

T. A. Brouillette & Son, Incorporated

Founded: 1892

Location: 527 Vigo Street, Vincennes (1891); corner of Hickman (now College Avenue) and Fifth Streets (1898, 1905); 906 North First Street; 911 North First Street (1912); 2903 Old Decker Road (1999–)

Thomas A. Brouillette, at the age of seventeen, opened a blacksmith and wagon making shop at the corner of Hickman and Fifth Streets in Vincennes. As wagons went out of fashion and automobiles began to make an impact, the company switched to making truck bodies. In the 1920s a local beer distributor, Prospect Thomas, approached the firm, desiring to have a truck body placed on a Model A Ford. Later the organization built the first passenger bus bodies for Blue Bird Bus Lines, a forerunner of the I-V Coach Company. By the end of the 1920s Benjamin F. joined his father in the company, and the name of the blacksmith operation was changed to T. A. Brouillette & Son.

As the business grew the company needed more space and Brouillette moved the firm to a site on First Street, a location now occupied by Vincennes University. By 1930 this space was not large enough, and a new addition was constructed. In that same year a franchise agreement was reached with General Motors Corporation (GMC) Truck, Trailer, and Taxicab Company, an agreement basically still in effect. As part of the deal, Brouillette obtained trailer chassis from GMC and built and installed van bodies.

In 1941 Thomas died, and Benjamin F. Brouillette and D. R. (Peck) Cole took over the firm. A new addition was built the same year. Six years later the old blacksmith shop was razed to make way for a third addition. After Peck retired, his son, Jim Cole, became the company's general manager. Cole and Tom Brouillette co-owned the business until 1993 when Cole retired. The Brouillette family recaptured sole ownership

of the firm at that time. After 1993 the company added a computer system for inventory and control. Larry W. Summit became the general manager in the mid-1990s, while Tom Brouillette began to concentrate as a sales agent specializing in new vehicle dealerships.

In 1999 the company was a successful GMC medium duty truck dealer that provided GM certified parts and service for Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. The firm continued to fabricate metal at its facility, allowing customers to custom order toolboxes, tanks, and shelving additions to their trucks as well as offering welding repair services.