

Barber Manufacturing Company

Founded: 1894

Location: North Cross Street, Anderson (1894–1920); 1824 Brown Street (1920–)

Frederick T. Barber founded the Barber Manufacturing Company in Anderson in 1894. Born in Barber Station, New Jersey, in 1859, Barber worked in a general store as a teenager. He began to take courses at the Capitol City Commercial College in Trenton, New Jersey, and after two years the college hired him as a teacher. Barber worked at a wholesale grocery firm for four years and then joined the Trenton Springs & Mattress Company. He managed the company's New York office and a branch factory in Chicago. He left Trenton Springs & Mattress Company in order to organize the Barber Manufacturing Company, which he incorporated in 1895. The Barber Manufacturing Company manufactured springs for seats, beds, davenports, chairs, and carriages.

An advertisement for the Barber Manufacturing Company, which appeared in the 1906-7 city directory, boasted of the quality of the company's "High-Tempered Spring Beds." "The Lace Web Has Never Been Equalled for Simplicity, Beauty, Comfort, Durability," it declared. The Barber Manufacturing Company's trademark was a rooster perched on a horizontal barber's pole. The trademark was inspired by a visit Barber received from a woman to whom he had sold a set of bedsprings. She was so pleased that she presented him with a red rooster. Barber began to market his bedsprings as a superior "roost-er." "They Provoke Slumber–Not Swearing," he declared.

By 1914 Barber Manufacturing Company had thirty employees. Its original factory burned in December 1919, but with machinery on loan from its competitors the

company was able to resume operation early in 1920. Barber Manufacturing Company moved to a new building on the corner of Nineteenth and Brown Streets. By 1925 the company, capitalizing on the growing demand for automobile springs, was thriving and had sixty employees. It was selling springs in Australia and the Far East. After World War II the company focused on manufacturing springs for the upholstered furniture and office furniture industry. Barber Manufacturing Company added a second plant in Anderson in 1978 and purchased the Acorn Spring Company in Chicago in 1984. In 1986 it opened a plant in Hickory, North Carolina. Frederick's son, J. Wilson Barber, served as general manager of the plant. Frederick's great-grandson was president in the 1990s. In addition to manufacturing upholstered seating, the Barber Manufacturing Company developed proprietary products for other firms, such as the La-Z-Boy Chair Company.