Wayne back to New Jersey where the expectation was that he would stay for the summer before returning to the Midwest.⁷ As fate would have it, Wayne’s summer at the hardware store lasted for over thirty years as he stayed and became part of the Company.

The final member of the Third Generation to join Kuiken Brothers was Ed’s youngest son, Robert, who entered the business much later. Robert spent several years working at Faber Brothers, a flooring and furniture store, until Evan once again intervened in 1980. The store was short-handed at that time and Evan once

⁷ Company minutes, recorded by Evan H. Kuiken, 13 October, 1969.



Single axle flatbed lumber truck parked in front of the company office at 13-44 Sixth Street, Fair Lawn.

more convinced Ed to invite another son into the business. With Robert joining Kuiken Brothers, the Third Generation was complete.

EXPANDING BUSINESS, EXPANDING HORIZONS

As the Third Generation integrated itself into the Company, sales began a steady march upward – growth that would eventually set the stage for expansion. Such expansion increasingly became a necessary part of survival. Although Kuiken Brothers had carved out an important niche as a local lumberyard, hardware store and shop, the 1970’s would see the beginning of the influx of large home supply stores that would begin to drain away many of the small do-it-yourselfers that provided much of the padding to the Company’s bottom-line. The problem was that Kuiken Brothers was not yet well-positioned to cater to the large builders and contractors that were becoming more a part of the building scene in Northern New Jersey. With only single-axel trucks, the Company did not have the capacity to deliver large loads quickly, a service that many builders viewed as indispensable.

Therefore the achievement of reaching \$1 million in sales was celebrated with an extra bonus, an hourly raise for everyone but the directors, and an especially large Christmas Party.

But in the early 1970's these problems were simply small clouds on the horizon. In 1972 Kuiken Brothers enjoyed its first \$1 million year in sales. This achievement was the result of the patient husbanding of business that had carried the Company through the 1960's. The store and yard had built up a loyal following amongst the local builders and when business got better for the construction industry, these close ties quickly translated into increased sales for Kuiken Brothers. The rapid increase in business put a strain on the capacity of the employees. Therefore the achievement of reaching \$1 million in sales was celebrated with an extra bonus, an hourly raise for everyone but the directors, and an especially large Christmas Party.

This increase in sales was accompanied by a slow modernization in the way the store and yard were operated. In 1972 the Company introduced charge cards for their regular customers. That same year Kuiken Brothers also worked to become compliant with all the requirements of the new Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) by installing safety features and bringing practices in line. During this time, the Company also became more involved in the Fair Lawn Chamber of Commerce as a way of supporting its business activities. This was accompanied by an increase in advertising which was overseen by Doug Kuiken as well as a general sprucing up of the store and yard's appearance with a new paint-job, lighting and signage in honor of Fair Lawn's 50th anniversary.

One of the most important steps taken to improve the quality of the business at this juncture was a timely decision to purchase a property which was sandwiched between two Kuiken properties on Fair Lawn Ave. The house, owned by

Another load of roofing ready to go, circa 1970



The Hardware Store and Millwork Shop on the corner of Fair Lawn Ave and Sixth Street circa 1965.



Material handling equipment outside of the warehouse on Sixth Street.

the Voss family, nearly abutted the hardware store and hindered any ability of the store to expand or to use the other property further down the road. Therefore, in 1972, the board of directors decided that an offer should be made for the property in order to ensure that the hardware store could be expended. The process of acquiring the Voss house was long and drawn-out. The gentleman living there was elderly and the Company initially offered to purchase the property while allowing Mr. Voss to reside in his house until his death. This deal was never consummated, however, as Mr. Voss’ daughter arranged for the sale to go through with the allowance that the former owner could reside there for a year while a new home was prepared for him nearer to the rest of his family. The final sale was agreed in 1975 and opened an important opportunity for the Company.

FATHERS AND SONS

Yet the whole process was not as smooth as it could have been, as the board had been divided over the wisdom of such a large purchase, never mind the costs of expanding the store into the new property. The first impetus for the move had come from Richard Kuiken, who had desperately wanted to expand his hardware store, but the real push came from the four men of the Third Generation who were beginning to grasp that expansion was necessary for survival. These four young men, Henry, Edward, Wayne and Doug, had been elevated to the board of directors as

Another quality load of building materials tied up and strapped down, circa 1975



members of an advisory committee in 1972 and had quickly flexed their organizational muscles in many areas of the business, often to the annoyance of their elders.

But it was in pushing for the purchase of the Voss house that tensions began to open up between members of the Second and Third Generations. These disagreements, not uncommon amongst fathers and sons regardless of whether they are running a business or not, were a natural outgrowth of the new generation coming into the business, with new ideas developed either at college or in their training elsewhere. Yet two things conspired to make these natural tensions transform into an important turning point for the Company. The first was that the Kuikens were firm practitioners of “tough love” towards members of their staff—and especially towards members of the family. While the men of the Second Generation were widely admired by their customers and employees, it would be a far stretch to describe some of them as “warm and fuzzy.” The store and the yard were places where fools were not brooked and words were not minced. This was especially true of their treatment of the Third Generation, whom the Second Generation were fixed on ensuring that they received no special treatment. The second factor was that Kuiken Brothers experienced a rather unexpected and sharp decrease in business at the end of 1973 and beginning of 1974 as a result of the OPEC oil price increases and Arab Oil Embargo and the subsequent spike in fuel prices. This put added pressure on the Company and frayed some nerves, right in the middle of the decision to purchase the Voss house and to expand the business, leading to a situation where patience and tact were preciously limited.

Matters came to a head during a special meeting of the board in October 1974. The meeting was called by Nick Kuiken to address issues regarding what he thought was poor effort being put out by the Third Generation. Nick believed that the Third Generation was relying a bit too much on their name and that they were neither caring for equipment nor taking their responsibilities seriously enough. These accusations provoked a strong response from the Third Generation who requested permission to draw up a list of complaints regarding the management of the Company. The meeting adjourned after what must have been an uncomfortable meal, with Evan recording, tongue firmly in cheek, that “An enjoyable dinner and meeting was had by all.”⁸

⁸ Company minutes, recorded by Evan H. Kuiken, 7 October, 1974.

While the men of the Second Generation were widely admired by their customers and employees, it would be a far stretch to describe some of them as “warm and fuzzy.”



Circa 1977 - Chris Schroeder in the Fair Lawn Millwork Shop. Chris is milling oak hubs, which would be used by surveyors for stakes. "We used to make them by the thousands" recalls Doug Kuiken. Sold for approximately \$10 a bundle.

Subsequent events would prove this dust-up to be an important episode in the Company's history. Neither side was totally in the wrong, but by instigating a challenge to the authority of the Second Generation, Henry, Edward, Wayne and Doug were asserting their own stake in the business and winning their fathers' respect in the process. This would ultimately prove a move that would allow the two sides to work together to prepare the Company for the challenges ahead. But at the time it made for a difficult few months. After meeting separately, the Third Generation presented their "constructive criticisms" to the directors in January, 1975. These critiques were initially not well-received. In an angry rebuttal to most of the points, some members of the Second Generation openly discussed retirement.

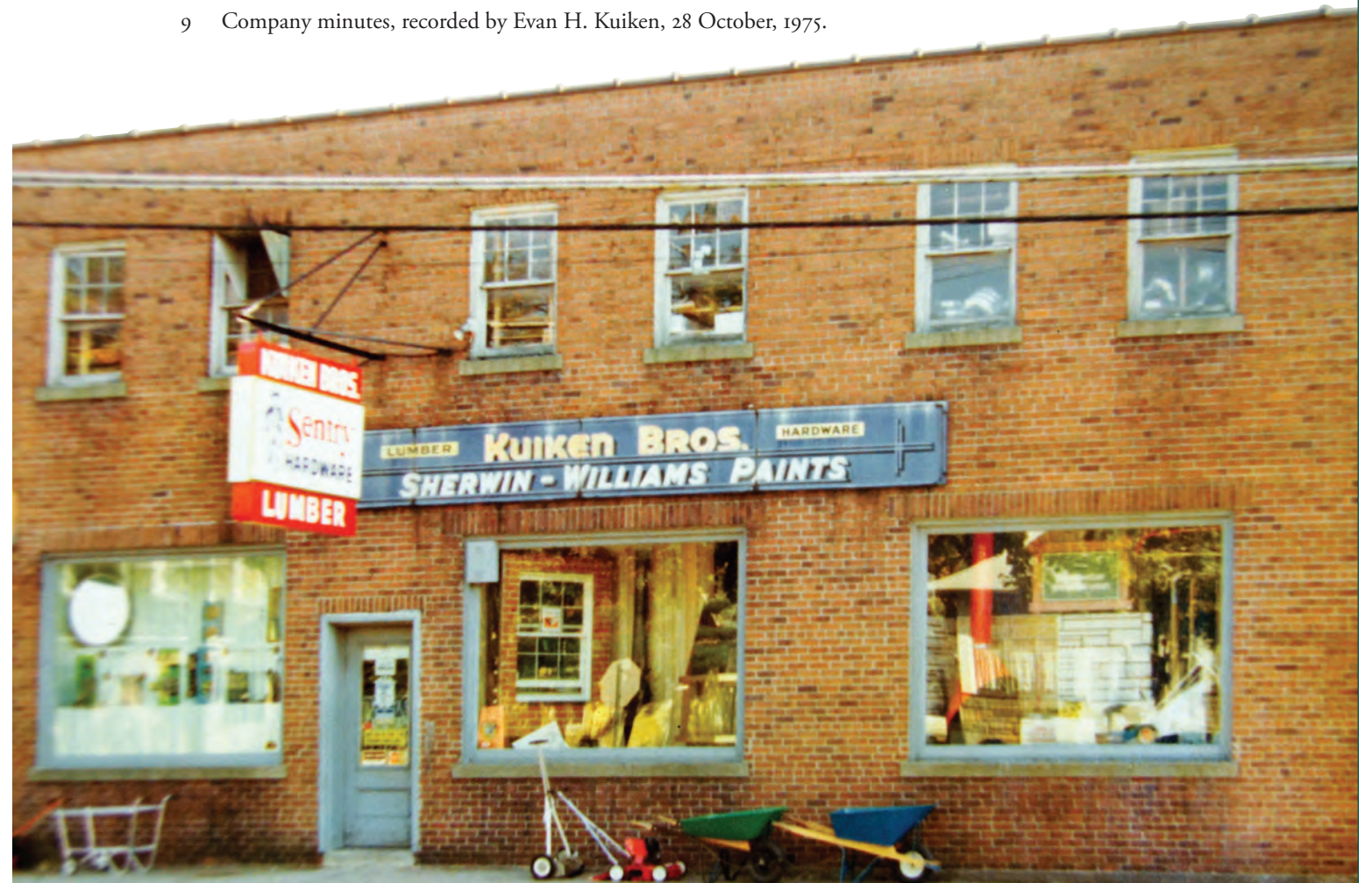
Yet cooler heads ultimately prevailed and the Second Generation began to see the necessity of giving their sons more responsibility and a greater say in the business, while the Third Generation also quickly learned the true weight of running a company. Once again, the impetus for this change was the Voss property. When the purchase became official in March, 1975, Kuiken Brothers began to make firmer plans for how to use the new space. Henry took the lead on this issue, pushing the board to make final decisions about the property so that the expansion could take place. With Henry's prodding, the house was demolished in September, 1975 and the property prepared for new construction. By

October, the architect and Henry had begun the process of winning the approvals necessary to expand the hardware store and to use the old property further down Fair Lawn Ave as parking. Impressed with the initiative taken by the Third Generation, the views of the older Kuikens began to soften towards the complaints presented to them in January. During a special meeting at the end of October, a year after the initial conflict erupted, Nick Kuiken brought up the idea of "giving younger members stock in the [corporation]," as he felt he "would like to see the younger members given more decision making authority."⁹

A MODEL YARD

With the hatchet buried between the two generations and the expansion of the hardware store completed in 1976 under Henry's watch, the Company received an important psychological boost. The purchase of the property and the construction of the new half of the building was the largest capital outlay in Kuiken Brothers history up to that point. The success of the venture went a long way in opening the Board up to new possibilities for the business.

⁹ Company minutes, recorded by Evan H. Kuiken, 28 October, 1975.





Wayne Kuiken in the store, mid 1970's. Wood-burning stoves became popular immediately following the Arab Oil Embargo in 1973.

When the project was complete, Kuiken Brothers had a state-of-the-art hardware store carrying a wide array of hardware, electrical and plumbing supplies. Behind the new store, Henry oversaw the construction of a large storage area which in turn allowed the hardware store to stock more bulk items. One range of products that the Company moved into briefly was the sale of fireplaces, kerosene heaters and woodstoves. There was a large push for these products in the 1970's as Americans looked to cut back on the use of oil products as a result of oil insecurity. Kuiken Brothers, trying to take advantage of this phenomenon, signed onto an innovative advertising campaign which was met with short-lived success.

The yard was not to be outdone, however. Minor improvements were made to the warehouses to fix the roofs and to expand the doorways to allow for bigger trucks to load. The yard also began to stock larger quantities of millwork and molding supplies which Kuiken Brothers acquired from places such as Black Millwork. The increase in these purchases gradually replaced the need for the shop to produce as much material directly for sale. The shop did continue to make special orders, however. When in 1975 the Fourth Christian Reformed Church, home church of many of the Kuikens, burned to the ground in Riverside, Paterson in a tragic fire resulting in the death of a Paterson fire

captain, Kuiken Brothers stepped in to help with the building of a church in a new location in Wyckoff. Chris Schroeder once again helped design and fabricate the moldings and millwork that adorned the new building, including a barrel ceiling.

But this was to be the final major custom project for the Company, however. In 1975 Chris Schroeder announced his impending retirement. At the age of 80, Schroeder had continued to provide valuable services to Kuiken Brothers and was for all intents and purposes irreplaceable. Upon his retirement, the Company began to move away from much of the custom work it had done in the past. This did not mean that the shop was not up to the occasional project, but Schroeder's departure helped along a process by which Kuiken Brothers began to focus more on its strengths in hardware and lumber and worked on becoming a model yard that would attract the large builders who were beginning to dominate the area.

Another opportunity to do this came in 1978 when Nellie Kuiken, the wife of Nicholas A. Kuiken of the First Generation, passed away and left her property at 6-02 Fair Lawn Avenue to her sons Ed and Evan. The property sat right on the corner of 6th Street and Fair



The new Fair Lawn Showroom and Office in 1983.

Kuiken Bros

celebrates our 71st Anniversary with a gala

GRAND OPENING

OUR NEW LUMBER SHOWROOM

Kuiken gives you more... More displays... more selection... and more service. Our new lumber showroom (on the corner of Fair Lawn Avenue and 6th Street) offers you better selections than ever. We're proud to keep up with your needs today. Since 1912 our prime concern has been to provide you with quality hardware and lumber supplies. And, what's more, our three generations of ownership are dedicated to the community and its appearance. We look forward to seeing you during our Grand Opening Anniversary Celebration.

Nothing to purchase. Just fill out this coupon and deposit it in the box in our new lumber showroom (additional blanks in the store). Deadline is July 15, 1983. Drawing to be held on Saturday, July 16 at 9:00 A.M.

FREE! WIN!

\$750 worth of bldg. & hdwre mdse.

1st Prize \$250 worth of mdse.

2nd thru 6th Prizes \$100 worth of mdse. each

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ENTER MY NAME IN
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THANK YOU CONTEST.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____

PHONE _____

1 PER CUSTOMER

FAIR LAWN AVE. & 6th ST., FAIR LAWN, N.J.

