

Home Furniture - Delivering Happiness Since 1937
Cathleen Norman, Silver City Main Street

Starting its fourth generation of Wygant-Kennedy family ownership, Home Furniture thrives at its location on South Bullard Street. For 89 years the business has built and kept a loyal local clientele thanks to high-quality products, free delivery, free set up, and creative financing. “We have some fifth generation customers,” laughs owner Scott Kennedy.

The store carries a range of furniture for any room in your house. “Recliners and mattresses are the biggest sellers,” says Kennedy. “And we’ve carried appliance forever.” The business has operated at lower Bullard Street for many of those years. Kennedy appreciates the location, saying “We want to be part of the thriving community in the heart of downtown. People just come in and look, after they’ve had lunch or coffee out. They’ve just happened in.” The store is located in downtown however delivery includes the Mining District, Mimbres, Faywood, Deming and Lourdesburg.

The original store was opened during the late 1930s by Kennedy’s grandfather Nelson Wygant, who came to Silver City with tuberculosis as a teen-ager. The youth ventured out from Indiana seeking the “sunshine cure” for the dreaded lung disease. “He stayed in one of the many sanitariums - a Burro Mountains homestead, the Goat Ranch,” Kennedy says. “And he lived another 40 years.” Young Wygant scraped together funds to open the furniture store in 1937 in the north half of what is now Little Toad Creek Brewery.

Increased copper mining helped Grant County climb out of the Great Depression, as demand slowly rose again for electrification, automobiles and munitions manufacturing for impending warfare in Europe. The Wygants opened a second store called the Bargain Annex, in the 1940s at 703 Bullard where Paw’s Cause is today.

“Our whole economy was based on copper mining,” says Kennedy. “The backbone is still copper mining, along with ranching, the forest, the university, medical. Retirees come and go. We sell to customers from Lordsburg, Glenwood, Mimbres and Deming”

Copper demand and mining increased in the 1950s, and the local economy grew stronger. The Wygants combined their Home Furniture and Bargain Annex, putting up a new concrete-block store building at the foot of Bullard Street.

Family ownership shifted as time went on. Nelson Wygant was getting ready to retire, when his son Paul, a co-owner, died of cancer in 1975. That year daughter Sudie and son-in-law

Dick Kennedy took over the business, moving with their three children back to Silver City after twelve years in San Diego.

Scott Kennedy got involved with the store full time in 1986, leaving a position at a local CPA firm. Soon, he became manager. He says it hasn't been easy keeping the doors open the past 40 years. Along with economic swings and changes in people's taste for furniture, he's seen plenty of industry changes, especially with manufacturers and vendors. Sources shifted to Asia from manufacturing plants in the Midwest and the South. The number of vendors shrank - he says there's only one is still around from when he took over the business in 1989.

Today, the conveniently located store still appeals to long-time locals and new locals too. (This writer bought a new couch there the first month she moved to Silver City.) The furniture is set up in inviting vignettes, a practice introduced by Scott's mother Sudie. Seven employees facilitate furniture purchases, financing, delivery and setup. Until recently there were three who'd worked for the business for more than 40 years.

The business is still marked by the prominent *HOME FURNITURE* sign, quite possibly the tallest sign in Grant County, installed by the Wygants around 1970. Kennedy says, "My grandfather put it up to remind people we were still here, after the road to Lordsburg [Highway 90] was rerouted over the Big Ditch."

The building's broad masonry walls make an ideal canvas for Silver City's creative mural artists. A mural competition organized by Herbie Madsen in the early 2000s brought colorful designs to the south side. "Then John-Robert Béffort painted the mural with my family members on it, about ten years ago," says Kennedy

You can see portraits of the whole clan in the southwest corner - Grandfather Nelson Wygant, Uncle Paul, Dick and Sudie Kennedy, Scott, his daughter Kristen and wife Denise. "It's never been tagged," Scott smiles. On the north side is a stunning Youth Art Mural project, sponsored by Mimbres Regional Arts Council in 2016.

The business celebrates its 90th anniversary next year, still going strong. And - delivering happiness since 1937.