

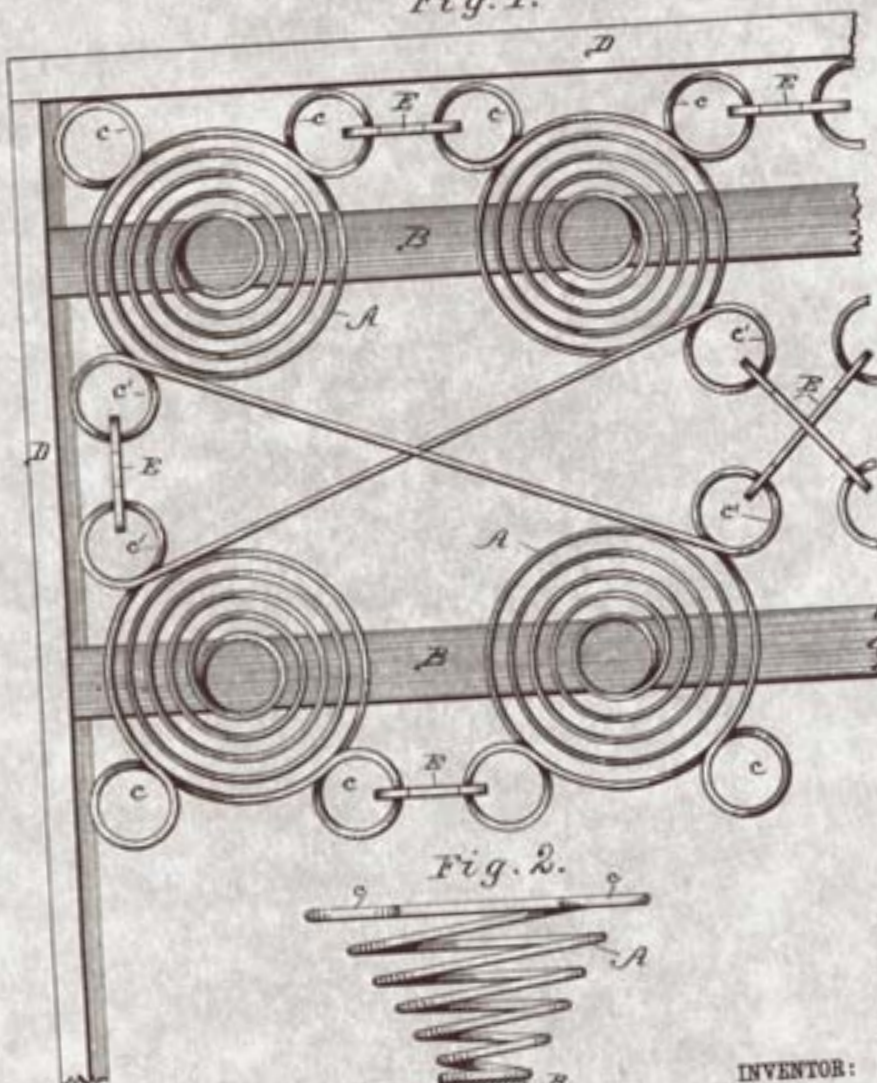
(No Model.)

J. P. LEGGETT.
BED SPRING.

No. 318,758.

Patented May 26, 1885.

Fig. 1.



WITNESSES:
Thos. Houghton.
John Chemon

INVENTOR:
J. P. Leggett
BY *Marr & Co.*
ATTORNEYS

In 1883, Joseph Palmer Leggett invented the first spiral-steel, coiled bedspring. He was granted an official patent on May 26, 1885, as this drawing from the United States Patent and Trademark Office indicates. Though the spring was revolutionary in design, few foresaw the invention growing into a multibillion-dollar industry. (Drawing courtesy of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.)

CHAPTER ONE

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

8,000 B.C. – 1901 A.D.

What a friend is a man's bed! After the toil and care of a long, hard day, or when one's very bones ache from too much play, what luxury it is to feel the gentle softness of a bed! In sickness, nature's own nurse, constant, steadfast, gentle, more healing than any medicine is a bed. And always the vital factor in the bed is the spring it bears.

—Raymond F. Leggett,
son of J. P. Leggett¹

THE WORLD WAS POISED ON THE EDGE of great change in 1883, bidding silent farewell to the past and entering a period of creativity and innovation. That year, Thomas Edison invented his first electric light, and Louis Waterman devised the fountain pen. Oscar Hammerstein patented a cigar-rolling machine, and the Brooklyn Bridge officially opened to traffic. The Triumph motorcycle made its debut, and the Orient Express made its maiden run between Istanbul and Paris. And in the small town of Carthage, Missouri, inventor Joseph Palmer Leggett shook the hand of blacksmith Cornelius B. Platt, forming a partnership that would eventually evolve into a multinational enterprise. Leggett's idea for a new and improved bedspring would even become the industry standard.

