THE YEAR WAS 1905. THEODORE ROOSEVELT WAS 8 MONTHS INTO HIS SECOND TERM as President of the United States. The Victorian age had come to an end with the death of the queen and Edward the VII was on the throne. The Panama Canal was under construction and there was no Income tax. Wealthy winter tourists were flocking to Florida for the winter and drainage of the Everglades was starting.

In Daytona, Mary McLeod Bethune’s Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls was one year old and the area was already known for its automobile races. Daytona was a bustling community. The Daytona Boat Works opened in 1903 on South Beach Street and the Merchant’s Bank was one of the most impressive buildings lining the west side of the shell road that was the town’s main street. The Palmetto Club had been formed in 1904 and the town’s leading merchants had begun to build their homes along Ivy Lane, a pretty street with a canopy of oak trees giving it shade from the heat. The city was growing; the population of Volusia County in 1900 was 11,374 and it was obvious to anyone here that it would more than double by 1920. This was the way it was when John T. Dunn, Sr. of Jacksonville stepped off the Flagler East Coast Railway to start a business for his three sons. On November 5, 1905, John T. Dunn, Sr. and his sons John Jr., J. Blair, and Edgar C, opened Dunn Bros. Hardware. The store

By Denise Williams
was located on North Beach Street next to what is now the present post office. The three brothers sold enamel & tinware, hardware, crockery, paint and house furnishings and Dunn Bros. Hardware soon became known as “the store with a million items.”

In 1908, the store was moved to 154 South Beach Street where Dunn Bros. shared half the building with the McCoy Bros. Garage and Edwards Moving Picture House. By 1910 the Dunns occupied the entire building and had added a second floor. Several apartments occupied the second floor and J. Blair was one of the first to live there with his new bride. Family members recall John T. Dunn lived there for many years. He liked to be close to the business. His sons finally had to ask him to move so they could make room for the additional store space they needed to showcase toys and related items.

Until Riverfront Park was filled in during the 1920’s Dunn Bros. Hardware had a dock that extended out into the river. During this time, if business was slow at the store the men who worked there would go out to the end of the dock to fish. When customers showed up, the clerk left behind to mind the store would go to the front door and shoot off a gun as a signal for the others to put up their fishing rods and get back to work.

Thus, the long history and union between the Dunn family and downtown Daytona Beach began.

Time passed quickly, the store prospered, and eventually the next generation of Dunns moved into the business. John had no children, but Edgar had ten and Blair had three. Of these, six followed the family tradition. Edgar’s children Clinton, Edgar M., Bill, and Austin joined forces with Blair’s children Buck and Jim. By this time, the community had grown and there were more Dunns in the family enterprise but the philosophy of the store had not changed. Customers knew that if Dunn Bros., “the store with a million items,” did not have a particular item, one of the staff would get on the phone, locate it, and special order it for them. Customers could expect prompt, friendly, and personal service.

Expansion inevitably followed with the purchase of the old Malby-Conrad Lumber Co. and in 1950 Dunn Lumber & Supply Co. was formed by Clinton, Edgar M., Bill, Austin, Buck and Jim. Located several blocks from the original hardware store, still near

They tested it... IT DIDN’T BREAK! Have You?

“I got a sample of the Brey-Krause universal frame mirror with the tilt frame packed separate, sent to me via UPS. They both looked very good. I sent the samples via UPS to our location across town and back and they still were not broke. So we brought in our first order of mirrors and some tilt frames along with some grab bars in early July. We’ve been shipping them all over the country and have re-ordered many more since then with not one broken mirror...

...In my 30+ years in this business this is the only mirror package that I’ve seen that UPS has approved of. The simple idea of one universal mirror with separate fixed tilt frame, adjustable tilt kit or shelf kit is great! But no broken mirror is even better. I was willing to pay more for this extra packaging but I didn’t have to from Brey-Krause”

~Jim Colburn, Twin City Hardware

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the center of Daytona Beach, Dunn Lumber carried on the family's business philosophy. Personal service was emphasized and Dunn Lumber purposefully stocked an inventory of hard-to-find items so that builders would not lose money due to unnecessary delays. The customers were not all "big" contractors, either. In fact, the Dunns take pride in having helped a generation of young builders to get started. Many of these are now well established, and their loyalty to Dunns attests to the efficacy of its "customers first" policies.

