

The Newsmagazine of the Door & Access Systems Industry

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## THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN GARAGE DOOR INDUSTRY

**MILESTONES AND MERGERS FROM 1921 TO 2014**



**What's Happening  
at Martin Door?**  
An Exclusive Interview  
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# THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN GARAGE DOOR INDUSTRY

## MILESTONES AND MERGERS FROM 1921 TO 2014

By Tom Wadsworth, CDDC  
Editor, Door + Access Systems Newsmagazine

**T**o our knowledge, this is the first time an attempt has been made to publish a comprehensive history of garage door manufacturing in North America. This chronicle helps us see the roots of our industry and how it has evolved.

Armed with these facts, perceptive readers may be able to forecast where it's going.

**Our Sources.** Over the past 15 years, Door + Access Systems has published brief histories of almost 40 companies in our industry. Each one of these "Pages of History" articles has required extensive research to gather the best and most accurate information available. We did much of the research, but we are also indebted to many company representatives who also did significant legwork.

In addition to writing these articles, I have been collecting historical data

for the garage door industry for 25 years. I've interviewed scores of old-timers who are connected with the roots of our business, and I've gathered hundreds of historical images of our industry in my work as a magazine editor.

**Our Focus.** This history focuses primarily on companies that make sectional garage doors in North America. We have occasionally included events about related products and other countries, but only when those events had a noteworthy relation to a sectional door company in North America. At a later date, we hope to publish a history of the manufacturing of related products, such as garage door openers and rolling doors.

**Accuracy.** We've made a diligent effort to have reputable sources behind every detail in this history. Yet we know that some sources may have innocently reported incorrect information. If you have any additions or corrections, you are encouraged to contact me at [trw@tomwadsworth.com](mailto:trw@tomwadsworth.com).



# 1921-1941:

## The Launching of a New Industry

Even though evidence indicates that the upward-acting sectional garage door existed in 1900 or earlier, the era of mass manufacturing sectional garage doors likely began in 1921. That's when C.G. Johnson of Detroit, Mich., started Overhead Door.

At that time, automobiles were becoming more popular and more economical. In 1913, Ford introduced the Model T and was the first company to produce more than 100,000 cars. The first Model T's reportedly sold for \$850, but by 1924, mass production techniques brought the price down to \$290. This greatly expanded the affordability of automobiles for the masses.

In 1921, when C.G. Johnson began his endeavor, Ford made more than 1,000,000 new

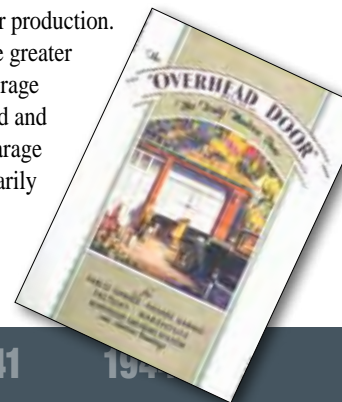


cars for the first time. Throughout the sustained economic prosperity of the Roaring '20s, U.S. auto production remained high.

As Americans

traded in their horses and buggies for gas-powered cars, they began to build their garages with doorways sized to accommodate the width and height of typical cars and trucks. And, as speed and convenience became valued more highly, sectional garage doors became much preferred to the swing-out barn-type door.

In these early years, the Midwestern states of Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois became a focal point of garage door production. This was likely due to the greater need for protected car storage during the Midwest's cold and snowy winter months. Garage door manufacturers primarily served regional markets, *continued on page 44*



### Timeline legend:

- Green text = New startup
- Blue text = Acquisition
- Red text = Closing
- Black text = Noteworthy industry milestone

\* Best information available.

Commercial doors by McKee



1920      1923      1926      1929      1932      1935      1938      1941      1944

### 1921

C.G. Johnson of Detroit, Mich., invents the "Overhead Door," a sectional upward-acting garage door. Partnering with attorney Forest McKee of Hartford City, Ind., the company starts its first plant in Detroit, Mich. The company headquarters move to Hartford City in 1923.

### 1923

Edward Fimbel, Sr., creates Fimbel Door and begins making garage doors in Hillside, N.J., having signed a franchise agreement with Overhead Door of Hartford City, Ind., to manufacture and market overhead doors in the Northeast. Operations are moved to Whitehouse, N.J., in 1969.

### 1924

Barcol, the Overdoor Division of Barber-Colman Company of Rockford, Ill., begins making sectional garage doors, based on the engineering of Howard Colman with funding from the Barber family.

### 1925

Overhead Door of Hartford City, Ind., introduces the first graduated-track closure system that ensures a weather-tight seal for sectional garage doors.

### 1928

McKee Door is founded in Harvey, Ill., by James Harry McKee, who developed a "mechanically balanced overhead sectional garage door" with a unique twin-roller system. The company moves to Aurora, Ill., in 1937.

### 1930

Crawford Door is founded by Fred Crawford and a few other investors from Thompson Products of Cleveland, Ohio. The company begins to make garage doors in Detroit, Mich..

### 1930

Rowe Mfg. Co. of Galesburg, Ill., begins making sectional wood garage doors.

### 1931

Kinnear Mfg., a rolling steel door manufacturer in Columbus, Ohio, introduces the Kinnear Rol-Top, its first sectional garage door, made of 12" sections.

### 1931

Overhead Door introduces the first graduated spiral drum, providing an evenly weighted counterbalance system for torsion-spring assemblies.

### 1933

Richards-Wilcox of Aurora, Ill., and London, Ontario, begins making airplane hangar doors, Rolltite sectional doors, and one-piece overhead doors.

### 1934

Crawford Door develops its sectional garage door with torsion springs.

