
Joyce C. Hall Hallmark Cards

By Sharon C. Laux

Joyce C. Hallmark was born in David City, Nebraska, in 1891. He was one of five children born to George and Nancy Houston Hall. Beginning at the age of eight, he started working at various part-time jobs to help support his family. In 1905, Joyce sold postcards with his two brothers in Norfolk, Nebraska. Hall had heard of something called "the Kansas City spirit" and the positive attitude that came with it. It was because of this idea and the railroads that Joyce moved to Kansas City in 1910. He left for the city with nothing but a single suitcase of clothes and two shoeboxes full of postcards. Joyce probably did not dream that he would end up becoming one of the greatest businessmen of the twentieth century.

When he made it to Kansas City, he set up his business selling the cards to local stores. Pretty soon, his brothers joined him. In 1914 they created a company called Hall Brothers and ran a small shop. They started selling more expensive Christmas cards and Valentines with envelopes instead of the old fashioned post-cards. They also expanded their products to begin selling gifts, books and stationary. Sadly, a fire destroyed all their cards in 1915, but Joyce and his brothers would not let that stop them. When they rebuilt, they bought an engraving firm so that they could create their own cards.

Sometimes emergencies help to create new products. In 1917, just before Christmas, the Hall Brothers store ran out of the plain paper they used to wrap gifts in those days. Frantic to find something their customers could use to wrap their presents, they put out sheets of fancy printed paper which they had used to line envelopes. They sold all of it. The next year they packaged the paper in sets, inventing the decorated wrapping paper we know today.

Hall's business continued to do well, and the famous Hallmark name first appeared on the back of the cards in 1925. He felt that "we didn't start our business to see how much money we could make, but to see how good a job we could do." The cards are not the only important thing about Hall's business. He offered his employees benefits like paid vacations, health insurance, regular coffee breaks and much more. All of this was amazing for the time, because no other companies did so much for their workers.

In 1928, Hall began to advertise nationally in magazines—the first card company to do so. Hallmark began advertising on the radio in 1940. Four years later, they started using the slogan "When You Care Enough to Send the Very Best". Shortly after that they started using a five-pointed crown as

their logo. In 1951, the company sponsored the first of the television specials that would come to be known as the 'Hallmark Hall of Fame'. Hall saw value in producing high quality programs that reflected what his company stood for - caring, quality, the best. Hall's pledge to quality was rewarded. Over the years Hallmark's television specials have won 75 Emmy awards. In 1954, the company officially changed its name to Hallmark Cards, Inc.

Joyce Hall led the company for over 50 years. In 1966, his son Donald became president of the company. Father and son oversaw the construction of Crown Center in downtown Kansas in the late '60's and '70's. This was the site of stores, offices, and residential apartments surrounding the Hallmark headquarters that became a city within Kansas City.

Hall and those who followed him made greeting cards a big business through hard work and innovation. Hall created the display rack that made it easier for customers to select cards and is still being used today. Hallmark created new holidays such as "Secretary's Day" and "Grandmother's Day" and was the first to sell paper party products. The company sells cards at many different prices in both their own stores and at discount stores. It creates cards for all ages, cultural groups, and even helps people design their own cards on the internet.

Hallmark expanded their creative staff by partnering with famous artists and personalities or buying the rights to use their work. The works of Norman Rockwell, Picasso, Mark Twain, Disney and Peanuts are among those featured in Hallmark products.

Hallmark also bought other companies. Crayola and Silly Putty are both owned by Hallmark. Hallmark also owns its own television network. In addition to cards, Hallmark sells gift items, candles, flowers, toys and decorations for the home. They also sell printing and artist supplies, and own department stores and residential and commercial real estate companies.

Joyce C. Hall died in 1982. He and his wife, Elizabeth, raised three children. They were supporters of the Kansas City community in many ways.

Today, Hallmark's economic importance can easily be seen. They employ over 18 thousand people and sell three billion cards a year. One in every two cards sent is a Hallmark card.