

# Maple Landmark

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Release at Will

## **Christmas Comes Early** *A Vermont Wooden Toy Maker's Blizzard*

MIDDLEBURY, Vt. – By all accounts, Monday, August 2nd was a typical summer day in Vermont. County fairs were returning in full force after a year off and a hint of "back to school" hung in the air. Despite the welcome sense of normality, inside Maple Landmark's Middlebury factory, the day became the culmination of an unprecedented reality. For the first time outside of the holiday season, an email distributed to customers nationwide warned of abnormally long lead times and the need to order early for the holidays.

As a manufacturer of wooden toys, games, and gifts, Maple Landmark's staff of 40 employees is familiar with the rapid pace of the holiday season, often referred to as Santa's Workshop. The formula is simple - a multi-month inventory build, turning to an all-out shipping sprint from Thanksgiving until Christmas. By the time the ball drops in Times Square, inventories are low and the cycle repeats. New variables were introduced to that formula in 2021, however, and the result was an earlier and extended holiday season. Each of the last four months, June - September, the company hit record numbers, piling onto an already strong year with no signs of slowing down. Mike Rainville, Maple Landmark's founder and president, explained "Pent up demand and retailers restocking their shelves have cleaned out ours. We are making things as fast as we can and are just barely keeping our head above water."

This unique surge is the latest twist in a two-year rollercoaster at the 42-year-old family business. As the pandemic gripped the nation in March 2020, Vermont's governor issued an executive order, closing the shop's doors to all but immediate family members for what would be six weeks. As the staff were gradually brought back, demand remained slack, but the lost time left plenty of work to be done before the holidays. The busy 2020 holiday season brought a taste of years past but also challenge, with several long-term employees retiring. The calendar flipped and the labor market tightened, making the hiring process more difficult. Coupled with stores around the country reopening and restocking, sometimes multiple times, the second half of 2021 is pushing Maple Landmark to its limits.

Across the globe, supply chains are running thin as many companies experience a rush of business and materials shortages. For Maple Landmark, though, the supply chain impact has been relatively minimal. As an American manufacturer, most of the materials used in crafting their wooden products come from nearby sources - not an ocean away. While world-traveling cargo ships are waiting weeks to offload their imported goods, the small crew of committed woodworkers in Vermont continue uninterrupted production to serve their customers. Recent estimates from the company suggest that they are offering lead times as much as 75% shorter than importers. Knowing the present delays, many customers were just happy that Maple

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Landmark could supply on such a "short" timeline.

Even with the "Made In USA" edge, Rainville recognizes that the holidays are approaching quickly and, with them, even greater demand. When asked for one piece of advice for consumers about this holiday season, Rainville responded simply, "Order early. Understand the gamble that you are taking if you order after Thanksgiving - we will still be trying our best but may not be able to deliver in time for Christmas."

## **About Maple Landmark**

Maple Landmark is a wooden products manufacturer located in Middlebury, Vermont. Since 1979, the 40 woodworkers at Maple Landmark have been crafting a wide array of award-winning toys, games, and gifts from local and sustainable wood. Maple Landmark uses a variety of manufacturing systems, innovative product design, and modern technology integrated with classic woodworking to remain competitive in a crowded industry that faces significant international trade pressures. Distributing products across the United States and sometimes internationally, Maple Landmark is recognized as a standard for quality wooden products in an increasingly tech-driven world.

For more information on Maple Landmark, please visit the website at [www.maplelandmark.com](http://www.maplelandmark.com).

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