### 1934

Wagner Mfg. of Cedar Falls, Iowa, begins producing the Wagner Overhead Garage Door.

### 1936

Martin Door is founded in Santa Ana, Calif., by Leno Martin, producing a one-piece overhead door. The firm changes to sectional garage doors in the 1960s.

### 1941\*

J.G. Wilson Corporation of New York City, N.Y., is making commercial sectional garage doors at its factory in Norfolk/Chesapeake, Va. The year it started making these doors is unknown.

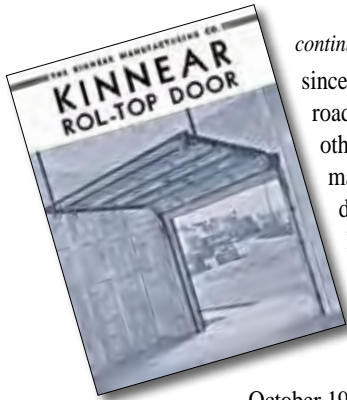
### 1944

Raynor Mfg. opens in Quincy, Ill., planning to make wood sectional garage doors at the war's end. The company is founded by Ray Neisewander Sr. of Springfield, Ill., and Bill Norberg, formerly of Rowe Mfg. of Galesburg. The plant moves to Dixon, Ill., in 1946.

### 1945

Quincy Mfg. of Tiffin, Ohio, maker of Tiffin Operators for residential and commercial garage doors, begins making wood garage doors.





*continued from page 43*  
since the nation's road system and other factors made national distribution harder to achieve.

The Wall Street Crash of

October 1929 put a stop to the roaring economy and initiated the 10-year Great Depression. By 1932, auto production had dropped by 75 percent from its high in 1929.

Garage door production was also deeply affected, but the tough times also forced many



entrepreneurs to find a way to make a living. Crawford Door and Rowe Mfg. started garage door production in 1930, while Kinneair began in 1931. By the outbreak of World War II in 1941, about 10 companies were making sectional doors, and the top three were considered to be Overhead Door (Indiana), Crawford Door (Michigan), and Rowe Mfg. (Illinois).

## 1944-1959:

### The Postwar Boom

Throughout the war years of 1942, 1943, and 1944, virtually no cars or garage doors were produced in America. Gas was rationed to three gallons per week per household, greatly reducing automobile use and travel. Lumber and steel were devoted to making war materials, and factories converted production to making items for the war effort.

While some garage door plants shut down completely, most door factories

contributed to the war effort. Crawford Door made aircraft parts. McKee manufactured wing struts and fuselage bracing for fighter planes. Frantz made ammunition box handles, cots, and cot hardware, while Raynor produced ammunition boxes and pallets for artillery shells.

But by late 1944, the country could see light at the end of the war tunnel, and manufacturers began preparing for a postwar boom.

After the war ended, \$200 billion in war bonds matured, and pent-up demand was unleashed. Housing starts skyrocketed from about 150,000 in 1944 to almost 2 million in 1950 as millions of soldiers came home and started building homes and families.

By this time, more Americans recognized the advantages of attached garages and sectional garage doors. The demand for garage doors seemed

*During the war, garage door plants converted production to war materials.*



1946

1948

1950

1952

1956

1958

#### 1946\*

Berry Door, a garage door manufacturer in Pontiac, Mich., is founded by Glen Berry.

#### 1946

Stevens-Thuet Company is formed by Harry Stevens and Hans Thuet in Long Beach, Calif., making aluminum garage doors. In the 1950s, the company made the Do-It-Door, a one-piece door, and the Alumi-Door sectional door.

#### 1946

Taylor Door is started by R.L. Taylor, producing one-piece steel garage doors in Detroit, Mich.

#### 1947

General Doors begins manufacturing wood garage doors in Bristol, Pa.

#### 1950

Frantz Mfg. of Sterling, Ill., begins making sectional garage door hardware and selling wood door sections from Quality Wood Products of Merrill, Wis.

#### 1950

Holmes Door is founded in Auburn, Wash., to make wood sectional garage doors.

Green text = New startup  
Blue text = Acquisition  
Red text = Closing  
Black text = Noteworthy industry milestone

\* Best information available.

#### 1951

Abe, Morris, and Herb Brenner establish Amarr as a building supply company in Winston-Salem, N.C. The company later focuses on garage doors.

#### 1951

Hörmann Door of Germany begins operations, offering the "Berry Door" with a design based on a one-piece door from Berry Door of Pontiac, Mich.

#### 1952

Lodi Door is started by Daniel G. Anderson in Lodi, Calif., making garage doors\*.

#### 1954

Emanuel Mullet buys Wayne Door from Ervin Hostetler and moves the small garage door business from Mt. Eaton (Wayne County) to Mt. Hope, Ohio.

#### 1954

C.E. Webb Sr., C.E. Webb Jr., and Robert Webb form the Wel-Bilt Vulcan Company in Little Rock, Ark., making one-piece steel garage doors.

#### 1955

Wagner Mfg. of Cedar Falls, Iowa, buys Stoddard Mfg., a maker of one-piece steel garage doors in Mason City, Iowa.

#### 1956

Ankmar Garage Door is created by Bob Martinez and Rudy Ankley as an installing door company in Denver, Colo. The company starts manufacturing garage doors in the 1980s.

#### 1956\*

Berry Door of Michigan introduces its first sectional steel garage door, a seven-section door.

#### 1956

R & K Mockler Mfg., formed by brothers Robert and Karl Mockler, begins making wood garage doors in Palisades Park, N.J.

#### 1957

Haas Door of Perrysburg, Ohio, begins manufacturing garage doors. The company is founded by Ernest Haas, his sons Spike, Barney, and Duke Haas, and son-in-law Donald LaHote.

