Your Source for Concrete Construction and Landscaping Products
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Celebrating Our First 70 Years!

Proud to be American-based and American made since 1946

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1946 - 2016
COUNTY MATERIALS CORPORATION

1946
First automated block machine installed in Marathon, Wis. in 1949.

1967

In the 1960s, the company continues to upgrade its block manufacturing production by adding automatic batching and cement silos, and expanding into more product lines.

The first precast concrete products are manufactured in 1972.

1997
A PCI Certified precast and prestress facility constructed in Roberts in 2001 allows the company to continue manufacturing long span bridge girders for DOT transportation projects, including the Minnesota DOT expansion project over the Mississippi River in 2003.

In 2013, County Materials completed construction of a production facility in Janesville, WI, to enhance production capabilities for high performance bridge girders, landscape and masonry products with superior quality and high-end, sought-after aesthetics not readily available elsewhere in North America.

In 2016, County Materials supplied 21,000 concrete tunnel segments and more than 200 precast and cast-in-place units for the Hiawatha Light Rail Tunnel in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The project earned the company its second Harry H. Edwards Industry Achievement Award.


In the 1960s, the company expands into larger commercial markets. In 1999, County Materials earned a Harry H. Edwards Industry Achievement Award for innovations in precast technology and manufacture of segments to construct a 1 million sq.ft. underground library archive at the University of Minnesota.

In 1981, the company manufactures its first concrete pipe and manhole products.

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County Materials advances its pipe and precast manufacturing capabilities with numerous acquisitions and plant openings in Illinois, Iowa and Indiana between 2005 and 2014.

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A Leader is Born

The year was 1946 and World War II had just ended. Our family-owned business located in central Wisconsin was humbly hauling sand and gravel to area farms. Discovering local masons did not have simple access to concrete blocks that would support development and growth of Marathon County communities, the decision was made to invest in a single machine capable of producing concrete masonry units. And on that day, 70 years ago, County Materials began its journey of supporting America’s growth and infrastructure development throughout the next seven decades.

At its conception, our company was known as Sonnentag Concrete & Gravel. Our founder, Merlin Sonnentag, launched the business by providing concrete products to masons and builders in Marathon, Wis. and surrounding communities. Relying on a steadfast commitment to quality and hard work, the company focused on earning the trust of employees and customers.

As man first walked on the moon and the 1950s and 1960s came and went, the country was growing and demand for concrete construction products was on the rise. Bustling, sprawling cities required stronger, more efficient construction materials. Our company responded. Ready-mix and excavation services were added in 1960. Merlin’s oldest son, John H., joined the company in 1966 after graduating college, and one year later, the company was incorporated and renamed County Concrete Corp.

Upgrades were made to block manufacturing capabilities by adding automatic batching and cement silos. This allowed the company to serve the growing agricultural, commercial and residential construction industry. The business also expanded into more masonry product lines, better able to meet customer needs for durable, readily available and high performing concrete construction materials used to build schools, hospitals, farm structures and homes.

“Our business was founded on working hard, taking pride in the results, building relationships, and earning the trust of employees and customers – they are still the cornerstone of how our company operates today.” - Tim Sonnentag, President

Strong Values, Hard Work

Change was happening fast. Current company president, Tim Sonnentag, says values instilled by his grandfather and father remained a constant. “Our focus has always been on serving the needs of our customers.”

As the years passed, technology continued to advance and communities prospered. Our company set the pace by manufacturing the first precast concrete products in 1972. This advancement provided a cost-effective and efficient alternative to cast in place concrete, and led to the modernization of numerous specialty products, including septic tanks, cast in basins, and storm manholes. With the addition of precast products, delivery became faster, installation easier, and contractor construction schedules were reduced. Precast septic tanks provided unparalleled years of reliable service.

