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**A FAMILY BUSINESS WITH AN EXTENSIVE HISTORY**

The Hyde Park Lumber Company

A *focus* MEDIA GROUP PUBLICATION



*The Hyde Park Lumber Company (HPL) provides high quality interior millwork and hardware products in Greater Cincinnati, Ohio. It has an enormous selection of lumber, shutters, plywood, cabinetry, doors, railings, mantels, moldings, countertops, siding, decking, raised paneling, columns, and more. Its knowledgeable design team helps customers with potential ideas and ensures that the project can be completed properly.*



# A FAMILY BUSINESS *with an* EXTENSIVE HISTORY

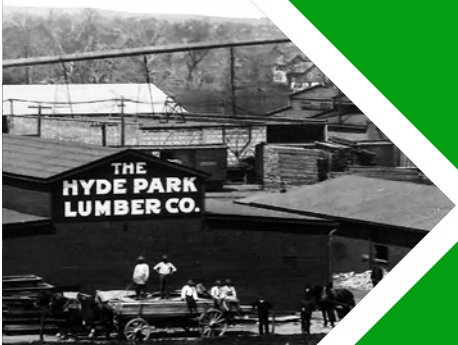
Written by Jen Hocken

The company was established in 1902 by Myers Y. Cooper, the owner of a real estate business and a construction company. HPL originally had a nine-acre facility with coal fired boilers to heat the plant and an electromagnetic generator to provide electricity. Underneath the then state-of-the-art facility was a 600,000 gallon cistern that provided the plant all the water it required.

Myers – also a former governor of Ohio – had experience building over 7,000 buildings during his lifetime including residential houses, apartment buildings, and commercial properties. This inspired him to create innovative products to supplement the industry's standards. Over time, the company patented many of its adjustable shelving units, display racks, knock-down shelves, and windows.

HPL participated in the war efforts in support of WW1 and WW2 by providing a variety of products to help the United States Armed Forces. In WW1, it built ammunition boxes for the Remington Arms Company to ship ammunition overseas, and in WW2, it sold millions of dollars' worth of adjustable shelving to the federal government for its warehousing space.

"We continued making mortar shell boxes for the Remington Arms Company, and we manufactured water tight shipping crates for Wright Aeronautical (which later became GE) for the Cyclone-14 airplane engine for the B-17 bomber," says Mike Judy, president of the ➤







► Hyde Park Lumber Company and great grandson of the founder.

Following the war, there was a boom in the housing market, and HPL became even more successful as it became known for its millwork. However, in the 1970s, the local and national competition became much fiercer, and it had a disastrous effect on the seventy-year-old company.

"In 1980, with sales just shy of \$1,000,000, drastic measures needed to be taken. The older management decided to bring on one of the younger family board members to try his hand at bringing the company back to life," says Mike. The rejuvenated HPL began to grow once again, and by 1984, the Mills Judy Company purchased the Hyde Park Lumber Company from the remaining family members.

In 1989, HPL developed and trademarked the Hyde Park raised panel system and sold millions around the country, experiencing real success. Some of the notable projects that used the system include the Federal Appeals Court next to the




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the excitement of finding new and unique products to sell."***

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White House, Ducks Unlimited in Colorado, the DeSoto Building in Savannah, Georgia, and numerous wineries in California.

By 1995, its revenue had reach 4.5 million dollars and more changes were just around the corner. “It was once again time for some bold moves. I appointed my bookkeeper Vicki Clephane as the vice president of the company, and I hired my lifelong best friend Tim Zeter to come in and help me run the business,” says Mike.

The new management team developed a strategy to reach its new goals in five years, yet the main hurdle was the location of its antiquated facility on a residential street. “In 1999, we contracted with Randy Cooper, the current owner of The Myers Y. Cooper Construction Company to build a new facility for HPL. It seemed only natural to keep it in the family,” says Mike.

The new facility and site was an incredibly advantageous choice for HPL. At first, the company only sold to builders and contractors, yet the new facility had a showroom for it to set up displays and open up to the retail market. Tim Zeter, the general manager would continually update the displays with the newest and best-quality products available, and the company’s sales slowly began to pick up.

In 2005, HPL decided to supply its customers’ needs by opening a kitchen department. The management team soon discovered that women usually made the purchasing decisions for the family home, and that by expanding the showroom and display, the space would become more inviting to increase sales’ numbers. Mike and Tim travelled the country to visit approximately fifty design centers and research the ideal showroom for HPL. ➤





I am Mike Judy. I have been at the helm of this company for the past 38 years. I am 64 years old and people always ask me, 'when are you going to retire?' I've been married for 42 years. I have four great kids. All have achieved something I never did, which was receiving a college diploma. I was lucky to get a high school diploma. I have eight grandchildren. I have been so blessed and I thank God every day. But here's the thing. Every day I remember that gloomy rainy day in January 1980 when I walked into the president's office. The once light carpet was now black. The metal desk he sat at held two garbage cans collecting water leaking in through the roof, and all I could think was, 'what have I got myself into?'

I don't know what it's like to be a pregnant mother and carry a baby in her womb for nine months. But when I come to work every day and have the honor and privilege of working with people that I truly love and the best customers in the world... well, I feel pretty damn proud of the baby that I have raised and I'm not ready to let her go just yet.

► By the end of 2007, its showroom had gone from 6,000 square feet to a 14,000 square foot design center with eight room vignettes displaying various ways to use moldings, cabinetry, wainscoting, closets, wood, copper ceilings, and much more. "We have ninety doors on display, over a thousand moldings, hundreds of cabinet knobs, and many lines of decorative hardware," says Mike.