Open Daily 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. • Saturdays 7:30 a.m. - 12 Noon • Closed Sundays **796-2082**

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Image of Doug's price level matrix spreadsheet. This document was eventually used as the guide to set up the price matrices in the new computer system.

Lawn Avenue, directly across from the hardware store and abutting part of the lumber yard. Discussions were immediately had about what the Company could do with the property. Some members of the Board advocated a conservative strategy of renovating the house on the property and repurposing it as an office. But others, including most of the Third Generation pushed hard to tear down the house and to build an entirely new showroom, office and storage area. It was eventually decided by the directors that the most benefit would be derived from a purpose-built showroom and office and therefore an architect was hired to draw up plans for the new building.

But with a big mortgage for the new section of the hardware store still on the books, and the property securely in Kuiken hands, it was decided to put off the decision for the time being. This delay was extended because of the economic downturn which accompanied the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Plans for the new building were completed in the fall of 1980 but progress continued to be stifled. With business suffering some stagnation, Kuiken Brothers dragged out the decision on the new building to the point where the town threatened to cancel the building permit they had received. Construction began slowly at the end of 1981 and the building was finally finished in early 1983. With its completion, Kuiken Brothers possessed a state-of-the-art showroom to accompany its large hardware store. With the offices being moved into the new building, the old office could be put to other purposes as well, increasing the storage space and the amenities of the employees.

MOVING FORWARD

The success of the two building expansions, coupled with a turn-around in business, gave Kuiken Brothers the confidence to begin flexing its muscles beyond Fair Lawn. In 1984, the Company took two more important steps to modernizing and expanding the capacity of the business. The first was the purchase of a tandem flatbed truck for \$74,000. This truck gave Kuiken Brothers the ability to deliver much larger loads of lumber and helped them compete with other lumber yards for the business of the large builders in the area. In order to keep track of this business and to help the Company tailor its stocking and sales policies, the Board decided that same year to buy a computer system.



Doug and Henry led the search for a system capable of handling the needs of the Company and eventually settled on the Triad system which would allow Kuiken Brothers to keep track of “inventory, points of sale, accounts receivable, accounts payable, etc.”¹⁰ The system cost Kuiken Brothers \$89,690 with a monthly service charge of \$1,100.

Kuiken Brothers first truck with dumping capabilities, helping to make deliveries extremely efficient.

These massive outlays, combined with the other updates to the store and yard as part of the building expansion showed how serious the Company was in preparing for the future. These moves show a yard and store that was positioning itself to face down the threats to its business posed by the increasing number of large home improvement centers, beginning with Sears, which would soon be joined by the likes of Home Depot and Lowes. To lead this new chapter, the Company moved to bring the Third Generation into full partnership. In 1981, Edward, Henry and Wayne were elevated to the position of full directors with Doug joining them a year later. To make way for the rise of their sons, Ed and Richard announced their retirements in 1982. In 1983, Nick resigned his position as the president of the company and assumed the role of chairman of the board. Evan, the youngest member of the Second Generation, and a stalwart defender of the need for Kuiken Brothers to expand and adapt, was elected president and prepared to shepherd the Company into an era of massive expansion.

¹⁰ Company minutes, recorded by Wayne Kuiken, 3 December, 1984.

1985 – 1996

Beyond a Single Location in Fair Lawn

*T*HE 1980'S WERE IN MANY WAYS A GOLDEN ERA FOR THE FAIR LAWN LOCATION OF KUIKEN BROTHERS. These years saw a rapid growth in sales as the economy boomed and the reforms and improvements which were made earlier took hold. Under Evan Kuiken's leadership, a group of young men were hired who would grow up in the Company and work for the firm for many years bringing with them new insights and talents. But it was a golden era that had its limits; by the end of the decade, Kuiken Brothers had reached the zenith of what was possible in Fair Lawn.

The Fair Lawn lumberyard was quickly running out of space.



Evan Kuiken maintained strong relationships throughout the local business community, as seen here where the company worked with the Fair Lawn Rotary Club to use the company's lumber truck as the base to their float, a tradition that continues today. Evan is seen above driving the parade truck.

REACHING THE LIMIT

The decisions made in the late 1970's and early 1980's to upgrade Fair Lawn's facilities had been fraught with risk, but the hard work and diligence of the Company gradually began to pay off. Sales had picked up after the brief recession of the early 1980's and Kuiken Brothers gained market share from its competitors. A large measure of the Company's success in this era was due to the strong connections that the new president, Evan, had been making throughout the business community through his membership and leadership of the Rotary Club and other groups. Evan's unique personality won him many friends and

The Company remained dynamic and future-oriented, but the only way for this to continue was to expand into other locations. Fortunately, Kuiken Brothers would be presented with a series of opportunities that would lead to a remarkable period of expansion. Remarkable not for its speed or grandeur – other companies have expanded more quickly – but extraordinary in that Kuiken Brothers was able to grow while keeping its family-run identity and the business ethos that had created the strong foundation for expansion in the first place.

steered a great deal of business to Kuiken Brothers. His activities in the community also raised the Company's profile and burnished its reputation at a time when the market was increasingly competitive.

Evan also oversaw the influx of a new group of younger employees who joined the company during the 1980's. Some of these individuals would stay with the Company for many years, with several still working at Kuiken Brothers today. Included among these new recruits were two of Henry's sons, Nick and Ken, as well as Doug and Ed's brother, Robert. This group helped reinvigorate the yard reflecting the optimism of the Company as a whole. And while Kuiken Brothers seemed to be getting younger, a few of the old guard still remained. Frank Dykstra would celebrate 50 years with the company in 1991, and became the only person in the Company's history to have worked along all four generations of the Kuiken family. This mix of experience, youth, and a good economy helped the Company boost sales to levels that would have been unthinkable even a few years before.

This increase in sales and the Company's strong reputation soon won the attention of other leading lumberyards in the Tri-State area. In early 1984, Evan was approached by the partners of two such firms, Dykes Lumber and West Essex Building Supply, about having Kuiken Brothers join the prestigious Lumbermen's Merchandising Corporation (LMC), a buyer's cooperative that linked many of the



(Left to right) Wayne Kuiken, Evan Kuiken, Doug Kuiken attending a Lumbermen's Merchandising Corporation (LMC) convention.

most successful lumber dealers and retailers in the eastern United States. LMC was an invitation-only organization and Kuiken Brothers had been getting to know members of the Mid-Hudson Group of the organization for several years before the eventual invitation arrived. After a meeting with the owners of Dykes and West Essex at the North Jersey Country Club, it was quickly decided by the board to join the group.

The move to join LMC would have a profound impact on the future of Kuiken Brothers. It not only decreased the costs of purchasing inventory, but it connected the Company to a network of other yards and dealers trading in many different products. Attending LMC meetings and shows opened the eyes of the Kuiken partners to the possibilities for the future of the business. It also allowed Kuiken Brothers to branch out into new product lines and to increase sales, as well as to learn best practices which were quickly implemented in Fair Lawn.

The exposure to other successful yards led the board to decide upon another round of improvements to the store and yard in the mid 1980's. In 1984, the Company chose to become an Ace Hardware dealer and in 1986, Wayne and Henry led a complete reconfiguration of the hardware store that rationalized the layout and improved the customers' flow through the space. The exterior of the building also received a face-lift as the mansard roof that adorned the lumber showroom and the hardware store was expanded to cover the old office and give a unified appearance to the entire location. These renovations led to a bit of a renaissance for the hardware store, with sales improving markedly.

Making way for the expanded warehouse.



Construction of new warehouse.

Meanwhile, improvements were also being made in the lumberyard. Between 1987 and 1988 the old trim shed, the site of the original lumberyard, was torn down to make way for a concrete block and steel warehouse that would house drywall, insulation, doors and other products in a dry environment. The building was the largest addition yet to Kuiken Brothers and increased the yard's storage space significantly. Other minor improvements were also made to increase productivity and efficiency. The Triad computer system was upgraded multiple times with new terminals being added in the store. Several new trucks were purchased to augment the shipping fleet and two new forklifts were added. Yet even with these upgrades there was still a pinch for space in the yard. Therefore, beginning in 1987 the Company began to lease additional warehouse and yard space offsite just a short distance away on River Road in Fair Lawn.

Henry Kuiken works on Fair Lawn's new mansard roof.

These improvements were rewarded as sales boomed through the mid to late 1980's. Business was so brisk and sales increasing so rapidly that an advertising campaign and promotion in honor of the Company's 75th Anniversary in



1987 was determined to be an unnecessary expense. All of this led to a feeling of confidence, as well as a feeling of bursting at the seams in Fair Lawn. Several property purchases were made on the borders of the yard in the hopes that they could be used for expansion. One such property which abutted the new warehouse was successfully rezoned and was turned into a lot that was used for storage and parking. But the repurposing of the other two properties was resisted by the town, as was the prospective purchase of a major piece of property which spanned an area from River Road to Sixth Street. A purchase agreement was cancelled after the town planning board rejected Kuiken Brothers' blueprints for a rezoned subdivision of the property that would have allowed for the expansion of the lumberyard.

The rejection of these plans meant that the Fair Lawn location had expanded to its maximum extent. The many improvements made beginning in the 1970's had reached their apex and the limits of the amount of business that was able to be handled was within sight. This presented the Board with a dilemma. They had maximized the potential of Fair Lawn and had seen the benefits of owning multiple locations through their involvement in LMC. Yet while Kuiken Brothers had not exactly been totally risk averse, it had valued stability and constancy over adventure and speculation in the past; any potential expansion into new locations would be something which none of the partners had ever experienced.

Early renovations underway to the Emerson location shortly after the acquisition of Harry Guss Lumber.

BRANCHING OUT

At a meeting of the Board of Directors held on July 16, 1990, Doug and Evan announced that the Company had been approached by another local lumberyard with a sale offer. Harry Guss, the owner of Harry Guss Lumber and a longtime

acquaintance of Evan through the Bergen Club, a group of lumber dealers from the area, had reached the end of his career and with no one in his family interested in taking over his yard in Emerson, NJ, he had decided to sell. His approach to Evan was made because of his longtime respect for the Kuikens and his belief that Kuiken Brothers would treat his customers well.

This offer presented the Company with an important opportunity to expand, but it still warranted a great deal of discussion. The board was greatly intrigued by the possibility but more than a little apprehensive. The location on Kinderkamack Road was a good one which would expand Kuiken Brothers' reach further into Bergen County, but the yard and buildings on the property were run down and needed attention. Any expansion into Emerson would not be a turn-key affair but would require a tremendous amount of renovation. A visit to the property by Ed and Richard, who were by now long retired but still active in the Company, left them at a loss as to what the Third Generation was thinking even considering the purchase. But the doubts that the Board had were expelled by Wayne, Doug, and in particular, Henry who saw potential in the space and whose vision for the Emerson yard carried the day.

Discussions with Harry Guss began shortly thereafter. The Board of Kuiken Brothers knew that a great deal of money would have to be put into the buildings and yard to get it up to snuff and this fact played into the negotiations. Remembering the condition of the building, Wayne reminisced that "the building probably could have been bull-dozed,"¹¹ and it was only after much discussion between themselves and with Harry Guss, that an initial offer was made. The negotiations were complex and took longer than expected.

During this delay, the US economy hit a rough patch and went into recession. The slow-down in business caused the Board to reconsider the entire deal for the Emerson location with the Board noting that "Real estate values have dropped, and business is a little slower."¹² After some reevaluation, however, it was decided that the risk was worth the potential reward. Therefore negotiations continued and a mutually acceptable price was found. The deal was signed on May 22, 1991 and the closing held on June 28, 1991, officially making Kuiken Brothers a multi-location business.

¹¹ Interview conducted at Kuiken Brothers, Fair Lawn, NJ. February 2, 2012.

¹² Company minutes, recorded by Wayne R. Kuiken, 21 January, 1991.

A visit to the property by Ed and Richard, who were by now long retired but still active in the Company, left them at a loss as to what the Third Generation was thinking even considering the purchase.



Henry and his crew moved beams and staircases to make better use of the space. Luckily for the Company, a friendly architect signed off on these changes and by September 1991 the hardware store was up and running.

But in many ways the negotiations over the purchase of Emerson was the easy part. Once the contracts were signed and Emerson became Kuiken Brothers' property, the real work began. Beyond renovating and reorganizing, the Kuikens faced the enormous task of growing their share in this new market. The minutes record this reality succinctly in noting that "work is being done to revive a company."¹³

The renovation was extensive and began with an upgrade to Kuiken Brothers' computer system to accommodate the second yard. This move integrated the two yards and expedited the work of making Emerson a functional part of the larger business. To further accelerate this process, the Board decided to begin the revamping by getting the store refurbished and stocked first. This work would need to be finished before the doors could even be opened the customers. Added to this was the extensive work needed in the lumberyard. The property needed patching, new racks and a complete reconstruction of the railroad siding, not to mention the purchase of more equipment such as new forklifts, trucks and vans.

Henry oversaw the effort, with outside contractors contributing to the work. Upon starting what was expected to be a bit of painting and tidying up, it quickly became apparent that the building needed more attention. Henry and his crew moved beams and staircases to make better use of the space. Luckily for the Company, a friendly architect signed off on these changes and by September 1991 the hardware store was up and running. The stocking of the new store and yard was a family affair as many Kuikens and their kids worked to stock shelves, sticker items, and generally spiff up the location. When the grand opening occurred, the store was hardly recognizable from the place that was purchased just a few months earlier.

The yard followed shortly thereafter with a repaving job, new cantilevered racks for lumber, and a freshly reconstructed and reactivated railway siding in the back – all being completed within little over a year. The first months' business was desperately slow but much of the effort was expended on rebuilding relationships and attracting back Harry Guss' old customers. Henry managed the new location along with his son Nick, his cousin Robert and a few other employees. This team, which included some of Harry Guss' former employees, worked hard to encourage old customers of the location to return and sought out new customers as well. Henry would later recall that "we fought for every

¹³ Company minutes, recorded by Wayne R. Kuiken, 17 June, 1991.

single customer in those early days."¹⁴ An increase in sales in October showed that the hard work was paying off. From that point on, sales in Emerson steadily improved and within a year reached a rough equilibrium with Fair Lawn.

STRATEGICALLY LOCATED

The strong success of Emerson coupled with the continued prosperity of Fair Lawn put the Company in a good position. Part of this increase in business was the result of good old-fashioned legwork. Phone calls, deals and business trips were all part of getting the products at good prices, making connections and exercising Kuiken Brothers' growing influence. It was on such a business trip to the Northeast Retail Lumber Association Convention in Boston that Doug was presented with an extraordinary opportunity. After a long day of meetings, Doug was approached by the acting president of Midland Lumber, a large but financially troubled lumberyard located in Midland Park, New Jersey. Through this brief encounter, it was made known to Doug that the Midland Park location was about to go on the market for sale and that another party was already involved in negotiations towards the purchase of the location.

¹⁴ Interview conducted at Kuiken Brothers, Fair Lawn, NJ. February 2, 2012.

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9⁹⁷
gal.
Pittsburgh Premium Ceiling Flat
12 year durability
Fast drying, stays white. Helps to hide defects and imperfections.
(11-312501)



12⁹⁷
gal.
Pittsburgh Satin Wall & Trim
12 year durability. High hiding and washable. Interior latex formula.



11⁹⁵
gal.
Pittsburgh Interior Latex Semi-Gloss Flat Wall Paint
8 year durability. For walls and trim. White and colors.



5⁹⁹
gal.
Pittsburgh Interior Latex Flat Wall Paint
2 year durability. High hiding and durable. Fade resistant.
(11-312287)



11⁹⁹
gal.
You Pay 11.99 Gal. When You Buy 5 Gal. Pail.