#### 1958

John J. (Jack) Dourney Jr. starts Arm-R-Lite Door Mfg. to supply doors for his garage door installation business in West Orange, N.J. In 1959, he designs the Arm-R-Lite aluminum and glass sectional door.

#### 1958

Quincy Mfg. of Tiffin, Ohio, becomes the first company to produce prepainted commercial steel garage doors.

#### 1959

Bob and Jane Eckert establish Eckert Door of Milwaukee, Wis., making wood garage doors.

limitless. For example, in 1946 at Raynor, "Demand was so high that we took orders for two months and then shut off orders ... for the rest of the year," said Howard Byer, company bookkeeper.



By 1960, the number of garage door manufacturers more than doubled. Some were new companies. Some were existing factories that expanded into garage doors, while some were garage door installing companies that started manufacturing to meet the overwhelming demand.

As in the 1920s and 30s, most of the doors produced in the 1940s and 50s were residential and commercial wood garage doors. But other materials began to be used. With the passage of federal funding to begin the interstate highway system in 1956, the demand for aluminum and glass doors began exploding as service stations sprang up throughout the country. Steel doors made their appearance, usually in commercial settings. In



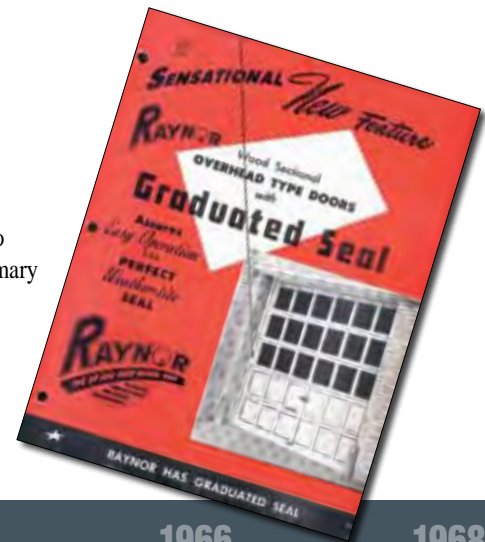
Early Wagner redwood door.

1959, fiberglass garage door production began as Americans were attracted by the appeal of a lightweight door requiring minimal maintenance.

Although more manufacturers started up on the East and West coasts, Midwestern states from Pennsylvania to Illinois continued as the primary focal point of garage door production in America.



*continued on page 46*



1958

1960

1962

1964

1966

1968

**1959**

Frantz Mfg. of Sterling, Ill., introduces Filuma, considered to be the first successful lightweight fiberglass garage door.

**1960**

Crawford European Door Company begins in Gothenburg, Sweden, led by Fred Bengtsson, who had visited the Crawford Door plant in Detroit.

**1960\***

Taylor Door of Detroit, Mich., is sold to Herman Otto of Garland Mfg., also of Detroit.

**1961**

Wel-Bilt Vulcan of Little Rock, Ark., acquires from Sears the tooling for the seven-section "Won-Dor." The company's name is changed to Windsor Door.

**1962\***

Phil Reveats purchases Aldor (Aluminum Door Company) of Hialeah, Fla., a maker of aluminum, steel, and fiberglass garage doors. The company soon merges with Baker Tool & Die of Hialeah. In 1963, Baker Aldor purchases Jones Engineering to create Baker Aldor Jones and soon begins to produce its own garage door hardware.

**1962**

Fred Crawford sells the U.S. operations of Crawford Door of Detroit, Mich., to the Jim Walter Company of Tampa, Fla.

**1962**

Wayne Door of Mt. Hope, Ohio, begins to manufacture its own garage door sections.

**1963**

Glen Berry of Berry Door markets the "Lincoln Door" clamp to help companies manufacture their own wood sectional garage doors. Ideal Door of Wisconsin, Delden Mfg. of Kansas City, and Francis Products of Russia, Ohio, are among the first to purchase the clamp.

**1963**

Ideal Door is founded in Woodville, Wis., as a manufacturer of wood garage doors.

**1964**

Chamberlain Corp. of Waterloo, Iowa, purchases Wagner Mfg. Co., a maker of wood and fiberglass garage doors in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

**1964**

Clopay Corporation of Cincinnati, Ohio, enters the garage door business with the purchase of Baker Aldor Jones of Hialeah, Fla., a manufacturer of steel, fiberglass, and aluminum garage doors.

**1964**

Delden Mfg. of Kansas City, Mo., is created by Gene Renner with Dick Wright, Harry Link, and Elmer Renner as minority partners.

**1964**

Francis Products of Russia, Ohio, a seller of garage doors and garage door openers, begins manufacturing wood garage doors.

**1964\***

Stanley Works of New Britain, Conn., buys Berry Door of Birmingham, Mich. For the next five years, the company is called Stanley Berry.

**1965**

General Aluminum Corporation (later known as Gadco) of North Aurora, Ill., owned by Louis Vago and Paul Kleinwachter, begins manufacturing fiberglass garage doors.

**1965**

Overhead Door moves its headquarters from Hartford City, Ind., to Dallas, Texas.

**1966**

North Central Door is started in Bemidji, Minn., by four local businessmen, producing wood sectional garage doors. Steel garage doors are added later.

**1967**

Barcol Overdoor of Sheffield, Ill., a maker of residential and commercial garage doors, is sold to R.C. Mahon Company of Detroit, Mich.

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# 1960-1979:

## The Acquisition Game Begins

Most economists consider the U.S. postwar boom to have continued until 1970, when inflation began to take its toll. For the garage door industry, business indeed continued to boom through the 1960s and 70s, though the 1970s were initially hampered by inflation and rising unemployment.

