Successful Builder of Wisconsin

COUNTY CONCRETE CORPORATION
Life as we know it would not exist without one important material that helped build our cities, roads and public infrastructures—concrete.

It is literally the building block of our civilization. To fully recognize its value, however, you'd have to spend years working with it, mastering its composition and evolving with its capabilities. County Concrete Corporation has done just that. What began more than 50 years ago by producing concrete masonry block, is now a company as strong and stable as its flagship product.

In 1946, County Concrete's founding father, Merlin Sonnentag, recognized the demand for supplying concrete block to Marathon County masons. The sand and gravel excavator seized the opportunity by starting his operation with a manual block machine and became the area's first producer of concrete products. With that same pioneering spirit, the second- and third-generation Sonnentags advanced the direction of County Concrete, and formed it into the multifaceted manufacturer and supplier of high-quality building materials that it is today.

You could say that their longstanding reputation for providing their customers with concrete solutions stems from its solid foundation. "There's a deep level of commitment within this company that's been passed down through the generations. Our family grew up working in the business and knows it intimately," said Rebecca Sonnentag, the marketing director and owner's daughter-in-law.

That intense commitment is evident in every aspect of the company's operations. They've employed cutting-edge technological advances in manufacturing and new plants to develop innovative product lines. County Concrete has also diversified its products and services to meet the needs of builders, contractors and architects from the ground up.
By the early 1980s, County Concrete was well established as a leading supplier of concrete block, aggregates and brick in Central Wisconsin, when it started the push to further expand product offerings and production capabilities, as well as establish 13 other facilities throughout the state and eastern Minnesota.

“We’re fortunate to be a major player in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Our diverse customer base has influenced our moves into new territories and taught us what it takes to grow in the business,” said Sonnentag.

And part of what it takes is knowing exactly what will make it in different markets. In addition to its corporate office in Marathon and locations in Custer, Eau Claire, Green Bay, La Crosse, Rice Lake, Stevens Point, Webster, Weston, Wisconsin Rapids, and Maple Grove, Minn., the company has new state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities in Appleton and Roberts. The company meets the demands of its building markets with an array of products and services. “It’s our goal to work with our customers in every area that they need us. We appreciate the strong customer relationships and credibility we’ve earned as both supplier and educational resource,” said Sonnentag.

Quality Products from The Ground Up

County Concrete’s fleet of 100 front-discharge mixer trucks in the central and western regions supply ready-mix concrete for residential, agricultural and commercial applications. Concrete and HDPE pipe solve drainage concerns in underground projects. They have a building’s exterior covered too, by offering an extensive line of decorative masonry units, brick, stone and construction products like stucco. Just last year the innovative manufacturer introduced its very own exterior veneer that’s caught on like wildfire according to Sonnentag.

County Stone® Masonry Units offer stunning results in low-maintenance veneers with their timeless beauty and versatile design advantages. County Stone is an attractive alternative—or complementary building material—to brick, stone and siding. It resembles brick with a split face and textured surface, and is available in 4- and 8-inch blocks. There are four standard, contemporary colors and a variety of facing options, including tumbled units. A bonus feature of the attractive, affordable veneer is that you can quickly get your hands on it. With three of County Concrete’s plants manufacturing County Stone, the average lead-time is four to six weeks.

At County Concrete’s HomeScape Studio on Prospect Avenue in Appleton, full wall displays showcase the latest in exterior building materials, including a complete selection of County Stone® masonry, stone and brick in a variety of face textures and colors.
Contractor Selects County Stone for Personal Residence

General Contractor Cary Glodowski, owner of C.L. Glodowski in central Wisconsin, recently opted for County Stone over brick on his personal residence. Glodowski selected the tumbled effect for his County Stone masonry units to help create a castle-like appearance. By tumbling textured split rock block, the units are finished with rounded corners giving them charming old-world character. Glodowski further customized the facade by having his mason apply various sizes in random order to the entire front of the house and three-car garage. "I wasn't sure how it would look when we decided to go with County Stone because it was new and I had never used it before," admitted Glodowski. "It was actually my wife who wanted something different and insisted that we use it." Glodowski was so pleased with the outcome of the job that he was proud to be one of the first builders in the Wausau area to showcase County Stone in the local parade of homes.

County Stone is just one more product Glodowski relies on getting from County Concrete. He's worked with the company for several years and likes the convenience of finding everything from concrete products to fireplace supplies at one location. "I don't have time to run around from place to place. If I need something, I know I can just call my County representative and he'll take care of it," said Glodowski. The level of trust that County Concrete's sales representatives develop with their customers reflects the company's dedication to providing quality service. It also answers how they've secured their position in a highly competitive industry.

Concrete Is Newest Creative Design and Sales Tool

The invention of County Stone and increasing use of concrete products exemplifies the direction concrete has taken in its form and function over the past decade. The building industry is recognizing the strong, durable material as an element of versatile beauty. County Stone units allow builders to customize buildings with special design elements like keystones, soldier coursing, arches, bays and pillars. With the advent of coloring agents and stains, concrete is suited to match most any decor.

Builders and homebuyers alike are privy to the fact that concrete is quickly becoming today's hottest design element. "More builders are realizing the value of using concrete for driveways and foundations, as well as above grade in the construction of their new homes. Homebuyers equate concrete with a builder's statement of quality. It tells people something the minute they see it," said Sonnentag.

Taking steps to enhance curb appeal is giving builders an edge in today's marketplace. Builder Mike Gibbons of GTS Construction in eastern Wisconsin's Fox Valley adds exterior amenities into his home plans by including eye-catchers like window and doorway accents, as well as landscaping.

