

# Palmer-Donavin Manufacturing Company



Amazing things can happen from chance meetings. That is the legacy of Palmer-Donavin Manufacturing Company, an employee-owned business that has grown into a leading wholesale distributor of residential building materials in the Midwest.

Headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, with branches in Masury, Hebron, Delphos, and Cincinnati, Ohio, as well as Lansing, Mich., and Rockford, Illinois, and Burnsville, Minn., Palmer-Donavin offers innovative and high-performance products, from roofing and siding to decking, flooring, and cabinets.

The idea for the company was sparked when Fred Palmer and John Donavin met while riding on a streetcar in the early days of the 20th century. While the company's offerings have morphed from macaroni noodles, tinware, and wash boilers to building materials, Palmer-Donavin has always focused on serving its customers through innovation, performance, and integrity. That mission, combined with a commitment to providing customers with manufacturer-direct inventory and the best customer service in the industry, has helped the company overcome strife for more than a century.

For instance, unlike many companies, Palmer-Donavin managed to survive the Great Depression, and even expanded into a nearby town. The early 1940s brought challenges, however, with fire destroying the company's manufacturing

equipment and corporate offices, and World War II threatening supplies. A smart, agile business move enabled Palmer-Donavin to switch to the wholesale distributor model that it has maintained over the years.

Today, Palmer-Donavin's customer base is composed primarily of residential home construction and repair and remodel businesses.

In 2007, the company transitioned to employee ownership, establishing an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) for its 500 employees. "Everyone has a vested interest in the betterment of the company," says Palmer-Donavin President Ron Calhoun. "We all work to be efficient, effective and customer-oriented in every phase of the operation." Turning the employees into business partners was the best course of action to assure the continuity of ownership, management, and independence of Palmer-Donavin.

Palmer-Donavin's focus on people was made even stronger in the late 1960s, when controlling interest in the company was purchased by Bob Woodward, Art Wiles, and Tom Doucher. That trio helped establish the employee-oriented culture that is still apparent today.

Employees matter at Palmer-Donavin, where the culture is one of family. There is a sense of camaraderie as everyone works as part of a team focused on company growth and

success. At Palmer-Donavin, employees know that their commitment to "doing things right" will bring rewards in the form of opportunities to develop and grow with the company.

While the Palmer-Donavin team is known for being diligent and hard-working, the company also understands the value of work-life balance. In fact, in 2015, the company was recognized by *Columbus Business First* as one of the Best Places to Work in Central Ohio.

In addition to their impact on the company's culture, Woodward, Wiles, and Doucher established a long-standing corporate philosophy of giving back to the community.

The men had met due to the shared experience of raising children with developmental disabilities, so since that cause was an important one to them, they sought ways to show their community support. In 2007, in honor of the company's 100th anniversary, Palmer-Donavin constructed a \$750,000 residential respite care facility for children with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. Once built, the facility was donated to Franklin County Residential Services, which operates a safe and temporary home offering specialized care for children with developmental disabilities. The company is proud to have recognized its legacy with this significant contribution to the Columbus community.

Palmer-Donavin also encourages its employees to give back to the community through activities promoted by the company and on their own. Many members of the team give back by contributing funds or participating in activities of organizations that are the fabric of the communities in which Palmer-Donavin operates. These include charities such as Palmer-Donavin House, Meals on Wheels, the Salvation Army, Mid-Ohio Food Bank, Rebuilding Together, and United Way.

In addition to supporting causes geared toward improving community, Calhoun notes that Palmer-Donavin has made the Columbus area its home because of a welcoming business climate: "Columbus has a good, vibrant economy to do business in. A rising tide raises all ships!"

From a rich and exciting past, Palmer-Donavin continues to build a future that is bright with hope and promise. The company has had its tragedies and victories, but with each passing year, it continues to grow wiser and stronger. Together, as owners, the people of Palmer-Donavin will continue to work hard to make the next 100 years even more dynamic and rewarding than the last.



THE DONAVIN FAMILY IN 1890.



OCTOBER 25, 2007: THE PALMER DONAVIN HOUSE OPENED IN CELEBRATION OF THE COMPANY'S 100TH YEAR.



THE CENTRAL OHIO CORPORATE OFFICE, ONE OF EIGHT LOCATIONS.