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Made in Milwaukee: Reeling Cart & Case

By *Kay Nolan*, for BizTimes
Published [July 8, 2011](#)

Reeling Cart & Case

440 Oakton Ave., Pewaukee, WI 53072

Industry: Moving and shipping carts and supplies for up to 1,700-lb. capacity, including panel carts for office cubicle walls, moving carts for computers and other equipment, "Chicago" – style stackable dollies, stackable flip-top plastic containers with specialized dollies. Also casters and customized shipping supplies.

www.reelingcart.com



When a business decides to move its operations to a different location, it can be exciting. But it also entails a very practical, logistical reality: how to physically move desks, cubicle panels, files and other equipment from one place to another.

A simple hand truck or dolly won't do.

And that's where Reeling Cart & Case, a small, family-owned business in Pewaukee, steps in. It makes heavy-duty moving carts for sale or rent to commercial moving firms. And when those moving companies have a client with something tricky to pack and move safely, Reeling Cart will make customized carts and shipping crates.

Along the same lines, Reeling has found a niche in the shipping and packaging industry, for which it crafts custom parts to protect items with unusual shapes or delicate parts. For example, one of Reeling's clients recently needed to ship industrial pumps for a customer. It contacted Reeling to make special wooden protective covers for the ends of the pumps.

Reeling Cart has two CNC machines for precision-cutting of custom shipping products.

"It's been a steady business for the past 20 years," said Hays Reeling III, a former music stage sound engineer, who got the idea for the company after a friend asked him to design carts for hauling sound equipment.

Today, Reeling's sons, Hays Reeling IV, 27, and Dan Reeling, 21, work full-time in the business, along with another full-time employee, Brian Cook. Reeling's wife, Nancy, does the company's accounting.

The men design and build the plywood carts in one of a cluster of long, low-slung old lumberyard buildings along a railroad track, which date to the late-1800s. The ancient wooden building – reinforced in recent years with steel siding – perhaps echoes well the simple sturdiness of Reeling's products. "There are carts that we made probably 15 to 17 years ago that are still around," says the younger Hays Reeling. "It's usually only the wheels that eventually give out, but we carry replacement casters for all of our carts."

The site offers a large loading dock and room for moving companies to swing in with their trucks and pick up the carts. "We don't really have to do much delivery," said Reeling. "Our customers have their own trucks."

Reeling also makes metal carts that are designed for moving office cubicle walls. The company's products also include stackable plastic containers with their own specialized dollies, and "Chicago-style" stackable wooden dollies.

Customers have grown by word of mouth, along with direct-mail fliers sent to moving companies. According to the elder Hays Reeling. "Pretty much all of the big moving companies use us," he said. "They start out renting our carts, but then many of them decide to buy carts as well."



Stackable dollies for plastic containers

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Reeling Cart has a website, but uses the Internet more for a side business developed while the Reeling boys were growing up – selling replacement parts for remote-control toy race cars. When driving his sons to racing events became a regular occurrence, “I figured if I was going to be there, I might as well get into the business,” said the elder Reeling. That website – in case any remote-control racing enthusiasts want to know – is www.lefthander-rc.com.

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