Leggett & Platt would begin with this practical product innovation—a single-cone-coil spring, which proved so successful that diversification into other areas was barely considered until the early 1960s. Over the next half century, however, the company would spread its industrial wings into aspects of production that its founders could never have envisioned.

Today, Leggett & Platt, Incorporated, is a member of both the *FORTUNE*® 500 and S&P 500, and leads the world in the design and manufacture of various components that go into finished mattresses and box springs. The same could be said of Leggett regard-



ing many functions and features embodied in your office chair, your automobile seat, your recliner, your bath mat, several of your appliances, your retail shopping venue, your motorcycle, and even the padding under your carpet.² The company also manufactures components found in approximately 80 percent of automobiles manufactured in North America and Europe.³ If you shop at Wal-Mart, Barnes & Noble, Circuit City, Costco, JCPenney, The Home Depot, RadioShack, Safeway, Target, or hundreds of other stores, you are not only purchasing products whose internal workings are manufactured by Leggett & Platt, but you are also pulling those products from shelves and racks designed and constructed by the company.⁴

Leggett & Platt is the world's leading manufacturer of innerspring and box spring components for residential bedding and a leading supplier of adjustable beds.⁵ It is also the world's top producer of recliner mechanisms, sofa sleeper units, and seating systems for the upholstered furniture industry.⁶ When it comes to other residential furnishings, the company is the leading supplier in the United States of non-fashion construction fabrics and carpet underlay, as well as a major supplier of geocomponents.⁷

In the field of commercial fixtures and components, Leggett & Platt's customer list boasts more than 1,000 accounts, including most major retailers. It is the world's top manufacturer of retail store fixtures and display products and services.⁸

Many components Leggett & Platt manufactures are integral to the widely recognized brand-name products of its well-known customers. However, none of Leggett & Platt's fine products have a brand name readily recognized by the average consumer. This fact is without a doubt the largest contributing factor to the company's lack of recognition within the general population.

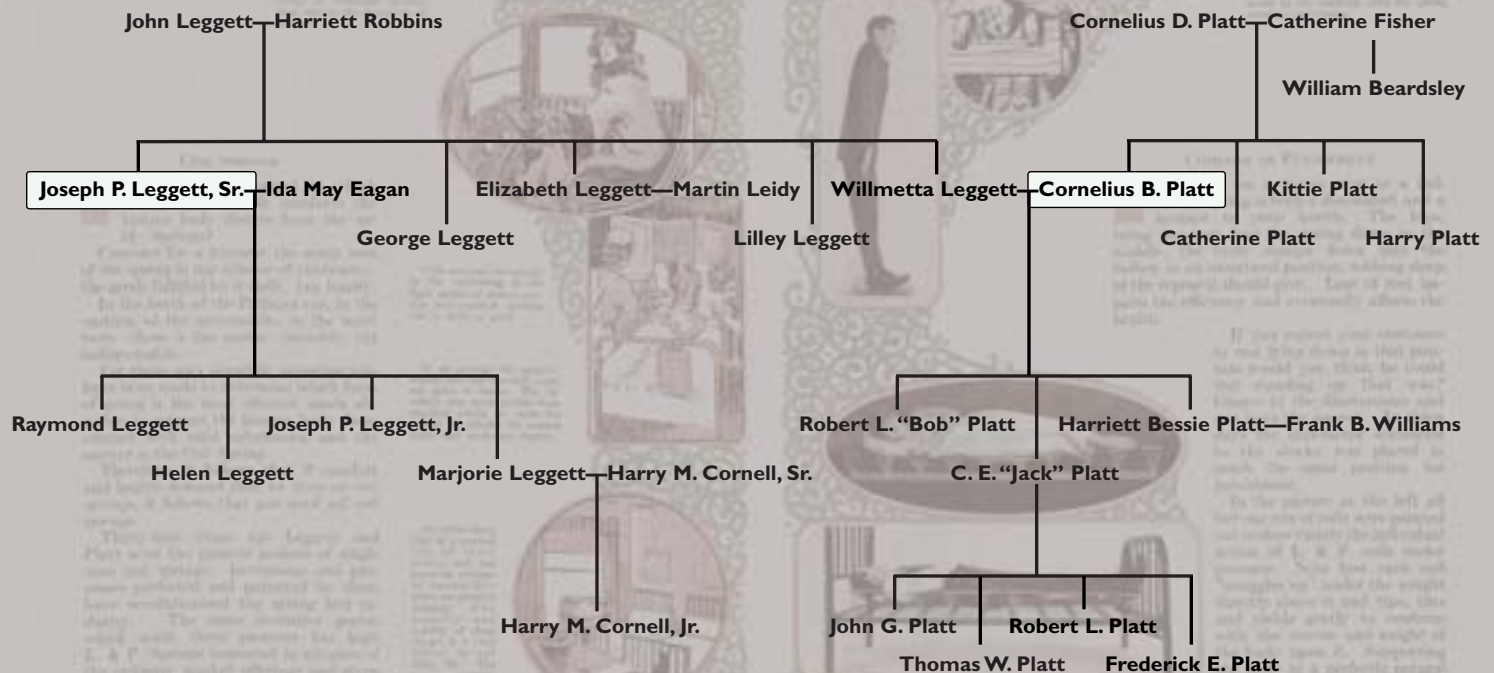
In other industries, Leggett & Platt is a leader in the manufacturing of seating mechanisms and related office furniture components.⁹ It further leads the way as North America's No. 1 independent producer of drawn-steel wire.¹⁰ In the industrial sector, Leggett & Platt is a major producer of electric resistance, welded carbon steel mechanical tubing, and other fabricated tubular components.¹¹ It also manufactures dozens of spe-

