

Lauck Manufacturing Company

Founded: [1882–84]

Location: 496 (later 1004) South Meridian Street (13 West Ray Street later used as principal address for same location), Indianapolis (1882–1968); 735 Bacon Street (1968–)

In 1883 or 1884 John Lauck opened a hardware store next to his home at 496 South Meridian Street. Behind the store, on West Ray Street, he opened a tin shop. Lauck's father, Michael Lauck, was a German architectural ironworker born in Alsace in 1818. Michael Lauck sailed for the United States in the wake of the revolutionary turmoil of 1848. He lived in Pittsburgh and New Orleans before settling in Newport, Kentucky, where John was born in 1854. In 1861 the Lauck family moved to Indianapolis. John Lauck learned the metalworking trade from his father, who died in 1866. John was listed in the 1872–73 city directory as a tinner working out of the family residence at 391 South Delaware Street. When he established his own firm on Meridian Street, John sold hardware and did tin and slate roofing. In 1905 or 1906 he brought his sons John Jr., Charles M., and Frank A. Lauck into the firm, which became John Lauck & Sons.

John Sr. continued to be active in the business until 1912, when he became president of the South Side State Bank, which he helped organize. By 1919 the bank's capital totaled \$50,000, and it claimed \$500,000 in deposits. The headstrong Lauck once confronted six bank robbers who commanded that he lay on the ground. When he refused, they beat him senseless with the butts of their revolvers. The South Side State Bank merged with the Fletcher Trust Company in 1928, but Lauck remained affiliated with it until his death in 1944.

The hardware and metalworking company remained in the control of John Lauck's sons, although, in the mid-1910s the retail hardware division was separated and placed under the direction of Charles. Charles operated the hardware business, which remained at the same location as the metalworking shop, until his death in 1947. Later in the 1910s the Laucks became receivers of the bankrupt Indianapolis Corrugating Company. John Sr. became an officer of the firm and John Jr. became superintendent. About 1922 the Laucks purchased the Indianapolis Corrugating Company's sheet metalworking equipment, including punch presses, shears, and welders. The Lauck family company then divided into John Lauck & Sons and the Lauck Manufacturing Company, although both seem to have operated out of the same establishment at Meridian and Ray Streets. Frank headed the old tinworking partnership, and both he and John Jr. controlled Lauck Manufacturing Company, the new sheet-metal works.

By 1924 the Lauck Manufacturing Company employed eight to ten workers and had a total invested capital of \$10,000. The company made sheet metal for automobile and general manufactures. Lauck Manufacturing Company's customers over the years included Duesenberg, Stutz, J. D. Adams, and the Maxon Corporation. Between 1937 and 1938 John Lauck & Sons dissolved, with Frank retiring from Lauck Manufacturing Company and leaving it in the hands of John Jr. Frank died in 1945, and John Jr. retired in 1953. Charles B. Lauck went to work for Lauck Manufacturing Company in 1946 and purchased it in 1957. With the construction of Interstate 70 during the 1970s, the West Ray Street property was destroyed, and the company moved to 735 Bacon Street. Charles B. retired in 1986 and sold the firm to Daniel A. Slightom.

In the last year of the twentieth century, Slightom remained the owner of the firm. Lauck Manufacturing employed twenty people and realized sales of over \$1 million in fiscal year 1999, continuing to produce steel boxes, machine guards, and stamp sheet metal.