



CASE STUDY

*First in a series of case studies by Firelands Rails to Trails, Inc. (FRTTI)
FRTTI is an all-volunteer, 501c3 non-profit organization who owns and
manages 20 miles of the North Coast Inland Trail in Huron County, Ohio.*

WHAT DO TRAILS MEAN TO INDUSTRY ?

Case #1: THE IOWA RIVER TRAIL and RAYMON COMPANY



ALBION, Iowa - The familiar song of the eastern goldfinch can be heard amidst the sound of the wind through the trees along an old industrial corridor. This corridor was once part of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway and will soon become the 34-mile Iowa River Trail (IRT). It will be one of the most scenic bike trails in the midwest.

The bird's chirping is momentarily interrupted by the rhythmic staccato of one of many press brakes operating next door at Raymon Company. Founded in 1979, Raymon manufactures a custom line of air diffusers and grilles for commercial buildings. They operate from a 60,000 square foot facility with 90 employees.

CEO Larry Raymon comments on the new trail, with construction underway and sections open to trail users in Marshalltown and Steamboat Rock already: "The proposed Iowa River Trail will offer landscapes that include 29 bridges (four of them cross the Iowa River), and have multiple community access points with towns every six to seven miles. It represents the vision of community leaders who recognize the importance of investments that result in recreational activities, cultural opportunities, improved quality of life, and improved health".



The Raymon Crew

Larry continues: "For the next 100 years, as thousands and thousands of bikers, hikers, and others pass through bike trail communities, they will not only provide current financial impact on local economies but they are also potential investors in future population growth of these communities. Prosperity, a larger tax base and a greater labor pool are outcomes that are possible for those communities with the willingness to invest in their future".

Raymon's facility sits on fifteen acres adjacent to the soon-to-be IRT. Larry is no stranger to conservation efforts which he combines with forward thinking and respect for our nation's history. Behind the plant are walking paths with restored natural prairie grass, wildflowers, and an apple orchard for employees. Many employees frequent this preserve on lunch breaks and are extremely excited about the IRT as a venue for recreation and as another way to get to work. Many employees live within an easy bike ride of the plant.

Adjacent to the IRT, Larry is building a park dedicated to Veterans. "The Veteran's Park is not only a tribute to all veterans who have honorably worn the uniform of the United States military, it is also a trailhead with restrooms and a park".

He adds: "It will be an encouragement for people all across Iowa to come and see the largest self-propelled Howitzer available in the U.S. inventory during the Vietnam war. The park is privately funded by my family without government investment or outside contributions. It sends a message to our community and to my current and future employees that we care deeply about respect, honor, and those that will follow us."

The company's website proudly proclaims "Heartland Values. America's Vision". Larry proudly adds: "We are a family-owned, private business that is successful without government subsidies, grants or loans".