cialized products,¹² from massage, lumbar, and seat-suspension systems for the automotive industry to quilting, sewing, and wire-processing systems for the bedding, home textile, upholstery, and apparel industries.¹³

Despite Leggett & Platt's size and vast array of sophisticated products, its roots can be traced back to humble beginnings that tell the story of two men, Joseph P. Leggett and Cornelius B. Platt, who built a unique enterprise based upon the old-fashioned ethics of courtesy and honesty common to a small, midwestern town. When J. P. Leggett created the first commercially viable, spiral-steel coiled bed-spring in 1883, he revolutionized the idea of a supportive and comfortable sleeping surface. However, the story of his accomplishments—and the company that has kept his name alive—doesn't begin in 1883.

The Leggett & Platt Family Tree

Late 1800s to Early 1900s



The C. D. Platt Plow Works plant, founded in 1873 by C. B. Platt's father, was located at the corner of Grant and Fifth Streets in Carthage, Missouri. This photo, likely taken between 1883 and 1885, shows a coiled spring bed suspended from the second-story window with a placard reading "Combination Spring Bed."



Rather, it is an important part of an industrial time line that goes back some 10 millennia.

A Brief History of Sleep

A good night's sleep, or at least the comfortable and healthy repose to which we are accustomed, was relatively unknown throughout history. Our ancestors most likely slept in caves on rough ground padded by leaves and grass. Their environment was bereft of comfort, as we know it today.

Roughly 10,000 years ago, however, man first began sleeping on primitive "beds." At the neolithic settlement of Skara Brae in Scotland (dating to approximately 3,400 B.C.) a stone bed hacked from a cave wall was discovered adjacent to a stone hearth and stone sideboard.¹⁴ In the same time period, the Egyptian pharaohs also raised their pallets off the hard ground. This luxury, however, was designated only for the elite; King Tutankhamen, for example, slept on a bed constructed of ebony and gold, while commoners continued to sleep on palm boughs heaped in a corner.¹⁵

It is believed that the Romans invented the first "mattress" by stuffing reeds, hay, wool, or feathers into a casing, a technique that continued until the late 18th century.¹⁶ During the Renaissance, the general public slept on coarse mattresses that were filled with pea shucks, straw, or feathers, while the upper classes enjoyed beds covered with velvets, brocades, and silks. In the 16th and 17th centuries, mattresses were stuffed with straw or down feathers and placed upon a latticework of rope. By the late 18th century, the cast-iron bed and cotton mattress gained popularity because these setups were less attractive to insects and vermin. Until that time, the presence of mice and insects within mattresses was an accepted fact, even in the beds of royalty.¹⁷

According to the National Sleep Foundation's 2002 *Sleep in America* poll, 58 percent of adults in the United States experience symptoms of insomnia

a few nights a week or more.¹⁸ Oddly enough, the malady has been viewed as a genuine health problem only within the last few decades. Today, however, research has allowed us to realize the true importance of sleep. It is estimated that fatigue resulting from sleeplessness contributes to more than 100,000 police-reported highway crashes, causing 71,000 injuries and 1,500 deaths per year in the United States alone.¹⁹

Although sleep deprivation arises from myriad sources, including health problems, stress, and the diversions of a fast-paced, high-tech society, studies agree that restful, less interrupted sleep is greatly aided by a supportive mattress and foundation.

