

McCombs & Son

Founded: 1896

Location: Dimittoes Market, Third and Fourth Streets (1896–1906); north of Sixth Street (1906–12); 201 West Sixth Street (1912–)

Burl Eddy and George McCombs formed the McCombs & Eddy Company. They installed tin and slate roofs and stovepipes for wood burning stoves. In 1906 Eddy left the partnership, later retiring to take up farming. George then teamed with his son Cecil to form McCombs & Son. The partners remained in the building north of Sixth Street until it was found that the edifice was sinking into the canal bed.

The company became a general manufacturer near the turn of the century, doing maintenance work for area factories and manufacturing furnaces. While installing roofs and stovepipes, George and Cecil also found time to create metal buggy seats for the Rex Buggy Company. When the manufacture of automobiles became an important industry in Connersville the father and son team produced metal fenders for various companies and metal moldings for “Rex Tops,” collapsible roofs for open-top cars. In 1927 Cecil became head of the company. Cecil had attended the New York Trade School and received additional training in steel fabrication and ornamental work.

During the Great Depression the company survived because Cecil had purchased an electric welder in 1930, one of only three in the county, and welding jobs kept the company afloat. Clair McCombs, Cecil’s son, went to Purdue University, receiving a bachelor of science in engineering in 1942. After serving in the United States Navy during World War II, Clair returned to help his father in the family business. Clair later left for California, but returned upon his father’s retirement in 1954 to take over the company. After the depression the company continued to fabricate steel for local businesses. As business requirements changed, the

company purchased new equipment, including electric rolling and shearing machines, to remain competitive.

The company has continued to employ cutting-edge technology. In 1988 the company purchased a Hypotherm CNC Shapecutting Plasma/Oxyfuel machine, with plate-burning capability. Three years later Clair incorporated McCombs & Son, with Nancy, Robert, and Thomas McCombs as stockholders. In 1998 the company employed eight, including Clair's three children. Sales from the welding, sheet steel fabrication, and CNC plasma-cutting services of the firm were expected to top the \$1 million mark. Clair McCombs remained the company's chief executive officer.