



A Century of Service

In the 1890s, a new American spirit was emerging. The brief and successful war with Spain was making the U.S. a world power. Railroads, telephone and telegraph lines were criss-crossing the country. Westward expansion and a new industrialism were creating growing cities.

Atlanta was one of them — a city that had literally risen from the ashes and three decades later was offering opportunities. Against that backdrop, an entrepreneur named Stephen Moncrief began a century of service that would be carried on by three families and continues today, stronger than ever.

These families — Moncrief, Kent and Mutz — each produced leaders who not only adapted to the changing times in the heating and air conditioning business, but also created a culture of service and integrity that serves as an industry model.

The Stephen Moncrief Era

Stephen Price Moncrief was born into a nation at war on February 28, 1862, in Lawrenceville, Georgia. He was thirty when he formed the Moncrief Dowman Company. By 1898, he had served for six years as its president. Primarily a manufacturer of galvanized iron and copper cornices, skylights and tin and iron roofing, the company had George Dowman as vice president, and Stephen's brother, Robert, as secretary-treasurer.

When Stephen decided to break away on his own, he took the furnace component of the company with him, and The Moncrief Furnace Company began its first century of service to Southern homes.

Atlanta in 1898 was a booming example of Southern reconstruction. Three years earlier, in 1895, a world-class exposition had drawn 800,000 people, one of them President Grover Cleveland. Coca-Cola was still in its adolescence, but beginning to grow. A merger had laid the groundwork for what would become the Georgia Power Company. Banks and insurance companies were springing up seemingly everywhere.

Stephen was eager to be a part of the city's growth. The Moncrief Company held an enviable position in the Atlanta marketplace. Furnaces and ducts were something new to Southern homes, and Moncrief was the first furnace manufacturing company of its kind in the South. "Builders, designers and installers of good heating furnaces and plants for homes and business concerns," promised the company's early advertisements.

Early Moncrief locations were 39 1/2 Broad Street, 139 Pryor and 59 S. Forsyth. Later, in 1921, Stephen purchased property on the corner of 3rd Street and Hemphill Avenue, where the company remained for nearly forty years, when Georgia Tech absorbed the property.

Even with increased business opportunities, the South was still agriculturally based, and the depression of the late '20s and '30s hit the region hard. Demonstrating the creativity and adaptability that has been a hallmark of the company, Moncrief sold many of its heating systems through innovative mortgage arrangements with buyers. There were 70 such deeds listed from 1929 to 1931, 50 from 1939 to 1941, and fewer in intervening years.



The Laurence Kent Sr. Era

With his health beginning to fail, Stephen Moncrief in 1929 became chairman of the board and passed on the active, day-to-day responsibilities of the business to his partner, Laurence Kent Sr., who became the company's president and chief executive officer.

When Moncrief died in 1932 at the age of 70, Kent and salesman Walter Hutchens purchased the company. Since both men had worked for Stephen Moncrief, shared his business philosophy and worked with his employees, the transition was smooth.

Moncrief continued to manufacture furnaces until the late 1940s. During that period, Moncrief was involved not only with service, replacement and add-ons, but also in new construction as the post-World War II era poured more than a million service men and women back into the economy, armed with government loans to purchase housing.

Laurence Kent Sr. served as CEO from 1932 until his death in 1950 (Walter Hutchens had died two years earlier). Under Kent's vision and leadership, Moncrief had made the transition to forced air furnaces (with air blowers), again demonstrating Moncrief's willingness to change with the times.

A key move occurred in 1950 when Allen Lavar, another Georgia Tech graduate, was hired to design and oversee the manufacturing of central air conditioning units at Moncrief, under the brand name Temperature Control.TM The company manufactured Temperature Control Central Air Conditioners until 1960, at which time Moncrief was the largest and most dominant heating and air conditioning company in Atlanta, according to renowned Atlanta historian Franklin Garrett. Today, thousands of Atlanta homes built during that period have Moncrief air distribution systems that have lasted as long as the house.

Following the death of Laurence Kent Sr., Moncrief's service philosophy was carried forward for a decade by the team he had put into place, including his son, Laurence Kent Jr.

1959 was a historic year for Moncrief. The Kent family sold the company to Peerless Corporation, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, and owned by the Mutz family. Harold Mutz (1902-1995), who had a business relationship with the Kents dating back to the early 1930s, was joined by his older brother, Frank M. Mutz, I (1896-1976, CEO, and their sons, O.U. (Oz) Mutz (1927-) and Thomas R. Mutz, (1920-1992).

