



REGGIO REGISTER

A Quality Proposition

BY JOHN LUKE

IN 1977, MIKE REGGIO and his fiancée paid a visit to his cousin, Grant Dowse, and Grant's wife, Pegge, at the tiny sugarhouse outside of Franconia, N.H., that the Dowses had converted to serve as an office and shipping room for their startup mail-order company, Garnet Hill.

Mike had graduated in 1972 from Northeastern University with a degree in business management, and he was intrigued with the Dowses' mail-order business model for Garnet Hill, which is still that company's operative model today—adapted to and vastly enhanced, of course, by the Internet and the Web: “the first full-size mail-order catalog dedi-

icated entirely to sharing the concept that fine natural fiber merchandise could actually be a way of life.”

As Garnet Hill relates on its Web site today, “the mix soon included the best the world had to offer: traditional cotton percales, high-quality wool blankets, cashmere throws, as well as luxurious apparel from classic European companies like Hanro and Giesswein.”

As an undergraduate, and then after graduating, Mike had worked for several manufacturing companies, dealing with everything from casting, machining and assembly to purchasing, shipping and vendor relations. It was the kind of experience he could have applied to

any of an almost limitless variety of products made by companies everywhere. But he wanted to find a product—and a business model—that he could make his own.

He already had in mind a product he thought would work: a floor register for heat circulation.

“At that time, during the late 1970s, the price of heating oil had been driven up because of that decade's oil crisis,” he says. “There was a resurgence in the demand for wood-burning stoves and wood heat. I had found and installed an antique floor register between floors in my own home to allow heat from my wood stove to heat the second floor. I knew from my work experience that I could make a similar register. I also knew that no one else was making them at that time. I hoped I could sell it through mail order.

The real question was the business model—to draw on a catchphrase from the midcentury advertising business, the “unique selling proposi-

tion.” What would be the ingredient that would keep a register-manufacturing business going—and growing—over the long term?

He thought he sensed that essential ingredient in his cousin's startup business model. Again, from the Garnet Hill Web site: “Despite the astonishing growth in size and merchandise assortment, many things about us remain the same. We still have a passion for the finest fibers, a demand for the highest quality, and a sense of integrity that extends beyond the product to our outstanding customer service.”

That was it: Quality.





“We started Reggio Register with this one product, a high-quality reproduction of an antique floor register,” Mike says. “Over the years we have evolved from a lot of hand work to finding machinery to become more productive. To this day we continue to strive to maintain the highest possible quality. It’s a constant effort, working with our employees and our vendors.

“In addition to continually adding sizes to our line of metal registers based on the feedback we get from our customers, we successfully launched a line of wooden grilles, introduced a square design that is appropriate for both contemporary and traditional settings, and have greatly expanded our options in cast-aluminum grilles to provide an attractive and durable choice for today’s value-conscious home and business owners.”

Today the Leominster, Mass., home of The Reggio Register Company is a state-of-the-art facility where the special molds are designed and the castings are carefully inspected, processed and powder-coated with a durable and attractive finish. Reggio Register grilles, the company says, “are manufactured to last a lifetime and are the finest available in America. They can be found in public buildings, historic sites and fine homes throughout the U.S.”



“From the day we first opened our doors in 1978, quality has been our number one concern,” Mike says.

“It is a passion of mine, and I personally ensure that every employee understands that ‘The Reggio Register Co.’ name we cast into every grille we sell means quality. In addition, we offer the largest selection of sizes, materials and finishes available anywhere in America, and pledge to provide friendly customer service and prompt delivery.”

Looks like that long-ago visit to a tiny converted New Hampshire sugar-house was a nudge in the right direction.



The Reggio Register Co., Inc.
reggioregister.com
800 880-3090