

M. Clune Company (Martin Furniture Company)

Founded: [1854?, 1864?]

Location: 474 South Meridian Street, Indianapolis (1864–75); 700 (later 1402) South Meridian Street (1876–); 5420 US 31 South

Michael Clune, the founder of M. Clune and Company, was born in County Clare, Ireland, in 1843, the youngest of five children of Timothy Clune. His family immigrated to the United States in 1848 and settled in Hendricks County, Indiana. John Clune, listed as a mattress maker, appears in the Indianapolis city directory in 1861. In 1866 Mary Clune is listed as his widow; she continued to manufacture mattresses for many years. The couple may have been relatives of Michael. Company lore places the founding of M. Clune and Company in 1854. However, Michael would have been only eleven years old at that date. Quite possibly, 1854 was the year John Clune first manufactured mattresses in the United States. In 1867 Michael and Patrick Clune were in business as grocers. Their firm, known as Clune & Brother, was at 174 Bluff Road. The next year, both were operating groceries, Patrick at the Bluff Road location and Michael at 474 South Meridian Street.

At some point Michael began to manufacture mattresses. He is first listed as a mattress manufacturer in the 1870 city directory, but two later accounts place the date he started business at 1864. The Great Chicago Fire of October 1870 proved a boon to his business. Michael supplied sixteen cars of mattresses to Cook County. Between 1875 and 1876 Michael moved his business to 700 South Meridian Street, gradually expanding from the manufacture of mattresses to general upholstery work to the manufacture of lounges and davenports and, finally, parlor furniture and living room suites. By 1883

Michael's firm, manufacturing mattresses and bed lounges, had yearly sales of \$30,000. His factory occupied a four-story structure and he employed eleven workmen. Michael secured patents for various furniture designs, including a ratchet that lowered the ends of a sofa, which he leased to other manufacturers for many years.

There were several Clunes in business in Indianapolis. In the 1889 city directory, Patrick Clune was listed as a furniture manufacturer, and in 1902 he and James M. Clune operated Clune & Sons, another furniture manufacturing and retail business. By the early 1890s John Clune was operating World's Fair on the corner of West Washington and Tennessee Streets, the largest home-furnishing store in the state, as well as two additional stores. World's Fair was later operated by Sarah and Margaret Clune. Michael Clune gradually brought his sons into his furniture manufacturing business. The M. Clune Company became M. Clune & Son between 1898 and 1899 after William J. Clune entered the partnership and M. Clune & Sons between 1903 and 1904 when Timothy C. joined the business. Timothy died in 1912 at the age of twenty-nine. That same year the firm was incorporated and, around that time William J. assumed the company's presidency, succeeding his father.

Michael died in 1914. In the succeeding years, the company was run by his son William and son-in-law Martin McDermott (who married daughter Cecilia). McDermott was an Irish immigrant and son of noted builder Robert McDermott, who supervised the construction of the Murat Temple, St. Vincent's Hospital, St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute, and the French Lick Springs Hotel. M. Clune and Company prospered, distributing furniture wholesale throughout the Midwest and East and maintaining representatives in New York, Cincinnati, and Iowa. William died in 1952, and

McDermott died in 1960. The firm eventually focused on the retail sale of furniture, operating the Martin Furniture Company, with Martin McDermott's grandson, Martin II, as president after 1961. Martin Furniture Company is now located at 5420 US 31 South.