Adding to County Concrete's complete construction
package is a line of innovative landscaping products. According to panelists at this year's NAHB convention in Atlanta, consumers are placing a high priority on outdoor features to add character and individuality to their homes. County Concrete fills this niche with products for patios, walkways and retaining walls in a choice of colors, textures and patterns. In addition to design flexibility, the landscaping products are lightweight and require no mortar for easy installation.

Ample Ideas Make Homescaping Simple

The current progression of how people are living and building is working has generated another opportunity for County Concrete. With their keen sales sense and marketing savvy, County Concrete developed HomeScape Studios as a resource for homebuilders. Since 1999, the idea hubs have been opening across the state and Minnesota. Builders on tight schedules can send their customers to a HomeScape Studio to talk with knowledgeable representatives and view extensive product displays and realistic indoor and outdoor landscape settings. Authentic fireplace rooms and wall sections located at various stores draw in consumers as a testament to the studio's marketing message: There's Someplace Like Home.

Offering the latest design ideas and product developments to maximize your building or landscaping project's potential is just another example of how County Concrete takes care of customers. Last year, the company introduced the Ultimate Designer™ CD-ROM as a tool to make designers', architects' and contractors' jobs easier when specifying concrete products. The interactive tool created to save time and stimulate creativity puts full color masonry and landscaping products at your fingertips. It lets you view products like decorative, glazed or burnished masonry, mortar, retaining walls and pavers, then build with them right on the computer screen. Ultimate Designer's comprehensive package helps you develop design concepts and present brilliant solutions to your customers.

The CD-ROM has been a feature of the many seminars County Concrete holds. Educating customers on their products and services is viewed as a necessary investment. This year alone the company has held open houses in La Crosse, Roberts, Weston and Appleton, as well as landscape seminars and offered AIA accreditation courses to architects. "We know that one of the best ways to build partnerships within the building community is to provide them with more information and resources than anyone else; we're here to make their jobs easier," said Sonnenstag.

Not only will you see County Concrete representatives on their ground, but the sales staff meets you on yours. "They get out into the field and talk to customers on their job sites. We've taken major steps to really listen to what builders and contractors want from us," said Sonnenstag. "We have a great amount of respect for this industry."

Proving this point, the company is even willing to fix problems that exist in the business. With a limited number of young people pursuing careers in masonry,
County Concrete joined forces with the Wisconsin Concrete Manufacturers Association and the Brick Distributors of Wisconsin to implement masonry programs across the state. The company has been actively involved in educating and recruiting high school and post-secondary education students interested in careers in masonry since the late 1980s. Through educational training and by donating brick and masonry products for classroom use, County Concrete is making a positive impact on the future of the masonry trade.

Successfully Managing Small to Large Workloads

Responding to market demand with an aim-to-please attitude and uninhibited approach has also gained County Concrete a spot in the heavy construction industry. By extending their product knowledge beyond its borders, the Prestress, Precast, Pipe Division was established in 1990 in the company’s western territory. At their facilities in Roberts, Eau Claire and Maple Grove, Minn., County Concrete manufactures and supplies prestress concrete bridge structures, box culverts, highway barriers, reinforced concrete pipe and other highway and commercial products. The company’s award-winning work on a 1 million-square-foot, precast concrete tunnel for the University of Minnesota won them supplier rights to the underground tunnel project of Minnesota’s first Light Rail Transit system. The Hiawatha LRT will link downtown Minneapolis, the airport and the Mall of America, extending 11.5 miles. Approximately three and a half of those miles, traveling beneath the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport, will be the underground tunnel segments County Concrete is in the process of manufacturing.

Critically acclaimed manufactured products have also won County Concrete accolades on projects in commercial and residential markets. The Wisconsin Concrete Masonry Association (WCMA) has honored the Riverview Plaza in Menasha with the Meynard W. Meyer Excellence in Masonry “Best of Show” award. County Concrete also supplied Jim Kassner Construction in Green Bay with masonry units for a private residence for this year’s Meynard W. Meyer Excellence in Masonry “best of show.”

With continued success in the different avenues of their business, you might wonder how County Concrete maintains consistent focus on the individual needs of its retail, trade and municipal markets. How can they go from providing pavers for walkways to tunnel segments for trains? By making customer satisfaction the company’s mission. “You have to start with a great product and follow it up with uncompromised customer service, and never lose sight of your purpose for providing them,” said Sonntag.

As Sure as Concrete—The Legacy Lives On

Regardless of who they work with, the strategy is the same—listen to the industry and act on opportunities. That’s the way it’s been since the company’s foundation was laid. A solid history of product innovation and customer commitment has brought County Concrete continued expansion to meet the growing needs of their customers. Equipped with an excellent staff carrying out the corporate philosophy in daily operations, County Concrete is well positioned to meet the challenges that lie ahead and react to changing markets with the right product mix. Exceeding customer expectations is and always will be at the forefront of their long-range vision.

The first person to touch a concrete block is the mason. Concrete units are made in County Concrete’s fully automated, computerized manufacturing facilities. Once cured, the products are transported daily by County’s fleet of delivery trucks from staging yards directly to job sites throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota. Central dispatching ensures prompt and efficient delivery.

County Concrete offers a wide selection of manufactured and exclusive products:

- Decorative/Standard/Glazed Masonry — Ultra Burnished™ & Elite™ High-Polished Masonry
- Retaining Walls — Concrete Pavers — Patio stones & blocks
- Aggregates — Ready-mix Concrete — Concrete Pipe
- Prestress Bridge & Highway products — Precast & Specialty products
- Brick, Stone, Masonry Veneers — Fireplaces