

A man with a tattooed arm, wearing safety glasses and large headphones, is focused on his work at a complex industrial stamping machine. The machine is green and features various gauges, levers, and a control panel with numerous buttons and switches. A bright lamp is positioned above the work area, illuminating the man's face and the machine. The background is slightly blurred, showing other industrial equipment and a factory setting.

by Abbe Miller, editor-in-chief

Chicago-style stamping

For 70 years, Jaidinger Mfg. has been a fixture on the city's near West Side as both a quality manufacturer and neighbor

For seven decades, Jaidinger Mfg. has probably gone unnoticed to the average person passing by. Operating from what appears to be a typical Chicago-style two-flat not far from the hustle and bustle of downtown, the company is much more than what its residential façade might reflect. Behind its doors lies a fourth-generation, family-owned company that has amassed a loyal customer base for its precision metal stampings, custom plastic stampings, intricate contact assemblies and specialty switch solutions.

While Jaidinger has expanded beyond its original location, it still operates according to the practical, hardworking sensibilities of its founder. With a team of 25 employees, the company is committed to its expansive customer base, providing custom-built assemblies and components to manufacturers of pinball machines, home appliances, aerospace electronics, military components and beyond.

“My dad’s philosophy was founded in his own father’s approach to business: taking care of customers and working closely with them,” says Julie Jaidinger, the company’s third-generation president. “That’s what generates new business for us today. We’re a custom manufacturer at our core, so we focus on working closely with our customers to help them develop the products they need.”

Business is also boosted by the company’s strict adherence to the highest quality control measures. Customers – new and returning – are attracted by the ISO 9001:2015 certification as well as voluntary compliance to REACH and RoHS standards.

As a longtime fixture in the heart of Chicago, Jaidinger is proud of its Windy City roots and feels a deep commitment to its customers, its staff and the local community. The company intentionally sources many of its suppliers and vendors from the local area, fostering a neighborly vibe that is appreciated by its stateside and international customers alike. No matter their location, the team at Jaidinger provides customers with the same tailored service on which the company was founded.

History on Hubbard St.

The story of Jaidinger Mfg. begins with the company’s founder, John H. Jaidinger, a self-taught entrepreneur who never had the opportunity to finish high school or attend college. Born in Colorado, John H., his mother and three sisters were forced to sell the family farm and relocate to Chicago when his father passed away.

“He was 13 at the time,” Julie explains. “He had always been interested in engineering and mechanical applications, but he never got the chance to go to high school. He was just kind of thrown out into the world.” →

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*Julie Jaidinger,
president, Jaidinger Mfg.*



In 1946, John H. Jaidinger, the founder of Jaidinger Mfg., stands to the right of his first boss and business partner, the founder of Huber Machine Works.

As a young man, John H. worked at Huber Machine Works, a machining and tooling company next door to Jaidinger's current site at 1921 W. Hubbard St. Julie tells the story of how her grandfather first met his employer completely by chance.

"He was walking down an alley when he noticed Mr. Huber working on a project in his open garage," she explains. "True to his curious nature, my grandfather stopped to ask what he was building. One conversation led to another, and before long, the two of them were working side by side. That partnership became the foundation of Huber Machine Works where my grandfather served as vice president."

Supplying the WWII war effort as well as other customers, business was good at Huber Machine Works. Life was good for John H., as well, as he was building a family and helping to grow the company. Things took a sudden turn, however, when Mr. Huber passed away unexpectedly, leaving John H. unemployed.

With three young daughters at home and his son, John S., on the way, John H. needed to find work fast. Turns out, that work would come in the form of his own business. Using his life savings, financial help from family members and his wife's well-timed real estate ambitions, John H. launched Jaidinger Mfg. The two residential buildings his wife had recently

purchased for rental income would serve as the home of this new business.

The two Hubbard St. properties, however, lacked sufficient space to install the large stamping press that John H. intended to use for the business. Undeterred, the former farm kid dug out the side of the building by hand and knocked down a portion of the front basement foundation wall just to get the press inside. Once it was in, he patched up the wall, assuming the press would never need to be moved out again. Seventy years later, that assumption proved true as the press is still in operation today.

Building a legacy

Over the years, John H. led Jaidinger to become the successful business it is today, earning seven distinct patents for innovative relays and switches along the way. His son, John S., grew up crawling across the factory floor and eventually assumed operational leadership of the firm.

"My dad was born at the same time the company was born," Julie says. "When we're celebrating my dad's birthday, we're celebrating the company's birthday."

In the early to mid-70s, her dad took over as general manager after the previous manager proved incredibly incompetent. The next five years were a tough time defined by strict credit, poor financial health and an economy with high →

energy costs. The 1980s and 1990s weren't a walk in the park, either, as industrial offshoring to China slowly sent manufacturing shops out of business or out to the suburbs. John S. and the company persevered, though, emerging in good financial standing. In 1991, he officially took the helm.

