



Supplier Profile - Colonial Saw

Colonial Saw Helps Set the Solid Surface Sawing Standard

As one of the earliest saw companies to plant roots in the fertile ground that is solid surface, Colonial Saw was founded in 1949 by John McLaren as a small saw service shop operating out of Buffalo, N.Y.

Today it is a privately held corporation owned by Paul and Jean Ravinski, and is the sole provider of a variety of sawing and grinding equipment. The company has 19 full time employees and covers all of North America, with offices on both the East and West Coasts.

How did it get from Point A to Point B?

In 1951, McLaren saw there was no U.S. agent for Vollmer steel saw grinders, so he approached the Canadian agent for the company with an offer, and a deal was struck. McLaren bought out the Canadian supplier and became the U.S. agent for Vollmer.

That same year, Manny Pacheco, the father of Jean Ravinski, bought out McLaren's interest in his company and moved it to Kingston, Mass. Shortly thereafter, he brought his daughter and her husband into the company.

Pacheco ran the company for many years, and when he passed in 1975, Jean and Paul continued to run it.

Over the years, the Ravinskis added several new lines to the sharpening machinery side of the business and broadened the product line with the addition of the top-quality Swiss woodworking machine lines Lamello and Striebig, for which they are most well known in the solid surface industry. They also expanded the operation across North America with the addition of the Ontario, Calif., office in 1984.



Enter Solid Surface

Because many of the early solid surface fabricators began as cabinet makers, some of which were using Striebig saws, the company was sort of drawn into the industry early on. As the product grew, so did Colonial Saw's role in it.

Because the company works with so many blade manufacturers, selling them equipment to sharpen their offerings, and also sells saws that these blades go on, it was in a unique position to address the needs of solid surface fabricators. Working with these blade manufacturers, the need

for specialized tooling to cut solid surface was addressed. As such, it was found that blades for cutting solid surface needed a larger number of teeth than standard woodworking blades, and that a negative hook blade works best.

This new blade design has become the standard in solid surface, and Colonial Saw made sure its solid surface customers were aware of the fact. As such, these fabricators found that simply putting a different saw blade on the same machine did an incredible job of making the cutting process of those big heavy sheets faster

and easier, and the quality of the cut was greater than they could generally get from any other method of cutting.

However, according to Dave Bull, Striebig product manager with Colonial Saw, word grew slowly, at about the same rate as solid surface, until the formation of ISFA, which the company joined early on. "Just as the organization grew the solid surface industry, word of Striebig's accuracy and durability grew," said Bull. "Since then the list of ISFA officers and board of directors has looked like a who's who list of Striebig owners."

Not only did Colonial Saw partner with the association, Striebig saws were in the fabricator training centers for Corian, Avonite and Wilsonart from the very beginning. And when the association began training fabricators, the company donated one of its vertical panel saws to the ISFA Training and Education Center (ITEC).

“[We] attended close to 100 regional meetings as the industry grew, and helped Fabricators make more money by improving their cutting process and sharing what we were learning along the way with shops all over the country,” said David Rakauskas, vice president of Colonial Saw. “Watching the industry grow has been very interesting. We talk a lot about the first days of ISFA when they only had a few members. In those early shows we’d sell 10 to 15 saws in only a couple of days, as Corian took over the market and everyone ramped up to be able to fabricate it. Something similar happened when the industry moved towards granite, but by this time, there were so many players in the game, it wasn’t as intimate. It’s certainly a niche industry that can be very trendy, but it has matured into a legitimate contributor to the American economy. I’m anxiously waiting to see what the next big trend is that actually sticks with the consumers. I hope it will be one that’s profitable for the fabricators.”

The Company Today

The company continues to offer a variety of products today, in three distinct product groups. Colonial Saw is the exclusive North American distributor of Striebig vertical panel saws and is the U.S. distributor for the full line of Lamello power tools, famous as the inventor of the biscuit joiner. The company also carries a broad line of grinding and sharpening machinery for sharpening shops and tooling manufacturers.

Like most companies in the current challenging economy, Colonial Saw is not above the tough times, but has refocused a bit to stay on top of its game. “We are doing a lot of service work and are focusing our new machine efforts around government agencies, as that is where the economic stimulus is most focused,” said Rakauskas. “We’ve sold a much larger percentage of machines this year to schools and museums than we ever had.”

He also has seen more of the saws going



Above: Paul Ravinski, president, and Dave Rakauskas, vice president of Colonial Saw.

to medical laboratory fabricators that use them on very dense materials that are resistant to chemical and biological contamination (such as Trespa’s TopLab product), which are specifically engineered for laboratory settings.

Looking Ahead

“Just as solid surface material has found new markets for application, we continue to seek out new niche products and markets for our product offerings and will continue to strive to help make our customers more efficient and profitable,” said Bull.

“However, we will not ever try to be all things to all customers or spread ourselves too thin, because that eventually dilutes the service we are able to provide.”

In addition to its unique offering of machinery, one driving factor for the company is its willingness to go a step further in sharing its knowledge with fabricators to increase their precision and profitability. Bull credits this to the fact that a small group of people have been with the company for many years and know the machinery they offer inside and out. That, along with the nationwide coverage area afforded by the



company’s locations on either coast leads to the outstanding customer service for which it is known.

And that is why, as Rakauskas puts it, “the vast majority of solid surface shops” own Striebig saws. It is doubtful that will be changing anytime soon. **ISFA**

For more information on Colonial Saw, call 781-585-4364, e-mail info@csaw.com or visit www.csaw.com.