


# furniture WORLD



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## RETAIL FURNITURE HERITAGE

# 1800-2011

### Retail Furniture Stories -Part 8

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

It was 1911, an extraordinary year of discovery and upheaval. In China, Sun Yat-Sen overthrew the Manchu Dynasty. Another revolution in not-so-far-away Mexico saw President Porfirio Diaz replaced by Francesco Madero. Visionary Roald Amundsen became the first man to reach the South Pole. The ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu was revealed to the world by American explorer Hiram Bingham. And Marie Curie became the Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry for her radium and polonium breakthrough.

#### LONG'S BEDDING & INTERIORS

Simultaneously, Harlem, New York, was impacted by the arrival of Max Long from Poland! Max was part of the major westward migration of European peoples, entrepreneurs many of them, who entered the American marketplace and fought their way to success. His grandson, Bob Long, now President of Long's Bedding &

Interiors, told us the story.

"Max manufactured and renovated horsehair mattresses and, in due time, his sons Harry and Irving joined him in the business. A couple of years later, with an initial investment of \$500 each, they opened Larry's Bedding on West 72nd Street, although Irving continued to work with his father. In spite of Harry's dedication and hard work, in a year's time the business was failing. Harry went to Max for an early 'stimulus package'. In the spirit of tough love, Max said, 'If you can't make it, close the store!'

"But shortly after, the War started, the Great Depression began to fade, business improved and Harry (my dad) bought out Max and Irving!

"Fast forward to 1963. I flunked out of the University of Wisconsin, and my dad offered to take me in; I was 20 years old." (He began his personal career history on the delivery truck.) "I started at \$75.00 a week. One year later, I asked for a raise as

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- Bob Long, Long's Bedding & Interiors

I was getting married. I received a \$15.00 raise, and was not too happy! Went to my dad and expressed my unhappiness. He said if you think you can make more elsewhere, go! He had a partner at the time, and did not want to take advantage. (P.S., one week later, he gave me \$20.00 more each week out of his own pocket!)



Long's 158, West 22nd Street store, circa 1930. With Bob Long, President, is daughter Terri, and Bob's wife, Judie.

LONG'S BEDDING EST. 1911

LONG'S BEDDING



"Long's does no advertising, and does not carry any of the 'S' brands. I have been told that LONG'S is THE BRAND!"

- Bob Long, Long's Bedding & Interiors

"In the mid-1980s, my wife, Judie, came to work as a bookkeeper, and very swiftly became a sales person! In the late 1900s, after graduating from Ohio State University, my youngest daughter, Terri, came to work as my bookkeeper, and she very swiftly became my right and left arms."

Long's Bedding has had both eureka and insightful moments over the decades. Said Bob, "My dad had a small warehouse in Harlem, not a lot of stock. In the late '60s, I opened a large warehouse, 10 times the size of the original. This enabled me to make quick deliveries as I stocked all beds in all sizes. In '72, I bought a small business that dealt with interior decorators for a very small tag. This turned out fantastic as there were hundreds of live customers. Today, I still have many of them."

Bob feels that "today is quite challenging in lieu of our economy the past three years, and the world with all its problems. Up until 2008, every year was a growth year and Long's did very well. I have had to make many adjustments; however, we are still surviving and paying our bills promptly."

"Long's does no advertising, and does not carry any of the 'S' brands. I have been told that LONG'S is THE BRAND!" An article reprinted in Long's website confirms that, "People come to Long's

Bedding not to buy an 'S' brand, but to buy our integrity."

"That's not to say that Long's doesn't have some strong bedding brands in its stable. . . The lineup does include an 'S' brand, Simmons, and also carries bedding by Aireloom, Therapedic and Englander."

"It also has its own bedding line, Long's Landmark, designed by the Long family."

Bob continued, "I have a very educated and friendly staff who do not push but have the knowledge to explain differences in qualities and construction of beds. All beds are stocked in all sizes and can be delivered within hours. I have my own two trucks and my delivery men have been with me some for over 20 years. The delivery men are the last touch with the customer and it is most important that the delivery ends on a good note."

"About five years ago, I started importing beds from RELYON Manufacturing from Somerset, England. These are the finest beds made in the world and they are all stocked in my warehouse."

Long's has been described as, "Bedding purveyors to the rich and famous" from its prime strategic location on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Renowned interior designer Steven Gambrel is a fan, as were John Lennon and former president, John Kennedy. Also on Long's client lists are Jerry Seinfeld, Steve Martin, Carly Simon,

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1930 & 1936  
 yellow pages  
 ads featuring  
 Beautyrest and  
 "Re-Made And  
 Sterilized  
 Mattresses."

Matt Lauer, Connie Chung and Diane Sawyer.

Mick Jagger was a tad unique when he ordered a wall-to-wall mattress for his bedroom, just one more successful project. Revlon's Chairman, Ron Perelman, requested extra-firm custom-made mattresses for his 10 homes, plus another, immediately, for his hotel room in Los Angeles. Not in the least dismayed, Bob found a trucker to drive the mattress cross-country to the hotel.

Long's website text can be forthright and pithy. Speaking to new college graduates, establishing their first homes, Bob says, "Tell your futon to kiss your done-with-dorm-life ass good-bye and get a grown-up bed!"

After nearly a century of service in what has often been described as "the toughest retail market in the country", Long's knows that they're "good in bed"! See [www.longsbearing.com](http://www.longsbearing.com).

## VERBARG'S FURNITURE

Meanwhile, west of Manhattan in Cincinnati, poet Longfellow's "Queen City", third largest community in the State of Ohio, a gentleman, his wife and five daughters, endowed with determinedly optimistic philosophies, adopted a motto that reflected their convictions, "Fine furniture with superb craftsmanship never goes