A positive trend started in 1974 when more than half of new homes included a two-car garage, further expanding the garage door market. In 1971, 39 percent of new homes had a two-car garage, but by 1979, that number



The precursor of the first Windsor garage door.

jumped to 62 percent.

In these two decades, more new manufacturers appeared, usually targeting regional markets in many locations in the U.S. and Canada. By 1970, more than 30 garage door manufacturers dotted the nation.

But by 1960, some companies had been manufacturing for more than 30 years, and the first generation of owners was beginning to retire. They asked themselves the inevitable question, "Do I sell, or do I pass the company to my children?" Thus began the first era of acquisition activity in the industry.

Some large corporations entered the door business by buying up successful garage door manufacturers. Crawford Door sold to Jim Walter Company in 1962. Stanley Works jumped into the door business, buying Berry Door in 1964. Ceco Corporation bought Windsor Door in 1969, while Harsco Corporation bought Kinnear in 1972.

Meanwhile, some of the industry's first



manufacturers sold out to other companies that were already in the door business. Barcol sold to R.C. Mahon in 1967. Rowe Mfg. bought Quincy Mfg. in 1969, while Frantz bought Rowe in 1973.

Two new names entered the business in the 1960s, and they would remain key players for a long time. Chamberlain began its foray into the industry in 1964

by purchasing Wagner Mfg., a garage door maker. And Clopay jumped into garage doors *continued on page 48*



1968

### 1968

NAGDM, the National Association for Garage Door Manufacturers, holds its first organizational meeting. At this meeting in Chicago are representatives of Barcol Door, Berry Door, Crawford Door, Frantz Mfg., Haas Door, Kinnear, McKee Door, Phenix Mfg., Rowe Mfg., Taylor Garage Door, Wagner Mfg., and Wayne Door.

### 1969

Clopay of Cincinnati, Ohio, acquires Francis Products of Russia, Ohio, a manufacturer of wood garage doors. Clopay begins selling under the Clopay name in 1972.

### 1969

Rowe Mfg. of Galesburg, Ill., purchases Quincy Mfg. of Tiffin, Ohio, a maker of steel garage doors and garage door operators.

### 1969

Windsor Door of Little Rock, Ark., is purchased by Ceco Corporation of Oakbrook, Ill. The company name becomes Ceco/Windsor.

### 1970

Northwest Door of Tacoma, Wash., begins manufacturing wood garage doors.

1970

1972

### 1972

Chamberlain sells its Wagner Door division of Waterloo, Iowa, to Clopay. Wagner's Waterloo operations are closed in 1978.

### 1972

Kinnear Mfg. of Columbus, Ohio, becomes a division of Harsco Corp. of Harrisburg, Pa. Kinnear makes rolling steel doors, commercial operators, and sectional garage doors.

### 1972

Willis Mullet of Wayne Door and John Zoller, formerly of Quincy Mfg., begin Dalton International in Dalton, Ohio, making commercial wood and steel garage doors.

### 1973

Frantz Mfg. of Sterling, Ill., purchases Rowe Mfg. Co. of Galesburg, Ill., a garage door manufacturer.

### 1974\*

Western Overhead Door of Portland, Ore., a manufacturer of wood garage doors and steel sectional commercial garage doors (started by Paul Kenaga and Bill Wheeler), is sold to Kinnear Mfg. of Columbus, Ohio.

1974

1976

### 1976

Safe-Way Door of Warsaw, Ind., a manufacturer of residential and commercial steel and wood garage doors since the 1960s, is bought by Harold James. James soon buys Custom Overhead Door, a wood door manufacturer in Churubusco, Ind.

### 1977

Ideal Door of Woodville, Wis., is purchased by Automatic Garage Door. Manufacturing facilities are moved to Baldwin, Wis.

### 1978

Alto Garage Door Mfg. is founded in 1978 in the Harrisburg, Pa., area by brothers James Pagliaro Sr. and Tom Pagliaro, making fiberglass garage doors.\*

### 1978

Midland Garage Door Mfg. of Fargo, N.D., begins producing garage doors.

### 1978

Stanley introduces the industry's first steel raised-panel garage door, the Sta-Lite 500\*.

### 1980

Rowe Mfg.'s Galesburg operations are closed and moved to Frantz in Sterling, Ill.

Green text	= New startup
Blue text	= Acquisition
Red text	= Closing
Black text	= Noteworthy industry milestone

\* Best information available.



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continued from page 46



with the acquisition of Baker Aldor Jones in 1964, Francis Products in 1969, and Wagner door in 1972.

Wood garage doors continued to dominate the industry through this period, although fluctuating lumber prices forced manufacturers to seek alternatives. Thin fiberglass garage doors enjoyed 15-20 years of popularity, but eventually lost their appeal due to lack of strength and security.

By the 1970s, manufacturers were beginning to overcome problems related to

manufacturing steel doors, such as structural stability, oil canning, and rust. Initially, steel became preferred for commercial applications. But by 1980, steel garage doors would begin to revolutionize the residential market.

## 1980-1999:

### Jockeying for Position

When the 1980s began, the country was plagued by interest rates approaching 20 percent, high unemployment, high inflation, and an energy crisis. But the advent of the steel raised-panel garage door spurred a boom in production that would soon overcome the stagnant economy.

For the first time, manufacturers had successfully merged the look of wood (raised-panel design and woodgrain) with the durability and low maintenance of steel. By

1985, nearly every manufacturer had jumped in the race to produce this wildly successful new door design. By the mid 1990s, wood and fiberglass garage doors virtually vanished from garage door warehouses as rollformers and giant hydraulic presses moved into the factories.

