

Inclinator Company of America

Manufacturing home elevators, wheelchair lifts and dumbwaiters for more than 90 years

Written by: Tom Faunce

Produced by: John Carioti

<http://bit.ly/1U8VCJO>

In 1923, C.C. Crispen got the idea for a moveable seat that was able to travel up and down stairs after visiting a convalescing neighbor who was confined to an upstairs bed. As a self-taught mechanical engineer, Crispen developed a prototype and obtained a patent and Inclinator Company of America was born. Located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Inclinator has grown into a leading company in the industry of home elevators, wheelchair lifts and dumbwaiters.

Crispen was running Crispen Motor Car Company, the first Cadillac dealership in Pennsylvania, when he got the idea to develop a system to help people who struggled to climb stairs in their own homes. His prototype consisted of a folding wooden chair and footrest that moved on rollers up and down a steel rail fastened to a stairway. The device used regular house electricity to operate the motor. Being narrow enough for people to still use the stairs by foot, he called it the "Inclin-ator" to convey the thought of an elevator working on an incline of stairs.

In 1924, the Philadelphia Electric Company invited Crispen to display the Inclin-ator in its showroom, which helped his idea become a viable business. Westinghouse Electric saw the unique product and had one installed at its Electric Home on Atlantic City's Boardwalk.

In 1928, Crispen designed the first residential electric elevator as an alternative for homes with winding staircases called "Elevette." Inclinator would eventually add vertical platform wheelchair lifts and dumbwaiters to its product line. Today, there are more Inclinator elevators in homes throughout the Americas than any other brand. "What we do for people is allow them to stay in their homes as they age," says Bill Stratton, president of Inclinator. "Our product is reliable and we continue to do tech support on elevators that have been installed as early as the 1930s."

Building upon a strong foundation

In addition to having the most choices and custom features in the industry, Inclinator is known for building reliable products and maintaining a solid network of certified installers and service contractors. The company backs its product with valuable technical support, exceptional customer service and a solid coast-to-coast dealer network. Its on-site engineering staff and full lab with testing capabilities provide ongoing superiority in product development and refinement.

While Inclinator no longer makes the stair lift, the home elevator business remains strong. The reliability and quality of its products are what keeps Inclinator ahead of the competition. "Our workers are craftsmen," says Stratton. "Because we've been in business since the 1920s, we have built up a reputation for our quality and service."

The company's target markets are luxury homes, elderly - aging in place and handicapped accessibility. The company has over 300 dealers throughout the United States, Canada and Latin America.

Years of experience

For more than 90 years, Inclinor has been a family-owned business and the company has remained a domestic manufacturer since its inception. "I'm really proud of the fact that our products are made in the United States," says Stratton, who has been with the company since September 2014. "When the housing market collapsed, our business took a hit, but the company persevered and survived." The company has also maintained a low turnover ratio. "We have people on our staff who have been here for more than 40 years," he adds.

Stratton brings more than 25 years of experience in manufacturing to Inclinor. He is the former vice president of procurement and materials planning for Adhesives Research Inc., a global adhesives manufacturer for multiple markets including electronics, industrial, medical and pharmaceutical. He earned an MBA in finance and marketing from Lehigh University, a Master of Science degree from Pennsylvania State University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Hartford.

After being in business for more than 90 years, the future is bright for Inclinor. The company is planning to continue to grow and has been in the process of launching some new products in the past year. "We're working on things that will continue to improve the performance of our elevators as well as give our dealers and the homeowners more options," Stratton explains. "We're also creating ways to make the elevator easier to install."

As the company continues to expand and build its customer base, Inclinor Company of America will continue to operate by the ethics and morals that have made it so successful for more than 90 years.