With the success of Dunn Lumber & Supply in Daytona and in an effort to better serve their customers, the Dunns opened Dunn Hardware & Supply of Bunnell in 1954. One year later Dunn Bros. Marine opened at 812 Volusia Avenue in response to the community's ever increasing interest in boating. The store was one of the earliest Johnson dealerships and supplied the area with a tremendous selection of maritime equipment. Located just behind the marine store was a small building which housed Dun-Rite Automotive which started in 1965. In late 1955, the Dunns joined forces with The Overhead Door Corporation to become the area's only garage door company. 1974 found Dunns expanding their successful paint business with the opening of Dunn Bros. Paint & Decorating on Volusia Avenue.

As the Dunn family of businesses continued to grow so did the number of family members involved. Sam, Ed's son, and Barry, Jim's son, again brought a sense of vitality to the family business. After working at the hardware store for a number of years, Barry was called upon to manage one of the Dunns newest acquisitions, Dunn Lumber & Supply of New Smyrna Beach. The newest lumberyard along with Dunn Bros. Ace Hardware, both located on Canal St. in New Smyrna Beach, where founded in 1981. Like his cousin, Sam Dunn started his career at the hardware store in downtown Daytona Beach. With the backing of the family, Sam helped organize the Downtown Merchants Association whose express purpose was to maintain and revitalize interest in the city's central commercial area. By the mid 1970's, the Downtown Development Authority was started with Sam Dunn as its chairman.

In 1979 the various Dunn businesses were consolidated into one corporate entity—The Dunn Corporation. Sam and Barry worked together to oversee the entire corporation as president and senior vice president, respectively, and later as co-presidents. Until the early 2000's Ed, Austin, and Jim served on the board of directors and continued to support the corporation with their sound advice.

With the passing of Clinton and Buck in the late 1980's, Sam and Barry worked together to manage the lumberyards. Over the years Sam served in leadership positions as Chairman of The Chamber, Daytona Beach Halifax Area; President of the Florida Building Material Association; and Chairman of the National Lumber and Building Materials Dealers Association.

In 1987, Wes Dunn, Edgar M.'s grandson, came on board as the toy department manager at the hardware store which became Dunn Toys & Hobbies. Wes was the first of the fifth generation Dunns to work in the family business. In 1988 Dunn Hardware moved to the newly renovated Ivey's building at 166 South Beach Street and the warehouses behind the old store were torn down for parking. In the early years these warehouses had been home to a tin shop, blacksmith, and race cars. When the warehouses were torn down a treasure trove of old tools and memorabilia was uncovered.

According to legend, Henry Ford garaged his race cars in the warehouses in the early days of racing. The Dunns like to think that the box of Model T tools they found might have belonged to Henry Ford.

Late in 1988 the corporation purchased the operations of Wickes Lumber at 200 South Segrave Street and began operation as Dunn Lumber & Supply. The corporation was watching the changing building industry and knew it would have to adapt to be successful. In 1992 the hardware store was moved to the lumberyard on Segrave and began doing business as Dunn Lumber of Daytona Beach.

The move of the hardware store to Segrave provided the opportunity to expand the toy operation at 166 South Beach Street. That store was later sold to Wes Dunn.
Since the early 1900’s the Dunn family has very involved with The Chamber of Commerce. John Jr., J. Blair, and Edgar C. were among the founding fathers and helped build the first chamber offices. Clinton and Sam have both served as President of the Chamber.

The Dunns built their business on the foundation that each individual customer deserves respect and they built their lives on the principle that the community we live in deserves a full measure of their service as well. The Dunns believe in the future of downtown Daytona Beach and have done their part to revitalize it. They believe they have been especially fortunate in the number of employees who’ve been so long with the company. These employees take pride in knowing their customers and are genuinely interested in giving good service. It says something for a family who has owned and operated a business for over 100 years with keeping employees for 20 or 30 years.

As Sam Dunn said during the company’s centennial celebration in 2005 “Just wait to see what happens during the next 100 years!”

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The Dunn Corporation has received many awards over the years including, but not limited to:

- Oldest Case knife dealer in the United States
- Daytona Beach Jaycees Spectrum Award
- Stanley Tools Golden Hammer Award
- Sunbank’s Pacesetter Award for 1989
- Community Dedication Award by the Daytona Beach City Commission
- Elks Club Citizen of the Year awarded to the Dunn family
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