"When my dad became general manager, the company's credit was in bad shape," Julie

explains. "When they would call to buy materials, they would get laughed at, but my dad didn't let that deter him. It actually turned him into an incredibly strategic buyer. To this day, shopping around and getting the best price is one of his skill sets."

John S. also lifted up the company with strategic acquisitions, buying the businesses and assets of failing vendors that wanted to



Julie Jaidinger, current president of Jaidinger Mfg., proudly carries the torch of her father and grandfather, treating customers, vendors and employees like family.

retire. His approach expanded the company's capabilities and inspired growth. In the early 2000s, the company transitioned its warehouse operations from the 1916 Hubbard two-flat into a 20,000-sq.-ft. facility in the nearby Humboldt Park neighborhood.

Julie also attributes the company's resilience to her dad's dedication to its customers and vendors, which she tries to emulate. His commitment to customer service was so strong that he was inducted into the Pinball Expo Hall of Fame.

"So much of our growth was thanks to the relationships my dad had with his customers," she says. "As an example, during the downturn in 2008, we had customers that couldn't pay their bills, but we stuck with them and really partnered with them to get through the financial crisis. The theme here is loyalty, not just to our customers and vendors but also to our employees."

Julie is proud to carry her father's torch. But she is also proud to know that she isn't doing it alone. Her brother, cousins and now the fourth generation of the family are all working together to carry on the company's legacy.

Custom operations

Another aspect of Jaidinger's success is its specialized blend of equipment. Across the two locations, employees work on a fleet of nearly 30 stamping presses – vintage machines

that have been entirely modernized as well as custom-built machines. Julie describes many of the "homemade" machines as high-speed presses, some of which were specifically developed for customer needs.

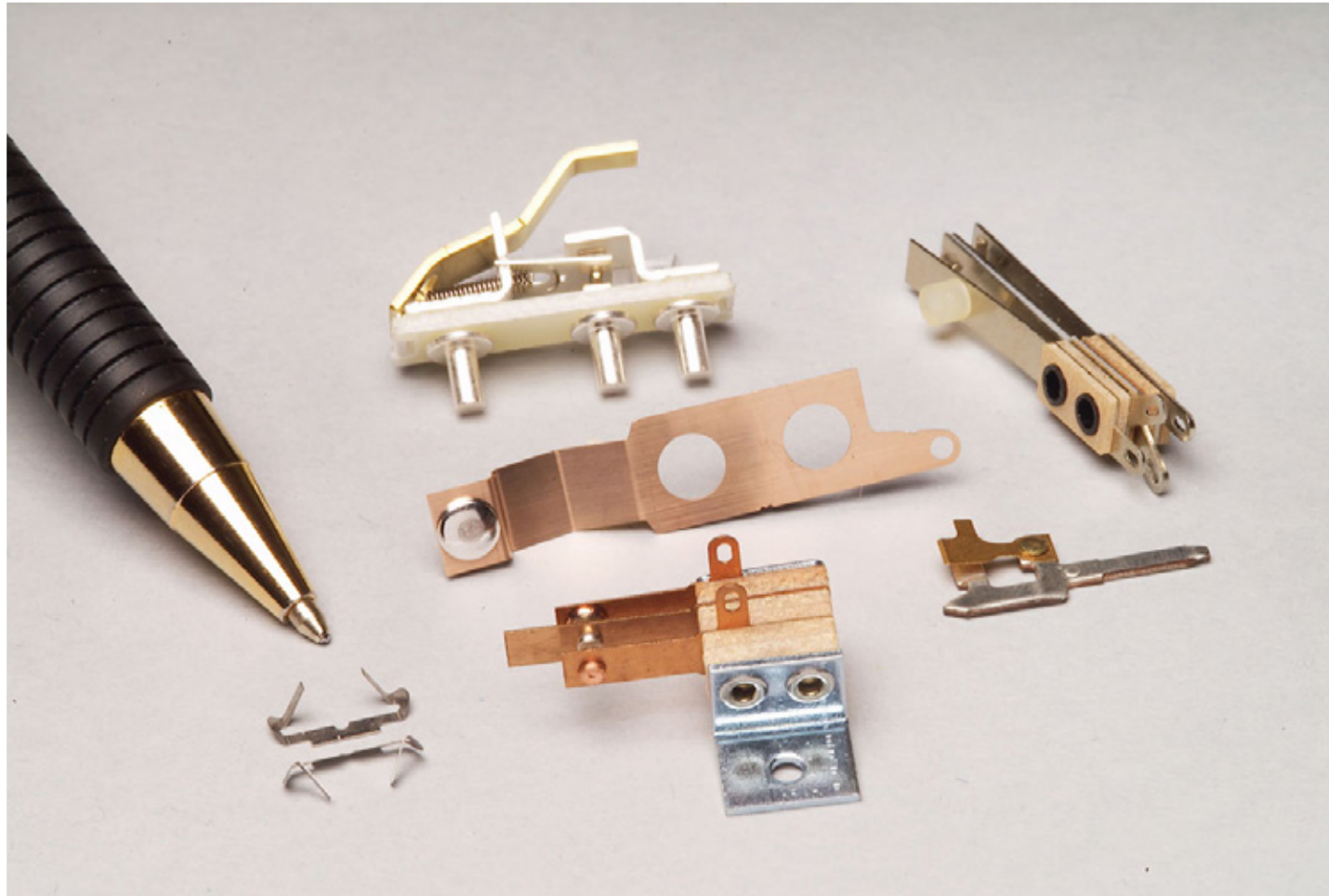
At the historic 1921 W. Hubbard facility, the original press – an L&J brand machine – was given a total overhaul. Instead of replacing the machine that started it all, the company modernized it by integrating advanced electronic controls and a high-precision automated servo feeder.