15⁹⁹
Full
crown
door
• 24" X 36"
• White oak



2⁹⁹
Prestone
Air
Conditioner
Cover
• 17" X 21"
• Fits most
air conditioners
• \$2.99



4⁹⁹
Prestone
Air
Conditioner
Cover
• 17" X 21"
• Fits most
air conditioners
• \$4.99



1⁹⁹
Prestone
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An advertising proof of the newspaper flier that was printed to promote the grand opening of Kuiken Brothers 2nd location in Emerson, NJ



This was the first rail car delivery to Midland Park upon taking over that site.

Upon his return from Boston, a quick meeting of the active board members was held to discuss the opportunity. Although the Company was still in the process of digesting its acquisition of Emerson, the Board was unanimous that the sale of Midland Lumber needed to be investigated for two reasons. The first was that the success of Emerson had given the Board the confidence that more expansion was possible. The growth in business at both Emerson and Fair Lawn had actually put the Company in a strong financial position despite the large capital outlays involved in purchasing and renovating Emerson. The Company was therefore in a great position to take advantage of the opportunity presented.

The second reason for interest in Midland Lumber was the fact that the decline of Midland had been part of the quick increase of sales at Emerson and Fair Lawn as many contractors moved their business to Kuiken Brothers. Should a healthy company purchase Midland Lumber, those sales at Emerson and Fair Lawn could quickly disappear. As Doug later noted, “the thought of having a bigger, badder competitor come back in there and starting to reel their business back and maybe



The rail siding at Kuiken Brothers Midland Park, NJ.

some of ours” meant they had “to take a really hard look.”¹⁵ Therefore the Board agreed that Doug and Henry should tour the yard in order to get a better idea of the possibilities for the property and to properly gauge Kuiken Brothers’ interest.

Since the partners had little idea of what the property was worth or how to even go about dealing with the officers of the organization which was in control of Midland Lumber, Henry decided that it would be a good idea to bring along a friend of his who was the chief loan officer at a local bank in Fair Lawn. While it was not their intention, and perhaps did not even cross their minds, the arrival of Henry and Doug along with a bank representative created quite an impression at Midland Lumber. The governing board of Midland Lumber was in the process of working out the details of a deal with another lumberyard while Doug and Henry were shown around. After their tour and with the prospect of the deal with the other yard being consummated at any moment, Doug and Henry conferred about the value of the yard, store and property and decided to bring that number back to the Board before proceeding.

¹⁵ Interview conducted at Kuiken Brothers, Fair Lawn, NJ. February 2, 2012.



Long time Kuiken Brothers employee Lou Cicchella installs the new rooftop store signage at the Midland Park, NJ yard

But, as chance would have it, the bank representatives on Midland Lumber’s board asked the two Kuikens if they were interested in the property and if so, how much they would be willing to offer. Despite having been instructed by the Board only to “tour” the yard, Doug and Henry laid out a bid. Henry later recalled that the eyes of the group went wide as they looked around the table at each other. As Doug and Henry later found out, the bid was the exact number that was being discussed with the other interested company. Already aware of the Kuiken Brothers’ local roots and good reputation, the bank representatives agreed to a handshake deal with Doug and Henry on the spot.

With a good deal in hand, the two went back to the Board to seek approval. Luckily for the two of them, the rest of the Board agreed that it was indeed a fantastic deal given the potential of the location, and decided to go ahead. By July 1993, the transaction was fully agreed to and the process of conducting inspections had begun. By August, Kuiken Brothers was satisfied enough to put a deposit down on the Midland yard and by September, new equipment was being ordered. The closing was officially on November 16, 1993, but by that point Kuiken Brothers had already begun the process of preparing the yard for the change of command.

Midland Park was in slightly better shape than Emerson had been when the Company completed its takeover. Despite this, Kuiken Brothers wanted to make some improvements before officially re-opening. The entire yard was repaved and other upgrades made to the store and the property. New stock was brought into the hardware store and the shelves were stocked once again by employees, friends and family members. The last thing to be decided upon was who would run the new yard. While Fair Lawn was still officially the headquarters, it was obvious that the

center of power in the Company would shift to Midland Park, at least business-wise. So the Board agreed that Doug, Wayne and Edward would move on a day-to-day basis to Midland Park. Doug was to handle the inter-store aspects of the business, Wayne would manage the location in general and Edward would take over what promised to be the busiest yard of the three.

Fair Lawn was to be run by a new generation of employees who stepped up the ladder to replace Doug, Wayne and Edward. Ken Tilstra, a long-time employee, took over the management of the hardware store from Wayne, while Ken Kuiken picked up the duties in the yard. The lumber counter remained in the able hands of George Wiseman.

With the new configuration and the new employees, some of whom were former Midland Lumber staff, Kuiken Brothers took up occupancy of Midland Park and opened the doors for business in February of 1994. The hard work put into sprucing up the facility quickly paid off as business poured through the doors. This powerful interest was due in large part to the near perfect location of Midland Park to the Bergen County building boom. The hard work of getting the yard back into shape coincided perfectly with the beginning of a large expansion in property development. Contractors that had drifted from Midland during its waning days under the previous management rushed back to resume their business at the Midland Park location. By its third month in operation, Midland Park was doing more business than Fair Lawn and by its fourth month it had surpassed Emerson.

The Kuiken Brothers team converting the newly acquired Midland Park location.





A Kuiken Brothers driver dumps a load of lumber at a new construction site circa 1990.

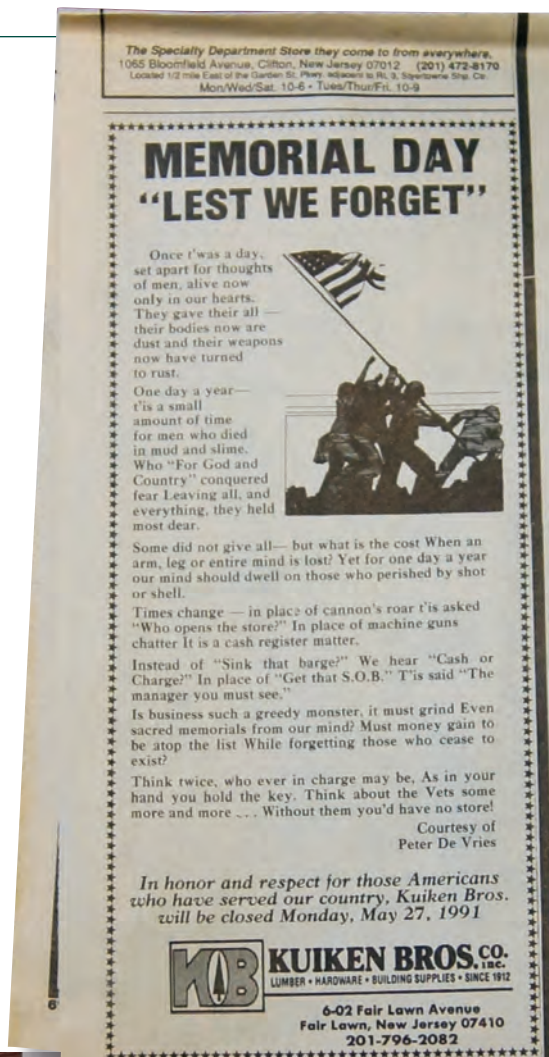
MANAGING GROWTH

With the acquisition of Emerson and Midland Park, Kuiken became one of the more significant lumber retailers in the area. What had just been a few years previously a humble, one-yard operation was now a major player on the scene. Despite this change in circumstances, the Board did their best to keep the Company grounded by not straying from its founding principles.

They did this in part by reinvesting profit into new equipment as well as into the profit-sharing 401K plans. New equipment, such as moffett and boom trucks, were essential elements of keeping Kuiken Brothers at the leading edge of what they could offer the many different types of customers. Improving the situation for the employees was also crucial in keeping and attracting the top talent that was becoming increasingly important as the Business grew and diversified. With three yards, the Kuikens were dispersed and more and more of the day-to-day operations were being run by employees. Luckily for Kuiken Brothers, a group of incredibly dedicated and talented people coalesced around the Company making themselves indispensable and key components of its successful expansion.

The Board also kept Kuiken Brothers' feet firmly planted on the ground by continuing to stay involved in the community. As the Company's prosperity increased, so did its contributions to the many charities it had supported when it was still a single-yard operation. The lesson of treating the local community right was not forgotten by the Third Generation who knew that helping out the local municipal services and community groups, would foster good-will and reflect well on the operation.

Yet not everything was smooth sailing for Kuiken Brothers. As the Company was busy expanding into Emerson and Midland Park, another type of company was also expanding. New big box-stores such as Home Depot and Lowes were moving into the area. While the strong community foundations and the healthy bond with their customers helped insulate Kuiken Brothers from the worst effects of this competition, many other lumberyards and hardware stores did not fare as well. Therefore while the Board was content with the three yards, new opportunities for expansion would soon present themselves. The enormous growth of the early 1990's would soon be dwarfed by another age of expansion just a few years later.



Kuiken Brothers donates their vehicles for the Fair Lawn Memorial Day Parade (driver Joe Folsom). The tradition continues today as Kuiken Brothers trucks can be seen in Memorial Day and Fourth of July parades throughout northern New Jersey.

1997 – 2011

Continued Expansion – the Housing Boom, the Bust, and the Great Recession

AFTER THE ACQUISITIONS OF EMERSON AND MIDLAND PARK, KUIKEN BROTHERS BARELY HAD TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE COMPANY. The task of getting the two new yards running and integrated into the Company was tremendous and was only overshadowed by the work of handling the new business that came through the doors at all three locations. Throughout the 1990's, Kuiken Brothers' customer base became increasingly more contractor-orientated as the do-it-yourselfers were lured into the big box stores. Faced with this change, the Company continued with its tried and true methods of providing high quality products and services which appealed to professional contractors and builders. Despite the growth of the big box stores, Kuiken Brothers' focus on these strengths helped them continue to expand.



Some other lumberyards were not so fortunate. Throughout the area, many similar businesses either went under or suffered to the extent that their owners no longer had the energy and resources to continue operating them. This trend would open up new opportunities for Kuiken Brothers to expand rapidly and to prepare itself to take advantage of the housing boom that would dominate the early to mid-2000's. This expansion happened much like Midland Park and Emerson's had, with other business owners reaching out to the Kuikens with offers to sell. As a result, the Company continued to benefit from the sterling reputation it had worked so hard to cultivate over the years.

At the end of the first decade of the millennium, this position would be challenged as the worst financial crisis to hit the United States since the Great Depression burst the housing bubble that had propelled Kuiken Brothers' sales on a seemingly inexorable path to ever greater heights. Fortunately, the heady days of success had not changed the long-held practices of patient reinvestment of profits back into the Company. This financial strength helped save the Company and allowed it to overcome a few pitfalls and mistakes that could have otherwise spelled disaster.

OPPORTUNITY CALLS

In late 1997, Doug Kuiken received a phone call from a long time acquaintance and fellow member of the Lumbermen's Merchandising Corporation (LMC), Nick Conklin. Conklin Lumber was a large operation straddling the New York/New Jersey area and the Conklins themselves had become good friends of the Kuikens over the years. Doug remembered that "we went to a lot of meetings

Warwick, NY



Ogdensburg, NJ

with them," and that "they were good people."¹⁶ Like Harry Guss before him, Conklin and family wished to exit the business and move on to other ventures. They contacted Doug because they wanted very much for Kuiken Brothers to take over the Conklin locations and business.

This presented Kuiken Brothers with an opportunity to expand once again. The Conklins originally offered the Company six yards on a 5-year lease basis. Included in this offer were yards in Hackettstown, Greenwood Lake and Ogdensburg in New Jersey, as well as Goshen and Warwick in New York. While the thought of such rapid expansion might have fired the imagination, the Board decided it would be prudent to take on the smaller, but still daunting task of incorporating two of the offered yards. They eventually settled on Ogdensburg and Warwick since both were closer to Kuiken Brothers' main base of operations and Warwick included a valuable rail siding. Reflecting on the decision later, Doug stated that "we felt like taking two on at one time was more than enough." To which Wayne added, "the family was starting to thin out because of the expansion," and that it was a conscious policy to try to keep at least one Kuiken at each location.¹⁷ This problem was partially addressed in early 1998 by elevating Robert, Nick Jr. and Kenneth Kuiken to an advisory capacity on the Board, but even this did not change the fact that there was a finite number of Kuikens to staff the Company.

This was not the only reason that the Board was right to take a cautious approach. Once again, the acquisitions required tremendous work to get them

¹⁶ Interview conducted on 2 February, 2012, Kuiken Brothers Office, Fair Lawn, NJ.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Warwick NY Lumberyard

up to the standards and sales level desired by the Company. Most of the Conklin staff was retained at the locations but there was still the need to incorporate the yards into Kuiken Brothers' computer system, inventory management and supply network, and the business culture on which the Company thrived. Both the yards needed makeovers as well. Henry was again heavily involved in the remodeling of the new locations, working with several contractors to build new sheds in the yards and to modify the stores. The work was especially dramatic in Warwick, which had never been paved and was "basically a mud yard" when the takeover occurred.¹⁸ Even the sales/showroom area in Warwick received a large addition and significant remodeling, all of which had to adhere to the standards of the town of Warwick's historical area designation.

Ogdensburg was in better overall condition but it, too, was the subject of a great deal of work inside the store and outside in the yard. Both locations continued to operate during the renovations, with Kuiken Brothers taking over in March of 1998. But because it required less work than Warwick, Ogdensburg held its grand opening first, in September 1998. Work on Warwick was slow in developing due to the many boards that had to give clearance to the changes that were being requested. Despite this, the Warwick yard did a healthy volume of business almost right from the beginning and soon began to post similar numbers to those of Fair Lawn.

¹⁸ Ibid.

NEW MANAGEMENT

The expansion of the business into Warwick and Ogdensburg also presented the Company with another set of challenges. Now with five yards, Kuiken Brothers was growing beyond the traditional management structure that the Business had operated under for many years. While there was no doubt that the members of the Board were still going to be involved in every major decision as well as many minor ones, some of the day-to-day management decisions were being devolved to non-family members for the first time.

Nowhere was this more true than regarding the finances of the Company. Kuiken Brothers had used an in-house bookkeeper almost from the beginning and had later added on-staff accountants. By and large, the Board had been able to keep up with the day-to-day numbers and was actively involved in all aspects of the Company's finances. Now, with five yards, such in-depth involvement could not be sustained. Unfortunately for Kuiken Brothers, the expansion took place just as the Company's longtime and well-respected office manager and accountant, Keith Douma, stepped down from his position due to ill health. In light of Keith's absence, Kuiken Brothers created a new position of controller and hired a full-time financial manager and accountant to fill the post. The individual who filled this post became the first non-Kuiken to regularly attend the Board meetings as he analyzed and reported on all matters pertaining to finance, economics, and corporate governance.

The diversification and growth that led to a need for a controller also highlighted the importance of maintaining strong relations between the Kuiken family and employees of the Company. In an attempt to maintain close ties in a radically different environment, the Kuikens needed a new approach. First, they began

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Wantage NJ Lumberyard

holding yard-wide meetings at the different locations in order to hear the questions and concerns of the staff while also being able to disseminate information regarding the business and any new policies that were going into effect. Secondly, they produced an employee handbook for the first time which stipulated the guidelines and expectations of the Company as well as outlined the benefits plans and rights of employees. These initiatives, along with a continued effort on the part of the Kuikens to work with the employees in all facets of the business, helped maintain communication between the staff and Senior Management.