The creation of the Garage Door Group of Kansas City is evidence of the startling popularity of the raised-panel design. For the only time in garage door history, three manufacturers joined hands to build a factory



1980

1981

1982

1984

1986

1988

### 1980

Taylor Door opens a plant in West Branch, Mich., to make the industry's first "sandwich" insulated raised-panel steel garage doors, while pan (uninsulated) garage door production moves to Auburndale, Fla.

### 1982

The Garage Door Group of Kansas City, Mo., is formed by Brenner Inc. (later to become Amarr) of Winston-Salem, N.C., Delden Mfg. of Kansas City, Kan., and Ankmar Garage Doors of Denver, Colo. The factory starts making residential raised-panel steel garage doors in 1983.

### 1982

Wayne-Dalton is formed by the merger of Wayne Door in Mt. Hope, Ohio, and Dalton International in Dalton, Ohio.

### 1983

Coach House, Inc., (C.H.I.) of Arthur, Ill., is formed when Ervin Yoder purchases Coach House Garages from its founder, Willis Miller.

### 1983

Michel Gendreau acquires the assets of Garaga Doors of Saint-Georges, Québec, a manufacturer of garage doors since 1979. Gendreau renames the company Garaga Doors (2000).

### 1983

Jim Walter Corp. of Tampa sells Crawford Door, a maker of commercial and residential sectional doors in Century, Fla., to Wayne-Dalton of Mt. Hope, Ohio.

### 1983

Lodi Door of Lodi, Calif., is sold to Overhead Door of Dallas, Texas. Environmental issues at the plant force the end of manufacturing in Lodi.

### 1984

Barcol Overdoor of Sheffield, Ill., a garage door manufacturer owned by Mahon Door of Warren, Mich., is purchased by Plycraft of Conneaut, Ohio.

### 1985

Spilman-Jellá Mfg. of Tempe, Ariz., led by John Jellá, begins manufacturing garage doors. The company name is changed to Anozira Door Systems in 1987.

### 1985

Overhead Door of Dallas, Texas, acquires Insoport, a Swedish-owned manufacturer of foamed-in-place steel sectional garage doors in Williamsport, Pa.

### 1986

Masco of Taylor, Mich., purchases Atlas Door of Edison, N.J., and Roll-lite Overhead Door of Orlando, Fla.

### 1986

Clopay of Cincinnati, Ohio, a manufacturer of residential and commercial garage doors, is acquired by Instrument Systems of New York.

### 1986

McKee Door of Aurora, Ill., is sold to Clyde Industries of Sydney, Australia. Clyde merges McKee with Porvene Roll-A-Door of Anaheim, Calif., creating Porvene McKee, based in Aurora, Ill.

### 1986

Northwest Door purchases Pacific Door & Spring, a manufacturer of torsion springs and commercial ribbed steel garage doors in Portland, Ore.

### 1986

Kent Forsland, a door dealer in Minneapolis, Minn., begins producing handcrafted wood garage doors. The company becomes Designer Doors in 1987 and moves to River Falls, Wis., in 1996.

### 1986

Richards-Wilcox, a maker of sectional garage doors in Mississauga, Ontario, is purchased from TI Industries by Ray Friesen and Randy Hiebert.

### 1987

Taylor Door, a garage door and entry door manufacturer in West Branch, Mich., is purchased by Masco of Taylor, Mich.

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■ Blue text = Acquisition  
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■ Black text = Noteworthy industry milestone

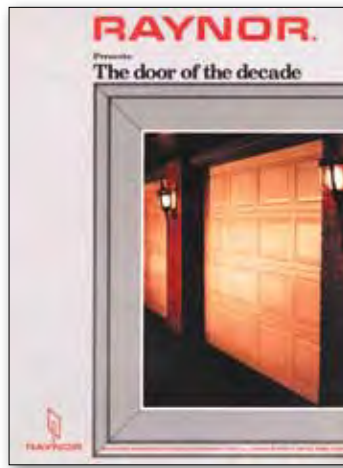
\* Best information available.



that produced (steel raised-panel) garage doors for all three companies.

With strong demand that continued almost unabated through the 1980s and 90s, companies began making strategic moves to become the dominant players in garage door manufacturing. Wayne-Dalton was a good example. Formed at the beginning of this era in 1982, Wayne-Dalton quickly broke into the top five manufacturers, riding on the success of its Foamcore raised-panel door and its subsequent purchases of Crawford Door (1983), Kinnear (1990), and Frantz (1994).

This period was also the prime active



period for Masco Corporation, the home construction products giant. Seeing profit potential in the garage door industry, Masco bought up Atlas Door and Roll-lite (1986), Taylor Door (1987), and Haas Door (1991). In 1995, however, they spun off all these companies and completely left the garage door business.

Similarly, Stanley Works made several strategic moves in this period, ultimately creating Stanley Door Systems in 1991, producing garage doors, entry doors, garage door and gate openers, and radio controls.

*continued on page 50*



## 1988

### 1988

Century Wood Door, a wood garage door manufacturer in Mississauga, Ontario, is purchased by Frantz Mfg. of Sterling, Ill.

### 1989

Masco of Taylor, Mich., merges Atlas and Roll-lite into one corporation, Atlas Roll-lite Overhead Door, with headquarters in Orlando, Fla.

### 1989

Summit Door is founded by William W. Greenway Jr., in Anaheim, Calif., making residential wood garage doors. In 1998, operations are moved to Corona, Calif.

### 1990

Able Garage Door Mfg. establishes a residential steel garage door manufacturing facility in Houston, Texas.

### 1990

Barcol Overdoor of Sheffield, Ill., closes.

### 1990

Overhead Door of Dallas, known as Dallas Corporation from 1985-1990, becomes privately owned when purchased by Bessemer Holdings, a New York investment firm.

