



## **BUSINESSES AND INNOVATION**

Go anywhere in the world and you are likely to encounter something that has been touched by Winona. In every industry, on every corner of the globe, products that originated here are part of people's daily lives, because behind the quaint façade of this historic river town is an entrepreneurial spirit that knows no boundaries and reaches deep into the foundation of Winona.

From the soothing liniments of Watkins to the innovative plastics of RTP, from the rugged chains of the Peerless Industrial Group to upscale St. Croix sweaters from Knitcraft, Winona has been a hotbed for ideas, big ideas, for more than 100 years.

In fact, the number of global companies who trace their roots to the charming streets of Winona is staggering by any standard, with many of them still headquartered here today. People might wonder what it is that spawns such great success from a city this size, but it is likely those people have never lived here. Winona was built by pioneers, and since the beginning people here have embodied and been inspired by that enterprising mindset.

Companies like Badger Foundry, United Machine, and Behrens have added machining brawn to the nation's industrial framework for the better part of a century, and organizations like CHS and Bay State Milling have been shipping and grinding grains to feed the country for even longer. And even before that, the distinctive hues of the rock quarried by Biesanz Stone was gracing buildings in distant locales, where it was appreciatively referred to as "Winona stone".

Manufacturers like Thern, National Chemical, and Cytec built a name for themselves in the nation's hoist, cleaning product, and plastics industries before the 1950s rock-n-rolled around. At about the same time, Hal Leonard was putting Winona on a worldwide map by literally inventing the printed music industry for modern songs.

A decade later, a little four-person company called WinCraft was making promotional products for high schools — and now 50 years later it is a licensed manufacturer for the NFL, NBA, NASCAR, and 300 or so other entities. Fastenal's story is strikingly similar. So is Wenonah Canoe's. In fact, it is the quintessential Winona success story, and it is one that is told over and over again.

And new stories of innovation and growth are making headlines today, with RTP, Coda Bow, Platicomp, Ticona, and Plasticert positioning Winona on the cutting edge of the composites industry as we speak. They join manufacturers like Benchmark and Watlow, and the city's powerhouse companies that have been here from the start, in propelling the community into a future of possibilities limited only by the imagination.

One might think that to achieve national or global reach, business owners would have to relocate their operations to a major metropolitan area, but for the business owners of Winona, that was simply never the case. Perfectly situated in between major urban centers like Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Des Moines, the city has, from the very beginning, had easy access to every major rail, water, and roadway in the Midwest.

But the real key to Winona's success is within the city's borders, where financial institutions and business leaders have developed the resources to nurture big ideas in the community. Lenders like Winona National Bank, Merchants Bank, and Wells Fargo, and organizations like the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce, the Winona Area Industrial Development Association, the Winona Area Venture Capital Group, and the Port Authority of Winona have worked together to create a strong fabric of support that helps new concepts flourish.

Through the decades, entrepreneurial thinkers have led organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, investing in the business community by infusing it with their time and talents. They are the same individuals credited with making Winona the city it is today, and by paying it forward they are ensuring that it will continue to be a global player for generations to come.