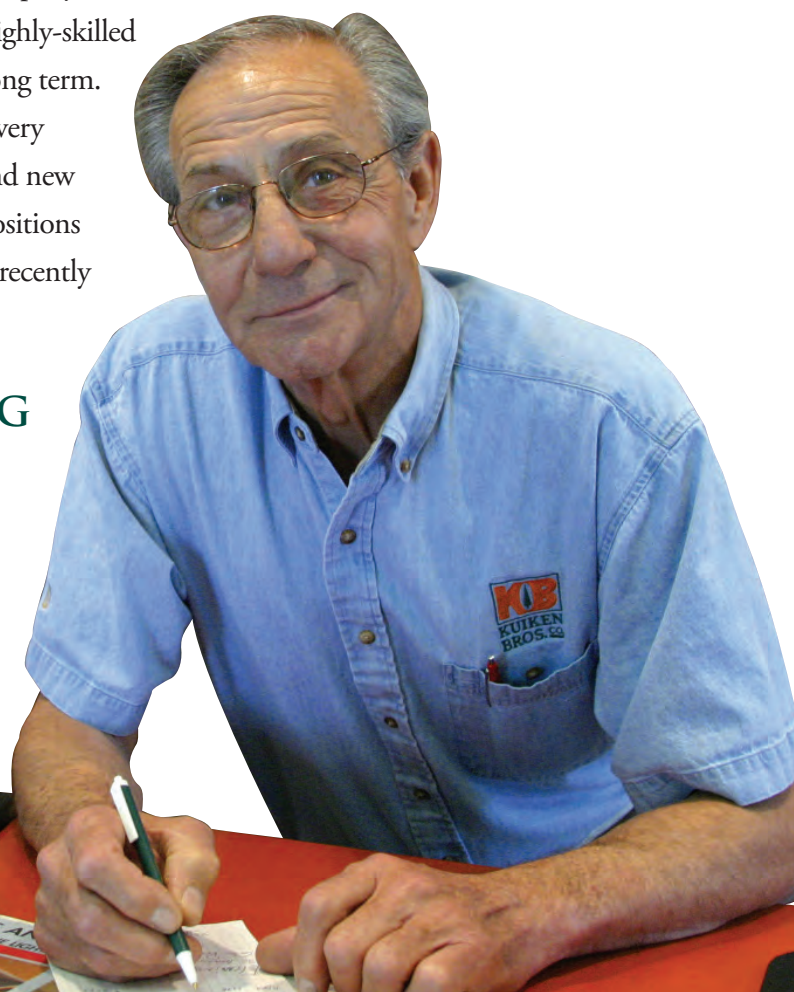
Throughout the expansion and the unavoidable changes it brought, Kuiken Brothers still sought to maintain the culture of a family run business. A conscious effort was made to keep a Kuiken at every yard and where that was not possible, regular visits were made by some of the senior partners. At this time the Company also expanded the employees' retirement and benefit plans. An enhanced profit-sharing/401k plan was put into place and was widely accepted and quickly taken advantage of by the staff. The Kuikens also recognized that as the Company expanded the staff would be relied on to handle more responsibility and day to day management of operations. In looking to the future, the Company knew it needed to maintain an environment which would attract and keep highly-skilled and reliable employees for the long term. To that end, the Company was very successful, as many of the old and new staff members grew into their positions of responsibility and helped the recently expanded operation to thrive.

FLOURISHING

The year 1999 saw sales rise by over 25% as a building boom set in across the area and as Ogdensburg and Warwick won greater market share after their first

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Longtime Kuiken Brother's employee, George Wiseman at his desk



year of operation. Much of this new revenue was reinvested directly back into the Company. In early 1999, the Warwick addition was finally approved and work began on expanding the store and incorporating a kitchen showroom and design center into the complex. In addition to this expansion, the Warwick rail siding was completely rebuilt which allowed the yard to receive more of its materials by train, direct from the West Coast lumber mills, rather than by truck.

These moves were matched just a few months later by the purchase of a building owned by Emerson Tile adjacent to the Emerson yard. This property would eventually be developed into a kitchen center, increasing the range of cabinetry displayed and sold by the Company. The other yards continued to improve their facilities and expand their delivery fleets as well - with new trucks and more advanced forklifts replacing older equipment.



The "Wall of Studs" at the Midland Park Lumberyard



Rail Car at the Midland Park Lumberyard

Wantage NJ



All of these improvements kept Kuiken Brothers out front and continued to increase the Company's stature within the industry. Not long after, Doug received yet another phone call with an offer to sell. Fred Bergen of Circle Building Supply, in Wantage, NJ, was having the same issues that had previously brought Harry Guss and Nick Conklin to Kuiken Brothers – he was eager to get out of the business. Rather quickly a price was negotiated and agreed upon. Circle Building Supply fronted right on Route 23 in Sussex County, NJ, and would be the first highway location for the Company. In July 2000 the deal was agreed upon and by October, the new Wantage location was up and running as the newest Kuiken Brothers location.

The Wantage store opened with a huge Beefsteak Dinner in the lumberyard's warehouse, bringing customers and employees together to learn more about Kuiken Brothers, the new kid on the block.

Wantage, like most of the other yards purchased by Kuiken Brothers, also required a massive renovation. New sheds were erected and the yard was paved and expanded. Additionally, the interior of the store was gutted and given a full makeover. A new hardware supply company was contracted to develop a new store layout and design. This process was completed and implemented by mid-2001.

Despite the large capital outlays across the six yards, the Company remained in solid fiscal condition. The increase in sales year over year continued and Kuiken

Brothers' continued its practice of putting much of its profit back into the Business.



Set sail on an evening cruise with Kuiken Brothers

You and a guest are invited to join us aboard the Lexington as we set sail on a Summer's evening cruise on Tuesday, September 11th.

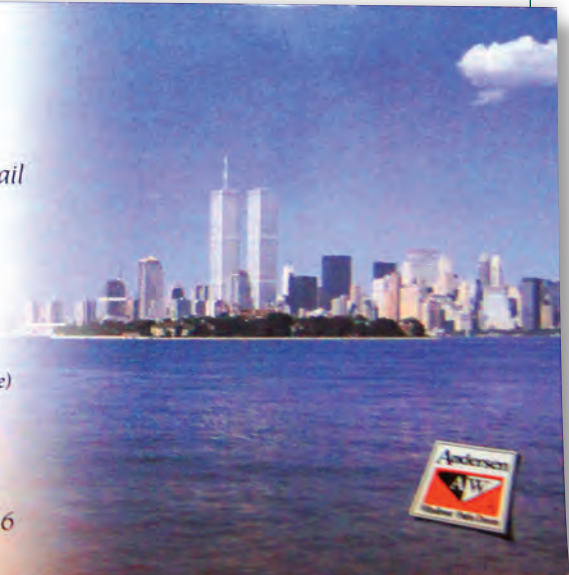
You've worked hard, so spend an evening relaxing on the water with friends—and plenty of food and drink

We will be boarding between 6:30pm and 7:00pm at the Lincoln Harbor Yacht Club, Weehawken, NJ. (plenty of free parking is available)

We set sail at 7:00pm sharp and return at 11:00pm

Dress is business casual.

RSVP to Nick Kuiken no later than Aug. 31st by calling 201-262-6666



In April 2001 the Company's accountant "noted to the board that KBCo is in good financial shape with very little debt to be concerned about."¹⁹

This era of immense prosperity had been overseen by Evan Kuiken who had served as president since 1983. Evan had long been a champion of the Third Generation and trusted Doug, Wayne and Henry implicitly. The success of the expansions had proven his trust to be well-placed and, as the Company looked set for a long period of stability, Evan decided to retire in February of 2002.

In his speech to the Board, Evan made it known that he had "the utmost confidence in the officers of the company to continue to grow and manage the company effectively."²⁰ Evan's larger-than-life shoes were to be filled by Doug, who became the sixth president of Kuiken Brothers at that same meeting.

The transition in power was also a symbolic turning point for the Company. The rapid expansion had made the governance of Kuiken Brothers much more complicated. Where there had been a few dozen non-family employees a mere ten years prior, there were now close to two hundred. With multiple locations to run, the Kuikens were now more widely dispersed, and no longer all under one roof. It therefore became apparent that the Company needed to install new policies, procedures, and programs to help ease and smooth out the transition from a small family run business to that of a multi-location, more complicated enterprise. Kuiken Brothers needed everyone working together, and from the same playbook.

¹⁹ Company Minutes, Recorded by Wayne R. Kuiken, 17 April, 2001.

²⁰ Company Minutes, Recorded by Wayne R. Kuiken, February, 2002.

On September 11th, 2001, following the news of the attacks, Kuiken Brothers closed the doors at 12:00pm and sent employees home to be with their families. The customer dinner cruise (invitation above), was also cancelled for that evening.

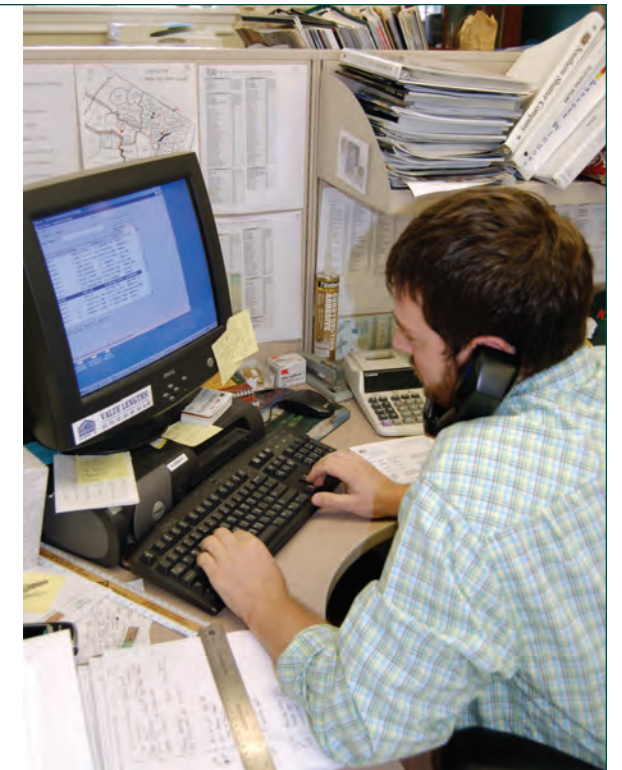
Evan's larger-than-life shoes were to be filled by Doug, who became the sixth president of Kuiken Brothers.

As a part of this, the Board held a series of strategic planning sessions with outside consultants that helped lay out a plan for the future development of the company. These meetings focused in on ways that the Company could increase efficiency as well as how to plan for growth into key areas of the region. The Company also moved to develop an incentive plan to supplement the pay packages that the employees received. The Company's historical method of awarding discretionary bonuses at the Christmas Party could no longer function and a new method was devised to more accurately reward employees, with the annual bonus being based on the over-all profitability of the Company.



Live building clinics at Kuiken Brothers Product Expo.

Kuiken Brothers also took steps to increase its outreach to its customers during this time. Traditional advertising and salesmanship had long been the basis of attracting customers to the Company. With the rapid expansion however, a more robust effort was instituted to bring new customers into the fold. In 2000, the first *Contractor Expo* was held at the Crossroads Sheraton Hotel in Mahwah, NJ. The event brought together contractors, builders, developers, and architects with many supplier representatives of the products Kuiken Brothers inventoried and sold. Demonstrations and lessons in product use, and of course food and gift items, made the *Expo* a tremendous hit and helped to expand the customer base, and deliver the message that Kuiken Brothers adds value to the professional builder community beyond supplying materials.



Kuiken Brother's salesperson, Matt Berger, at work at his desk. Matt would later become the manager of the Roseland facility.

In order to better track the performance at the different yards, Kuiken Brothers also sought to upgrade the computer system. The old system could no longer handle the multi-yard data-sharing which was now necessary and essential as a result of the expansion. The Company therefore decided to purchase a different system in 2003. The new system was to allow better communication, greater integration, and more advanced inventory management. As with any platform conversion, the transition was extremely challenging. The minutes describe it as “a difficult process, plagued with many set-backs.”²¹ Once the system was fully functional, however, it vastly improved the ability of the Company to manage inventory, sales and trends, throughout all locations.

This closer integration was essential because Kuiken Brothers was not done expanding. In 2002, Doug began eyeing a massive piece of property in Rockaway, NJ close to Route 80. The purchase of this property was negotiated with the owners and a price agreed upon. This was a very exciting development for the Company because the Rockaway location would have offered Kuiken Brothers direct access to the heart of Morris County, an area where the Company had limited market share at that time. But environmental and zoning snags hung up the deal. Kuiken Brothers wanted contingencies worked into the purchase contract that if they were unable to get the required permits to build, the deal would be off. The owners of the property wanted a quick agreement, however, and the project faltered and was eventually called off.

²¹ Company Minutes, Recorded by Nicholas M. Kuiken, 17 March, 2003.

THE BEST OF TIMES

This did not discourage the plans for further expansion, however. In announcing the ending of negotiations regarding Rockaway, Doug “reported on several other locations that [were] being investigated.”²² In 2003 the process of purchasing the Warwick location was completed after the expiration of the original five year lease. While the final details of this transaction were being worked out, the Board made another acquisition for the Company. Elmwood Supply Company, located in Garfield, NJ, was a provider of drywall, ceiling tile, and other building materials, predominantly for commercial building projects. Roy Meyer, owner of Elmwood Supply, approached Kuiken Brothers and a subsequent sale of the business was negotiated over the summer of 2003. Since Elmwood Supply was a thriving business with a strong customer base and a slightly different business model, it was decided by the Board to continue operating the business under its original name. The deal was finalized in September and Elmwood Supply became a wholly owned subsidiary and the seventh location.

Elmwood Supply Company becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of Kuiken Brothers in 2003.

²² Company Minutes, Recorded by Nicholas M. Kuiken, 20 January, 2003.



Shortly thereafter, the Company was expanding its footprint in Wantage on a piece of undeveloped property that was contiguous with the existing location. This expansion vastly increased the ability of Wantage to store more materials. This project paled in comparison, however, to the next expansion of the Company. In May of 2004, Doug reported to the board that a 12-acre site in Roxbury Township was available. The property itself, which was in the town of Succasunna, had been the site of a Wickes Lumber yard that had burned to the ground in 1998. The potential deal was very exciting since it fit the profile that had made the Rockaway location so enticing. As Doug reported, the site would “alleviate many of the distribution obstacles that [have] been associated with the rapid growth of the company,” as well as “giving KBCo. a strong presence in Morris County.”²³ It was agreed to go ahead with the deal and the property was closed on in October of 2004 for what was hoped would be a quick construction and opening process.

The newly purchased site in Succasunna contained old t-sheds and an automotive parts store that would later be demo'd and renovated to make room for the new location.

While the many acquisitions and purchases of the early 2000's had an impact on the Company's cash flow, there was never any doubt of Kuiken Brothers' stable fiscal condition. This was due to the careful stewardship, over many years, of the Company's resources. The Board and executive management team continued its traditional conservative approach to the use and implementation of the Company's retained earnings. This included turning down several other opportunities to purchase lumber yards that, for different reasons, failed to

²³ Company Minutes, Recorded by Nicholas M. Kuiken, 24 May, 2004.

meet the parameters the Company had laid out for its expansion plans. But any impact on cash flow from expansion activity was quickly made up for by the continued construction boom.