### 1990

Ranch House Doors, a custom wood garage door manufacturer in La Mirada, Calif., is started by Mike Neal. Offices are later moved to Corona, Calif.

## 1990

### 1990

Wayne-Dalton acquires the Kinnear division of Harsco, a maker of sectional and rolling doors, closing the Columbus plant and moving operations to Dalton, Ohio. With the purchase, Wayne-Dalton claims to be "the largest manufacturer of overhead doors."

### 1990

Ceco Industries merges with H.H. Robertson of Pittsburgh to form Robertson-Ceco. Ceco/Windsor Door becomes a subsidiary of Robertson-Ceco.

### 1990

Phenix Mfg. of Shawano, Wis., merges with a management team headed by Floyd Fenix. Phenix makes wood, fiberglass, and steel garage doors.

### 1991

Haas Door, a garage door manufacturer in Perrysburg, Ohio, is purchased by Masco of Taylor, Mich.

### 1991

Mid-America Door is founded in Ponca City, Okla., by a group of door dealers and others to manufacture steel sectional garage doors.

### 1991

Clyde Industries splits Porvene McKee into several pieces, selling the McKee Door plant in Aurora, Ill., to a group of Aurora-based managers who resume manufacturing as McKee Door.

## 1992

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But by 2000, it had sold off all interests in these industries, and the Stanley brand disappeared.

Until the 1980s, all the major manufacturers were located east of the Mississippi, with the notable exceptions of the Garage Door Group and Windsor Door. Inhibiting their westward expansion were the Rocky Mountains, which seemed to be a barrier that complicated distribution. The large Southern California market presented more problems, such as the continued popularity of one-piece doors, unique size and headroom configurations, and the high cost of doing business.



By the late 1980s, the Western market was increasingly turning to sectional doors, but the major manufacturers still struggled in this market. The ongoing struggle contributed to the formation of several new regional manufacturers in the area. But by the late 1990s, most of the major manufacturers had made progress in the West through key acquisitions and the creation of distribution centers.

Through this period of expansion, the major manufacturers also made significant inroads into Canada. This northward thrust was typically accomplished by setting up distribution centers in major cities or by acquiring a Canadian manufacturer.

Looking beyond Canada, the major manufacturers also greatly expanded their export business to dozens of countries around the world. In this period, English emerged as the global business language, fueled by the



emergence in 1991 of the U.S. as the world's only superpower—America leading the world through the computer/Internet revolution and the subsequent globalization of American popular culture. All this greatly paved the way for American companies to break through the communication barrier and successfully sell their products in foreign lands.

Another key development of this period was the closing of three of the earliest garage door brands, all based in Illinois. Rowe (est. 1930) finally closed its doors in 1980. Barcol Overdoor (est. 1924) finally shut down production in 1990. McKee Door (est. 1928) closed down in 1995. None of these closings happened suddenly, but were long in the making. The ongoing challenge of upgrading aging facilities to incorporate modern technology was one factor that contributed to each company's demise.

1990

1992

1994

1996

1998

**1991**

Porvene McKee, a door brand headquartered in Aurora, Ill., ends.

**1991**

Stanley Works forms Stanley Door Systems in Troy, Mich., by consolidating its door, operator, and radio controls divisions. Troy is where steel and fiberglass entry doors are made.

**1992**

Clopay of Cincinnati, Ohio, acquires Ideal Door and Phenix Door, two Wisconsin-based garage door manufacturers, and claims to be "the largest manufacturer and marketer of residential garage doors in the United States." Clopay then changes its name to Clopay Building Products.

**1992**

United Dominion Industries of Canada buys Ceco/Windsor Door of Little Rock, Ark., from Robertson-Ceco.

**1994**

Wayne-Dalton purchases the Frantz Building Products Division of Sterling, Ill., a maker of commercial and residential garage doors.

■ Green text = New startup  
■ Blue text = Acquisition  
■ Red text = Closing  
■ Black text = Noteworthy industry milestone  
 \* Best information available.

**1994**

Ankmar Door's share in the Garage Door Group of Lawrence, Kan., is bought by Amarr Garage Doors of Winston-Salem, N.C., and Delden Mfg. of Kansas City, Mo.

**1995**

Clopay acquires (from Masco) Atlas Roll-Lite Door of Orlando, Fla., a manufacturer of rolling steel doors, grilles, counter shutters, sectional garage doors, and doors and components for the self-storage market.

**1995**

Haas Door, a Masco-owned garage door manufacturer in Perrysburg, Ohio, is acquired by Nofziger Doors International of Wauseon, Ohio. Haas operations are moved to Wauseon in 1996.

**1995**

McKee Door of Aurora, Ill., closes, selling its machinery and equipment to United Dominion Industries, owner of Windsor Door of Little Rock, Ark.

**1995**

Anozira Door Systems, a maker of commercial and residential garage doors in Tempe, Ariz., is purchased by Holmes-Hally Industries of Los Angeles, Calif.

**1995**

Taylor Door, a garage door manufacturer in West Branch, Mich., is acquired by American Architectural Products of Ohio.

**1996**

DASMA, the Door & Access Systems Manufacturers Association, International, is formed by the consolidation of the Door Operator & Remote Controls Manufacturers Association (DORCMA) and the National Association of Garage Door Manufacturers (NAGDM).

**1996**

DoorTech Industries is formed by Mike Truman of Oceanside, Calif., to make steel, aluminum, and wood garage doors.

**1996**

Overhead Door of Dallas, Texas, a manufacturer of residential and commercial garage doors, openers, and rolling doors, is bought by Sanwa Shutter of Japan.

**1996**

Windsor Door of Little Rock, Ark., purchases Harris Door of Portland, Ore., a maker of wood garage doors. Harris was founded in 1955 by L.R. "Bud" Harris.