Joseph P. Leggett Invents the Bedspring

Patent number 318,758 of the United States Patent and Trademark Office is a simple document adorned with the simple title "BED SPRING."²⁰ Although bedspring patents were being granted since the 1850s, none had proved commercially viable. That honor would go to Joseph Palmer Leggett on May 26, 1885. In part, the description of his revolutionary creation reads as follows:

My invention relates to springs for bed; and it consists in the detailed construction and combination of the same, as hereafter fully described, whereby the spaces between the springs are in great measure filled up, and the tick or mattress is

*prevented from falling through between the springs which support it. These springs, by having a very wide spread bearing against the tick or mattress, are prevented from turning over when the weight upon the mattress does not come directly over the center of the springs. ... The manner in which the separate springs are coupled together and combined distributes the weight of any person resting on the mattress over the adjacent springs in addition to those directly underneath and keeps the various parts of the mattress at the same level.*²¹

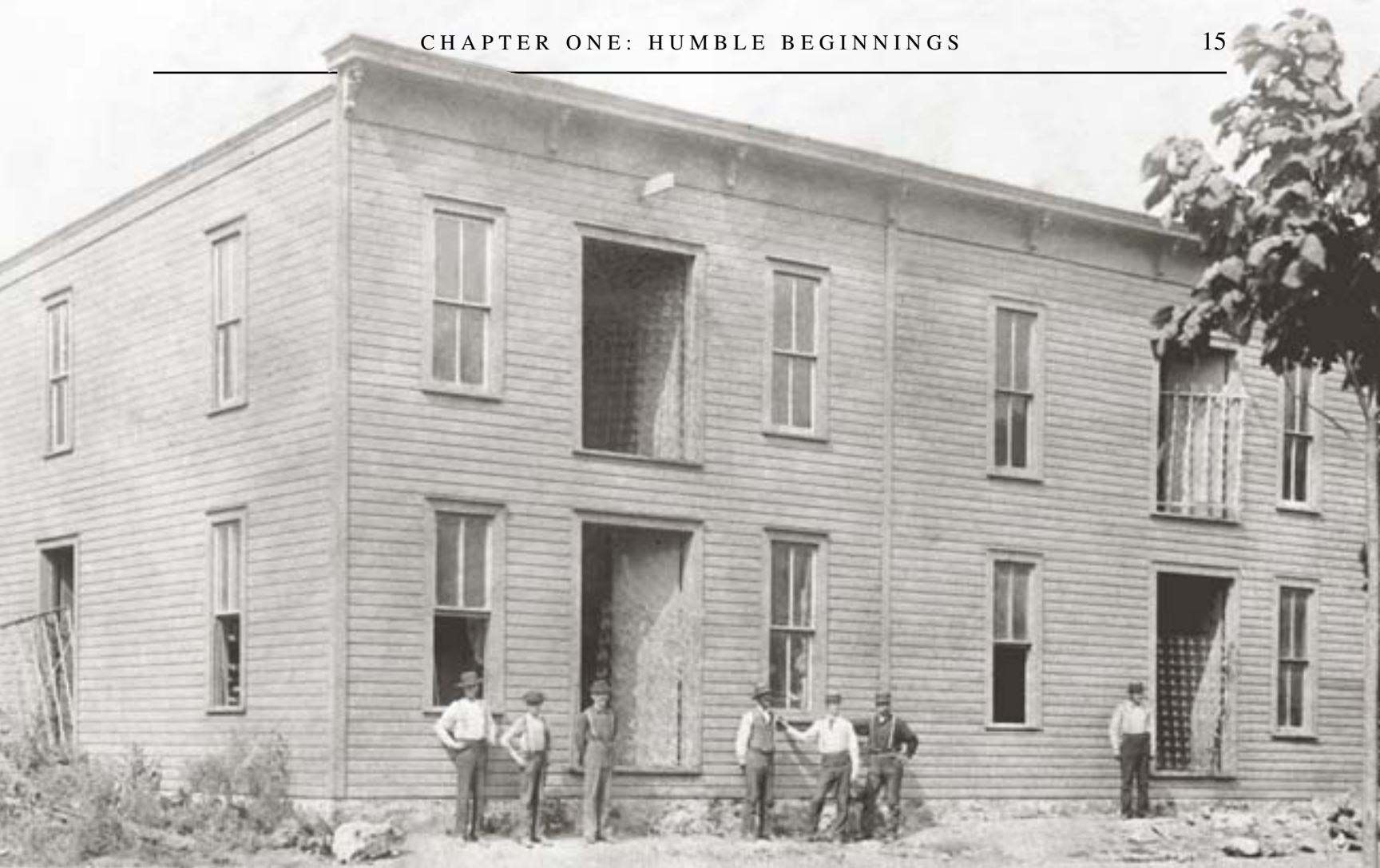
J. P. Leggett was born in Millville, Pennsylvania, on March 6, 1856, to John and Harriett (Robbins) Leggett, who had emigrated from Hall, England, in 1836. A large landowner, John Leggett was a prominent citizen in the Millville community and had secured his son's education at the Millville Seminary. Although historical records are lost, young Leggett probably arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, in the 1870s and worked at various firms in a mechanical capacity while perfecting various inventions.

