

Aurora Lumber Company, Incorporated

Founded: 1848

Location: Original location unknown, Aurora; Third and Mechanic Streets (1859); US Highway 50 (1954–)

The Aurora Lumber Company is descended from a lumberyard founded in Aurora in 1848, reputedly by L. G. Hurlbert. It was the first lumberyard in Dearborn County. Hurlbert settled in the area in 1836 and established himself as a merchant. According to a newspaper advertisement that appeared in the 12 April 1852 issue of the *Aurora Independent Banner*, Hurlbert was operating a sawmill with a man named McHenry. By 1860 at the latest, Hurlbert owned the yard at Third and Mechanic Streets that later became the Aurora Lumber Company. Hurlbert sold lumber, provided planing services, ran a flour mill, and dealt in sashes and doors.

L. G. Hurlbert, Jr., became a partner in 1866 and after his father's death sole proprietor. By 1885 L. G. Hurlbert & Son specialized in rough and dressed pine lumber, most of which was obtained from northern Michigan. The company handled upwards of 1 million feet of lumber and produced almost 1.5 million shingles annually. Robert Clark Mattox became a partner in the yard in the 1890s and in 1906 full owner after the Hurlberts moved to California. When Mattox sold the yard in the 1920s it continued as the Aurora Lumber Company. In 1954 the lumberyard moved to a new location on US 50.

Mattox sold the yard to Midland Building Industries, a small Indianapolis chain of lumberyards. In the mid-1960s the company went out of business. Dale Hizer, the manager of the Aurora store and an employee since 1953, bought the business from

liquidators. He incorporated the firm and continued to run the business until the early 1980s, when his daughter, Janet H., and son-in-law, Carl E. Petty, assumed the responsibilities of running the operation. The 1990s proved to be a time of growth for the concern. On 7 June 1999 the Aurora Lumber Company, Incorporated opened its new 10,000-square-foot facility to the public. The building took nine months to construct and provides 7,000 more square feet than the old structure, which stands next door. In 1999 Pettys continued to run the business, with the help of their son, John, and two other family members. While it remains an independent lumber dealer, the company has teamed with other independent operators in a buying group under the banner of the Do It Best Corporation, which allows smaller firms to be price competitive.