

# RIPON'S INNOVATION IN MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing in Ripon has a rich history centered on innovation, particularly in laundry equipment, textiles, and agricultural equipment. Beginning in the mid to late 19th century, the city grew into a small-scale industrial hub.

## Ripon Knitting Works

- Founded in 1880 by Jehdeiah Bowen (1817-1891), a merchant, pioneer, and politician, the Ripon Knitting Works was a prominent manufacturer of heavy hosiery, work mitts, and slipper socks, becoming the nation's largest producer of slipper socks by the late 1940s.
- The company operated a three-story brick building at the corner of Watson and Seward Streets (now the site of Ripon Drug) from 1891 to 1969. (top, right)
- The factory was contracted to provide socks to the U.S. Army during wartime.
- The business was sold and the factory was demolished in the late 1960s/early 1970s.



Barlow & Seelig's first washer, 1908

## Alliance Laundry Systems

- Barlow & Seelig Manufacturing started in 1908. It was later renamed Speed Queen and is currently known as Alliance Laundry Systems.
- Joe Barlow and John Seelig established a reputation as innovators. In 1911, the company's first washer powered by an electric motor was built. In 1915, they introduced the first swinging wringer to operate in any direction. In 1922, they began manufacture of washers built with nickel copper tubs, a first in the industry.
- In 1928, Speed Queen became the brand name for Barlow & Seelig products.
- In 1953, the first automated washer was manufactured.
- In 1998, the company was renamed Alliance Laundry Systems.



## Ripon Foods

- Ripon Foods was founded in 1930 by Horace A. Bumby, starting with just one oven and 25 employees. It earned the city the nickname "Cookietown" as it grew to bake millions of cookies daily, primarily known for its famous "Rippin' Good" brand.
- 1947: A new factory was built at 420 E. Oshkosh Street to accommodate major expansions.
- Late 1960s: The company peaked in production, employing over 450 workers and baking 5 million cookies per day across 60 varieties. About 50% were sold under their signature Rippin' Good Cookies label.
- In 1992 Ripon Foods partnered with the community to bake a massive 3,500-lb, world-record-breaking chocolate chip cookie.
- In 1999, the Bumby family sold Ripon Foods to Ralcorp, and in 2013, Ralcorp sold Ripon Foods to ConAgra Foods.
- In 2015, ConAgra announced the closure of the Ripon plant.

## The Foundry

- The foundry has roots dating back over 160 years.
- In the 1870s to 1880s, the business was originally operated by Furniss & Zinth, manufacturing agricultural tools.
- It was purchased in 1879 by William F. Schaefer Jr. to become "The Ripon Foundry and Machine Shop," providing crucial tools for regional granite quarries.
- Now known as AFK Foundry, the business has continued to serve the upper Midwest with gray and ductile iron castings for over a century.

## Accurate Controls

- In 1975, Tom Rogers (1943-2025) founded Rogers Electric, Inc., an industrial electrical contracting company in Ripon.
- Rogers first conceived Accurate Controls in 1982 while working with Leviton. It began as a one-man operation focused on lighting controls.
- In 1989, Tom and his son, T.J. Rogers, officially joined together to incorporate Accurate Controls, Inc.
- The company entered the prison corrections market in 1990.
- In 2019, Accurate Controls moved into the former Ripon Foods (cookie factory) facility after purchasing and renovating the massive 61,000-square-foot space.



## Advertisers Manufacturing (Admanco)

- The Admanco story began in 1919 when the Ripon Shirtwaist Co. was founded on Jackson St. The company went out of business in 1922, so the owners used the sewing equipment on hand to manufacture custom-printed promotional items including carpenter's aprons, grocer's aprons, potholders, painters hats, flags, and vests.
- In the 1930s it gained prominence by manufacturing 1.5 million "beanies" for Coca-Cola.
- Advertisers moved to the Industrial Park on the northeast side of Ripon in 1979.
- The firm changed its name to ADMANCO Inc. in 1984. It operated as one of the world's largest manufacturers of cloth promotional items before closing in 2004.