

## RUCKER ENTERPRISES

One dusty August afternoon in 1905, a 20 year-old Southern youth left his home in Columbia, South Carolina to seek his fortune in more distant climes. Shortly after the "Late Unpleasantness" his father, a Confederate veteran, had also left his home in the Lynchburg, Virginia area for a brighter future. However, Lee's warrior was finding it nearly impossible to raise a family on the meager living he made selling mill supplies and lubricating oils to the emerging but impoverished Southern manufacturers. As independent commission men were gradually being displaced by the rapacious agents of the Oil Trust and other combines, Houston Rucker earnestly advised his sons to try other lines of work. Thus, after two years at the University of South Carolina, necessarily terminated by strained financial circumstances, Pierce Christie Rucker sought his future and fortune beyond the restricted confines of Richland County, South Carolina.

Having apprenticed as a cotton broker during his summer recesses, Pierce had made contact with several buyers and warehouse men in the Greensboro, North Carolina area and chose to make his way there. Shortly after arriving in Greensboro, he established Rucker Cotton Company and became a significant factor in the cotton trade of the Upper South. Always optimistic and forward-looking, he next built a cotton warehouse that was then joined by a general merchandise warehouse. He then started a drayage business.

In due time Rucker's business interest had expanded and he acquired substantive holdings in local real estate, banking and insurance. As the 1920's were halcyon days for the South and the entire country, he felt secure about the future and sought to expand his interests. Alas, his economic euphoria was not justified, and the advent of the 1930's saw an end of many a bright dream. The economic quake that followed may have only shaken the financial centers of the country, but it annihilated the economies of the burgeoning cities in the South.

By dint of hard labor and perseverance, Pierce Rucker managed to retain his primary calling, cotton brokerage, but all of his peripheral holdings were swept away in that debacle known as the Great Depression. Ever alert to the new opportunities presenting themselves, he made his way back by sheer persistence. By 1940 concern with diversification had replaced survival as the order of the day. The end of World War II found Rucker in distribution, storage, trucking and real estate and a substantial corporate structure had been erected on the old foundations. By 1950 the complex of companies now functioning were recognizable and emerging in their present form. At this juncture he chose to turn the direction of the business over to the next generation.

In 1937 Pierce Rucker Jr. had joined his father in management of the business. Pierce Jr. was inducted in the Army in 1941. In 1945, after service in the Philippines, he was mustered out and returned to the family business. Pierce Jr. found his niche in managing the distribution operations. He worked effectively and successively in distributing beverages, automotive supplies and lastly household appliances.

In 1940, Mr. Rucker's only daughter Mary Lewis joined the company as a book-keeper, after graduating from college. She served effectively therein until 1946 when she married Robert Edmunds, a Virginian, and moved to Halifax, Virginia.

In 1951, after service in the Army Air Corp. as a navigator and graduating from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Mr. Rucker's younger son Walker assumed management of the plant properties. Under his aegis the older properties were upgraded and greatly expanded. A real estate company was incorporated and a trucking line initiated. Having served in the business for over 45-years Walker, as his father before him, had trained his successor.

James G. Rucker, a grandson of the founder, joined the family business that year. He is a graduate of Wake Forest University, Class of 1986, and also received his MBA from Duke University in 2002. Jim will guide the companies into the 21st century. Rucker Enterprises faces the new century with confidence.

In memory of Mary Fry and Pierce C. Rucker S. the family committed to financing the Emergency Wing of the new Wesley Long Hospital. The original hospital had been the Rucker's neighbor for several decades. The dedicatory remarks are summed up in the inscribed plaque personifying Mary and Pierce Rucker's humanitarianism:

"Not unacquainted with disaster, we have learned to aid the unfortunate." (Virgil)