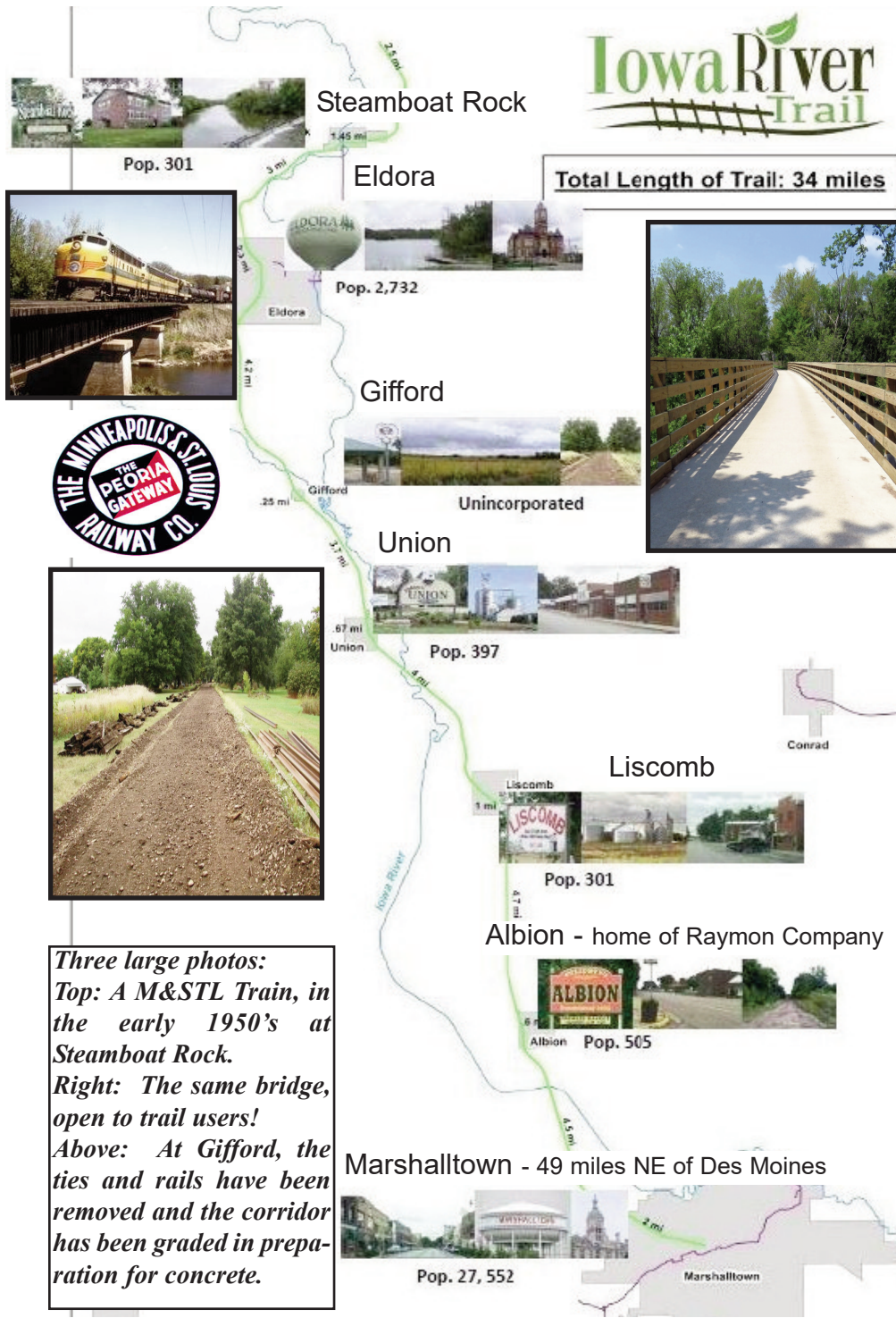
The Iowa River Trail, in terms of a scenic venue for recreation and fitness, is very exciting. The Iowa River Trail, as it relates to the communities it connects, and the potential it offers to local industry and companies along the route like Raymon Company, is **extremely** exciting.

"Communities must have the vision and willingness to invest in their future".

Larry Raymon, CEO, Raymon Company

Iowa River Trail: Marshalltown to Steamboat Rock

Marshall and Hardin Counties, Iowa, are quite similar to Huron County, Ohio. Marshalltown (pop. 27,552) and Eldora (2,732) are not unlike Norwalk and Monroeville; and the area spanned by the Iowa River Trail lies roughly in between Des Moines and Waterloo, much like the North Coast Inland Trail spans an area between Toledo and Cleveland. This part of Iowa has a similar industrial and agricultural base as in Ohio with fine communities and people who take pride in their hard work. This is evidenced by the well-kept appearance of their homes, farms, businesses, communities, and trails! Iowans love their state, and take their trails seriously!



Firelands Rails to Trails Trustee Joe Mantey recently took a plant tour of Raymon Company as one of their Ohio product representatives. On the tour, no fewer than six employees said: **“Did you hear we’re getting a bike trail!?”**

The kicker is that none of them knew their rep was a volunteer with a bike trail group back in Ohio. But the excitement was in the air!

But Mr. Mantey and his family weren’t in Iowa strictly on business. They came to ride the many trails the state has to offer. Three such vacations in four years.

“You’re going *where* on vacation?!” was a frequent question from friends in Ohio when told about their plans to bike in Iowa. Blank looks often accompanied these questions since Ohio and Iowa are so geographically similar and not the typical beach or mountain vacation destinations.

In fact, the Mantey’s, like many others they met on the trails, came from near and far to ride these **beautiful concrete trails** and what they found were wonderful people and great communities - with outstanding scenery along the way.

“They get it”, said Joe. “Trails do several things. They provide safe and scenic recreation, alternative transportation, tourism revenue, and as Larry Raymon put it so well, they keep young, talented, healthy, professional people in their small towns and cities and attract more and more every day. **How could you ask for anything more?”**

Three large photos:
Top: A M&STL Train, in the early 1950’s at Steamboat Rock.
Right: The same bridge, open to trail users!
Above: At Gifford, the ties and rails have been removed and the corridor has been graded in preparation for concrete.

“An investment in your community’s trail is an investment in your business”