



# Maggard Razors

IN DOWNTOWN ADRIAN, ENTREPRENEUR BRAD MAGGARD HAS GROWN A SMALL SPACE INTO ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST NICHE RETAIL LOCATIONS

---

Photos and Story by Phil Eich, Storyville Social, as part of the Michigan Main Street Story Series

I was working in IT and at my place of employment, beards were frowned upon. But I always hated shaving because I had very sensitive skin. So one day, I Googled how to get a better shave. That led me to a few blog articles, and those led me to traditional razors. I was blown away; with a traditional razor, I got a better experience, less irritation, and in the end, it actually cost less than disposable cartridges.

I got my first straight razor about six months later. Not only was I fascinated by them as objects, but you have complete control over the cutting angle since there is no specific design imposed by the manufacturer. You get better results with less irritation and other issues.

I started collecting and

working on vintage straight razors for other people which turned into buying as many as I could find, working on them, and selling them. I set up a dedicated workshop for myself in my house. Word spread, earning me a worldwide reputation as the go-to person for working on and sharpening straight razors. Because of the growth, I needed to find a separate location for the work rather than just operating 15 feet away from my couch.

We acquired a small retail space in downtown Adrian, and over the course of two years, our inventory grew from virtually nothing to over 1,000 products. Currently, we have over 4,000 SKUs in our store, and we're probably the world's largest traditional shaving store.

Our store has gained a reputation for being a place where customers can explore and experiment with products from all around the world. Although we only conduct about 1.5% of our total business through our storefront, every single product we have is physically available here in our brick-and-mortar location so customers can touch and examine any item they want to purchase.

It's remarkable that we attract customers who are willing to drive for hours to visit us; individuals travel from nearby cities, such as Cincinnati, and we even had someone fly from across the world solely to visit our store.

I have been able to incorporate other elements into the business that keep me motivated. One example is the purchase of a big, beautiful historical building, and working to restore it to its former glory. That falls in line with the type of business that we have, which is all about bringing tradition and quality back.

Having our store here in Adrian also had practical advantages for me, especially when I was working at Eton College. I could easily commute between work and the business. A significant advantage of being in a small town in the Midwest is that real estate is cheap. It allowed us to compete with e-commerce competitors in places like San Diego, California; they're paying a \$6,000 a month rent, and we had a mortgage of just \$1,500.

When shipping packages, the proximity to various regions allows for quicker delivery



**"IT'S REMARKABLE THAT WE ATTRACT CUSTOMERS WHO ARE WILLING TO DRIVE FOR HOURS TO VISIT US; INDIVIDUALS TRAVEL FROM NEARBY CITIES, SUCH AS CINCINNATI, AND WE EVEN HAD SOMEONE FLY FROM ACROSS THE WORLD SOLELY TO VISIT OUR STORE."**



times compared to shipping from the East Coast to the West Coast or vice versa. This advantage enables us to get products to customers faster and more effectively. While we may not compete directly with the likes of Amazon, we strive to be the second-best option available. If we can provide a better experience than our competitors, customers are more likely to choose us as their preferred destination. Labor costs in the Midwest are generally lower compared to the coasts. While we strive to provide above-average wages for our retail employees, we can still maintain competitive pricing in the e-commerce world because of our location.



Even with all the growth we've experienced, I've never stopped loving the products. I've never stopped enjoying making a custom handle for a straight razor. I've never lost the sense of accomplishment I experience when I produce a custom item. It still feels like a hobby to me, and I continue to find enjoyment in it. While certain aspects of any business may eventually feel like work over time, it hasn't lost the luster for me.

**"WHILE CERTAIN ASPECTS  
OF ANY BUSINESS MAY  
EVENTUALLY FEEL LIKE  
WORK OVER TIME, IT  
HASN'T LOST THE LUSTER  
FOR ME."**



If you were to travel back in time and tell me everything that has happened, I'd say you were absolutely nuts.



—Brad Maggard of Maggard Razors, Adrian, Michigan



# Michigan Main Street Story Series



**MICHIGAN ECONOMIC**  
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION