



## **Cayce Mill Supply, with Fifth Generation Ownership, Approaches 100 Years of Business**

Few American businesses ever achieve the milestone that Cayce Mill Supply Co.'s owners and employees will be fortunate to celebrate in 2019.

Established in December 1919, the Hopkinsville company is marking a century of business with fifth-generation owners who are not simply surviving in their industry, but are clearly thriving with ambitions to see the company pass to another generation.

“Seeing the business thrive through five generations and over 100 years is a dream come true for the Cayce family,” says Breck Cayce, whose sons, B.J. Cayce and Bart Cayce, are the fifth generation in their family to run the business. B.J. is the company’s CEO, and Bart serves as president. Breck credits the Cayce Mill family of employees as well as the company’s loyal customer base with the achievement of such a milestone.

Roughly 90 percent of American businesses are family-owned or controlled, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates, but it remains rare for family companies to survive past the first generation in the same family. In fact, only about 30 percent of companies are passed to the second generation, and just 12 percent still exist into the third generation. The odds tumble to 3 percent for the fourth generation and beyond.

Breck’s great-grandfather, Clinton Cayce, established the business, and initially it catered to grain mills, saw mills and farmers. Huge saw blades and even dynamite were sold in Cayce Mill’s early years.

Next in line from Clinton Cayce came his son, Granville Cayce Sr., and then his son, Granville Jr., who was Breck's father. Also involved in the business were Breck's late uncle, Robert Cayce, from 1952 to 1999, and his mother, Billie Lee Cayce, from the 1960's to 1996.

After graduating from Murray State University in 1973, Breck began working for his father full-time. At that time, Cayce Mill was a single branch distributor and employed fewer than 20 workers. Today, with Breck's sons at the helm, Cayce Mill has expanded to four locations with over 90 employees.

In many ways, Cayce Mill's evolution mirrors changes in American industry and commerce over the last 100 years. Today the company is a distributor of electrical, plumbing, HVAC and industrial products, and has showrooms for residential kitchen, bath and lighting design. In addition to its 180,000-square-foot headquarters and warehouse in the former Phelps Dodge plant in Hopkinsville, Cayce Mill also has locations in Russellville, Owensboro and Mayfield.

"We've changed as the times changed," Breck says. "But in the 1950s, we decided to focus on electrical, plumbing and HVAC products."

B.J. Cayce views Cayce Mill's ability to adapt to new ways of doing business as a key to its longevity. Recently, the company was awarded the WIT Rise Award Grand Prize, Recognizing Innovation and Strategic Excellence.

"We all wear a lot of hats. If you're going to survive and grow, that's what you're going to have to do," B.J. says.

"The company excels with a diverse customer base doing business in almost every state," notes Bart. Cayce Mill customers range from local homeowners to large corporations doing work across the country and overseas. Bart adds, "We have loaded shipping containers bound for Iraq and Afghanistan."

Along with serving plumbers, electricians and handymen who arrive at Cayce Mill's four locations early each morning for supplies, the company is involved in major industrial projects across the Southeast.

Breck says many longtime residents in Hopkinsville know the business mainly for its design center showroom, which is one of the largest in Kentucky. But the majority of Cayce Mill's business involves supporting commercial and industrial projects.

One of the most significant changes for Cayce Mill came in late 2004, when Breck announced the company had purchased the former Phelps Dodge facility on U.S. 41. Bart and B.J. agree the company could not have grown as it has in the last decade at the old location, where operations were spread across four buildings with a railroad track running between the structures. Now the main location sits on a major highway with easy access to Interstate 24, the Pennyrile Parkway and U.S. 68.

The Cayces also saw that the move to the larger facility was a big morale boost for employees. Everything is under one roof, including 10,000 square feet of office space and the Design Center with more than 8,000 square feet of showroom space.

Cayce Mill has a tradition of hiring employees who stay with the company for decades. Breck likes to say, “We hire to retire.” In the last few years, two employees with 40-plus years retired from Cayce Mill.

It is noteworthy that the company’s growth and large customer base has not changed many long-held traditions the Cayce family and their employees hold dear. This includes financial support and in-kind donations for community groups, such as school and youth sports teams, 4-H clubs, United Way, Salvation Army, Boy Scouts, the YMCA, faith organizations and numerous others.

Employees are encouraged to get involved in the community. Cayce Mill backs them by making it possible for its employees to invest time in community events.

Known for many years as a good corporate citizen, Cayce Mill received the Better Business Bureau’s prestigious Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics.

B.J. and Bart both earned bachelor’s degrees from Murray State University after graduating from Hopkinsville High School.

The brothers are raising their own families now, and they’ve given Breck five granddaughters. The oldest is 12 and the youngest was born in early 2018.

One or more of the young Cayce girls could become the sixth generation of their family to run Cayce Mill Supply. Considering the company’s long history and promising future, the family has that goal in sight.