



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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THE CIGAR FACTORY

Would you believe it! We had two ancestral uncles who were in the cigar-making business and were very, very successful! This is a story about two Wiggenhorn brothers of Wilhelma (grandma Minnie's mother). To refresh your memory, the Wiggenhorns are the family from Watertown, Wisconsin who ran the famous Buena Vista Hotel where Charles Kuhnert met Wilhelma and they married, thus the beginning of the Kuhnerts of our family.

The making of cigars was started by Eugene Wiggenhorn in the Buena Vista Hotel in 1858 after serving an apprenticeship with an established firm already making cigars. Eugene started small with a little capital from his father who had been in merchandising in Germany. Obviously Eugene was quite successful and he soon outgrew his quarters at the hotel so he moved to larger quarters, and his brother Constanza became a partner.

Constanza had been a successful business man in a nearby town but the cigar business was becoming a major operation in Watertown, employing many people as you can see from this photo. On the front which is not readable it says "Wiggenhorn Bros. CIGAR MANUFACTORY No. 2." As the company prospered, it moved from one larger location to another. At this location in the picture they employed 34 workmen and were said to be making 1,000,000 cigars per year.

The brothers continued to expand and continued to merchandise their products. One way of advertising



their products was participating in the parades that small towns always held on certain days during the year. I hope you can see this float from 1898 clearly enough to make out the advertising on the side, which said HABANA. As the cigar company continued growing the brothers had a very unique way of dividing up the specific responsibilities. Constanza was in charge of the books, kept the payroll, and attended to home sales. Eugene was the general overseer in the manufacturing department and was in charge of personnel.

The years progressed and they moved from one place to another, always needing more space. Soon two sons of Constanza, Julius and Guido, joined the company. They were in charge of assorting and packing the cigars. The Wiggernhorn Brothers became quite well known, even having their own fancy cigar box. You can see the box and the lid which is quite imposing. One of the accounts I read



mentioned sales amounting to three million dollars a year. If this is true, this was quite a business that started with very little



capital in one room in their parents' hotel and grew and grew.

As more and more cigars were sold in many areas in the United States in 1910, they had to move into their own building in which they occupied

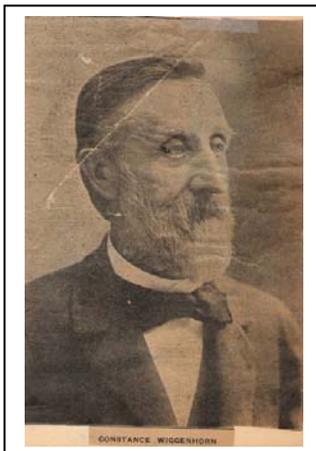


several floors. Unfortunately the utility pole obscures the name but written boldly across the side of this

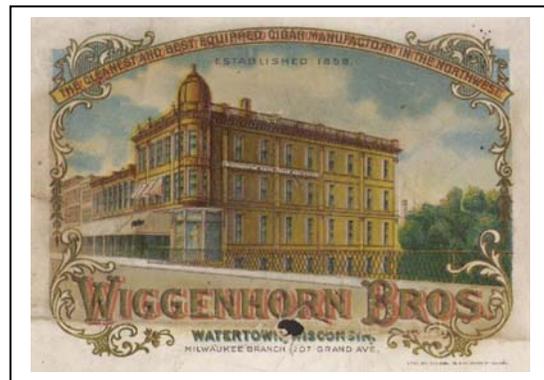


building was the name "Wiggernhorn Brothers." Several promotional ways were used to

acquaint the public with their cigars. This could be why they became so well known, because the picture of the plate was sent to me from a Wiggernhorn in Ohio who proved not to be related. I'm also including a picture of the building that could have been in a newspaper advertisement for "THE CLEANEST AND BEST EQUIPPED CIGAR MANUFACTORY IN THE NORTHWEST."



Although Eugene started the company, he left it and moved to California and Constanza and his sons continued with the business. All in all, the cigar business the brothers built became a very prosperous enterprise for Watertown, Wisconsin.



I am indebted to William Jannke of Watertown for the pictures. See Mary's Message for more.

(Webmaster & Technical Advisor: Jerry Larkin)