

Maple Landmark

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Release at Will

From Simple Beginnings...

Vermont native not your average entrepreneur

MIDDLEBURY, Vt. – Like most people, Michael Rainville had a part-time job through high school and college. Unlike most people, however, Rainville worked for himself making wooden products. Now, more than thirty-eight years later, Mike has turned his hobby into a multi-million-dollar company that employs over 40 local craftspeople and 3 family generations.

Rainville's company began in the basement of his parents' home in Lincoln, Vt. Having plenty of wood and tools around – both of his grandfathers were carpenters & house builders – working with wood and creating things came naturally. His first wholesale account was written in 1979 and, by 1985, Rainville had selected Maple Landmark Woodcraft as the name of his company, paying homage to his grandparents' farm and maple sugaring business - Maple Landmark Homestead.

After graduating in 1984 from Clarkson University with a degree in engineering and business management, Mike began construction on his first shop - a 3-story, 3,500 square-foot facility – with the help of his grandfather.

In 1987, Maple Landmark acquired Troll's Toy Workshop of Barnet, Vt. Troll's Toy Workshop's biggest asset was a "letter" line of cars, which evolved into the NameTrains in 1994. The release of the NameTrains established new accounts nationwide and led to a 75% increase in sales. The search was on for a new location to better accommodate the growth.

The construction of a new 6,400 square-foot factory and showroom, located in Middlebury, Vt., was completed in February 1996. An additional 8,500 square-feet of space was added in 1999.

Maple Landmark acquired Montgomery Schoolhouse Toys, of Montgomery, Vt., in 2001. Montgomery Schoolhouse was founded in the early 1970s and had a faithful retailer following but could not keep up with the emerging competition and the changes in production/manufacturing strategies.

A redoubling of efforts to stay Vermont-made gave birth to the Schoolhouse Naturals product line in 2008. The Schoolhouse Naturals products blend the use of laser technology, locally-harvested materials and fine craftsmanship to make uncoated products that are geared for children ages 3 and under. "In light of recalls and the backlash against products made overseas, we wanted to give our customers and store owners as many choices as possible," commented

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Rainville. “Children 3 and under are very oral - everything goes in the mouth - so no coatings on the product has become a popular option.” Schoolhouse Naturals were on the leading edge of the “green” toy movement; Maple Landmark did not have to change or adapt processes, materials or machinery, being green and American made all along.

In recent years, product development has been strongly emphasized. “In our product development efforts, we first look for the “holes” in our lines, trends and even our scraps to see if there are ways to fill those holes, grab on to a trend or use scraps,” said George Macedo, product development team member. Macedo went on to say, “there are very few ideas that are completely disregarded; some things may just get put on the back burner for a while.” The product development team is especially proud of the new award-winning Flip Face blocks that were introduced mid-2017. Notable additions for 2018 also include additional wind spinners, Silly Sticks, and more.

Beyond the traditional toys, gifts and games sales, Maple Landmark has also found growth in its’ custom work - tap handles for nationally-known breweries, candle lids, and uniquely-styled trains. These private label-brand projects have helped to fund an 11,000 square-foot building addition that was completed in November 2016. The addition gives more space for product, machinery, and the opportunity to hire more craftspeople. More space also means that products will move smoother through the system reducing internal production costs. “We are really excited about the space. Our shop is like a home, sometimes the family just gets too big to stay in a one-bedroom apartment. It’s just a bit too cozy,” comments Pat Rainville, finish room supervisor.

For more information on Maple Landmark, please visit the website at www.maplelandmark.com.

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