A historic rise in property values had spurred on an expansion of building that had Kuiken Brothers firing on all cylinders. Beginning in 2003, sales began to increase significantly, and some of the yards were having trouble keeping pace with their orders. Trucks would return from a delivery and pre-assembled orders would be staged and ready for a second run. Sales hit record highs in 2004, spiked higher in 2005 and peaked in 2006. With increased business came the need for an expanded staff. Industry and economic experts began questioning the longevity of this cycle, and some even began talking about an imminent collapse. Doug later remembered that “we saw the high-water mark hit in ’06 but around June of ’06 we saw things beginning to unravel.”²⁴

These fears remained remote however as the Company had little time to worry. The growth in sales occupied the entire staff of Kuiken Brothers and also increased the frustration about the difficulties the Company was having getting approval to build on the new Succasunna site. The large site was

*Edward N. Kuiken III
unloading a railcar of
lumber in Midland Park,
October 2011.*

²⁴ Interview conducted on 2 February, 2012, Kuiken Brothers Office, Fair Lawn, NJ



supposed to have been developed quickly and had it been so, it would have helped Kuiken Brothers smooth out some of its business while growing sales at the same time in a new market. From the beginning, the project was beset by regulatory problems stemming from issues that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection feared could be caused by the erection of the new buildings. With the project mired in red-tape, Kuiken Brothers was nevertheless still able to move ahead with the construction of a window, kitchen and millwork showroom on the property which was completed in 2006 and named KB Concepts. This showroom featured a large selection of windows, doors, moulding, decorative hardware, decking and kitchens in full room settings to help ease product selection. The design of the building allowed builders, architects and homeowners to walk through and interact with the many different products that the Company could provide them with. The feedback received from customers showed that the entire project was a design success and the concept has inspired the redesign of a number other Company showrooms to date.

*Showroom Grand Opening
2006, Succasunna NJ*

With the property market as red-hot as it was during this time, it seemed that anyone with a little bit of capital could do quite well in real estate. Thus, when Kuiken Brothers was presented with an opportunity to provide financial backing to several building projects, it looked like a plan worth examining. A seemingly low risk investment, it was decided to move forward and jump into the game

with some partners. There was some initial anxiety about deviating from the normal, conservative course that had been the Company’s bread and butter for so long, but it appeared that such projects were surefire winners. Sure enough, Kuiken Brothers’ first property development in 2004 was an outstanding success. The small apartment building returned a good profit on the investment and encouraged the Board to put aside their reservations and go forward with bigger, more ambitious – and ultimately more risky – plans. Several new projects were entered into in 2006. The outlay was much larger but it was hoped that the return would be as well. Unfortunately for the investors, the timing could not have been worse as the housing market was about to implode.

At the time, the investment seemed to make perfect sense. At the peak of business in 2006 it seemed like the Company could do no wrong. Sales and profits were at record highs and the Company’s balance sheet was very strong. While Kuiken Brothers never became loose with its finances, the period did see some expenditure that might have been foregone in the past.

Fortunately, as it turned out, the Company never drifted too far away from its traditional business model. Even as profits surged, the Board continued the strategy of returning most of that profit into the Company, keeping its capital account and balance sheet solid. There was continual investment in people, equipment, facilities, and technology.

THE WORST OF TIMES

Slowly, almost imperceptibly at first, the atmosphere was changing. In the second half of 2006, the Company began to notice a change in business activity. Going into 2007, almost two years before the collapse of Lehman Brothers which announced to the world the impending financial disaster, orders began to slow down at Kuiken Brothers. The downturn was not dramatic at first; in fact, it looked like the Company was simply settling back into a more regular level of sales and growth following the frenetic boom of 2005 and 2006. But the Board watched the changing of the tide with apprehension. Doug recounted later that “by June of ’06 we could see things starting to crack,”²⁵ and by the end of 2007 sales had receded back to their 2004 level, which was still a very respectable number. Many of the large building projects that had powered

25 Interview conducted on 2 February, 2012, Kuiken Brothers Office, Fair Lawn, NJ.

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Emerson, NJ

the boom were coming to an end and fewer and fewer new projects were breaking ground.

But for the time being, the Company was concerned with other matters. The Succasunna location’s construction continued to be mired in a regulatory morass due to concerns about off- site wetlands. While these delays were frustrating, a potentially more damaging development briefly threatened Emerson. A downtown redevelopment plan created by the town of Emerson called for use of eminent domain to appropriate some of Kuiken Brothers’ property. The town’s plans stalled, however, due to the downturn in the economy.

These bureaucratic headaches did not change the overall strategy of expansion, however. The beginning of the economic slowdown put renewed pressure on some of the smaller lumber dealers in the area; one such company, Lumber One in Roseland, NJ, entered into talks with Kuiken Brothers about a sale of their yard. A deal was soon hashed out with John Misko, the owner



Roseland, NJ



Roseland, NJ



Three longtime employees, the Douma brothers (left to right Scott, Steve, and Mike), came to Roseland following the acquisition in order to lend their expertise in setting up the new facility.

Midland Park's Millwork Showroom featuring various window, door, and moulding options.



of Lumber One and on June 11, 2008, Roseland became the newest Kuiken Brothers location. Doug reported to the Board that “although the demographics and business potential is very favorable at this location, there is a lot of hard work to be done in resurrecting the business and increasing market share.”²⁶

The struggle for market share had been getting more difficult and competitive given the downturn. One area of the Company that faced a particular challenge was the hardware department. As the business had continued to cater increasingly to building professionals, many hardware categories were eliminated. Midland Park and Fair Lawn were renovated in 2008, transforming their hardware stores into showrooms geared towards showcasing the various windows, doors and other millwork products sold by

²⁶ Company Minutes, Recorded by Nicholas M. Kuiken, 21 July, 2008.



Back row (left to right), Kenneth H. Kuiken, Michael W. Kuiken, Wayne R. Kuiken, Matthew D. Kuiken, Nicholas M. Kuiken. Seated (left to right), Richard R. Kuiken, Nicholas H. Kuiken, Edward N. Kuiken, Douglas R. Kuiken, Henry Kuiken, Robert E. Kuiken.

the Company. The successful conversion of Midland Park and Fair Lawn was followed by similar changes to the other locations as the Company sought to provide more space for its customers to be able to preview the materials and products that they offered. As successful as the moves were, the changes marked the end of an era.

However, even greater shift occurred around the same time. In early 2008, Evan Kuiken, the Company's long time president, passed away after a long illness. In 2009, Ed Kuiken also passed away and was soon followed in 2011 by the Company's fourth president, Nicholas. This string of losses deprived the Board of valuable insight and advice during a time of great challenge. The deaths also left Richard Kuiken as the only remaining member of the Second Generation still able to serve on the Board of Directors. But even while Kuiken Brothers was mourning the death of their uncles, fathers, advisers and friends, a new era was beginning. In March 2008, Michael and Matthew Kuiken were elevated to the Advisory Committee of the Board of Directors along with the Company's controller, Tom Tubridy.²⁷ The entry into the business of more of the Fourth Generation was a glimmer of hope in an otherwise gloomy period.

Gloom was the operative word because all the while the economy continued to show signs of slowing down. This was initially not very concerning – the good times of the mid 2000's were almost too good to be true and the Company had survived many economic downturns in the past. But this economy was turning into something very different, into something that Kuiken Brothers had not seen since the 1930's. With the collapse of Lehman Brothers in late 2008, it was

²⁷ Michael and Matthew would be quickly elevated to the Executive Committee of the Board in November 2008.

In March 2008, Michael and Matthew Kuiken were elevated to the Advisory Committee of the Board of Directors along with the Company's controller, Tom Tubridy.

apparent to all that a serious financial meltdown was imminent. Finances dried up for the builders and developers that were Kuiken Brothers' main customer base, and new construction nearly ground to a halt. Sales began to plummet for the Company and all plans for further expansion were put on hold. Approval for construction at Succasunna had finally been granted in June of 2008. A ground-breaking ceremony, hosting local dignitaries, was held in July, and work had



Ground-breaking ceremony at Succasunna. Standing (left to right), Ken, Nick Sr., Doug, Henry, and Nick. Kneeling, Matt and Michael.



Local community dignitaries present during the ceremony.

begun in earnest at the site. But with the uncertainty of future business, the Board decided to mothball the project once the steel and skin of the building had been erected. While prudent, the delay was painful given the length of time, energy, and money already spent to get the construction underway.

As the recession deepened, so did the loss of business for Kuiken Brothers. In late 2008 the Board noted that “We anticipate a turbulent forecast for the near future,”²⁸ and their assessment was correct. As a result of the declining sales, the Executive Committee was forced to put in a series of cost-saving measures. Saturday hours were cut at all Kuiken Brothers' locations, with Elmwood Supply not opening at all on Saturday. Benefits and salaries were cut, wages were frozen, the 401(k) match was



Succasunna's main warehouse and guard shed under construction.

suspended and each and every expense was questioned. Even the annual Christmas/Holiday party was cancelled. Yet all of these moves were relatively painless compared to the need to reduce the labor force. With business slowing down dramatically, the Company was overstaffed. It was decided to place a hiring freeze across all the locations and to allow normal attrition to winnow down the size of the staff. Unfortunately, this passive approach had to be supplemented by cutting ties with several employees, a gut-wrenching process which was not taken lightly by the Kuiken Family. During the Great Depression, the Company had been staffed mainly with family who could forego payment until times got better, but given the company's size in 2009, the pain was shared and borne by a larger group. This was truly one of the darkest moments in the Company's history.

To make matters even worse, the large residential projects that Kuiken Brothers had gotten involved with in 2006 were all reaching completion stages in 2008 and 2009 but finding little interest and few buyers for the many apartments and condos that the new buildings offered. Saddled with the unwanted buildings, the Company was forced to sit on its hands while huge amounts of capital were tied up.

²⁸ Company Minutes, Recorded by Nicholas M. Kuiken, 22 September, 2008.

RENEWAL

From these set-backs sprang a renewed vision for Kuiken Brothers. The entire recession, the painful cuts in staff and benefits, and the fiasco of the real estate development projects all inspired the Company to return to its core competencies. Doug later recalled that the Company had developed “a little hubris” about its success and the recession provided just the wakeup call that was needed.



Builder's seminar held on site during the construction of the lumber yard in Succasunna.

Even during the worst of the recession in 2009 and 2010, the fundamentals and capital structure of the Business remained strong and the Company's banking relationships endured – intact and viable. The conservative approach to the use of profit and continuous re-investment in the business was maintained and gave the Company a strong and substantial base. Although the Company may have veered slightly now and then, it never strayed too far from its roots nor lost focus on the important things on which it had grown its reputation. Even during the darkest days

of the recession, strategic moves were made that would enable the Company to emerge even stronger and with a greater reach than it had ever had before.

First, the Company renewed its drive to invest in efficiency and to expand into more markets. The second initiative was to focus on providing and developing products that could reach both traditional Kuiken Brothers' customers as well as expanding the reach of the Company. The third was making sure to stay out in front of the customer through marketing outreach and education.

The first goal was met by restarting work on the Succasunna store and by renewing the drive to reach new customers. The rapid decrease of sales began to abate at the end of 2009 and by mid 2010 there was a modest rebound. This convinced the Board that work on the new supersite yard needed to be finished in time for the economic recovery that they hoped was right



Mark Everett, long time Kuiken Brothers' employee, providing words of encouragement to a room full of builder customers at a Beefsteak dinner.



Linda and Hannah Everett (Mark's wife and daughter and also long time employees), welcoming customers at a company event.



Doug Kuiken speaks to a group of customers at a builders installation clinic.



Drive-through lumberyard in Succasunna.

around the corner. Work on the buildings and site had progressed very slowly during the halt in construction but now the order was given to resume work on a full time basis. The Company set a target date of completion for the late spring/early summer of 2011 and met that goal.

Just prior to commencing the construction process, the Succasunna yard was used as a depot to store

inventory that would be needed to fill large orders quickly and efficiently for the other yards. This activity had to be suspended and moved to Wantage once the construction began. This role was expanded when the yard was completed with Succasunna, as planned, becoming a hub for supplying the other yards while building a customer base of its own. Succasunna began doing minor amounts of business in March and by June had received its temporary certificate of occupancy and was up and running.

A grand opening celebration, which included a professional lumberjack competition, was held on June 4, 2011, with over 1,400 people in attendance – a celebration of not only the hard work that went into getting the new location on its feet but also a chance to celebrate the fact that the Company had made it through the worst of the recession. While business had not returned to the levels of 2006, 2011 did see a modest uptick in sales.



President Doug Kuiken cuts the ceremonial 2X6.



Grand Opening ceremony of the main lumberyard in Succasunna with local community dignitaries.

LUMBERJACK SHOW & PRODUCT EXPO

SATURDAY, JUNE 4th
10am-4pm

33 ROUTE 10 EAST
SUCCASUNNA, NJ

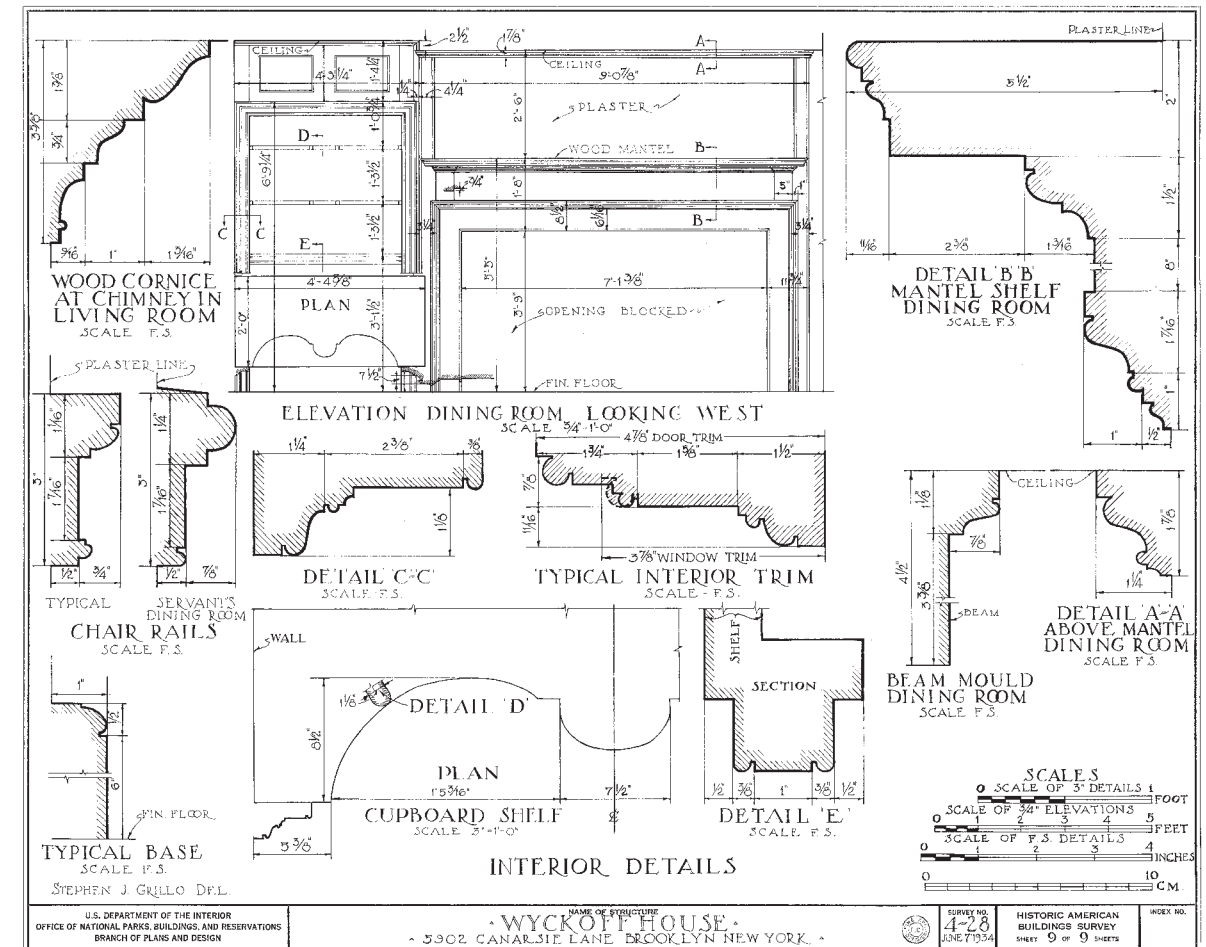
CLICK FOR DETAILS

GRAND OPENING OF
KUIKEN BROTHERS' 9TH LOCATION!