The original facility also houses an extensive, specialized tool and die shop. Managed by Julie's brother and veteran tool and die craftsmen, the shop produces all of the specialized custom tooling Jaidinger's customers require.

With nearly three times the floorspace as the original location, the Humboldt Park facility houses the bulk of the high-speed machines as well as the larger presses with capacities up to 40 tons. The facility also boasts a Taylor Winfield automated in-process welding system to ensure secure connections between stamped parts.

Family-first culture

To keep productivity humming at Jaidinger, 25 employees work at the company's two locations. Approximately 70 percent of those →



Founded 70 years ago, Jaidinger Mfg. has earned the reputation of a quality, custom producer of electrical and mechanical components, including relays, electrical contact assemblies and switches.

employees are women with an overall average tenure of 16 years. The family-first culture is boosted with incredibly flexible scheduling that accommodates the many moms that work there.

Employees also benefit from lifelong professional development. Julie says that training isn't considered an isolated event, but is instead a continuous, organic process woven

directly into Jaidinger's ISO-certified continuous improvement mentality.

"We're always looking to do things better, which is a way to constantly keep teaching our employees new things," Julie says. "Doing things better also means offering employees an excellent benefits package. We're a small company and a family business, so our →

The power of partnership

A big part of Jaidinger Mfg.'s identity – and success – is its location in the heart of Chicago. As the company says on its website, "Being headquartered in Chicago isn't just a location – it's a strategic advantage." The city's centralized location has long been a benefit for all types of manufacturers while its diverse, skilled workforce continues to be one of its greatest competitive advantages.

Maintaining an urban footprint, however, requires adaptability, strategic planning and the right partners. To navigate the ever-changing, ever-challenging manufacturing landscape, Jaidinger partnered with the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to helping Illinois manufacturers become more competitive, resilient and innovative.

To do so, IMEC works alongside small and mid-sized manufacturers to strengthen operations, develop leaders, adopt new technologies, improve profitability and accelerate long-term growth. Through trusted advisors, strategic resources and industry connections, IMEC empowers manufacturers to navigate challenges and seize new opportunities – the power of partnership in action.

Julie Jaidinger, president of Jaidinger Mfg. and the granddaughter of its founder, originally discovered IMEC by tuning into one of its

educational business webinars during her lunch break. That introduction led to a relationship with Tom Grant, IMEC's regional manager, who helped her identify and apply for critical marketing grant opportunities and supported projects such as a complete website redesign. Today, she describes the partnership as invaluable.

"I've been able to network quite a bit with other companies and discuss projects that we want to work on and next steps," Jaidinger says. "Just last week, I attended the IMEC Defense Industry Day where I had the opportunity to connect with government partners and our peers in the regional defense sector.

"IMEC has also helped us connect with our local representatives," she adds. "That was helpful because I just applied for a loading zone. Our business has been in the neighborhood for more than 77 years, but the neighborhood is changing, so I needed to apply for a loading zone for the first time on the side of our building."

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*Julie Jaidinger,
president, Jaidinger Mfg.*



Austin Mohr, the great grandson of John H. Jaidinger, works on a high-speed press at the Jaidinger Mfg. facility in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood.

employees are like family. We see their value and the skills they bring, so if they're a good fit for our culture but maybe not good in one skill set, we'll find a new place for them in the business."

This commitment to community is no doubt a big reason why Jaidinger has found success over the years. From humble beginnings to its record-breaking year of revenue in 2025, the company continues to prove the power of family and importance of relationships. Julie and the

current team are continuously inspired by the generations that came before them.

"Looking back at our founder – my grandfather – we think about his ingenuity, strength and perseverance," she says. "It's just kind of easy to be motivated by that." ■

Jaidinger Mfg.