

C R A I N ' S

Cleveland Business

Originally Published: July 21, 2015 4:30 AM **Modified: July 21, 2015 6:17 AM**

Milestone: Five generations help to build Akron Porcelain & Plastics



Photo by CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Akron Porcelain & Plastics Co.
president David Lewis (right) and
his father, former company
president George "Mike" Lewis.

COMPANY: Akron Porcelain & Plastics Co.

OCCASION: Its 125th anniversary

The people at **Akron Porcelain & Plastics**, which is one of the city's oldest companies, understand that 125 years of business is no small feat. But when the company's 100 employees and their guests gather to commemorate the anniversary in August, they don't expect an extravagant celebration. Rather, Akron Porcelain & Plastics will hold a modest picnic to reflect on its history and so that employees can enjoy some quality time with coworkers.

"We are kind of low key," company president David Lewis said. "We don't beat our drums a lot."

Lewis is the fifth-generation leader of the Akron Porcelain & Plastics. When his great-great grandfather, F.W. Butler Sr., started the Akron Smoking Pipe Co. in 1890, the company manufactured clay pipes before switching to electrical insulators at the turn of the 20th century. The business finally moved into plastics by the 1950s. Today, Lewis said, its productions is roughly split with 70% dedicated to plastics and

30% to ceramics.

Providing manufacturing and molding services to companies all over the world, Akron Porcelain & Plastics' presence is strongest in North America. Lewis said the region has "a diverse market base," which includes the electrical and foundry industries and, more recently, the oil and gas industries. He credits this variety of customers with helping fuel Akron Porcelain & Plastics' longevity, allowing it to focus on one sector when business in another slows.

Another factor in its success, according to Lewis, is the conservative approach the company takes to its finances. He said the business runs with no debt and its leaders keep an eye on costs and pricing "like a hawk."

"Most companies, the first generation starts the business and the second one grows it and the third one spends all the money," Lewis said. "We were just fortunate that every generation had a stake in keeping it going."

-- Zachary Woznak

Use of editorial content without permission is strictly prohibited. All rights Reserved 2015

www.crainsicleveland.com