The company's retail walk-in success came at the perfect time, and it was the primary reason HPL was able to stay afloat after the recession of 2008. "We treat our design centre as a living thing. We are continually changing and updating the displays to the newest and best products available. It has been so exciting to watch it grow from \$0 walk in sales in 2000 to close to \$6 million in 2017," says Mike. This year will be the company's sixth record-breaking year in a row.

The kitchen department has grown quickly since its inception, and the company has added two new kitchen designers to the team. HPL has also partnered with a custom company that is helping to create a product line of cabinets called the Hyde Park Collection.

Reclaimed lumber, barn siding, fence boards, and barn doors are popular with designers these days. The management team at HPL enjoys finding new and different products, and it recently travelled to find a company in Lexington, Kentucky that sells reclaimed wood products. "This is the kind of thing that keeps my job fun after all of these years: the excitement of finding new and unique products to sell," says Mike.

HPL is a fifth-generation, family-owned-and-operated company that looks after its employees and rarely has any employee leave the company. The way employees are treated has a real impact on how efficient they are at work. "We believe that family comes first, and if an employee's child has a baseball or soccer game, that is life and important to that family. This is just a job, and we will do everything in our power to accommodate the employee," Mike says.

Having an enjoyable time with coworkers is another benefit of working at HPL. The annual customer appreciation cookout is fun for both the employees and the customers. This large event fed 550 people last year and had forty vendors demonstrating new products available to carpenters and contractors. "We have 1,000 shirts printed up every year and give a lot away that day," says Mike. The printed shirts are a great advertising tool, and people often come into the store wearing a cookout shirt from one of the last thirteen years that the event has been taking place. "We have seven grills going with brats, metts, and third-pound burgers."





Mike Judy works with two of his children who will likely take over presidential roles of the company when he decides to retire. His son, Mills Judy III has worked with HPL for twenty years, and his daughter Lindsey Gray has been a part of the company for nineteen years.

The family has all taken courses about how to be successful in a family business. "We have been through Nextgen classes and several years of the UC's Goering school for family and private business," says Mike. The University of Cincinnati's Goering Center works to assist with business growth and help family-owned companies endure.

"I have been at the helm of this company for the past thirty-eight years," Mike says proudly. "I come to work every day and have the honor and privilege of working with people that I truly love and the best customers in the world."

The Hyde Park Lumber Company believes that companies can only have two out of three of the following: the least-expensive product, the highest-quality product, and great service. HPL went with the last two categories. The quality of its products is excellent, and its experienced staff members take pride in their position and the service that is provided to the customer. ■

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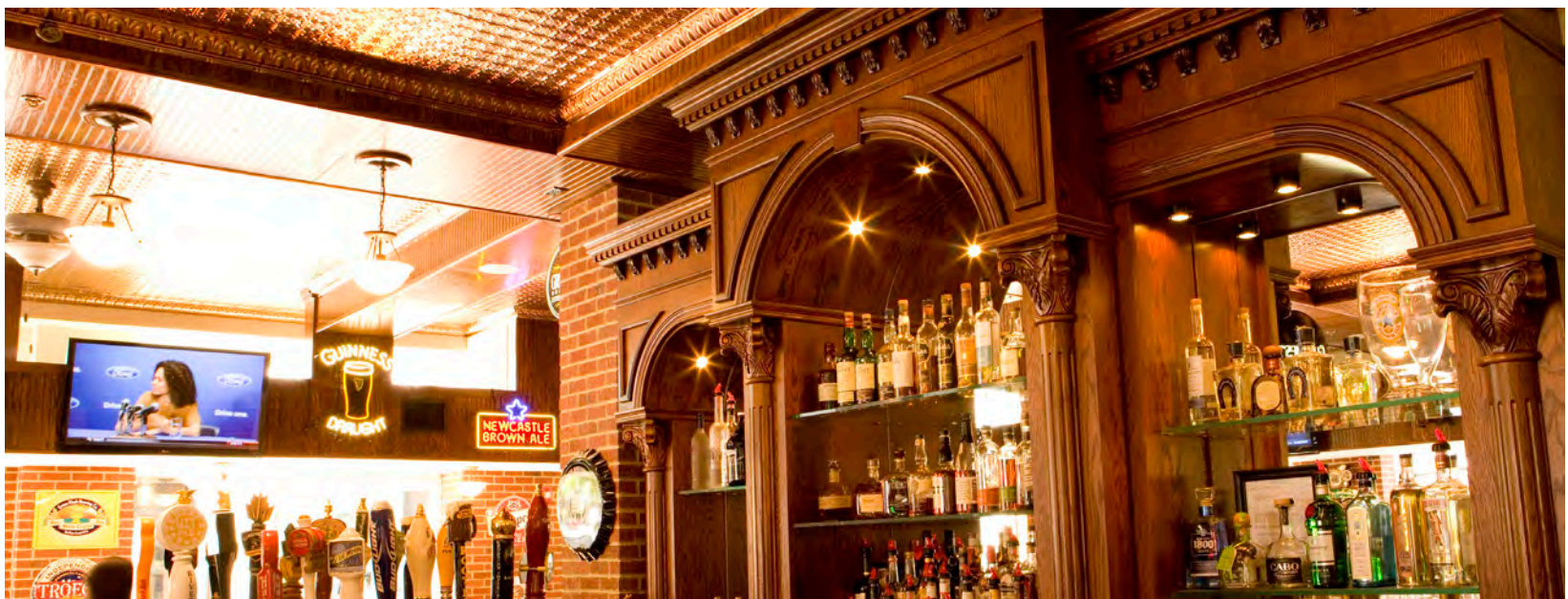


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