In 1960, after 39 years at Third and Hemphill, Moncrief moved to its present location at 935 Chattahoochee Avenue. From 1960 to 1975, Moncrief rented the property from long-time customer and well-known Atlanta attorney Alex W. Smith Jr. (III) of Smith, Gambrell and Russell. In 1975, Moncrief purchased the building. Today, the Chattahoochee property is one of two company-owned Atlanta locations.

Just as the 1960s were a time of change for the country, so was it for Moncrief as it moved through several mergers that shaped the company for the remainder of the century. Peerless and Moncrief were purchased by Space Conditioning Systems, Inc., a division of Electronic Specialties, in 1963. That company, in turn, was purchased by Dunham Bush, Inc., two years later.



While ownership changed, management and employees did not, nor did the business philosophy that had guided Moncrief through the Kent years. The following Moncrief employees, listed alphabetically, carried on the company's business principles:

George Atkinson
Horace Campbell
Chambers Doss
Mr. Doss Sr.
Emory Green
John Huff
Walter Hutchens
Ruben Johnson
Laurence Kent Jr.
Laurence Kent Sr.
Allen Lavar
Foster Law
Curtis Lynn

Robert Mann
Mac McDonald
O.U. Mutz
Horace O'Kelly
Lloyd O'Kelly
Ivey Poole
Charlie Powell
E.C. Rackley
Eli Rutledge
Archie Searcy
Ted Searcy
Luther Sikes
Billy Stanfield
E.L. Stanfield

The Frank Mutz, II Era

The Kent era had completely passed by the early '70s, and a new era was underway. Thomas Mutz formed Unique Indoor Comfort, a Chicago-based contracting organization. In 1972, he and eight Unique Indoor Comfort investors purchased Moncrief.

Thomas R. Mutz I

Thomas Mutz (1920-1992) was born in Edinburg, Indiana. Tom was a young child when his family moved to Indianapolis, where he lived until 1974. He graduated from Indiana University and served in the Pacific during World War II as a Marine fighter pilot. Immediately after the war, he entered the family heating business. At the end of his life, Tom's philosophy on managing a heating and air conditioning business was well known: Do the job right the first time, tell the truth, ask for business and keep accounting and paperwork simple.

Tom was known for inspiring others and helping them succeed, including his son, Frank M. Mutz, II, to whom Tom taught business sense, ethics, sales and accounting. Tom's son Frank moved to Atlanta in 1973 at the age of 24. In 1975, Tom turned the reins over to Frank and remained a valued director, shareholder and consultant to the company for the remainder of his life.



Frank M. Mutz II

Born in 1949, Frank II was raised in Indianapolis until age 15, lived a year in Clayton, MO, a suburb of St. Louis, and then moved to the Northshore Chicago suburb of Wilmette, Illinois. He graduated from New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1967, from Bowling Green State University (Ohio) in 1971, and was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army as a first lieutenant in 1973.

Frank Mutz is chairman of the board, president, chief executive officer and controlling stockholder of Moncrief Heating and Air Conditioning, Inc. He holds unrestricted State of Georgia licenses in Heating and Air Conditioning, Master Electrician and Master Plumber and multiple NATE certifications.

The Moncrief era personified by Frank is known by customers, employees, vendors and licensees for quality work, integrity, reliability, dedication and loyalty. For Frank, success is all about relationships. The key people who helped build Moncrief's modern era share those values and pass them on to all who come in contact with the company. The "criefers" who made a career with the company adopted the Moncrief way of doing business as their own and helped build a business of which everyone associated with it can be proud.

Moncrief at 100 Years Plus

By 1980, Moncrief had purchased the assets of Leonard Heating and Air Conditioning in Decatur, and Roswell Air Conditioning Company and its property at 1233 Canton Street in Roswell. Purchasing the Roswell location proved to be a wise investment given the explosive growth on Atlanta's north side in the '80s and '90s.

Moncrief owns two other heating and air conditioning companies—one in Indianapolis, IN and the other in Lexington, KY. Additionally Moncrief owns Unique Indoor Comfort, Inc. a company that licenses a name and management services in seven states.

The Moncrief focus in the Mutz era, as it has been for more than a century, is on providing superior service and installations to customers. Moncrief's reputation for superior quality has been built through years of doing the job right and not cutting corners.