

Yarnelle Lumber Company

Founded: 1864

Location: Huntington (1864–66); 295 West Canal Street, Wabash (1866–)

George Duck, a Stark County, Ohio, native, started operating a lumber company in Huntington, Indiana, in 1864. Two years later he moved the firm to Wabash, teaming up with Dr. J. H. DePuy to buy an interest in the Empire Planing Mill in 1873. Three years later DePuy sold his stake in the business to Duck, who in turn sold a 33 percent interest in the company to William V. Pressler. The partners added sash and door production to their concern, a two-story frame building on west Canal Street. The Duck and Pressler Lumber Company prospered, developing a large business that included not only a lumber yard, but also a construction division, which built both commercial buildings and family housing.

Sometime before 1882 William R. Yarnelle, also an Ohio native, moved from Nebraska, where he had been engaged in the dry goods business, to Wabash. He immediately found a position with Duck and Pressler, moving up to the post of business manager by the late 1890s. As the business manager he made the company more profitable by adding almost any building materials that might be needed by a builder to the list of products available at the lumber company. Cement, sewer pipes, shingles, laths, oils, paints, glass, and putty were among the items either made on site or shipped in by rail to Duck and Pressler. By 1884 average yearly sales totals reached approximately \$25,000, and the company employed as many as twenty men.

When Duck died in 1899 his share in the business went to his daughter, Mildred, and his son-in-law, William Yarnelle. In 1904 Yarnelle bought out the interests of

Pressler and changed the name of the firm to the Yarnelle Lumber Company. Around the start of the second decade of the twentieth century William Yarnelle added coal to the list of company services, changing the name of the concern to Yarnelle Lumber and Coal Company. By 1918 William included his sons, George W. and James K. Yarnelle, as partners in the firm. William continued to preside over the business until 1937.

James K. Yarnelle became the president of the company in 1937, but only lived until 1944. His widow, Lois E., ran the firm until 1950 when she gave charge of the company to her son, Joseph W. Yarnelle. Under his direction the company continued to sell lumber and hardware items, but also added a storage business to the list of the firm's services in the early 1970s. A second storage business was added on Carroll Street around 1979. In 1987 William Ken Yarnelle became the fifth generation of his family to preside over the company.