Although Leggett's first patent, the coiled bed-spring, would become his most famous innovation, his accomplishments were not restricted to the world of invention. Leggett was also well respected for his contributions to his community in Carthage, Missouri, where he was elected mayor for three consecutive terms from 1906 to 1912. He also served as president of the Bank of Carthage and a member of both the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and the Knights of Pythias.²²

In 1888, Leggett married Ida May Eagan of Carroll County, Missouri, with whom he had four children: Raymond, Helen, Marjorie, and Joseph Palmer Leggett, Jr.²³ Marjorie would later marry Harry Cornell, Sr., whose role would prove integral

As a result of a business partnership between the inventive mind of J. P. Leggett (below left) and the practical, manufacturing mind of his brother-in-law C. B. Platt (below right), a new industry was born in 1883 with the production of the first commercially viable, spiral-steel coiled bedsprings.





to the success and survival of Leggett & Platt, Incorporated. In turn, one of their children, Harry Cornell, Jr., would eventually take the helm of the company and lead it toward its current position as a multibillion-dollar corporation and global leader.

In 1883, with his idea for a new and improved bedspring firmly in mind, J. P. Leggett attempted to secure a manufacturing facility as well as a partner who possessed both mechanical expertise and the desire to invest in the enterprise. As chance would have it, 20-year-old Cornelius B. Platt, who would become his brother-in-law in 1885, had all the qualities Leggett sought in a partner.

One of five children, C. B. Platt was born on March 6, 1863, in Illinois, to Cornelius D. Platt, a blacksmith, and his wife Catherine Fisher, granddaughter of the famous artist Jonathan Fisher. His parents, both from New York, had married in Allensville, Indiana, in 1846, and lived in Polk County, Iowa, for several years before the family traveled in covered wagons to Carthage in 1873, where

After outgrowing the C. D. Platt Plow Works plant, the first Leggett & Platt bedspring factory was opened in 1890 at the corner of Second and Maple Streets in Carthage. This photo, taken in 1892, shows the company's staff. Although the first and fourth individuals pictured from left to right are unidentified, the rest include Kansas farmer Sam Smith, George D. Leggett, Carthage plumber Karl Speece, J. P. Leggett, and C. B. Platt (far right).

they established themselves as “pioneer citizens, well-to-do and prominent.”²⁴

On August 12, 1885, 22-year-old C. B. Platt married J. P. Leggett's sister, Willmetta, and they had three children, Jack, Bessie, and Robert. He also co-owned a facility located at 508–514 Grant Street in Carthage called the C. D. Platt Plow Works, which his father had founded in 1873.²⁵ Within a decade, the enterprise had established a name for quality and was assembling as many as 200 plows per day.²⁶

As a family member, good friend, and blacksmith—self-taught in metallurgy and engineering—the young C. B. Platt possessed an excellent combination of skills to complement the inventive J. P. Leggett in a partnership to produce Leggett's new and improved spring bed. So, Platt put together several hundred dollars as his contribution to the fledgling venture. His experience with early industrial production would help move the business partnership forward.

After several months of preparation and hard work, the first coiled bedsprings were manufactured with belt-driven machinery at Platt Plow

Works in 1883, with the product garnering Leggett a patent in May 1885. Until Leggett had developed the bedspring, bedding in the United States had generally consisted of cotton, feather, or horse-hair mattresses, with no added cushion. Leggett's bedsprings were designed to provide a foundation for these mattresses, with the coils fabricated separately. So, for the next 12 years, bedsprings were produced alongside farm equipment at the facility and then sold to retail merchants. Although the Platt Plow Works sign remained on the building, production focused almost entirely on the manufacturing of bedsprings by the late 1800s.²⁷

CARTHAGE, MISSOURI: THE MAPLE LEAF CITY

FOUNDED IN 1841, CARTHAGE, MISSOURI, HAS never been a slow-paced community. While area residents are friendly and laid-back, Carthage is a town where success and prosperity have almost always arrived in a rush.

A historic town located on Route 66 in Jasper County, Carthage was named after a city in North Africa. By 1854, the town was assigned the Jasper County seat, and a new brick and stone courthouse graced the public square. In 1856, John Shirley, father of the notorious would-be outlaw "Bandit Queen," Belle Starr, acquired most of the square's north-side property, where he built an inn, tavern, livery stable, and blacksmith shop, introducing some of the first businesses to the city.¹ He also became a respected member of the county government.

