If it’s big, complex, and goes on a Navy ship or Space Shuttle, Hardie-Tynes probably made it,” so wrote Marie West Cromer in a 1991 article for *Birmingham Magazine*. But, for this century old manufacturing company, the military represents only one component of its diverse product spectrum.

Located in Birmingham, Hardie-Tynes was organized in 1895 by two Mississippians, William Hardie and William D. Tynes. A 1901 fire at its original site caused a move to its present location at 800 28th Street North. Its famous water tower, built in 1922 as a fire deterrent, is considered a landmark on the edge of Birmingham’s downtown area.

Hardie-Tynes has always adjusted to the times and met new technological challenges head-on. Beginning with the development and manufacture of steam engines, it added steam driven mine hoists for new coal fields and later hydraulic machinery manufacturing for cotton industrial needs. When electricity impacted the country, Hardie-Tynes was at the forefront, building complete steam-driven electric plants.

America’s war efforts during both World Wars presented unique challenges to Hardie-Tynes. In World War I, it built triple expansion marine engines for the country’s new Victory Ships. When shells were in short supply, it added 37 mm shells to its production. During World War II, the company supplied all high pressure air compressors for destroyers, battleships and submarines. In fact, from 1939 to the end of the war, virtually every U.S. submarine was equipped with Hardie-Tynes air compressors.

Over the years, Hardie-Tynes has consistently responded to the military’s requests for newer devices. More than 600 American ships use rotating machinery manufactured by Hardie-Tynes; two of the four aircraft carriers sent to the Persian Gulf, the John F. Kennedy and the Independence, carry steam turbine equipment and parts designed, manufactured, and installed by Hardie-Tynes. America’s modern navy, and even some foreign navies, are equipped with Hardie-Tynes steam-driven turbines, air compressors, aircraft carrier catapults, vertical missile launch plenums, and ship turbo blowers. Even NASA’s Space Shuttle contains aluminum rings and other complex components produced by Hardie-Tynes.

Throughout its history, what has set Hardie-Tynes apart from its competitors is its ability to build to last. Many parts and components built decades ago are still in operation. In fact, in 1989, Gordon L. Flynn, the current CEO of Hardie-Tynes, received a letter from a British mining company that was going out of business. The letter read, “This magnificent engine (mine hoist) was built by your firm in 1945 or ’46 ... the brake shoes are still the original ones.” This represents the pride of craftsmanship of Hardie-Tynes.

In 1943, the Department of the Navy presented the Hardie-Tynes Manufacturing Company with their prestigious Army-Navy “E” Award for outstanding production of war materials. In accepting the award, the president of Hardie-Tynes expressed to his employees: “The receipt of the Award entails certain obligations, one of which is that we continually strive to improve the performance on which this award was based. Upon every man and woman of the Hardie-Tynes Manufacturing Company rests the responsibility of not only maintaining but improving the standards and keeping the award pennant flying with honor.” Today, this remains the standard of Hardie-Tynes that will proudly take it into the 21st century.