



Your Home Store A. L. THOMPSON'S

Celebrating 70 YEARS IN BUSINESS



A. L. Thompson's is a household name in the Cayman Islands. It's where contractors, homeowners, do-it-yourselfers, and interior design enthusiasts go to find the widest selection of building supplies and home products in the islands, all under one roof. *Words by Natasha Were.*

A family-owned and run business that started with a shipment of lumber sold from a yard has grown into a mega store, with 180,000-square-feet of retail space where customers can browse appliances, bath and kitchen fixtures, home fashions, and Christmas decorations, choose paint, tools, lighting, electrical supplies, and plumbing goods, buy restaurant equipment, and order lumber and building supplies.

This year Cayman's largest home store celebrates 70 years in business – and 70 years of helping to build (and rebuild) a thriving, prosperous community.

IN THE BEGINNING

The story of A. L. Thompson's began in 1950 when a boat from Nicaragua arrived in Grand Cayman carrying a shipment of lumber. Meanwhile, a young Caymanian, Alfred Lawrence Thompson, was

wondering what to do. Back from working on the Panama Canal, he had used the knowledge gained there to build a fishing boat, but his wife, Corinne, wanted no part of it. When the captain offered to trade his lumber for the fishing boat, Thompson readily accepted. He moved the lumber to his yard and started selling it.

Before long, Alfred Lawrence Thompson, referred to as Lawrence, started sourcing other building supplies, while his wife handled sales, and the business expanded steadily. By the early 1960s it had outgrown the capacities of their yard, so they rented commercial space in George Town. In 1967, the business moved into the Thompson Building – designed and engineered by Lawrence – in the heart of the capital.

The arrival of tourism and the financial services meant rapid development for the islands, and Lawrence and Corinne's business was key to supplying many of the materials required for the new construction taking place.



Alfred Lawrence Thompson



Thompson Building under construction, 1966



Opening ceremony of A. L. Thompson's, 2006



A. L. Thompson's Home Depot, 1995



Paint Department, 1980s



Aftermath of Hurricane Ivan



A. L. Thompson's, Countryside Shopping Village

By 1978, their children Alfred (Al) Lawrence Jr., and Berna Thompson Cummins had taken over running the business. With traffic growing and parking spaces declining in George Town, in 1988 they took the controversial decision to move from downtown into what had been the warehouse, on the edge of Industrial Park. Although some people doubted the wisdom of the move, Al and Berna had a clear vision for the future: a single store with easy parking where customers could find everything they needed for their homes, from construction to interiors. Their customers certainly enjoyed the convenience of the re-branded A. L. Thompson's Home Depot, and within four months, sales figures had tripled.

HURRICANE IVAN

In September 2004, disaster struck. Hurricane Ivan's assault on the islands devastated the retail store and destroyed much of the inventory. Yet Al and Berna had staff who depended on their jobs and a community that needed to rebuild. It was not a time to close the business. Owners and staff worked among the wreckage, selling the building materials that had survived and cleaning and reopening the damaged store. A new store needed to be built. The only way to do so without closing was to build it over and around the existing store. Despite the complexities of the build, A. L. Thompson's was open for business

throughout the few years of construction, ensuring that their staff remained employed and their customers had uninterrupted access to the supplies they desperately needed.

THE PRESENT

It's been a story of expansion ever since. In late 2006, they opened a 7,500-square-foot satellite store in Countryside Shopping Village in Savannah. The following year they opened phase one of the new store in George Town. They completed phase two in 2009 and renamed the business A. L. Thompson's – Your Home Store. The second phase included the Home Fashions Gallery and the Bath & Kitchen Gallery, managed and maintained by Al's wife, Melissa. In 2013 they added a department that supplies restaurant equipment. Expanding the store further, they constructed and opened the Outdoors yard and garden department in 2015, which added a second entrance and exit to the massive store as well as an additional parking lot.

Over the past 18 years, Berna's three children, Katharine, Larry, and Daniel, joined the firm and have grown with the business to hold managerial positions. Larry's wife, Noraine, Dan's wife, Caron, and their cousin George are also active and hold senior positions at A. L. Thompson's. They contribute to the continuity of the company by providing their respective knowledge, skills, and passion.



The current A. L. Thompson's being constructed over the former building, 2006



The Appliance Gallery



A. L. Thompson's Bath & Kitchen Gallery

BRANDS AND SERVICES

A. L. Thompson's constantly strives to increase the brands and product lines it stocks and is the exclusive distributor in the Cayman Islands for upscale brands such as Makita and Stihl tools, Valspar paints, Kohler and Delta fixtures, and Whirlpool, Sub-Zero and Wolf, and Miele appliances.

Because the customer experience is at the heart of the business, A. L. Thompson's also aims to build in convenience at every stage of home building and decorating. Customers can therefore:

- take their plans in to get a quote for building supplies
- have building materials and appliances delivered free of charge
- consult in-house designers about kitchen and bathroom options
- have tools and appliances that are under warranty repaired
- have a gift registry for weddings, birthdays, and other celebrations.

A. L. Thompson's also holds two annual major consumer expos, Tool Fest and Home Fest, where customers can enjoy product demonstrations, gifts, and discounts.

With two stores, four galleries, almost 200 staff, and a list of exclusive brands, A. L. Thompson's helps the people of the Cayman Islands to improve their homes and thus their lives.



Kohler Registered Showroom



Entrance to the Outdoors



The Appliance Gallery



Luxury Level



To learn more, visit our channel and view our anniversary video.

