

# LAITRAM, LLC



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Above: Founders of the Peellers Company—  
Fernand, J. M., and Emile Lapeyre, 1949.

Below: Laitram's first building on  
619 South Peters in the New Orleans  
Warehouse District, 1954-1974.

As a teen, J. M. Lapeyre spent summers working in his father's shrimp processing plant near Houma, Louisiana. In the early 1940s, shrimp worldwide were peeled by hand. J. M.'s father, Emile, realizing his son's fascination with how things worked (combined with the frustration and constant problems associated with hand peeling), challenged his son to make a machine that would peel shrimp. J. M. accepted the challenge and found inspiration while in the unlikelyst of places: church.

"I got my original idea, believe it or not, in church," J. M. said in a 1982 television interview. "When I was supposed to be praying, I was thinking about how to get the shrimp out of the shell because my father had said, 'If you want to make a lot of money, invent a shrimp peeling machine.' And I thought, why not squeeze them out of the shell? And so, when I got down to the plant the next time, I began to step just to the side of the shrimp with my rubber boots to see if I could in fact squeeze the shell from the meat. And...it worked!"

To test his theory, young J. M. brought shrimp home from the plant and began running them through the rubber rollers of his mother's hand-turned washing machine, yielding even more encouraging results. After convincing his father that he had successfully peeled shrimp mechanically, the question became: How to proceed with a project to develop a practical machine, one that would be a real commercial solution to the biggest problem facing the processing industry?

As J. M. was only sixteen and still in high school, Emile contacted his brother (J. M.'s Uncle Fernand) to assist in constructing a prototype machine incorporating J. M.'s theory and design idea.

A year later, on July 25, 1944, a patent application was filed for the first automatic shrimp peeling machine and awarded October 28, 1947. Peellers, Inc., was founded two years later, (now Laitram Machinery) to manufacture and lease the first automatic shrimp-peeling machine, the Model "A" Peeler, which would peel up to 1,000 pounds of shrimp in one hour.

Over the next seven years, J. M. invented the cleaner, deveiner, and grader and these machines were all added to enhance and expand the performance of the Model "A" peeling line. Not satisfied with only local success along the Gulf Coast, J. M. began to think globally. In 1958, he moved his family to Denmark (and later Switzerland) where he designed a machine to peel the much smaller cold-water shrimp species of Northern Europe, Iceland and Greenland. In 1963, Peellers' name was changed to The Laitram Corporation (J. M.'s middle name "Martial" spelled backwards), but the pioneering spirit of those early days remained as the company continued to grow. By 1974, Laitram had outgrown its cramped quarters and the congestion of the New Orleans Warehouse District and moved to its newly constructed campus in Harahan, Louisiana, where it has continued to expand and is headquartered today.

J. M.'s business career began in 1943, when he had the original concept of the present-day shrimp peeling machine. From that day until his death on May 1, 1989, he worked for the company his ideas had created. Although he held many roles throughout the years, he was uniquely productive and happy with his job as inventor and product designer. The challenge of coming up with simple solutions to complex problems inspired J. M. throughout his life, and he was ultimately awarded 190 U.S. Patents. Jay Lapeyre, J. M.'s eldest son, joined Laitram in 1979. Leaving the inventing up to his father, he kept his focus on growing the business and in 1987 established the Laitram Business Philosophy, which





emphasizes continuous improvement through innovation and investment in its employees.

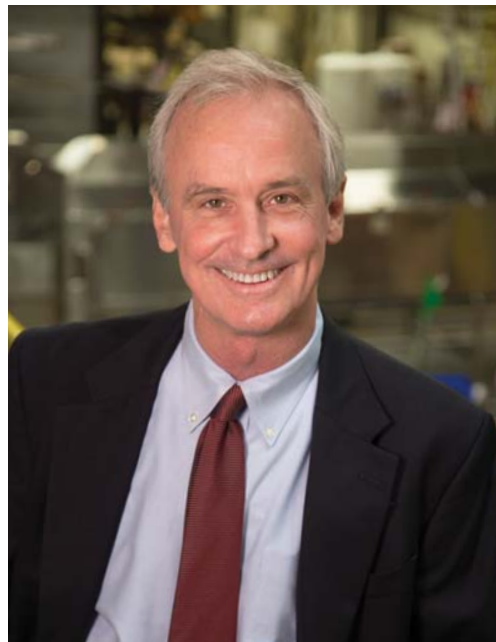
Today, Laitram, L.L.C. is a privately-held manufacturer of diversified products founded on the inventions of J. M. It has four operating divisions: Laitram Machinery, Intralox, Lapeyre Stair, and Laitram Machine Shop. The company continues to innovate, and generates more U.S. patents than any other company or university headquartered in Louisiana.

Laitram Machinery has been in business nearly seventy years and has pioneered high-performance shrimp processing equipment, steam cookers, blanchers, pasteurizers, and graders for processors worldwide.

J. M.'s shrimp peeler spawned Laitram's largest division, Intralox, in 1971. Shrimp were moved from the peelers by way of metal conveyor belts, which required frequent maintenance and replacement due to deterioration from salt water. After pitching his idea of plastic conveyor belts to the major metal and rubber conveyor belt companies to no avail, J. M. invented the first all—plastic, modular conveyor belt. Today, Intralox manufactures the world's most innovative and complete line of modular plastic belting and related products, and produces world leading conveying technologies for package handling and sorting, and for highly sanitary food processing.

Lapeyre Stair was founded in 1981 to manufacture the alternating-tread stair, a safer alternative to steep stairways and ladders and has expanded to include, customized, conventional,

precision fabricated industrial stairs. The Laitram Machine Shop provides high-value machining and related services to the Laitram divisions and select outside customers.



*Top, left: J. M. Lapeyre in 1985 pictured with his "Lapeyre Stair."*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MICHAEL F. SUSTENDAL

*Top, right: Intralox headquarters in Harahan, Louisiana—our largest division.*

*Left: Jay Lapeyre, president of Laitram, LLC.*

For over sixty-five years, Laitram has developed a worldwide reputation for ethical and responsible business practices, and delivering exceptional customer value and service. With over 2,200 employees worldwide (1,200 on the Harahan campus), the growth and sustained success is the result of a focus on continuous improvement, a core belief in the potential of people, and a commitment to treating employees, customers, and suppliers with honesty, fairness, and respect.