By 1861, the 1,200 citizens of Carthage clashed over the issue of slavery, leading to several historic confrontations. On July 5, 1861, the Battle of Carthage, also known as the Battle of Dry Fork, marked one of the earliest, official engagements of the American Civil War, as 1,100 Missouri State Guard troops led by the experienced Col. Franz Sigel fought 6,000 Confederates

under the command of pro-Southern Missouri Governor Clairborne F. Jackson.² The one-day battle was a major victory for the Missouri State Guard and played a huge part in determining Missouri's course during the war. The Battle of Carthage also marked the only time a sitting U.S. state governor led troops in the field. The "Second Battle of Carthage" took place in October 1863, but the worst clash occurred in September 1864, when Confederate guerrillas burned down most of the city.³

In the late 1800s and beyond, nearby lead mines and limestone quarries contributed significant wealth to Carthage. Burlington limestone, also known as Carthage marble, was a valuable local stone used to build the majestic Carthage courthouse, as well as parts of the Missouri State Capitol, U.S. Capitol, and even the White House.⁴ The gray marble was also used in the construction of many large and ornate Victorian homes that still grace Carthage's Grand Avenue. Carthage marble is also present on the exterior of Chicago's Field Museum and at Macy's in New York City.

By 1900, in an architectural survey prepared for the Missouri Department of

Leggett and Platt knew that Carthage was a thriving town. Although the city had been devastated by the Civil War and almost destroyed by Confederate guerrillas in September 1864, within the ensuing decade, the Maple Leaf City had proved its resilience.²⁸ Boasting a population of nearly 6,000 residents and a number of thriving businesses, Carthage included a grocery and dry goods emporium, several three-story brick buildings, a clothing store, several churches and schools, a large woolen mill, a flour mill, a brickyard, and even an opera house. Both Leggett and Platt realized, however, that the town's market was limited. Thus, the duo took to the road.

The entrepreneurs loaded a horse-drawn carriage with their product, and with the assistance of George Leggett (J. P. Leggett's brother) and Jack Platt (C. B. Platt's youngest son), they visited retailers in nearby towns, such as Joplin, Lamar, Galena, and Lockwood. To conserve space in their wagon, both the springs and the slats onto which they attached were loaded separately and then constructed on the sidewalk in front of the store after an order was received.²⁹ This attracted curious townspeople, who observed the four gentlemen as they assembled their invention, providing the entrepreneurs with an opportunity to attract even more prospective buyers.



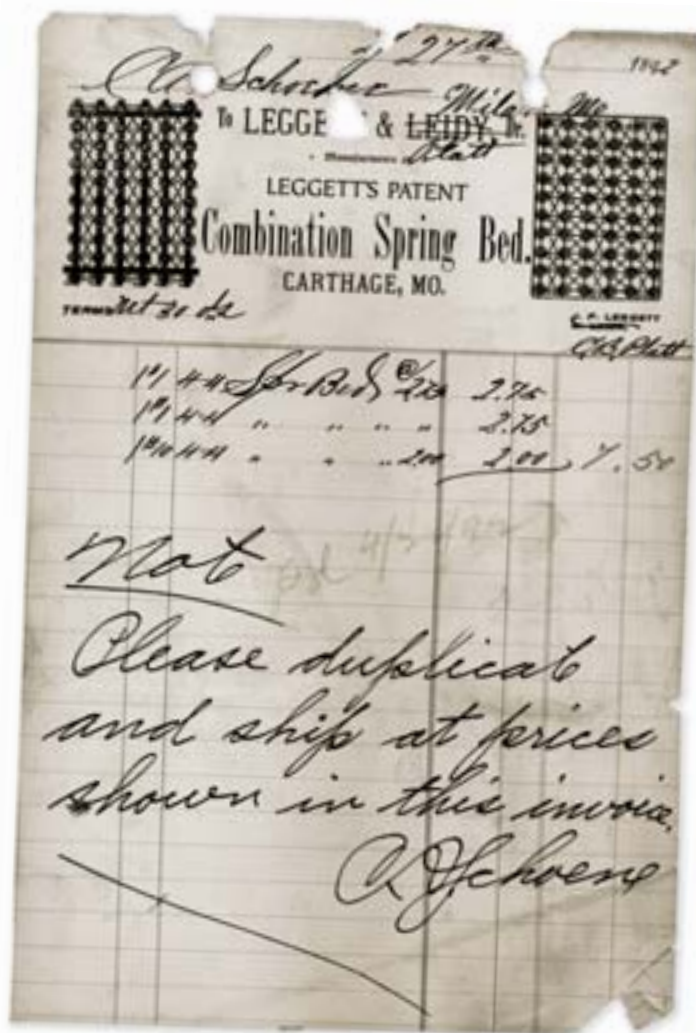
Natural Resources, Carthage was judged as the richest town per capita in the United States.⁵ Today, this town of 12,688 is one of the most visually appealing stops in the Missouri Ozarks. The town's beauty is especially apparent in early October, when the Maple Leaf City holds its annual Maple Leaf Festival.⁶