**1996**

Plycraft Corporation of Conneaut, Ohio, a maker of wood garage doors, is sold to Rudy Komar of Conneaut.

**1997**

Clopay acquires Holmes-Hally Industries, which includes Anozira Door Systems of Tempe, Ariz., and Holmes Door of Auburn, Wash.



By the turn of the century, more than 40 garage door manufacturers had entered the business, creating an increasingly competitive marketplace. The economic struggles of the next 10 years would begin to trim away at that number.

## 2000-2014:

### Adapt or Die

By 2000, the steel raised-panel design had enjoyed 20 years of dominance in the industry. But the design was now old, tired, boring, and way too common.

Then came the carriage house design, first emerging as a stunning custom-built wood garage door. Its success, though only a fraction of raised-panel sales, still prompted all major manufacturers to resurrect their wood production capabilities or to outsource the production of carriage house doors.

But wood still carried the disadvantages of high cost and high maintenance. So, by 2005, all the major manufacturers were



producing their own steel carriage house designs. These new doors gradually grew in popularity until they comprised about 20 percent of residential sectional door sales in 2013.

In the midst of this design transition, the nation suffered an economic earthquake in 2008 that had devastating effects on garage door production, both commercial and residential, but primarily residential. Construction of new homes hit 1.7 million in 2006. The Great Recession of 2008 strangled

*continued on page 52*



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### 1998

#### 1997

Stanley Door Systems in Birmingham and Novi, Mich., and in Covington, Ohio, is bought by Whistler Auto-Mation Products. The company name changes to Stanley-Whistler, a division of Whistler Corporation of Chelmsford, Mass.

#### 1997

Windsor Door is purchased from United Dominion by American Buildings Company (ABC) of Eufaula, Ala. Later, Onex Corporation acquires ABC, forming Magnatrx.

#### 1998

Amarr Garage Doors purchases Delden's share in the Garage Door Group of Lawrence, Kan.

#### 1999

Raynor Garage Doors of Dixon, Ill., purchases Richards-Wilcox, a maker of commercial garage doors in Mississauga, Ontario.

#### 1999

Sunwood Doors begins making wood garage doors in Long Beach, Calif.

#### 1999

Whistler Corporation sells its Stanley brand of garage doors and openers to Innovative Home Products.

### 2000

#### 1999

Taylor Building Products of West Branch, Mich., is purchased by Nick Cangialosi of INC Industries of Lodi, N.J.

#### 1999

TKO Doors of Sussex, Wis., a maker of sectional knock-out doors, is acquired by United Dominion Industries of Canada.

#### 2000

Artisan Custom Doorworks, a custom wood door manufacturer headed by Matt Courtney, begins operations in Bristol, Pa., and Milford, Del. Headquarters are moved to Morgantown, Pa., in 2003.

#### 2000

Innovative Home Products ceases manufacturing (Stanley) garage doors in Birmingham, Mich.

#### 2001

First United Door Technologies of Tempe, Ariz., begins manufacturing commercial and residential garage doors. The company is headed by John Jellá and four other former employees of Anozira Door Systems.

#### 2002

C.H.I. Overhead Doors of Arthur, Ill., is sold by the Helmut family to Long Point Capital, an investment firm in N.Y. and Michigan.

### 2002



housing production, reducing total new homes to 800,000. As banks failed and greatly reduced lending, housing continued to drop, reaching a low of 450,000 new homes in 2011, a mere 27 percent of 2006 levels.

By most accounts, garage door sales dropped as much as 45 percent, stinging every manufacturer in the business. Companies had

to adapt or die. Forced through the economic wringer, manufacturers cut costs in every way possible, learning lean manufacturing techniques the hard way.

By 2014, most had given up on seeing a return to production levels of 2000-2006. Instead, the industry envisioned a “new normal” for garage door sales. That meant lower production and continued lean operations.

Several smaller manufacturers were forced out of business during the recession. This was particularly true in Southern California, which had been among the hardest hit by the recession. Some mid-sized manufacturers were severely affected and became targets of acquisition. The major manufacturers survived, but emerged with fewer employees and tightened budgets.

Through this period, fewer new manufacturers sprouted, and the rate of

acquisitions greatly slowed from the boom years of the 1980s and 90s. However, the shrinking of production, sales, and operations made companies more affordable to larger corporations that could afford a major purchase.

Thus, two major acquisitions rocked the industry in this era. The first was Overhead



Door’s acquisition of its long-time major competitor, Wayne-Dalton, in 2009. The financial strength of Sanwa Shutter of Japan, Overhead Door’s parent company, helped make the purchase possible.



## 2002

### 2002

Hörmann, Europe’s largest manufacturer of doors and operators, enters the U.S. market, opening a plant in Vonore, Tenn.

### 2002

North Central Door of Bemidji, Minn., a manufacturer of commercial and residential garage doors, is acquired by Steve Holley and Bob Huston.

### 2003

Able Garage Door Mfg., a maker of commercial and residential steel garage doors in Houston, Texas, files for Chap. 11 bankruptcy protection and is acquired by NCI Building Systems, also based in Houston.

### 2003

Amarr Garage Doors of Winston-Salem, N.C., acquires Fimbel Door, a manufacturer of commercial and residential sectional garage doors in Whitehouse, N.J.

### 2003

Novoferm, considered the second-largest manufacturer of garage doors and operators in Europe, is purchased by Sanwa Shutter of Japan, the parent company of Overhead Door.

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\* Best information available.

## 2004

### 2004

C.H.I. Overhead Doors of Arthur, Ill., is acquired by JLL Partners, a private equity firm.

