

“Paul S. Mannino And The Carroll Manufacturing Company”

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by Jay A. Graybeal

During the second half of the nineteenth century, readymade clothing became widely available for American consumers. Manufacturing tailors produced millions of garments in urban factories that often employed immigrant labor including young children. In the worst factories, workers toiled long hours in poor conditions and were paid by the piece. During the early twentieth century, some Baltimore manufacturers found it profitable to open branch factories in suburban communities including several in Carroll County. The May 22, 1925 issue of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper reported on a charismatic manager named Paul Mannino and the planned expansion of his garment factory in Westminster:

“In the month of June 1919 a small manufacturing business, employing fourteen persons, was started in the recently demolished Davis building at W. Main and John street, this city, by a young man, a native of ‘Sunny Italy,’ as manager for Isaac Hamberger and Son of Baltimore.

Paul S. Mannino, the manager of the factory, is a young gentleman of exceptional qualifications in the matter of managing employees, especially those of the female persuasion. Himself, a first-class operator, gifted with the rare talent of being able to impart his knowledge to others in a smooth and gentlemanly manner, he has surrounded himself with a corps of helpers equaled by few and surpassed by none in their chosen business.

Paul S. Mannino is a son of Mrs. Rose Mannino and the late Saviour Mannino and was born in Palermo, Italy, on May 9, 1888. He is one of a family of four sons and four daughters. His father, who died when Paul was a small boy, aged 7 years, was an exporter of fruit from Italy to America. For many months before his death the elder Mannino lay on a bed of sickness during which time his business was lost, and his fortune reduced considerably.

Comes to America.

Shortly after the death of her husband Mrs. Mannino sold the only remaining property of her husband and, with the meager proceeds, embarked with her eight children for New York. In due time the family arrived in America unknown to everyone and with faint prospects even of a night’s lodging.

However, the head of an Italian family accidentally met the mother and children on a street in Brooklyn and, after making an investigation, took them to his home and afterwards assisted the widow to secure a residence and work for the children qualified to labor.

Learns Tailoring.

While in Italy Paul had attended school and, being rather apt, had made considerable progress. At the age of nearly 15 years he was given employment in a tailoring establishment in New York City and for his first week’s work he received the magnificent sum of \$1.92 which he handed to his mother. It was the beginning of his life’s work and how well he has improved his opportunities will be disclosed later.

Comes to Baltimore.

About ten years ago young Mannino, having become an exceedingly proficient operator in tailoring, accepted a flattering offer from Messrs. Leonard Grief & Brothers, of Baltimore, large manufacturers of

clothing, then conducting their business at Redwood and South Eutaw Streets. Here he labored for three years to the entire satisfaction of his employers, at the end of which he was offered much better terms by Messrs. S. F. and A. F. Miller, also manufacturers of clothing with whom he remained for one year.

Starts Factory Here.

In 1919 Messrs. Isaac Hamburger & Son, of Baltimore, secured the services of Mr. Mannino to start a small factory in Westminster for the manufacture of Palm Beach coats only. Coming to Westminster a perfect stranger he secured the use of the old shirt factory room in the old Davis building in which he installed the necessary machinery and began work with 14 inexperienced operators. From this start to the present Mr. Mannino has exhibited those rare talents of teaching and managing employees successfully.

Three years ago Mr. Joseph Berney purchased the Palm Beach coat factory, and Mr. Mannino was retained, and the manufacture of whole Palm Beach suits was begun. More room was acquired, more operators were employed, and the pay roll increased considerably.

Joseph Berney continued to manufacture a better grade of Palm beach suits until about 6 months ago, when the business was purchased by Messrs. Emil Crockin and J. D. Hornstein, of Baltimore, partners conducting business under the name of The Wear-Well Pants Company.

Plant Enlarged.

Woolen Suits Manufactured.

When The Wear-Well Pants Company, a very wealthy firm, purchased the machinery from Joseph Berney it decided to abandon the manufacture of Palm Beach suits and devote all of the energy and considerable capital to the manufacture of first class woolen suits, of pants, coats, and vests.

In contemplation of enlarging its business, without asking the citizens, or Chamber of Commerce, of Westminster to advance one cent, but willing to enlarge its business in Westminster until a plant valued at \$50,000 was completed, the Wear-Well Pants Company contracted with Mr. Walter H. Davis, long before he built the present excellent Davis Building, to lease two rooms, and probably three, 40 feet by 108 feet in the new Davis Building, then in prospect of being erected, for the purpose of installing at least \$25,000 worth of machinery in order to employ at least 250 operators at an average salary of \$15 per week. Some to begin at \$12 per week while others would earn \$25.00 per week of 48 hours.

The Davis Building was erected and The Wear-Well Pants Company has fulfilled its promise. It was employing 182 operators, but when another industry began operations about 20 of them were persuaded by some one to accept employment with the new industry. However, several of the employees have returned and the number of employees is increasing daily.

If sufficient help can be secured The Wear-Well Pants Company contemplates renting another room in the Davis Building and bringing its cutting department to Westminster. It has rented one of the floors of the Post Office Building in order to take care of its increasing business. The contemplated additions will bring the value of the plant up to \$50,000.

Pay Roll.

On May 1st., 1925 the weekly pay roll of the company was \$2,400 and if the company is allowed to proceed with its plans, without unpardonable interference by outsiders, its pay roll will very soon amount to \$3,500 per week.

The Plant.

The plant is equipped with the latest and best machinery now on the market. Steam, a very necessary thing in the business, is produced by a new gas burning boiler, and one does not realize it is in the building. All machinery is driven by electricity and the rooms are well lighted, bright and cheerful. When the weather is warm large electric fans are used to cool the atmosphere in the rooms.

Character of Work.

On entering the work rooms one is impressed with the neatness of everything. The large number of sewing, pressing, and cutting machines make very little noise, and the operators seem to enjoy the work. The work is light and clean and everything about the plant is kept in a sanitary condition.

Great Value to Community.

When one remembers that only a few years ago very little or no employment was offered the young folks of Westminster it is a source of pleasure to contemplate the possibility of a large clothing manufacturing plant in our midst. An industry begun and carried on by a firm of considerable wealth, a firm having faith in the people of this community and its future prospects, is one that should be cherished and given the best and fairest treatment possible."

The writer took great pains to describe the facilities and working conditions as ideal and that the workers seemed happy, an effort perhaps to dissuade union activities. Also, as noted in the article, manufacturing provided entry level jobs for younger workers and, as the accompanying photograph shows, the majority of them were women. By 1937, the firm was a branch of the Grief Company of Baltimore and was known locally as the Carroll Manufacturing Company. At that time the company employed 600 workers with a weekly payroll of \$10,000. The firm manufactured men's and women's clothing in the Davis Building and also in a facility over the Opera House on East Main Street. During World War II the company supported the war effort by producing uniforms for the military.



Former employees of the Carroll Manufacturing Company posed in Fall 1959. Standing, left to right: Carrie Heagy, Joe Bowers, Della Bell, Jane Ebaugh, Ethel Cook, Esta Dorsey, Lucile Bankard, Marie Zepp, Bessie Clary, Belle Coppersmith, Larue Stoner and Gay Smith. Seated, left to right: Bertha Shipley, Mary Wells, Elizabeth Shipley, Sam Nocella (Union representative and Vice-President of Baltimore Regional Joint Board), Rosie Sipes and Maggie Kane. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.