Artist Andy Thomas created this authentic 1895 painting of downtown Carthage after months of painstaking research. Thomas utilized historical photographs, maps of the city from 1893 to 1897, and a bird's-eye panoramic view of the town to help him create an accurate, yet artistic, impression of the area. *(Painting printed by permission, courtesy of Andy Thomas.)*

Foundations for the Future

By 1885, Leggett had already secured what would one day become an extraordinarily valuable patent on his bedspring. Around that time, however, it is believed that Martin Leidy, another brother-in-law of J. P. Leggett, acquired some shares of the company from C. B. Platt, who was temporarily away on an unexplained absence.³⁰

Although records are sparse, an old receipt indicates that the partnership was initially known as Leggett & Leidy and later as the Combination Spring Bed Company. However, the weathered receipt also shows “Leidy” crossed out and the name “Platt” written beneath it.³¹ Whatever the case, Leidy’s involvement was short-lived. Platt returned in 1886 and repurchased Leidy’s shares, giving rise to the trade name Leggett & Platt.



From this humble beginning, the business grew on the merit and popularity of its product.³² As the business began to expand, it required greater production space. In 1890, the partners relocated from the C. D. Platt Plow Works to a 20-by-50-foot building on the corner of Second and Maple Streets in Carthage. The factory was eventually extended from Lyon Street to Maple Street, creating an L-shaped building, with the business office and part of the mechanical department located on Second Street, near Maple.³³

During this period, Leggett continued to perfect, enhance, and improve his original bedspring product. On January 21, 1896, he was granted a patent for a “Spring Bed Bottom,” which better secured the bedsprings in place, while permitting them to yield under pressure.³⁴ On September 20, 1898, he received a patent for the “Manufacture of Spring Bottoms,” which related to the nesting of springs that would form the bottoms of beds, chairs, and other types of furniture.³⁵ That same day, Leggett received yet another patent—for a “Machine for Attaching Bed Springs to Cross Wire Braces.”³⁶ This latest invention consisted of a machine that would quickly and efficiently connect the bedsprings with the cross wire braces of the frame. On January 27, 1900, he was approved for another patent—his latest improvement for a “Sectional Bed Bottom.”³⁷ The improvements involved pairs of metal drop-hangers, cross-ties connecting the hangers, and longitudinal ties extending lengthwise from the hangers. These ties then supported the bedsprings themselves.

Left: The letterhead of this 1892 receipt bears the Leggett & Leidy Combination Spring Bed Company name. Apparently, Leggett and Platt were conscious of the costs of waste, as a close look reveals that “Leidy” was crossed out and “Platt” written underneath. An ample supply of old letterhead must have been available, since the partnership between J. P. Leggett and C. B. Platt was established in 1885 and Martin Leidy had left the company years earlier.

Opposite: By the turn of the 20th century, Leggett & Platt utilized certain brand names to appeal to retailers that purchased its revolutionary spring beds. “Lure-Sleep”—featured here in a company manual outlining a newspaper advertising campaign—was one of many such names.

The illustrations on this page are reproductions from the new series of electrotyped newspaper ads—read them over and order a set for your local paper—actual sizes are one and two columns in width.



Yes it does
make the cheeks rosy and the eyes bright, sleeping on Leggett and Platt's

LEGGETT & PLATT
Double Deck Spring

You spend one-third of your life in bed. Make your sleep more restful with a Leggett and Platt Spring. Guaranteed for your lifetime.

L

Because beauty is health and restful sleep is more essential to health than even food or exercise. Come in and let us show you how easily you may own and enjoy this most desirable chamber accessory.

(DEALER'S NAME HERE)




It's Nice
to get up in the morning but it's nicer to lie in bed sleeping on Leggett and Platt's

LEGGETT & PLATT
Double Deck Spring

Supports the body in a natural, healthful position conducive to perfect relaxation and restful slumber. Come in and let us show you how easily you may enjoy the luxury and soothing comfort of a Leggett and Platt Spring.

