



Bedding Today

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Old, new worlds work together to give Shifman edge in market

You just stepped from 1918 to 2008," Bill Hammer said as he led me on a factory tour at Shifman Mattresses in Newark, N.J. We had crossed the hardwood floors of a building constructed in 1918 and stepped onto the concrete floor of the 2008 addition.

That is an appropriate image for the changes at Shifman, where the best of past manufacturing processes join modern technologies to usher in a new day for the 118-year-old company, one that provides opportunities for growth as the producer steps up its marketing efforts to tell the very good news of its heritage of craftsmanship and quality production.

That heritage will live on in the company's commitment to some old-fashioned ways of manufacturing mattresses. Time-tested techniques like garneting its own cotton and hand-tufting its mattresses and still using eight-way, hand-tied box springs remain, but they are supplemented with modern manufacturing and sewing equipment. The result is a unique mix of the past and present that is found in only a handful of bedding plants in the country.

Shifman has been based in a four-story brick building in Newark since 1918. The building dates back to 1887, when it housed a patent leather manufacturer, and it was expanded in 1918 when Shifman moved in.

Three years ago, Shifman completed a 24,000-square-foot addition, with a 19,000-square-foot warehouse and a streamlined production layout that dramatically ups capacity, allowing Shifman to expand business, according to Bill Hammer and his father, Mike, CEO of the company.

Shifman does almost everything differently from other bedding producers, putting more quality into its beds at a time when some others are looking to cut costs. That means putting more nails into its wood box spring frames and more staples into the dust ruffles that enclose the bottoms of the box springs and still using the highest quality twine for the eight-way hand-tied box springs, a product seldom seen in bedding lines these days. It means devoting two hours to sewing operations, and adding layer after layer of cotton, a key comfort ingredient in the company's beds.

All of that effort goes into a line of high-quality two-sided mattresses, which the Hammer says maintain their comfort levels much longer than the one-sided sleep sets that proliferate these days.

"We are focusing our energy on making better products," said Bill Hammer. "We are spending more money making better products."

In these days of intense cost-cutting in the bedding arena, it's nice to come across a company that spends more money to make beds of superior quality. Kudos to the Hammers for keeping the Shifman story a vibrant one today.

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