

EDITOR'S NOTE: BizVoice® reached out to a variety of companies with manufacturing histories dating back to the 1800s. Here are the stories of two companies that responded.

Brinly-Hardy in Jeffersonville makes tractor attachments – like this cart – as well as other lawn care, gardening and heating equipment.



BRINLY-HARDY'S ROOTS GROW DEEP

By Crickett Gibbons

Began in 1839, but origins date to the early 1800s when “Little John” Brinly, a blacksmith in Simpsonville, Kentucky, began making plows in his spare time. His son, T.E.C. Brinly, made a one-piece steel plow from a saw blade in 1837.

James Edward Hardy joined the company in 1963, a few years after it moved to Louisville, Kentucky. Incorporated as Brinly-Hardy Company in 1900.

Relocated to Jeffersonville in 1998, where it now employs about 200 people.

Makes lawn and garden equipment that is sold nationwide to homeowners and commercial lawn specialists. Also manufactures gas heating equipment.

Purchased Spyker, known for commercial spreaders, in 2009, and Cozy Heating System in 2014.

Operates 240,000 square feet of production and storage space, plus a 10,000-square-foot research and development facility, quality lab, outdoor test track and plot areas.

Brinly-Hardy President Jane Hardy attributes the company’s longevity in a large degree to its culture and innovation.

“We are a family business and always have been. I’m fifth generation. It matters a lot in how we treat each other and how we work together. We are very team-oriented when we work on projects,” she explains, adding, “Also, we are very innovative. We’ve done a lot of things. ... The product has changed quite a bit.”

Tractor accessories are the company’s niche under the Brinly brand, Hardy says. “Whatever you might put on a tractor, we make. We make them for different people (companies) and our brand as well.”

Brinly-Hardy expanded beyond residential lawn and garden products in 2009 by acquiring Spyker, which is known for its commercial spreaders.

“Spyker will be celebrating 150 years in 2018,” Hardy notes, which is also when Spyker will launch “a really fabulous new product line that basically takes into account everything we’ve learned in 150 years.”

The new Spyker product will be launched at trade shows, such as the Golf Course Supply Show in February, she adds.

People behind the products

The company refers to employees as “Brinly people,” with more than 20% having worked there for over 20 years, according to the web site. Hardy describes what it’s like to be part of the organization.

“We are used to wearing a lot of different hats. Because we are a small company and make so many different things, we are flexible and willing to try a lot of different things, do different things and help each other out,” she reveals. “We could be building one product one day, then reassemble the team and build something different the next day. Also, we try to have fun together.”

When asked how Brinly-Hardy sets itself apart from other companies, Hardy returns to the company culture.

“There aren’t too many other companies like us. What I think sets us apart is ... our family culture and the variety of what we do make us a great place to work. We have employees who leave and then come back. That happens a lot with us and that’s gratifying. We feel like we offer people the chance to learn a lot here.”

RESOURCE: Jane Hardy, Brinly-Hardy, at www.brinly.com