

The M.C. Lilley Company

Founded in the mid-1860s, the M. C. Lilley Company was world renowned as manufacturers of regalia. Regalia is defined as “the distinguished symbol of a rank, office, order or society; magnificent attire, finery.” Besides ceremonial swords, the Lilley Company produced banners, flags, emblems and uniforms for fraternal societies and organizations such as the Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias and policemen. Lilley also supplied the U. S. Marine Corps and the cadets of West Point and Annapolis with swords. During World War II the company made thousands of machetes for Dutch troops. There is even a story of one of the swords being recovered from Pearl Harbor in great condition. Their goods were shipped all over the United States, Canada and even Australia.

The company was founded by four leading citizens of Columbus, Ohio all veterans of the Civil War. They were Mitchell Campbell Lilley, John Siebert and brothers, Charles and Henry Lindenberg. All four men were members of the Odd Fellows and published the “Odd Fellows Companion”, a publication of the fraternal organization. Through their newsletter they received many requests from people wanting to purchase regalia. They decided to produce the items themselves and thus a company was born. The company first occupied a small building at 253 S. High Street but grew into four large buildings at the corner of E. Long and N. 6th streets. When the Depression hit in 1933, the company was bought out by Henderson-Ames of Kalamazoo, Michigan and the name was changed to Lilley-Ames. It officially went out of business in 1965.

SOURCES:

- Arter, Bill, *Columbus Vignettes*, 1966 Volume 4, p.73
- McBride, Harriet, *Fraternal Regalia in America 1865 to 1918: Dressing the Lodges; Clothing the Brotherhood*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2000. Pages 108-211, 293-362, 378-388
- *The City of Columbus and Its Resources; A Souvenir of the Ohio State Journal*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State Journal.
- *Columbus Dispatch Magazine*, February 28, 1971