Axe Throwing | Chopping | Log Rolling | Cross Cut Sawing | Chainsaw Carving



In looking to expand the product offering, one area where Kuiken Brothers knew the Company could grow was in the sale of mouldings. A few members from the management team had been looking to add some new designs to the selection of mouldings offered by Kuiken Brothers. They had done some research with various mills and in numerous published pattern books but had come away uninspired – many of the patterns offered were similar in style and lacking the type of panache needed to give Kuiken Brothers an edge in the marketplace.



Then in the summer of 2009, during the heart of the recession, the team discovered the Historic American Building Survey, a collection of prints and designs held by the Library of Congress. During some investigation of these files, the Kuiken Brothers' staff discovered that some of the historic homes and buildings featured in this system were local to Northern New Jersey and the Hudson River Valley. Even better, some of these files even documented the moulding styles and designs

*Line drawings from the
Historic American
Building Survey*



Contractor appreciation event at Succasunna.



of these historic homes. After sifting through hundreds of files, a group of moulding designs was picked for further study. In early 2010, Kuiken Brothers contracted with a nationally-recognized historic moulding and millwork expert to work with Company staff to verify the authenticity of the mouldings and to help finalize the designs. In total, sixty-six unique profiles were sketched and designed as CAD (computer aided design) files. They were then categorized by Classic American architectural style (Early American, Georgian, Colonial Revival, Federal, Greek Revival, Traditional Revival) and published in the KB Classical Moulding Catalog which featured drawing details and full scale renderings. A poplar mill in Kentucky was contracted to produce the new mouldings and an initial run of 300,000 linear feet was produced. The new KB Classical Moulding Collection was debuted at the Product Expo in 2010 and sales picked up quickly thereafter. In November 2011, the KB Classical Moulding Collection was named as one of the 100 Best New Home Products of 2011 by *This Old House Magazine* and sales have so far reached as far as Wyoming, Texas, and Florida.

The third initiative of the downturn was to remain out in front and relevant to customers. While some organizations made drastic cuts to their marketing and advertising budgets as the recession hit, Kuiken Brothers actually increased their efforts to stay in front of their core customers. The Company took the opportunity to focus on its core customers and ensure that they were up to speed on the many products that were introduced during the boom years. During that time, builders found it difficult to find time to engage in product education, and yet manufacturers continued to come out with new products and innovations that ultimately would save builders time and money.



Builder Installation Clinic at Succasunna

During the recession when builders had a little more free time, Kuiken Brothers hosted educational events at all of their locations so that products could be reintroduced. These events were used as an opportunity for the sales team to reach out and stay in front of customers as well. Nationally recognized installation experts would visit Kuiken Brothers yards for full day installation clinics showcasing a wide range of topics from installing crown moulding, to properly framing a deck.

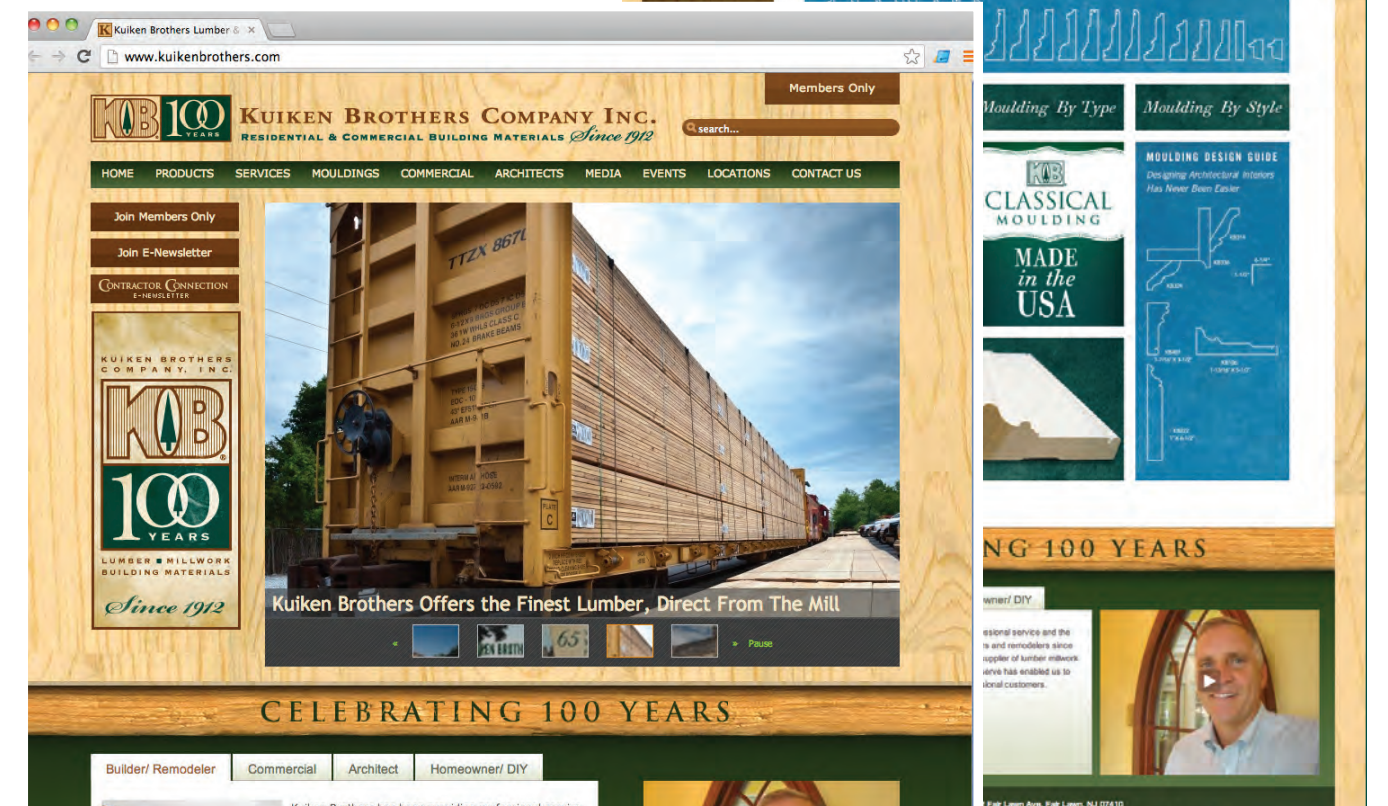
In addition, Kuiken Brothers invested a lot of time and energy into the creation of an innovative website where information could quickly be posted and spread internally to its employees, and then to customers through the company's Contractor Connection e-newsletter which was e-mailed to over 7,500 building professionals by the end of 2011. The website enabled the embedding of videos – enhancing customer and employee training. The entire Kuiken Brothers collection of stock moulding profiles were posted online in CAD format so that architects and designers could download and specify the Company's custom collection in their plans. A Members Only section was also developed for Kuiken Brothers account holders where they could download copies of invoices, statements, as well as check basic product pricing. They could even pay their month-end statements through the site. The goal was to help

create another level of office efficiencies for customers so that they could spend less time in the office and more time on the jobsite.

By the end of 2011, the website was averaging over 10,000 monthly visitors, turning this into a virtual storefront for Kuiken Brothers that helped to spread the word about the organization and all of the products and services offered.

The completion of Succasunna and the success and plaudits for the KB Classical Moulding Collection marked the end of the dark period for Kuiken Brothers. Throughout 2011, sales picked up pace and while the record sales of 2006 have yet to be touched, sales have recovered to such an extent that much of the austerity measures imposed in 2008 and 2009 had been relieved. The health of the Company's finances has been matched by a renewed vision and purpose for Kuiken Brothers. The previous three years had been among some of the darkest that Kuiken Brothers had endured since the Great Depression. But as 2012 dawned, the owners and staff not only had improving business conditions to look forward to, but also a chance to reflect on 100 years of operation.

Kuikenbrothers.com, a 24/7 showroom and design gallery highlighting the products and services available to existing and prospective customers.



2012

A Modern Lumberyard, and a Reflection on 100 Years

*W*HILE REACHING 100 YEARS OF BUSINESS IS A CONSIDERABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT, A COMPANY DOES NOT ACHIEVE SUCH A MILESTONE COMPLACENTLY. During its 100th anniversary year, Kuiken Brothers took time to value and appreciate the achievements of the previous century, and to reflect on the lessons learned and the challenges overcome. But just as importantly, the Company looked forward and took steps to bring the organization into its 101st year.

This determined, conservative, yet progressive approach to strategic growth caught the eye of the lumber and building materials (LBM) industry at large. The calculated balance between an appreciation for the past and a determination for the future was valued by Kuiken Brothers' peers and colleagues across the industry. This was made evident when Kuiken Brothers was recognized as the PROSALES Magazine's Dealer of the Year for 2012. The Company was selected out of over 4,500 independently owned LBM supply businesses nationwide. The title was awarded in recognition of exceptional operation, management and innovation, as well as meritorious service to the local community and to the LBM industry. The accompanying article paid special attention to Kuiken Brothers' roots and

Back row (left to right), Nicholas M. Kuiken, Matthew D. Kuiken. Front row (left to right), Wayne R. Kuiken, Kenneth H. Kuiken, Douglas R. Kuiken, Henry Kuiken, Robert E. Kuiken, and Michael W. Kuiken.



Construction of the Succasunna facility with the stand-alone showroom, already open for business, in the foreground.



traditions, but also focused on the ways that the Company was moving forward and bringing its service and supply network into a new era.

Perhaps the best symbol of this commitment to progressive and strategic growth was the newly constructed yard in Succasunna. The Succasunna facility represented a significant departure from the traditional lumberyard model towards a more integrated and efficient approach. In a way however, it was a return to the beginning. The Succasunna facility was being designed and built from scratch, and that hadn't happened since the original location in Fair Lawn a century prior. All other Kuiken locations had been acquired as existing businesses and facilities.

In laying out the plans for the new site, the management team, along with the designers and engineers, envisioned and realized a modern facility to serve as an advanced distribution center, retail lumber yard, and high-end showroom. Protecting and managing inventory is one of the biggest drivers of efficiency in a supply business. As such, considerable attention was paid to storage, racking, and traffic flow. All inventory in Succasunna is kept under-roof either in the 90,000 square foot warehouse, or under one of the four large volume, covered, cantilever racking systems. Inside the warehouse fast moving inventory is stored in roller-bins, which allows for quick, and safe, loading and unloading of material by motorized racking equipment and forklifts. In a traditional setting stocking each unit of moulding or lumber would require hours of tedious labor by one or more employee. With the new roller bins, the same unit of material can be stored in just minutes by a single forklift operator.

At Succasunna, and elsewhere throughout the Company, another shift was underway with respect to fleet modernization. Lumber was traditionally shipped to job sites on “dump-bed” trucks which would literally dump the load of lumber in the general area it was needed. In the preceding handful of years however, it became increasingly valuable for builders to have material set in place on site in order to better facilitate their construction schedules. Kuiken Brothers responded by increasing the amount of truck-mounted forklifts to the fleet beginning in the 1990's.

These forklifts enabled operators to place

Kuiken Brothers dump-bed truck delivering material (circa 1970s). Below, a newer tri-axle vehicle with truck-mounted forklift loaded for delivery.





material in tight spots, and exactly where needed by the construction crew. The early truck-mounted forklifts could operate in forward and reverse only, which somewhat limited their ability with long-length material on tight jobsites. By 2002 Kuiken Brothers began to introduce 4-way machines that could drive in forward and reverse, as well as side to side which became invaluable on tight jobsites – and specifically urban jobsites where long-length material was needed in deep, narrow passages.

Truck-mounted forklifts had become an invaluable tool in shipping lumber and other building materials. As the new site would inventory not only residential building materials, but also commercial materials such as drywall, an even greater investment was made in modernizing the fleet. Truck-mounted cranes, or “boom trucks” had been used by Kuiken Brothers for years, however with the commercial business expanding through the acquisition of Elmwood Supply, and now the addition of commercial materials at Succasunna,

reliance on boom trucks was even greater. In urban construction projects, material is generally lifted, or “boomed”, directly to the floor it’s needed. With the most recent investment in equipment in 2012, Kuiken Brothers was now able to boom material up to eight stories – making the Company an even more formidable player in commercial markets.

INTEGRATING MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

By the end of 2008, Kuiken Brothers was already a nine-location business as the Succasunna yard was in construction behind the existing showroom on that site. With footprints throughout northern New Jersey and southern New York State, the way in which the Company operated had to be reassessed. It was no longer feasible to operate as semi-autonomous business units spread across a vast region. In order to capitalize on the resources of each other, greater integration of the yards would be necessary. With nearly 300 employees, a fleet of over 80 trucks, and an inventory mix spread out over multiple locations, Kuiken Brothers sought to bring greater cohesion to the operation.

The management team therefore decided to invest in a new technology that would pull order data from the Company’s computer mainframe and push that data into a new Order Delivery Tracking (ODT) platform. The ODT system provided company-wide decision makers with a full view of the day to day operational requirements of each location, and better enabled them to make well-informed decisions about deliveries and the movement of inventory. Delivery tracking was further enhanced by installing GPS transponders on each of the vehicles which gave dispatchers and sales associates real-time order information, and further automated the flow of information.

With the computing and telecom infrastructure fully integrated, the addition of GPS and ODT closed the loop on Kuiken Brothers’ technology integration strategy. With 9 satellite locations, the Company was now operating as one cohesive enterprise – sharing in each others’ resources, while trimming overhead and expense.