Because of this, many communities began requiring concrete tanks. Additionally, concrete munitions and precast products helped cities improve storm water management systems, a critical component to growing infrastructure. By 1981, the company was producing concrete pipe products, and nine years later, John was named president of County Concrete Corp. In 1987, the company made a major move by establishing a concrete pipe operation near Orlando, Florida. America and the company were growing. “The transformation of construction technologies happened incredibly fast,” said Sonnentag. “Our industry not only had to respond to demand, but we also had to constantly be on the cutting edge in order to provide contractors, engineers and designers with high quality and innovative materials to meet their needs. When you think about the scale and complexity of construction projects and material selections we have today, compared to what society demanded in earlier decades, it is a world’s difference. County Materials and our employees played a pivotal role in that evolution.”

Overcoming Challenges

As with any business, the concrete construction industry saw its fair share of highs and lows. Fluctuating economies throughout the years, greater competition, and challenging business environments were ongoing realities. Our company stayed focused on manufacturing products to keep pace with the nation’s growing
infrastructure needs. We credit this success to the employees who dedicated themselves to leading with integrity and sharing a clear sense of purpose. Customers clearly understood our company’s unwavering commitment to serve them, and it led to successfully managing economic and business challenges through the decades.

In the 1990s our company responded to demand from larger commercial markets and started producing specialty products. The industry took notice, when in 1999, County Concrete earned a Harry H. Edwards Industry Advancement Award for innovations in precast technology. These advancements were used to manufacture concrete segments to construct a 1 million sq. ft. underground library archive at the University of Minnesota, a first of its kind project in the Midwest.

A change in ownership occurred in 2003, when the company was renamed County Materials Corp. John’s oldest son Tim became president, and his youngest son William was named vice president. Our company continued growing and other high-profile projects followed. Enhanced quality and production capabilities also led to major infrastructure work. County Materials was selected as the manufacturer for the Minnesota Holovista Light Rail Tunnel in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The project was completed in 2004 and involved 21,000 precast concrete tunnel segments and more than 200 arch wall and lintel panels. The undertaking earned the company our second Harry H. Edwards Industry Advancement Award.

Strategic Growth

In the past decade, additional plant openings and acquisitions were strategically completed in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Indiana. Along with expanded manufacturing capabilities for new construction products, in 2013, an advanced manufacturing facility was built in Janesville, Wis. This project brought our company immediate recognition for manufacturing massive, high-performance bridge beams, including girders used on the $95 million Fox River bridge project in Illinois.

Today, County Materials maintains its headquarters in Marathon, Wis., and the third generation leads a team of nearly 1,500 employees in more than 40 locations and six states. Our products are utilized in infrastructure, transportation construction, commercial, agricultural, municipal and residential building and landscaping projects of all sizes. More than half of our company’s production is for concrete pipe and precast products. Other regional product divisions include ready mix and aggregates, hollowcore, and prestressed bridge girders, and numerous masonry and landscape lines that are capturing the industry’s attention.

“Our priority has been and will continue to revolve around being responsive to our customers’ needs by providing personalized service, reliable industry knowledge and trusted experience. We add value for our customers because we employ dedicated people and keep investing in our manufacturing capabilities. Ultimately, we are guided by a focus on safety and continuous improvement.”

- Tim Sonnentag, President

A Past that Inspires the Future

County Materials has progressed to become a national leader in the concrete construction industry. Our American company is family-owned and employs dedicated team members who fulfill the company’s mission to build the communities where Americans live, work and play. Continuous improvement, technological advancements and trusted responsiveness all result in years of experience. Just led by County Materials playing a pivotal role in the growth and development of our nation’s infrastructure.

We will continue to seek new opportunities, invest in manufacturing capabilities, drive innovation in our industry, and remain unwavering to our commitment to lead with integrity and a sense of purpose that goes beyond the bottom line. The future is bright for both our industry and County Materials.

Empowering People Today for a Brighter Tomorrow

Because of the family’s desire to give back, County Materials is active in local communities through the Sonnentag Foundation. The family’s philanthropic interests are strategically focused on supporting programs and projects that empower and inspire people in communities where County Materials has locations. Additionally, since 2000, the Sonnentag Foundation has awarded scholarships to children of County Materials employees who are graduating high school and pursuing continuing education.

www.sonnentagfoundation.org
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