L

(DEALER'S NAME HERE)



NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING

HERE is a quality peculiar to Leggett & Platt Springs and that is the "ultimate in comfort." That note has been put into all the various forms of Leggett & Platt advertising. Newspaper and other forms of local advertising over your own signature form the connecting links in the chain of the modern sales plan. The manufacturer's advertising goes broadcast in magazines and other media of national circulation, acquainting the public with the excellence and desirableness of the article, creating desire for the goods. Obviously, this publicity cannot carry dealers names. The local newspaper goes into the home carrying a similar advertisement, over the name and address of a definite dealer.

Use Leggett & Platt electrotyped ads in your local paper over your own name and address to tell the people of your city where to go for Leggett & Platt Springs. By using these ads in your paper you will transfer to your store all of the sales advantage of the prestige and good will that has been built up thru Leggett & Platt advertising in the past.



It does make a difference
in the way you feel of a morning sleeping on Leggett and Platt's

LEGGETT & PLATT
Double Deck Spring

Sleep well and you keep well. Your physical and mental condition during waking hours depends on the restfulness of your slumber. We let you enjoy the luxury and comfort of a Leggett and Platt Spring when it may be best for you!

L

Each little coil snuggles up under the weight directly over it and supports the body in a comfortable, healthful position conducive to perfect relaxation and restful slumber. Fatigue slips away from the body when perfectly relaxed and mother nature rebuilds you over new every night. Come in and see the Love Sleep.

(DEALER'S NAME HERE)



"He sleeps well who is not conscious that he sleeps ill."—Bacon.

"A Victor Spring will help some."—Hubbard.





The patents served as giant steps forward, covering the spectrum from manufacturing beds on a wire base (instead of wood) to what would be known as the Leggett Hinge-Top Spring Bed, originally derived from the “Spring Bed Bottom” patent of 1896 and improved upon in successive years thanks to Leggett’s eye for efficiency and function. Perhaps most important, the 1898 patent applied to the concept of interlocking coils, a development far ahead of its time.

The buying public was becoming accustomed to the superior comfort and durability of the Leggett & Platt Spring Bed, and consumer demand made expansion inevitable. In 1895, Harry Platt, brother of C. B. Platt, was offered a franchise to use the Leggett & Platt patents. So he opened a factory in Louisville, Kentucky, and operated the facility until 1903, when the McElroy–Shannon Bedspring Company of

Leggett & Platt’s first business office at the factory on Second and Maple Streets reflected the company’s humble beginnings. Pictured (from left to right) are J. P. Leggett, Walter W. Hubbard, Col. W. K. Caffee, and C. E. “Jack” Platt.

Carthage purchased it.³⁸ Charles F. McElroy, who had moved to Carthage from Hannibal, Missouri, in 1881, was a wealthy individual involved in mining and real estate.³⁹ He was also a shareholder in the Missouri Electric Railway and the founding shareholder of the Carthage Land and Mining Company.⁴⁰ Although little is known about his partner, Woodford Shannon, it is known that McElroy took on various partners over the years in his extensive endeavors.

The McElroy–Shannon Bedspring Company was partially controlled by J. P. Leggett. The 1900

Carthage city directory lists the company as located at 211 South Grant Street, with McElroy as president, Shannon as secretary, and J. P. Leggett as vice president.⁴¹ Leggett's name may have been absent from the public lexicon in this enterprise, but in effect, the Louisville plant was still partially owned by Leggett & Platt. The McElroy-Shannon Bedspring Company would later open a bedspring plant in Philadelphia and move the Louisville operation to Waukegan, Illinois, and then back to Louisville. It would continue to remain affiliated with Leggett & Platt until 1922, when it was fully acquired.⁴²

By 1901, Leggett had applied for a dozen patents, including a Canadian patent taken out that year as a contingency for selling rights in Canada for the manufacturing of bedsprings. It had become evident that the Leggett & Platt Spring Bed was a popular product with consumers. As the company

continued to experience growth and expand across the nation, J. P. Leggett and C. B. Platt decided it was time to implement a formal business structure. That year, they incorporated their enterprise under the name Leggett & Platt Spring Bed & Manufacturing Company in Missouri, and J. P. Leggett was named its president.⁴³ The other original stockholders included George D. Leggett, William McMillan, W. K. Caffee, J. P. Newell, Kate M. Johns, R. E. Lister, W. W. Bailey, Robert Ornduff, W. E. Hall, B. A. Mevey, M. B. Parke, E. O'Keefe, Dr. M. J. McClurg, and William E. Brinkerhoff.⁴⁴

In less than 20 years, the inventor and the blacksmith had worked to create and market a product that would completely alter the design, construction, and sales of the traditional bed. The days of the hard pallet and horsehair mattress were quickly coming to a close, with the name Leggett & Platt rising to the forefront of sleep technology.