Much of this drive for a more efficient operation and advanced communications was driven by the Fourth Generation of Kuikens who had slowly been assuming more and more responsibility during the preceding years. The structure of the Board was therefore reconfigured to take this new situation into account. Nick and Ken Kuiken, having already been on the Board for many years, were given more clearly defined roles as the Vice Presidents of Sales and of Commercial Business respectively. Meanwhile Matt Kuiken was elevated to the role of Vice President of Operations and Mike Kuiken was made Vice President and Secretary of the Board. These new positions did not mean a drastic change in



Kenneth H. Kuiken



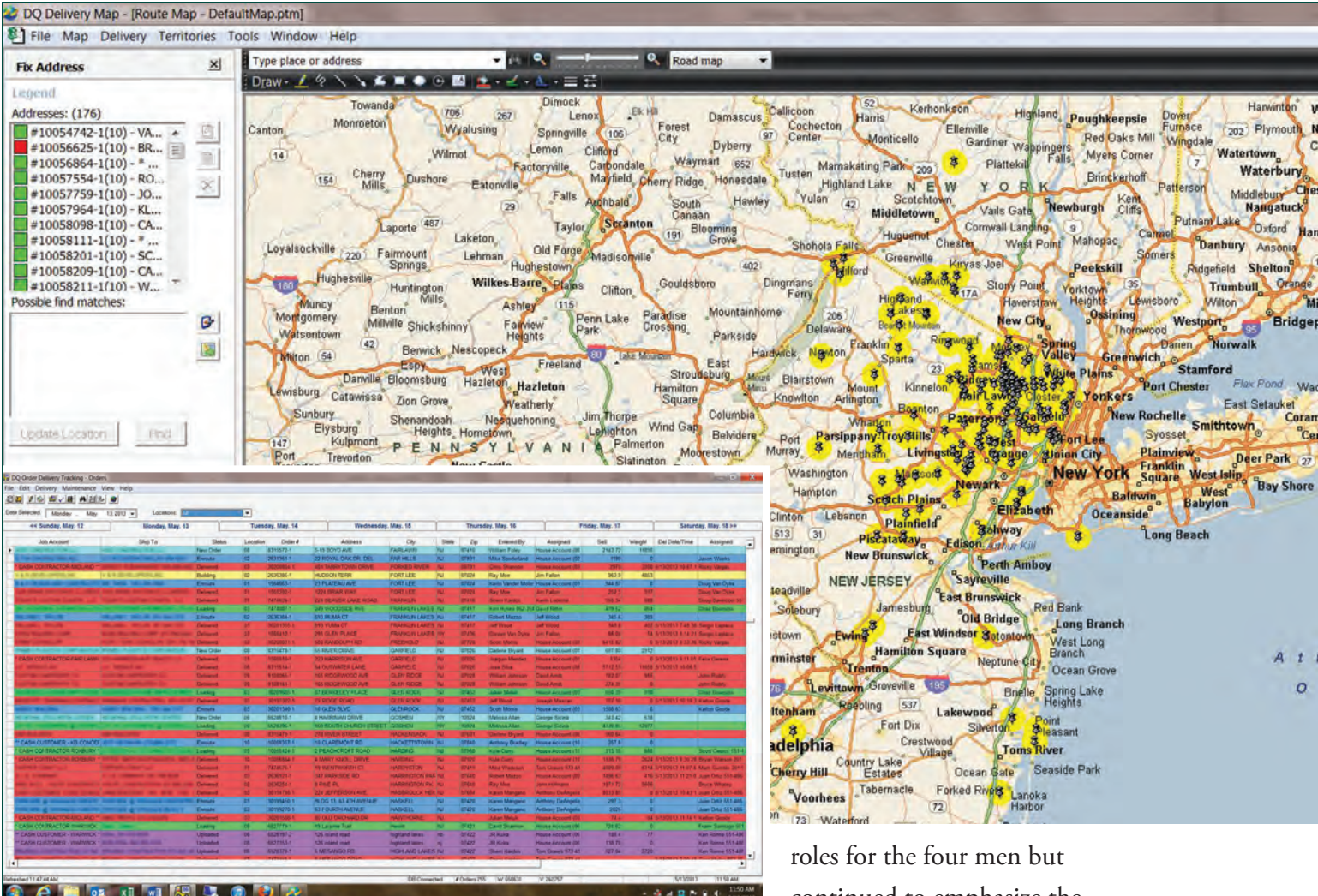
Nicholas M. Kuiken



Matthew D. Kuiken



Michael W. Kuiken



Order Delivery Tracking (ODT) screenshot depicting orders delivered on a given date.

continuity of leadership of the Company. With Richard Kuiken still attending board meetings throughout 2012, three generations of the Kuiken Family remain involved in the operation and management.

This mix of old and new perspectives was essential to the continued success of Kuiken Brothers in 2012. The efficiencies brought about by these technological upgrades, with continued adherence to traditional core values, was essential for the Company to thrive in the new market. This was especially true of the market for commercial construction. Following the economic downturn, the Company redoubled its efforts to increase market-share in the commercial sector. The 2003 purchase of Elmwood Supply had been a major step in this direction, yet for several years it remained as a stand-alone location for commercial business. With the opening of Succasunna, however, the Company was primed to push further into the realm of commercial sales. As a mark of this commitment, Elmwood Supply was renamed Kuiken Brothers in 2012. The site itself would remain exclusively a commercial building materials location. As Doug Kuiken noted,

roles for the four men but continued to emphasize the

“We changed the store name because we want the Kuiken Brothers brand to be synonymous with the New Jersey and New York commercial building industry.”¹

REFLECTION

All of these moves helped to make 2012 a very good year for business. In addition to growing sales however, 2012 was a year of reflection on the intangible elements that have contributed to the long success of Kuiken Brothers. The celebration of 100 years lasted for all of 2012 but in typical Kuiken fashion there was little self-aggrandizement. Instead, the 100th anniversary celebrations focused mainly on the people who made the century of business possible – the customers, the employees, and the communities in which Kuiken Brothers operates.

One example of this was a special three-day volunteer commitment to Kuiken Brothers’ long-time partner, Paterson Habitat for Humanity in June. During

¹ Kuiken Brothers Press Release, 1 June, 2012.



Paterson Habitat for Humanity Corporate Challenge, June 2012.



100th Anniversary parties with Kuiken Brothers staff.

Habitat's 2012 Corporate Challenge, 45 Kuiken Brothers' employees volunteered 360 man hours of labor to a new home construction project in Paterson – a town which, 100 years prior, played a key role in the industrial and residential development of the area. It was only fitting then that 100 years later, Kuiken Brothers would symbolically contribute to the re-development of the city.

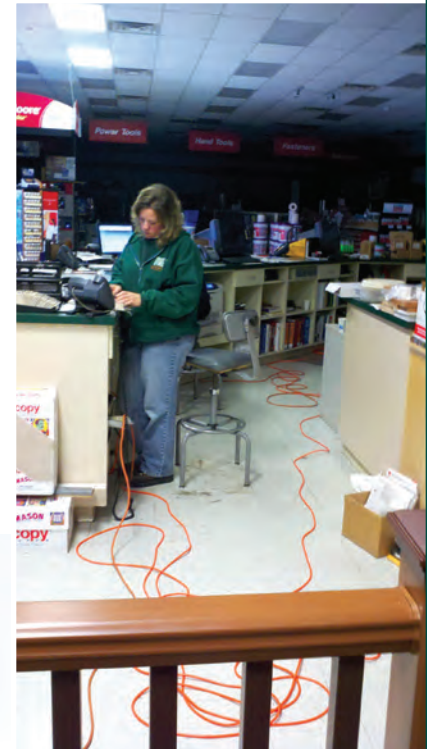
Kuiken Brothers also included its customers in the celebration. The 2012 Product Expo turned out to be one of the largest and most successful to date. Over 1,000 builders, architects, and designers attended the event held at the Sheraton Crossroads in Mahwah, NJ. Live building clinics and seminars provided attendees with training on the most up-to-date building products and proved to be educational for both customers and employees regarding the future of the building supply industry. In addition to this main event, customer appreciation "beef steak" dinners were held for each of the 9 locations.

Celebrations with the employees were similar. New KB 100th anniversary fleeces, coats, and shirts were distributed and dinners were held for the various locations. These casual and intimate gatherings with friends and colleagues were reminiscent of times past when the Company had only a single location and a handful of employees.

LESSONS LEARNED, LESSONS APPLIED

The celebrations came to an end by early fall, and the Company was just beginning to look at a rapidly approaching year end when the tides once again turned. Only this time, not figuratively. On October 29 Hurricane Sandy made landfall on the New Jersey shoreline. Kuiken Brothers had handled storms of all sorts over the course of 100 years, but the devastation wrought by Sandy was unprecedented. While none of the locations suffered major damage themselves, the blow to the local infrastructure made normal operations impossible.

Downed power lines cut off power to most of the yards with some being without power for over a week. Nominal operations were kept up



Power outages and building damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. Employees Sherri Kardos (above), and Dave Verblauw (left) work to get the facilities up and running in the days after the storm."





Generators were used to provide limited power to the Kuiken Brothers facilities following the storm. Power was out for up to 8 days at some locations.

WHILE HURRICANE SANDY HAS LEFT COMMUNITIES IN OUR AREA DEVASTATED,

some have already begun to rebuild. We have received many inquiries as to how far we will travel to make a delivery. The answer: You tell us where you are building and we'll get you the material. We have been shipping material to projects along the Jersey Shore, and in all five boroughs of New York City for decades. With 9 locations and a fleet of 80+ vehicles, our ability to serve you in further territories is even easier than before.

If you have a specific project inquiry in a territory you may think is outside of our normal delivery zone, please contact
Matthew Kuiken, Vice President of Operations mdkuiken@kuikenbrothers.com (201) 652-1000



Statement stuffer distributed to customers regarding making deliveries along the shore points following the destruction of Hurricane Sandy.

with the use of portable generators but whatever sales could be completed were hindered by the fact that deliveries were nearly impossible due to road closures, downed trees, and other obstructions. To make matters even worse, a run on the fuel supply left many gas stations short of gas – both limiting the ability to fuel the fleet, and also making it difficult for employees to make it in to work. Gas lines were miles long, and the contentious behavior of desperate commuters was reminiscent of the early 1970's.

The same perseverance that enabled Kuiken Brothers to survive the numerous other crises throughout its history was called upon once again in handling the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The dedication of the employees in cleaning up and remaining operational was nothing short of exceptional. After the initial cleanup and clearing of roads most of the business that Kuiken Brothers was

transacting was for emergency supplies needed to patch damage caused by fallen trees and limbs. Beyond repairing small damage, the expected rebuild of the devastated New Jersey coast is expected to continue through subsequent years.

Hurricane Sandy was a humbling reminder of the myriad factors that impact business, and that all the best planning cannot totally prepare a firm for uncertainty. But Sandy served also as a reminder that the human element of Kuiken Brothers is the Company's true source of strength. The adaptability and dedication of the staff allowed the locations to recover quickly and to turn the attention of the Company towards serving the community as soon as possible.

This human element is the greatest intangible of all, and it was this aspect of Kuiken Brothers' history that was celebrated in November at a gathering of the Kuiken family. The dinner brought together four generations of Kuikens with



Members of the extended Kuiken Family celebrating the 100th Anniversary at Arcola Country Club in Paramus NJ on November 15, 2012.



Richard R. Kuiken recounting stories of the early years as a second generation owner during the Kuiken Family 100th Anniversary celebration.

Richard, aged 92, serving as a reminder of the Company's past and numerous children representing the family's future. The night was marked with speeches and stories that honored family members past and paid homage to the traditions and values that are the enduring legacy of the Company's forefathers. It was recognized by those gathered there that honoring and respecting those traditions, and instilling those values into the next generation, would be the best way to ensure another 100 years for Kuiken Brothers.



Members of the third generation, Henry, Wayne, and Doug, recount stories throughout the evening.



Members of the Kuiken Brothers Board of Directors. Standing (left to right) Wayne R. Kuiken, Matthew D. Kuiken, Robert E. Kuiken, Kenneth H. Kuiken, Nicholas M. Kuiken, Edward N. Kuiken Jr., and Michael W. Kuiken. Seated (left to right), Douglas R. Kuiken, Richard R. Kuiken, and Henry Kuiken.



A small photo book of the history of Kuiken Brothers was prepared for those in attendance at the dinner.

Conclusion

Looking Forward

***T* O SURVIVE AND INDEED THRIVE FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP AND OWNERSHIP OF THE SAME FAMILY IS NO SMALL ACCOMPLISHMENT.**

When Kuiken Brothers was founded in 1912, it was but one of potentially thousands of small, local construction and building supply companies looking to make a living in the new communities developing in the early

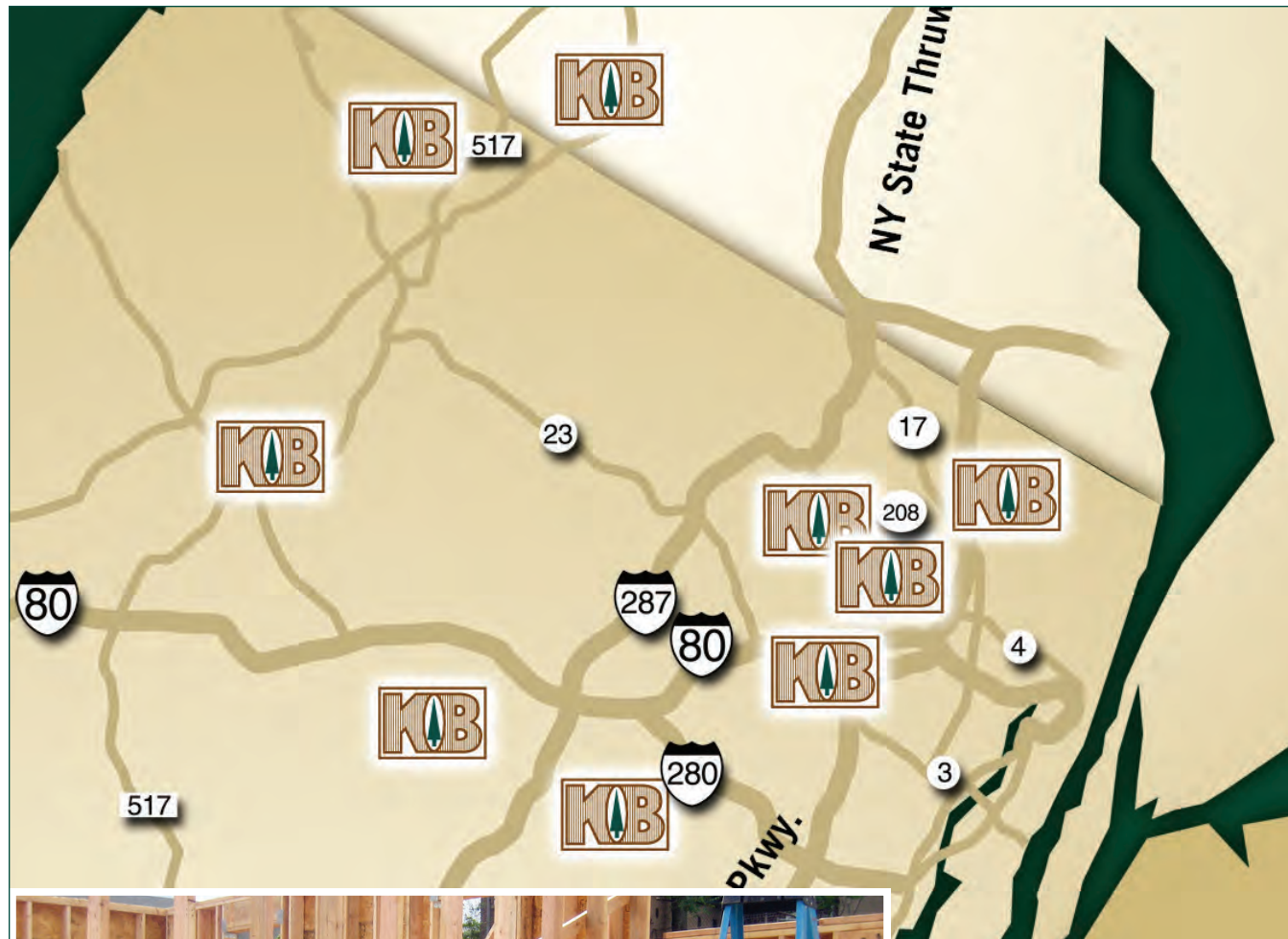
twentieth century. On the surface, there was little that was remarkable about the Company. For decades it stood alongside many other small businesses operating in the marketplace of northern New Jersey. Below the surface, the value of honest hard work was instilled in the members of the family and the employees who were like family. The First Generation of Kuiken Brothers knew their business was only worth the integrity of their dealings, and that only an honest dollar had value. This moral foundation gave the Company a guiding purpose for generations to come and extended far beyond providing for the Kuiken Family. At the core of the Company's mission has been the responsibility of providing security for its employees, real value for its customers, and support for its community.



