



Success Across Generations

Ohio Store Builds Toward Future, Maintains Classic Looks

From restored furniture to vintage clothing stores, it's a hip time to embrace the old. And with a family history and community support behind it, hardware supply company Dwyer Bros. is making the most out of its vintage look and feel.

Founded in 1888 at the same location on the main street of London, Ohio, Dwyer Bros. is now owned by Aaron and Drew Dwyer. They lead a company that has expanded its footprint and offerings as the demands of the modern retail hardware customer has grown. Taking over from their father TJ two years ago, the brothers are the fourth generation to lead what has become an institution in the area for its look as well as the place to grab a hard-to-find item in a pinch.

"We're in a small area, and the more we can offer, the more we can sell. It all means more inventory," TJ says. "We do just about everything. We don't say no to anybody."

Dwyer Bros. Hardware owners **Aaron Dwyer**, left, and **Drew Dwyer**, right, stand with father and former owner, **TJ Dwyer**.

Never a No

That mantra of customer service and varied products has led to multiple expansions for Dwyer Bros., eventually growing from a small portion of the still-standing original building (which once included a hotel, amongst other businesses) to the current 14,000 square feet of sales space and 5,000 square feet of warehouse space.

Filling that space is a variety of products and services, far more than what a customer might expect after glancing at the sign displaying the store name, which hangs above the door on London's Main Street. The signage is reminiscent of the original hanging above the same door in the 1890s, hung there by Aaron and Drew's great-grandfather Thomas J. and his brother Michael.



Founded in 1888 by **Aaron and Drew Dwyer's** great-grandfather, **Thomas J.**, and his brother, **Michael, Dwyer Bros. Hardware** has steadily expanded to a now 14,000-square-foot salesfloor and a 5,000-square-foot warehouse.

The combination of an old-school look and new-school convenience is not lost on the Dwyers, nor their 23 employees, whom the owners credit with filling multiple roles to accommodate their customers.

“Our staff does nothing but help people. I don’t care what your job is, if you see someone, go talk to them. Find out what they need and help,” TJ says. “We’ve been lucky thus far, as usually every employee has an expertise. If the person that’s helping doesn’t know what a customer needs, they can find someone who does.”

That ability to fill needs has led to several specific expansions for Dwyer Bros., most noticeably the attached paint store offering a wide variety of Pratt & Lambert paints. That kind of specialty supply helps in supporting the “of course we have that” attitude.

“It just builds the inventory,” Drew says.

Vintage Feel

The years may have changed the variety of services and products at Dwyer Bros., but they haven’t altered its appearance too much. If the signs don’t lure a customer in, the original wooden floors or old clippings displayed on the walls will definitely fuel their nostalgia for times gone by.

“We do have a big inventory, and that’s why we’re successful. We don’t let our old building hold us back from the times, but the building helps us sell it at times.”

—Aaron Dwyer, Dwyer Bros.

The theme continues throughout Dwyer Bros., with the same vintage sign hanging over the main entrance decorating the paint store door. It sits right next to a modern sign advertising the store’s paint selection, showing even further the balance the company has achieved between comforts of the past and needs of the future.

However, the Dwyers are quick to dispel the idea that the store is living in that bygone era. The atmosphere of the store might draw in the occasional historian, with the Dwyers often entertaining weekend travelers looking to glimpse the store for themselves, but getting a sale is still the focus.

“I still see people come in on weekends. Most Saturdays I’ll meet someone that drives out to

see an old hardware store. But we try to keep up with the times,” Aaron says, adding that the vintage feel comes along with a packed house.

“You can’t sell it if you don’t have it,” he says. “We do have a big inventory, and that’s why we’re successful. We don’t let our old building hold us back from the times, but the building helps us sell it at times.”

Inventory and a classic approach aren’t all of the store’s charm either. It’s also an attitude that a customer’s problems are the store’s problems, and a survey conducted several years back proved to the owners that their approach was what London and the community wanted.

“Our customer base did not want to see us move anywhere. A lot of them were really adamant about it. The old building is just part of our image,” TJ says. “We have people who take the time to show customers how to finish a project or where to find that last item they need. You don’t get that anywhere else. We’ll fix your problem, and everybody’s happy.”

Fulfilling Area Needs

Located roughly half an hour west of Columbus, Ohio, London is near a multitude of

competitive interests. Whether it’s big-box stores or online sites that can put a product on someone’s doorstep the next day, Dwyer Bros. has expanded its offerings to keep up with its competitors.

A large part of that push has been expanding sales from homeowners and individuals to the contractor customer base.

Aaron calls the store a kind of wholesaler for the surrounding community, and it’s a role that has only grown as the needs of its customers have changed.

Specifically, plumbing and electrical have been areas of need for pros that Dwyer Bros. has fulfilled.

“We go very deep into commercial sales in plumbing and electrical,” Aaron says. “We act like our town’s wholesale house in those departments. We’ve broadened our image to be so much more than an old hardware store with vintage wooden floors.”

That attitude of fulfilling the community’s needs is also a driver behind Dwyer Bros.’ newest endeavor: lumber. When an area competitor closed, the London area was left without a local supplier, Aaron says. This was something that the Dwyers didn’t want to see continue. Their answer was to add a lumber



One of the largest expansions for **Dwyer Bros. Hardware** has been an attached paint store. More recently, the store opened a lumber department after an in-town competitor closed its doors.

department to fill the need for customers working on smaller projects, as well as common lumber needs.

“To keep people in town, we started a convenience lumberyard. We aren’t out to sell a house package, but it offers a nearby option for most needs,” Aaron says.

“I’ve had contractors thank me for doing it,” TJ says. “Small contractors really got hurt when (the lumberyard) moved.”

Future Projects

Given its ever-expanding list of departments and services, Dwyer Bros. is in a unique position to attract the current generation of customers while harkening back to the days of the corner store it used to be.

The next step into the future will be a rewards program through its co-op, Aaron says, which is a move he says he believes is just a logical step in the efforts to keep up with the store’s ever-growing competition.

“I think the rewards program can really boost our sales next year,” he says. “We’re just moving with the times; anything we can give back to customers helps.” ➡



Along with original signage, **Dwyer Bros. Hardware** keeps its charm with original wood flooring and posted clippings and photos from its history.