

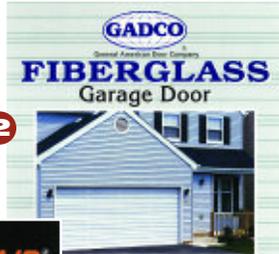
FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

General American Door Company

Editor's Note: In 2005, GADCO celebrates its 40th year in the garage door business. Here's a look back at its beginnings and key milestones.



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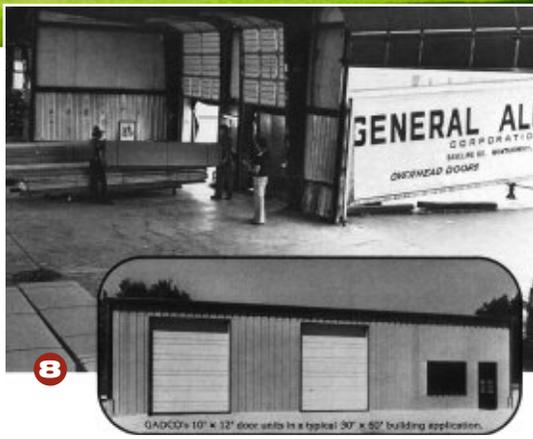
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Photos

1. An early General Aluminum Corporation price book.
2. GADCO's first garage door.
3. The first HDPE door, 1974.
4. GADCO's first steel raised-panel door, 1984.
5. The Montgomery, Ill., plant (ca. 1995).
6. Louis Vago, founder, at NAGDM meeting in 1989.
7. Joe Kee, president, 1988 to present.
8. Shipping doors, ca. 1980.

Milestones

- 1961 ▶ Louis Vago and Paul Kleinwachter establish General Aluminum Corporation, providing residential aluminum siding to meet a growing trend in America.
- 1964 ▶ The company's new manufacturing plant in North Aurora, Ill., begins producing aluminum siding, selling its product primarily through lumberyards in the Midwest.
- 1965 ▶ Capturing another growing trend, the firm expands manufacturing operations to produce fiberglass garage doors, marking its beginnings in the garage door business. The doors, like the aluminum siding, are sold primarily through Midwestern lumberyards.
- 1971 ▶ The company moves to its current location in Montgomery, Ill. After five expansions, production space grows to more than 175,000 sq. ft.
- 1974 ▶ The firm invents and patents Therm-O-Air, the industry's first high-density polyethylene (HDPE) door in an all-aluminum framework.
- 1979 ▶ The Liberty, the company's first steel garage door, is introduced. The door is a ribbed residential door.
- 1980 ▶ Louis Vago purchases all the shares owned by his partner, Paul Kleinwachter. From 1981 to 1983, Vago serves as the president of NAGDM (National Association of Garage Door Manufacturers).
- 1984 ▶ The Americana, a raised-panel steel garage door, is announced.
- 1986 ▶ Vago sells controlling interest to Merchant Capital Group, an investment group, but he retains an interest and stays on as a consultant. The garage door division, previously a division of General Aluminum, begins operating as General American Door Company (GADCO).
- 1988 ▶ Joe Kee, an associate with Merchant Capital Group, becomes GADCO president. Previously, Kee had served with Rust-Oleum Corporation as Americas area director and with Abbott Laboratories in engineering, finance, and management. GADCO discontinues its aluminum siding operation to devote all resources to garage doors.
- 1990 ▶ General American Door introduces the Freedom Series garage door, the first raised-panel HDPE door.
- 1996 ▶ Joe Kee is elected to a two-year term as the first president of the newly formed DASMA.
- 1997 ▶ The firm drops its General Aluminum identity and officially becomes General American Door Company (GADCO).
- 2002 ▶ GADCO announces the Presidential Series of handcrafted wood carriage-house garage doors.
- 2004 ▶ GADCO introduces the Country Freedom Series 9004, an HDPE door in the carriage-house style.
- Today ▶ GADCO is a regional manufacturer serving the eastern half of the country, from North Dakota to Mississippi and all points east. Although most customers are installing dealers, the company still maintains a strong presence in the lumberyard market.

With a manufacturing plant in Montgomery, Ill., GADCO maintains distribution centers in Pendergrass and Valdosta, Ga., Bowling Green, Ky., Iron Mountain, Jackson, and Waters, Mich., Albany, N.Y., Twinsburg, Ohio, Allentown, Pa., Richmond, Va., and Poca, W.Va.

Secrets of Success

Joe Kee, president, attributes the company's 40-year success to its attention to customer service: quick response, an extensive distribution network, innovative products, and always striving for trouble-free service.