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THE SMITH & WATSON STORY

Smith & Watson was founded New York City in 1907 by Richard Smith and Alexander Watson. Although **Smith & Watson** carried fine English antiques, they became more renowned for their talented designers and cabinetmakers; producing some of the finest furniture of the 20th century.

Their first showroom was at Madison Ave and 34th St.. It was in this location in the summer of 1915, that 16-year-old John Ryan Senior joined the firm. What began as a summer job became a passion which led to a lifetime career. John Ryan Senior remained an employee of the firm until 1941, when he bought the company from its founders. He remained with the company for 62 years until his death in 1977.

John Ryan's eldest son, John P. Ryan, joined **Smith & Watson** in 1947, shortly after serving in World War II. By this time the company had moved to a larger space at 20 East 55th Street where they catered to the "carriage trade", wealthy New York families such as The Rockefellers, The Astors, The Carnegies and The Mellons.

In 1956, John P. Ryan's younger brother, Robert T. Ryan, the current president, joined the company. By the late fifties, **Smith & Watson** had been "discovered" by the interior design and architectural trade. The growth of corporate business flourished in the sixties. **Smith & Watson** developed a contract division headed by Ellen Ann Dawson, working closely with architects and designers to create executive offices and boardrooms. During the last fifty years, **Smith & Watson** has also enjoyed favor with the political and artistic elite.

In 1970 the company moved their showroom to the Decorative Arts Center, a building open only to the trade on 63rd Street and Second Ave. In order to keep up with increasing sales, the Ryans developed close associations with talented firms in England and Europe with a view toward having more furniture made abroad. Most of these companies like Smith and Watson have been family owned and operated for several generations.

In 1984, Barbara Ryan Pilcher, daughter of John P. Ryan, joined the company following a ten year career at Manufacturer's Hanover Trust. John Luke Ryan, son of Robert T. Ryan joined the company in 1994, after completing his education at The University of Rhode Island.

Smith & Watson found its new and current home at The New York Design Center in 1998. The 8,000 square foot showroom features **Smith & Watson's** collection of fine 18th and 19th century English reproductions and accessories, as well as furniture from two English companies they represent, Titchmarsh & Goodwin and Original Club Fenders. The showroom has recently added lines including The Manor House Collection and a Brunschwig & Fils fabric boutique.

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