

Hyatt's Graphic Supply Co., Inc.

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www.hyatts.com

The History of Hyatt's



50 Years Strong
1959-2009

The Foundation of Hyatt's

The 1901 Pan-American Exposition ushered in a new century for Buffalo that would see the “City of Light” rise to the nation’s 8th largest and first to provide wide-spread electric lighting thanks to the harnessed power of Niagara Falls. With steel and grain milling industries growing rapidly and shipping companies prospering, Buffalo was enjoying expansion and a spirited culture.

In 1941, Charles W. Hyatt was just one of the many people moving to Buffalo to make a life in the bustling city. Fresh out of high school, Charles moved from the small village of Whitehall, NY, north of Albany.

Soon though, the US entered World War II and Charles went into service with many other young men. The increased need for steel and vehicles for the war effort and post-war expansion served to boost Buffalo. After seeing Paris, the appeal of living in a vibrant city brought Charles back to work for a relative that owned a printing supply business.

Buffalo Matures

By 1959 growth in manufacturing had plateaued and international freighters began bypassing Buffalo in favor of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Still, Buffalo’s work ethic and its educational, cultural and entertainment assets kept it successful. Charles, now with years of experience in the graphics business, saw an opportunity to start his own company.



Charles Hyatt as he works in his office in the early 1960's.

Hyatt’s Graphic Supply began with a few large customers and Charles completing his first business transactions at his dining room table with his wife Helen. It was not long, however, before the business expanded into a small storefront on Franklin Street in the Allentown Arts District of Buffalo in 1959.

Main Street Location

From that handful of commercial customers, Charles continued to expand the business and in 1961 he moved to a larger location at 914 Main Street.

In the space of just one of the building’s four storefronts, Charles set up shop selling to local commercial artists and designers, and offered custom framing with a small frame shop in the basement.

There weren’t store clerks or office staff, just a secretary to take phone orders and help the few walk-in customers.

Even after suffering a large fire in 1965, Charles persevered to rebuild in the same Main Street building. This location would be the beginning of what has grown to become Hyatt’s headquarters including offices, warehouse and flagship store.

Expansion and New Opportunities

Hyatt’s reputation for professional framing was growing and with a passion for discovering new artists, Charles began selling original artwork. A second storefront on Main Street was transformed into Gallery 912 and he hosted wine & cheese art show openings for the community.

Charles also saw an opportunity to expand into selling a small selection of fine art supplies. With business going strong, he later opened a second location at 8565 Main Street in Clarence in 1971 to focus on arts and crafts.

The Clarence store, long managed by 25-year employee Sheryl Dvorak, was first named Hyatt’s Art and Craft Shoppe Ltd. It offered a wide-range of art and craft materials to gain the interest of amateur and weekend artists, while the Buffalo store continued to focus on professional and commercial design customers.



1959 - First Hyatt's store at 499 Franklin St. in Buffalo's Allentown Arts District.



1971 - The 8565 Main St. store in Clarence, NY while still under construction.



1980 - Hyatt's delivery truck at the Buffalo headquarters and warehouse.

The Next Generation

The 70's and 80's proved to be decades of change and growth for Hyatt's as Charles' sons, Peter and Greg, entered the business.

1970's: New Hands on Deck

Peter began working in the frame shop in 1970 while Greg started in the store after his 1975 college graduation.

Peter and Greg would play major roles in helping their father over the next several years to improve operations, including the installation of their first main frame computer and, after the family acquired the entire building in 1978, remodeling the Main Street location from 4500 square feet to its present 32,000.

In the latter part of the decade, Greg focused on retail sales and took charge of the Clarence store with the help of his wife, Lynn. He also worked to make Hyatt's stand out by designing the company's first catalogue.

Meanwhile, Peter began selling lettering machines and materials that paved the way for the development of an important new division.

1980's: Growth Spurt

Greg would soon lead an expansion to a new metropolitan area with a store and commercial warehouse in Rochester, NY in 1984. The East Avenue location in the heart of Rochester's arts and museum district served professional and amateur artists alike.

Embracing future trends, Peter took advantage of the earliest personal computers by establishing Hyatt's Sign Division to sell digital sign making equipment and materials.

At the same time, Adrian Harris, Jr., an industry veteran new to the company, created Hyatt's Engineering Supply Division to serve architects, engineers and industrial accounts.



1980 - Overhead view of half the Buffalo store after expansion and remodeling.



1984 - Hyatt's storefront on East Ave. in the city of Rochester, NY.

Growing the Business

In 1988, Peter and Greg officially became co-owners of the company after a combined 31 years working at Hyatt's.

While Greg became CEO and continued as the head of retail and commercial art sales, Peter's Sign Division was quickly growing from a one-man operation to a dozen employees in six states.

