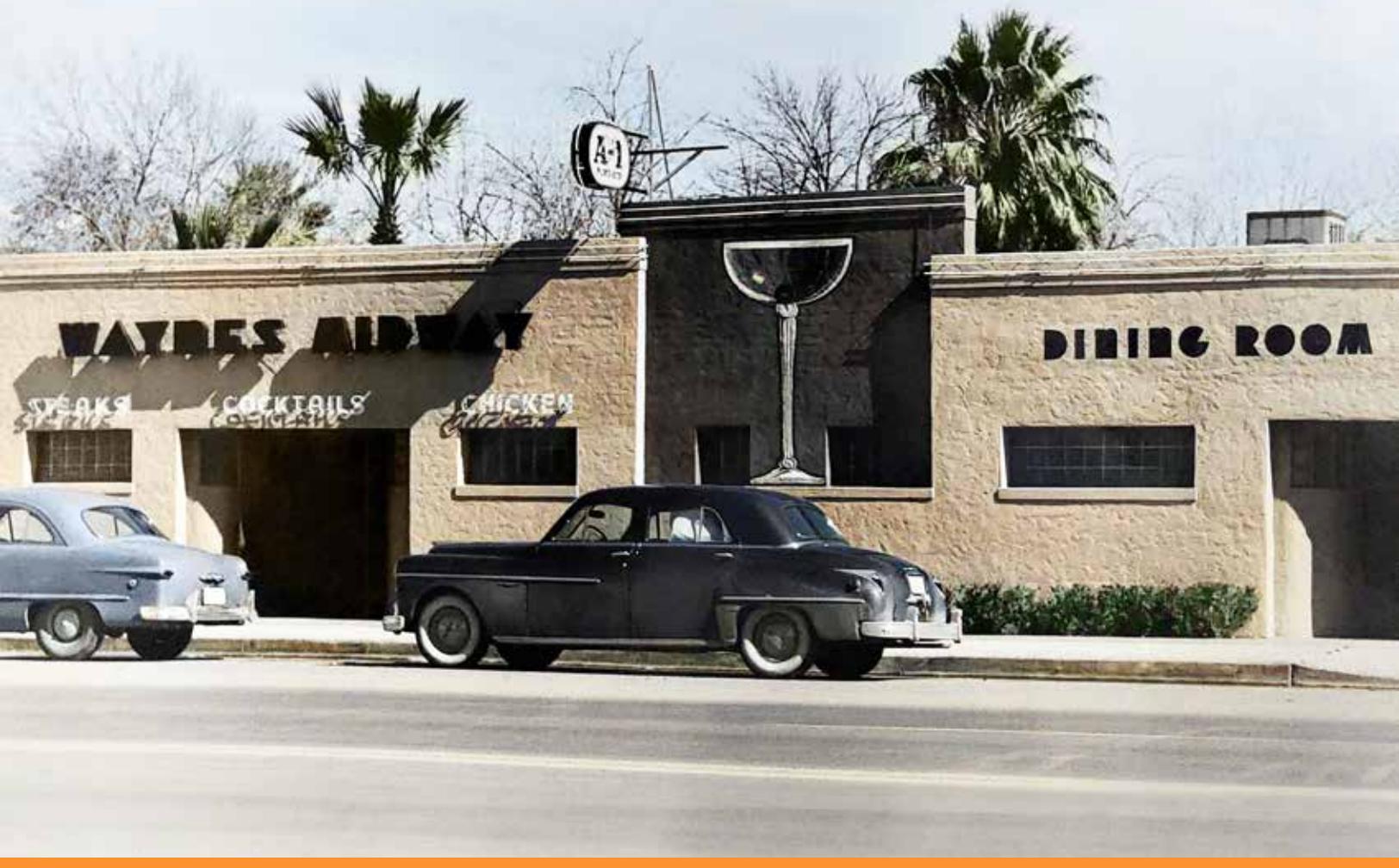
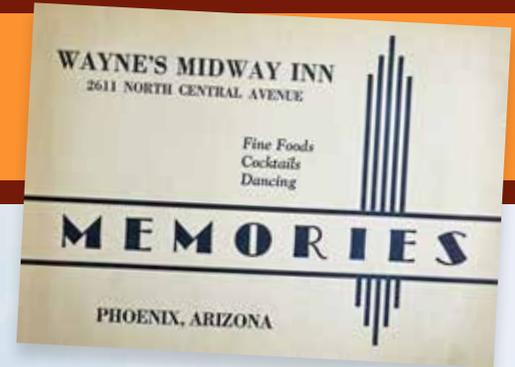


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## CASTELLATED STEEL BEAMS SUPPORT ARIZONA'S FASTEST-GROWING STEEL FABRICATOR

Launching a business during the COVID-19 pandemic would seem to be a recipe for failure. But Brandon Bell, a second-generation steel fabricator, made lemonade out of lemons when he launched Next Level Steel during the chaotic period. The new steel fabrication company in Mesa quickly discovered its niche.

"During COVID, there was a surge in warehouse building, but we previously didn't focus on that business because traditionally, most commercial warehouses/light industrial spaces in Arizona are built with wooden roofs and use little structural steel except for the steel joists," Bell says. "But because of COVID, the price for roof-building joists tripled as manufacturers struggled with supply chain issues and could not keep up with demand."

Next Level Steel launched its Castellated Structural Group (CSG) in 2020 to offer this innovative structural steel as an alternative roofing support material to meet this growing need. With support from Jack Koehler and the engineers at PK Associates, CSG constructed a small castellated beam fabrication line using proprietary technology at their Mesa facility at 522 West McKellips Road.

High-tech castellated steel beams are stronger, faster to erect, and span further distances than traditional steel beams. CSG starts by slicing and splitting apart steel I-beams before they are precisely welded

back together. The "teeth" carved in the beams are offset, creating a series of precise hexagonal holes that help make the steel beam stronger. The beams require less lead time than traditional roofing structures.

"With the refinements in our manufacturing processes and our new facility's higher volumes, we can compete with traditional roof joist companies even if their prices and lead times stabilize," Bell says.

Next Level Steel provides design, fabrication, and steel erection services for clients ranging from the upcoming TSMC semiconductor factory to the completed dining hall at the Marine Corps Air Station Yuma. Local general contractors who use their products include Whiting-Turner, Layton, and AR Mays.

Bell started Next Level Steel with six employees but plans to have more than a hundred soon with the opening of its second steelyard. The company is constructing a state-of-the-art dedicated castellated

beam plant in Goodyear and hiring 40 highly-skilled steelworkers. CSG's new facility will more than double capacity up to 1 million square feet per month to keep up with the booming demand.

The steel fabricating company is forecast to generate \$100 million in revenue this year as it prepares to expand across the Western U.S. To help steer the company's growth, they've recently hired a new Vice-President for Business Development, Lauren Fisher.

Born and raised in Yuma, Bell previously helped build his family's ornamental fence company in Phoenix into the state's second-largest fabricator of structural steel. Bell split from the family business in 2018, and after his two-year non-compete clause expired, he purchased a small structural steel shop and formed Next Level Steel and Castellated Structural Group, which are projected to have completed 8 million square feet of projects by the end of 2023. 🏗️



**Top left:** Castellated steel beams.  
**Top right:** Brandon Bell.  
**Right:** Next Level Steel executive team (l-r): Brandon Bell; Karen Ragains, Controller; Nick Wooten, Chief Estimator; Lauren Fisher, VP of Business Development; and Phil Clark, COO.