Kuiken Brothers 1915 at what is believed to be the Little Falls Laundry. Kuiken Brothers was the builder on this project. Note the truck on the left hand side – written on the side of the vehicle, "The Kuiken Bros. Co Builders, Fair Lawn".



Kuiken Brothers current Board of Directors. Back row (left to right), Nicholas M. Kuiken, and Matthew D. Kuiken. Front row (left to right), Wayne R. Kuiken, Kenneth H. Kuiken, Douglas R. Kuiken, Henry Kuiken, Robert E. Kuiken, and Michael W. Kuiken.



Paterson Habitat for Humanity Corporate Challenge, June 2012

embody those principles. The dedication of those who wear the Kuiken Brothers logo to act honestly, work hard and deal fairly is something to which no monetary value can be ascribed. These men and women had to adapt to the times and evolve to meet the new demands of an expanding Company. With growth has come challenges, but while the appearance and approach might have changed,

Over time, the small operation in Fair Lawn grew to an enterprise of nine unique locations employing several hundred people and a sales volume today that far exceeds anything imaginable in 1912. Kuiken Brothers would have never achieved this growth without adherence to their core principles. Such success would not have been possible without the people who

the essential core philosophy and culture of the Company always stayed the same.

Though much continues to change today, remaining true to core beliefs will continue to be the essential element of Kuiken Brothers' strong business model. Computers and smart phones have replaced pencil notations on scrap wood and paper. Forklifts, boom trucks, and hydraulic power racking have eliminated a great deal of the manual labor. Multi-faceted marketing programs such as corporate events for customers, educational seminars, product expos, and an interactive website have added intricacy to salesmanship that never existed before. But in spite of all the advancements in technology and communication, Kuiken Brothers still works hard to stay in touch, on a personal level, with customers and staff; the Business has been, and remains, relationship-driven. A firm handshake and a spoken promise is not a forgotten tradition at Kuiken Brothers. The principles that made the Company a stable and successful enterprise one hundred years ago endure today.

Fair Lawn Trim Shed





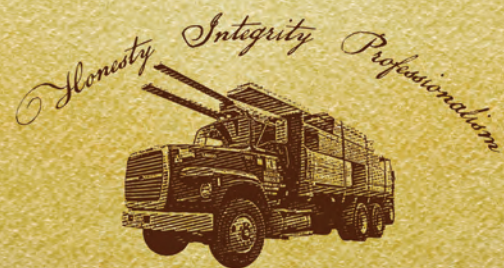
KUIKEN BROTHERS COMPANY, INC.
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL BUILDING MATERIALS
Since 1912

MISSION STATEMENT

To be the leading provider of Residential & Commercial Building Materials in the markets we serve.

To exceed our customers' needs and expectations by consistently providing quality materials and solutions in a responsive, respectful manner within a framework and culture of honesty, integrity and professionalism.

MOTTO Get it Right!



The phrase *get it right* – which calls to mind the notion of providing good service, having the right materials, and making deliveries on time all for a fair price – in fact encapsulates far more than that. One hundred years of business has taught the men and women who make up Kuiken Brothers that *getting it right* is about much more than simply running a successful and profitable business – it is about doing it with honesty and integrity. The history of

Often the old is cast out in favor of the new, people come and go, and culture changes. The traditions and moral character that has allowed Kuiken Brothers to succeed and prosper in good times and bad for a hundred years continues to be a guiding compass. As it has been highlighted throughout this text, Kuiken Brother's greatest asset has been, and will always be, its people. Nothing good happens without good people.

The motto of Kuiken Brothers is a simple phrase: ***Get it Right.*** For all these years, the Company has never ceased to work diligently to live up to that goal. It has succeeded much of the time; when it did not, the people working at Kuiken Brothers learned from their mistakes, corrected them and came back stronger and wiser.

Kuiken Brothers demonstrates there are ways to succeed while maintaining high standards. *Getting it right* has always meant acting with integrity and working to build a stronger community both within the Company and within the areas that the Company inhabits. It means focusing on bigger issues rather than simply the bottom line. It means viewing customers and employees not as a means to an end, but as an integral part of the culture and fabric of Kuiken Brothers. These core beliefs have provided Kuiken Brothers with a pathway for survival, prosperity and growth.

Kuiken Brothers' success has come as a result of cultivating a company culture built on a legacy of respect and integrity, and while one hundred years is a very significant milestone and a cause for celebration, it is now history. The Company shall continue to focus on the present as it always has, utilizing the past as a model and moral compass to build on such a legacy of respect and integrity. The plan now is to carry that forward for the next one hundred years.

The plan now is to carry that forward for the next 100 years.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

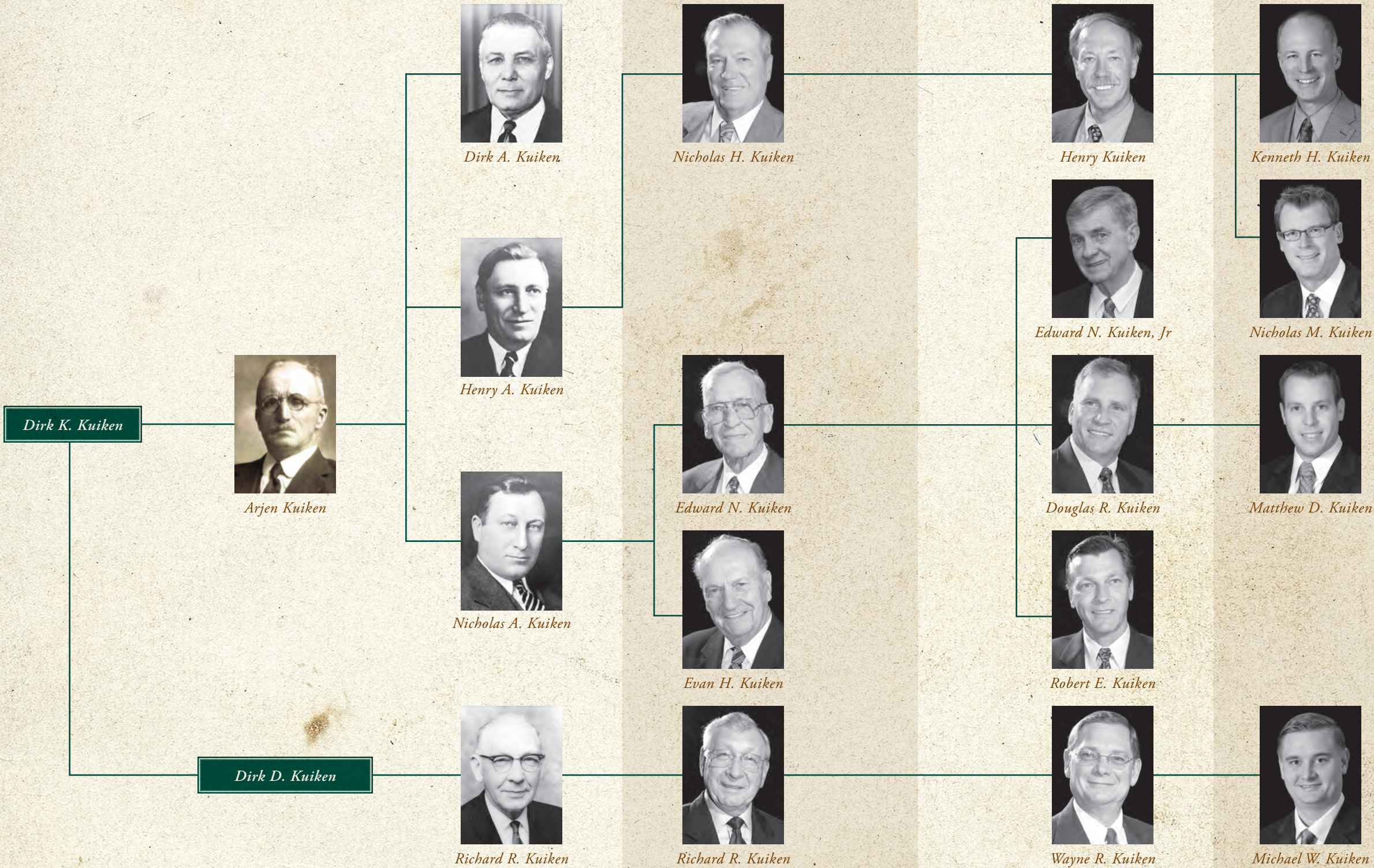
THE FIRST
GENERATION

THE SECOND
GENERATION

THE THIRD
GENERATION

THE FOURTH
GENERATION

KUIKEN FAMILY TREE



DIRK A. KUIKEN
b. 1883 Holland – d. 1952

HENRY A. KUIKEN
b. 1885 Holland – d. 1956
m. Gertrude Rosendale

Nicholas H.
b. 1919 – d. 2011
m. 1937 Jeanette Sikkema

Muriel J.
Beverly
Jenna
Andrew
Devon

Bernard
Michael
William
Mary
Mark

Henry
Kenneth H.
Capri N.

Nicholas M.
Andrew N.
Matthew J.
Katherine P.

James M.
Skylar
Charlotte
Evan

Nicholas
Christian
Kyle
Kathryn
CJ

Todd

NICHOLAS A. KUIKEN
b. 1889 Holland – d. 1944
m. 1916 Nellie Vander May

Edward N.
b. 1917 – d. 2009
m. 1946 Marjorie Fokens

Edward N. Jr.
Jennifer
Edward III

Douglas R.
Leigh Anne
Gabriel L.
Adam D.
Samuel E.

Amanda A.
Matthew D.

Robert E.
Michael G.
Jack M.
Lily E.

Brent
Brent T.
Jonathen D.

Reanna

Evan H.
b. 1924 – d. 2008
m. 1958 Evelyn Timek

RICHARD R. KUIKEN
b. 1896 – d. 1968
m. 1918 Tillie Van Hook

Richard R.
b. 1920
m. 1945 Jeanette Rienstra
m. 1983 Joan Cronk Tilstra

Wayne R.
Carolyn J.
Abigail K.
Aidan M.
Lydia C.

Michael W.
Micah A.
Caleb B.
Jesse C.
Naomi D.

Jonathan R.
Madeleine E.

Richard A.
Erica
Richard

Step-Grandchild of Richard;
Grandchild of Joan – Robert

HENRY AND NICHOLAS
ESTABLISH KUIKEN BROTHERS,
16 YEAR OLD RICHARD JOINS

1912

DIRK A. KUIKEN
JOINS
KUIKEN BROTHERS

CIRCA 1920

EDWARD, GEORGE,
NICHOLAS AND
RICHARD JR. INVITED
TO SIT ON THE BOARD

1947

EVAN JOINS
KUIKEN
BROTHERS

CIRCA 1950

HENRY, EDWARD, WAYNE
AND DOUG KUIKEN
ARE ELEVATED TO THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1972

ROBERT,
NICK JR. AND KENNETH
ARE ELEVATED TO
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2000

MICHAEL AND MATTHEW KUIKEN
ARE BROUGHT ON TO THE BOARD OF
DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.
CONTROLLER, TOM TUBRIDY, JOINS THE
ADVISORY BOARD.

2008



Wantage, NJ





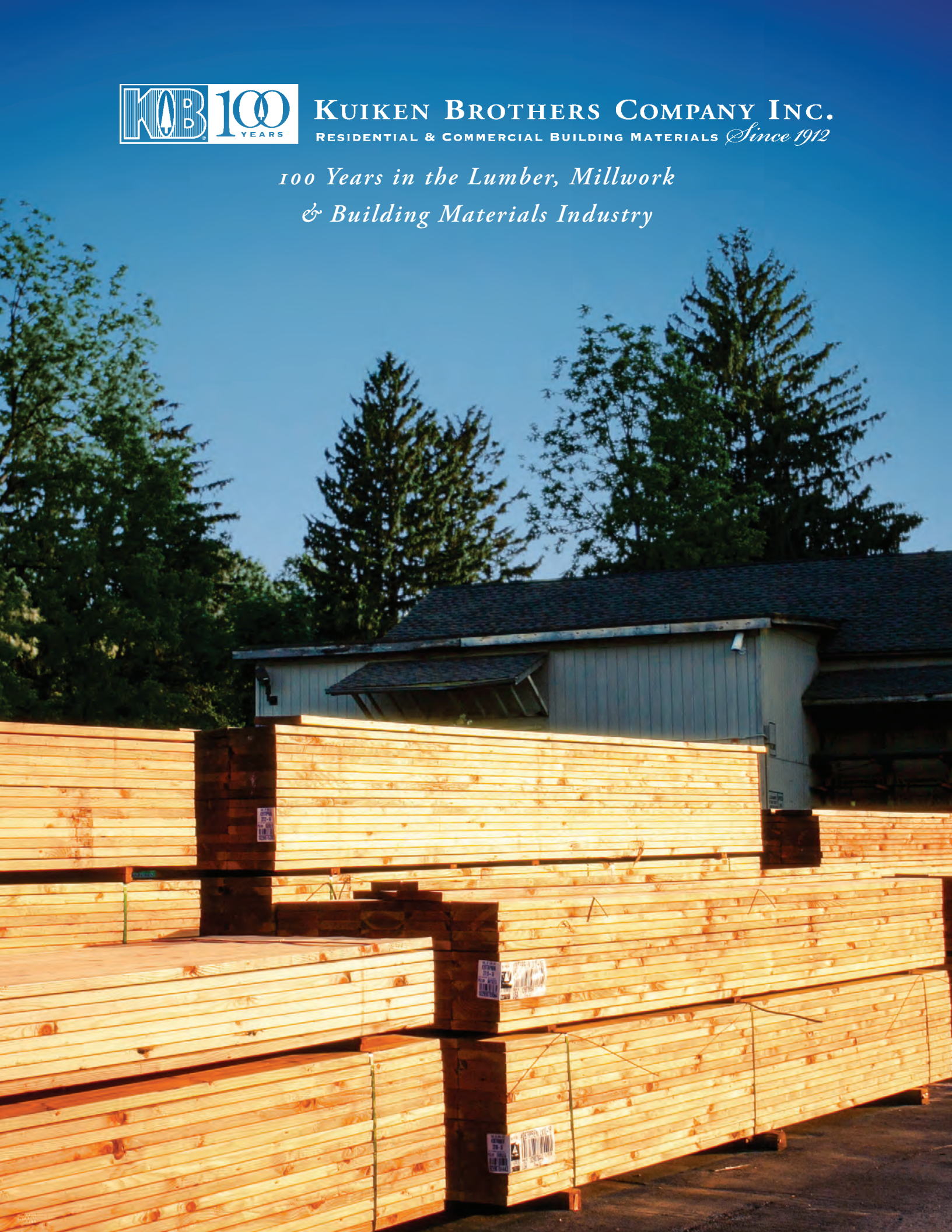
Emerson, NJ





KUIKEN BROTHERS COMPANY INC.
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL BUILDING MATERIALS *Since 1912*

*100 Years in the Lumber, Millwork
& Building Materials Industry*



2012



KUIKEN BROTHERS COMPANY, INC.



RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL BUILDING MATERIALS

FAIR LAWN, NJ
6-02 Fair Lawn Avenue

EMERSON, NJ
246 Kinderkamack Road

MIDLAND PARK, NJ
145 Lake Avenue

WANTAGE, NJ
175 Route 23

SUCCASUNNA, NJ
33 Route 10 East

WARWICK, NY
33 South Street

GARFIELD, NJ
485 River Drive

ROSELAND, NJ
14 Eisenhower Parkway

KUIKENBROTHERS.COM

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