Signs of the Time

The Sign Division had begun in 1984 with Peter taking a big risk on being able to sell five \$10,000 Gerber 4B sign making computers within six months. Piloting his four-seat Cessna to customers throughout the Northeast, he personally sold and installed all five with two months to spare.

With the digital revolution well underway, Hyatt's quickly became a major distributor for Gerber Scientific Products and soon expanded to the

entire second floor of the Main Street building as Peter hired a team of equipment specialists and support staff.

In 2002, Hyatt's was awarded recognition as a Platinum Plus Partner by Gerber for outstanding service and knowledge. Over the years, the Sign Division has grown to sell all the industry's top brands and a wide-range of equipment and materials.

Growth also came with a warehouse in New England that allows Hyatt's to stock a vast inventory and expand its efficient next day delivery to customers in 13 states.

With 25 years of sign experience, Hyatt's knowledgeable team now serves customers of all sizes across the globe. Industries served include sign making, monument design, motorsports, vehicle wrap and even license plate making.



1986 - Current Hyatt's 24-year employee Beth MacCarrick working at her desk.



1988 - Peter Hyatt moves the Sign Division offices onto the second floor.

Evolving Hyatt's

During the 1990's the personal computer was changing the face of the design industry and with two out of three retail stores focused on serving the commercial artist, it was apparent Hyatt's faced the problem of making the locations appeal to a greater audience.

Moving Trucks

After 10 years on East Avenue, the Rochester store moved to the suburb of Henrietta. The new location made it more accessible to the casual shopper and students, as well as providing plenty of room for classes and picture framing. Hyatt's remains at this location today and is celebrating 25 years in Rochester in 2009.

Hyatt's also added a new location as it moved into the Galleria Mall in the Buffalo suburbs in 1992. While customers could find all the traditional art supplies, the store also attracted non-artists with unique gift items and fine framing.

Learning to be flexible with product lines at all the stores, Hyatt's discovered how to appeal to creative minds of all types. Hyatt's was a mainstay at the Galleria for almost 8 years before combining with an expanded Clarence store in 2000.

Pantone Division

In 1998, Hyatt's seized an opportunity to expand the company and serve the international design and fashion industries by becoming a dealer for Pantone color reference products.

Developed by Lawrence Herbert, Pantone had addressed the problem of colors printing differently in a variety of equipment, paper, ink and climate conditions. Their solution was a series of guides printed in controlled conditions and keyed to number references that became a common language around the world.

Understanding designers would want selection and service, Hyatt's focused on establishing a large in house inventory and providing superior service. Today, Hyatt's is proud to serve many well-known companies and designers around the world of everything from clothing to toys.

The World Wide Web

While Hyatt's now offered a diverse range of products and services for people in various creative industries, Greg and Peter continued to look for ways to leverage the latest technology.

Hyatt's unveiled their first Web site in 2001 that gave customers the ability to shop online from anywhere in the world 24 hours a day. Being online also allowed the company to communicate their inventory of 35,000 items in an always up-to-date format.

Recently, Hyatt's unveiled their completely new Web site design that has increased customer usability.

They have also begun an e-mail program with monthly E-Newsletters and updates that provide valuable information to customers.

The Hyatt's Family

Started as a small family business, Hyatt's is proud to have remained family owned and operated over the past 50 years and to now employ over 40 people.

Hyatt's could not have achieved so much success without the hard work of its many loyal and knowledgeable staff members.

With many having been with the company for over 10 years, the Hyatt Family would like to thank all of its employees, old and new, that have helped to make Hyatt's 50 years strong! ■

Our special thanks to long-time employees Ron Clamp, Kirstin Dixon, Sheryl Dvorak, Al Friedreich, Stacy Geiger, Mike Hanna, Adrian Harris, Roger Krischan, August Lascola, Beth MacCarrick, Kate Owens, Mark Pfeil, Tom Sherry, Rose Synor, Jennifer Verpoten, Craig Weiss, Sue Zeis and the dearly departed Moya Peterson, Leona Plumley and Charles Zdanowicz.



2003 - Lynn Hyatt, former longtime employee Moya Peterson, and Greg Hyatt.

Hyatt's in the Community

At Hyatt's, art education and the promotion of the arts have always been important missions. Since the opening of the Clarence store, Hyatt's has offered art classes for all abilities. Today, the tradition continues with classes taught at all locations in a variety of subjects and a summer art camp for kids.

Hyatt's also works with area schools and colleges to produce art kits for students so they can get the supplies they need at an affordable price. Having graduated from architecture school, a special project of Greg Hyatt's is working with the University of Buffalo School of Architecture to offer students supply kits, award prizes to top students and act as a visiting critic.

Student prizes and art club awards are generously given every year throughout Western NY. Recently, Hyatt's was excited to have the opportunity to be a major donor in the construction of the new Burchfield-Penney Art Center that has added another wonderful art and architectural landmark to Buffalo's rich heritage.