





Five Generations of
**QUALITY &
INNOVATION**



Written by William Young

The C.A. Lawton Co. is a business with a deep and rich history, as it was started in 1879 by its namesake, Charles Lawton and his uncle, E.W. Arndt. Originally known as The Novelty Manufacturing Company, its first invention was called the bran dresser and was made to separate bran from flour. Five generations of Lawtons have led the company since its beginning, navigating over a century of changes and difficulties to continue manufacturing quality castings.

C.A. Lawton is just one of many names under the Lawton Standard parent company banner, and it proudly carries the distinction along with businesses such as Temperform, Penn-Mar Castings, Northern Iron & Machine, American Iron (Versa-Bar), and AMSCO Wear Products. Some of these allied companies became part of the Lawton family around 2019, when C.A. Lawton began a surge in growth. This allowed Lawton to add suppliers to provide even more options in metals. ▶▶



► Since the start of that growth period, the company has gone through major changes and done so amidst global concerns like the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflict in countries where its suppliers are located. Strategic Marketing Consultant Terra L. Fletcher believes this illustrates the flexibility and adaptability of Lawton, as well as its willingness to set goals and keep stretching them regardless of what is happening in the world.

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Sales and Marketing Manager Andy Mastalir explains that the company has put together a platform and an expanded group of capabilities to meet more of the needs of its customer base. Instead of being a group of small foundries individually focused on their own capabilities, Lawton’s biggest achievement thus far is offering a one-stop shop experience for customers, covering a much wider breadth of these needs, more than any other business can offer in the industry. The company is expanding into areas it could not before—areas that its customers want.

As that expansion continues, the company uses its wealth of knowledge across its locations to its advantage. Lawton Standard employs lessons learned at one of its facilities across the entire family of companies. Sharing teams across its locations has also helped the company be consistent, and Mastalir notes that there is always strong collaboration between engineers, and generally, a supportive, familial atmosphere at the company, where everyone is approachable and communication is encouraged.



Fletcher points out that this internal atmosphere starts with Chief Executive Officer Alex Lawton, and that her decision to work with the company came about because of the respect and open communication. She states that everyone feels that they are a part of something bigger and that Lawton’s personality is rare in the industry.

“Lawton is a growing company that still has a family feel,” agrees Marketing/Communications Coordinator Nate Vandergrift.

Part of this family approach is embracing ecological stewardship, a topic that many industries, and customers of those industries, are becoming increasingly interested in and concerned about. There has always been a proactive approach across the Lawton platform to be environmentally conscious and good neighbors in the communities its locations are in, says Vandergrift.

C.A. Lawton in De Pere is Green Tier 2 certified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, meaning that it commits to recycling and green practices. It is also ISO 9001 and 14001 certified, indicative of both its quality and

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commitment to sustainability. Everything used in the foundry is recyclable and even reused for community projects. Excess sand can be reused in various projects, including construction projects, and unusable castings are often re-melted to reduce waste in the foundries as well.

Mastalir explains that the company is fast becoming part of a global economy touched by various countries, which means that companies like it are beholden to and influenced by factors like the Paris Accords, a European-led process to determine the carbon footprints of companies now and by 2030. As many of Lawton's customers have European parent companies that dictate these standards to their U.S.-based affiliates, the company is coming to understand its carbon footprint by grappling with these questions and moving toward greener solutions.

Although Lawton and its affiliates continue to grow and improve, Mastalir says that the industry is in a recovery stage post-pandemic; not only was it thrown for a loop by the events of 2020, but the initial recovery saw many scrambling to rebuild supply chains and pipelines. The broader industry is only now beginning to understand the impact of the recovery period and what the new normal will be. But Lawton Standard is confident that every day brings it closer to the goals of serving more of these customers and their new projects. ▶▶





▶ Vandergrift says that quality and innovation go together for the company, which uses advanced software to predict casting pours to ensure the highest quality castings, putting it ahead of the competition. Although there is a great deal of innovation in the industry with regard to new designs and ways to do things, Lawton's suite of products seeks to satisfy basic needs for which there is still considerable demand, especially in areas like air-handling and construction or with everyday products that use its casting products, such as drinking water or automobiles.



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Because Lawton is a larger business, it is involved with many clients, and this allows it to be more stable. “We don't over-expose ourselves to any one industry or customer, [and] customers are excited about this prospect,” Mastalir says. In fact, the company's largest customer only accounts for about 14 percent of the overall business and the largest industry only 18 percent, which means that it can support other sectors because it is not overly committed one way or the other.





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Fletcher says that the company is grateful to have a wealth of strong support and resources in the industry, such as from the American Foundry Society, which helps the company determine if it is on target with or ahead of trends. It also enjoys great local resources including the Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance and the Manufacturing First Expo & Conference. Diverse offerings present another big advantage, especially as the company improves in using technology to track trends that are important to customers and targeting messages to growing audiences.

Into the new year, Lawton will be working on expanding its capabilities and finding out what needs it must fulfill to best provide for its customers. The team persists in their commitment to innovation and continuous improvement, using new technologies, tools, and research to make higher-quality casting at a reasonable price and in a timely manner. The company's products are conceived in very long sales cycles to be ready for future demand, which Fletcher says speaks to its ability to withstand market changes and fluctuations.

Communication to career-minded young people about the advantages of working in manufacturing is also key. As Fletcher says, "We want our young people to know there are good options here," and that companies like Lawton Standard offer



a variety of positions and opportunities for growth. This team looks to extend a hand to young workers to create a career they can build for themselves within the Lawton ranks as the company continues its upward trajectory. ■



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