### 2004

Great Northern Door is founded by Ty Ostroviak in Savage, Minn., to make wood garage doors.

### 2004

Windsor Door is acquired by Desco Capital Partners, owners of the Republic Steel door and frame division. Republic and Windsor are merged to form Windsor Republic Doors.

### 2004

DoorLink Mfg., founded by Timothy Link and Roger Humphreys, begins making residential and commercial garage door sections and hardware in North Kansas City, Mo.

### 2004

Premium Garage Door, a maker of vinyl garage doors, is bought by Wayne-Dalton from Associated Materials of Akron, Ohio. Premium was previously owned by the Alside Home Improvement Group.

### 2004

Safe-Way Door, a manufacturer of residential and industrial garage doors, is acquired by Equity Capital Partners, a Midwest investment company.

### 2005

Ankmar Door, a garage door manufacturer in Denver, Colo., is purchased by Gallagher Industries, a private equity firm in Denver.

## 2006

### 2006

Gadco (General American Door Company), a sectional garage door manufacturer in Montgomery, Ill., is purchased by Hörmann of Germany.

### 2007

R & K Mockler Mfg., a wood door manufacturer in Palisades Park, N.J., closes its doors.

### 2007

Taylor Building Products’ garage door business in West Branch, Mich., is sold to Safe-Way Door of Warsaw, Ind.

### 2008

Able Door, a maker of residential and commercial sectional garage doors in Houston, Texas, ceases operations.

### 2008

Ankmar’s CladPanel (composite wood door) operations in Sweet Home, Ore., are bought by Overhead Door’s Access Systems Division.

### 2008

Ankmar’s remaining manufacturing assets (after the CladPanel purchase) are sold at auction. The Ankmar brand ends.

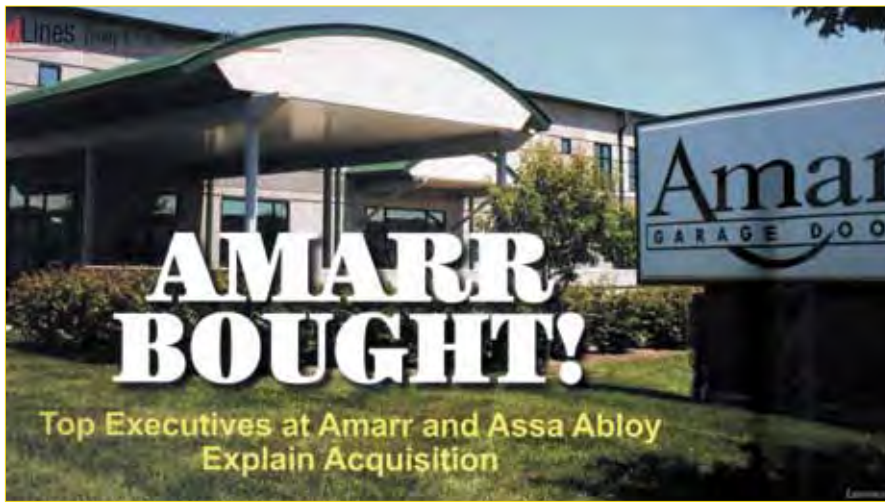
### 2009

DoorTech Industries, a garage door manufacturer in Oceanside, Calif., closes.

### 2009

Millennium Garage Doors of Corona, Calif., a maker of residential sectional garage doors, closes its doors.





The second was the purchase of Amarr in 2013, then considered to be the third largest manufacturer in North America. Like the Wayne Dalton acquisition, the Amarr buyout was funded by another large multi-billion-dollar global enterprise: Assa Abloy of Sweden. Globally, Assa Abloy and Sanwa Shutter own major garage door companies around the globe and could be considered the two major competitors in the global garage door industry.

What does the future hold? Since the economy is rather similar to that during America's eventual resurgence after the Great Depression, one would hope for another construction boom like that of the late 1940s and 50s. But cautious optimism is likely to reign while the manufacturers keep their eyes on the impact of large global competitors that have entered North America. ■

## 2010

### 2009

Overhead Door of Lewisville, Texas, acquires Wayne-Dalton's (Mt. Hope, Ohio) residential and commercial garage door business in North America and Europe.

### 2010

Eckert Door, a wood garage door manufacturer in Wauwatosa, Wis., closes after the deaths of Robert and Mary Jane Eckert, company owners since 1959.

### 2011

Windsor Republic's garage door division in Little Rock, Ark., is purchased by a private investment group of individuals from Garage Door Services of Houston and Windsor Door. The company name returns to Windsor Door.

### 2011

C.H.I. Overhead Doors of Arthur, Ill., is sold by JLL Partners to Friedman Fleischer & Lowe, a San Francisco-based private equity firm.

### 2011

Jeld-Wen of Klamath Falls, Ore., ends its garage door business.

### 2012

4Front Engineered Solutions, headquartered in Carrollton, Texas, is acquired by Assa Abloy of Sweden. 4Front provides loading dock and door products under the names

## 2012

of TKO Dock Doors, Kelley, Serco, and others.

### 2012

Summit Door of Corona, Calif., a custom wood garage door manufacturer for about 20 years, closes and declares bankruptcy in 2013.

### 2013

Amarr Garage Doors is acquired by Assa Abloy of Sweden. Assa Abloy, formed in 1994, now has 43,000 employees, operations in 70 countries, and sales of about \$7 billion.

### 2014

Designer Doors of River Falls, Wis., is purchased by Kent Forsland, the company's original owner, after the company files for Chap. 7 bankruptcy.

### 2014

Martin Garage Doors of Salt Lake City, Utah, is purchased by Gary Nielson and Shane Smith of the Salt Lake City area. Nielson becomes company president.

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