

Celebrating a Century of Building Achievements

Dunlop & Johnston, Inc. completes 100th year in business with an eye toward the future



Congratulations to Dunlop & Johnston on 100 Years of Building Excellence



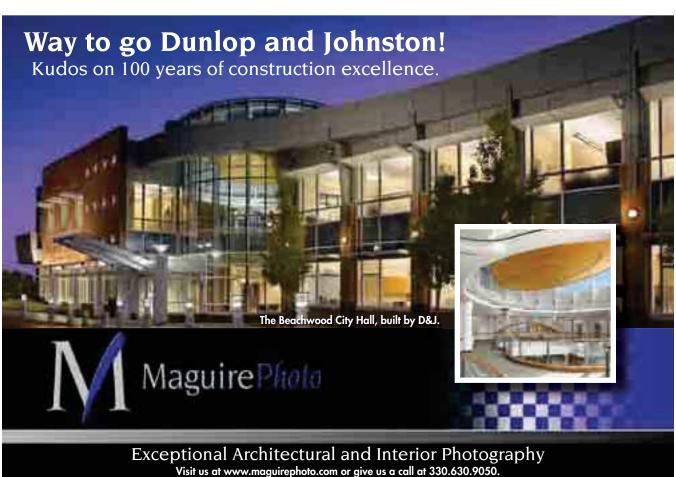
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Celebrating a Century of Building Achievements

Dunlop & Johnston, Inc. completes 100th year in business with an eye toward the future

By Lou Kren | Photos courtesy of Dunlop & Johnson, Inc.

In 1910, the city of Cleveland could have been best described with four Bs: booming, brewing, batting and building. Cleveland recently had overtaken Cincinnati as the largest city in Ohio, and in 1910 boasted 560,000 residents, making it the sixth largest in the United States. Twenty-six breweries served the city, and likely patronizing those beer producers were baseball fans cheering on the Cleveland Naps' Nap Lajoie as he overtook Ty Cobb to win the American League batting title. Of course, the growing metropolis needed facilities for residents and workers, hence the building boom. In 1910, following eight years of construction, the Cleveland Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, a Mall Plan centerpiece, opened on the northeast corner of Public Square.

Also in 1910, albeit with much less fanfare, John Dunlop and Frank Johnston Jr. left their native Scottish shores, arriving in Cleveland and setting up their carpentry business.

Fast-forward 100 years. In 2010, Cleveland's population once again places it behind Cincinnati (and Columbus, too), Cleveland breweries – smaller craft breweries at that – number about a dozen, and we won't even discuss a batting title related to the Cleveland Indians. Yet, a full century later, the U.S. Courthouse

still stands, as does constructor Dunlop & Johnston.

The firm, with 25 employees operating out of its 15,000-square-foot headquarters on three acres in Valley City, has worn many hats through its 100 years to best serve the roller-coaster Northern Ohio development market. The variety of experience and accumulation of expertise is evident in the capabilities offered by Dunlop & Johnston, including general contracting, construction management

and design/build. Be they commercial, industrial, retail, healthcare, interior or public sector, Dunlop & Johnston takes on projects stretching east and west to the state borders and as far south as Columbus and Dayton.

Focus shifted to general contracting

"Since the early-1990s, I would describe our focus as hardcore general contracting," explains Randy Spencer, Dunlop & Johnston president. "And we have been successful due to that

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MAN ON A MISSION President Randy Spencer says Dunlop & Johnston, Inc. has concentrated primarily on "hardcore general contracting" since the early 1990s. That focus, he says, has brought the company success.

focus. For us, general contracting is a core principle."

Randy points to a number of recent projects that reflect the general contracting (GC) capabilities of Dunlop & Johnston, and the firm's reach across the state.

Nearly complete, the Kent State University at Tuscarawas Performing Arts Center in New Philadelphia comprises 50,000 square feet. It includes a 1,100-seat theatre with a mezzanine level and communication balcony as well as a multipurpose rehearsal room, dressing rooms and classrooms. The center's two-level lobby can also be used for conferences and receptions, with seating for 368 guests.

Dunlop & Johnston also served as general contractor for the new 67,506-square-foot French Creek Family YMCA in Avon, which *Properties* featured in its April 2010 issue. The two-story masonry structure, adjacent to the recently built All Pro Freight Stadium on a 122-acre parcel, boasts an eight-lane competitive swimming pool and adjoining family pool, multipurpose gymnasium, running track, fitness and weightlifting center, aerobics space, childcare facilities, whirlpool spa and sauna, cycling studio, and playground.

Scheduled for an August 2011 completion, the \$19 million Regional





TAKING SHAPE A project currently underway for Dunlop & Johnston is the 50,000-square-foot Kent State University at Tuscarawas Performing Arts Center in New Philadelphia. When completed, the building will include a 1,100-seat theatre and a two-level lobby that can be used for conferences and receptions, with seating for 368 guests.

Training Institute (RTI) in Columbus is another Dunlop & Johnston GC job. Constructed for the Ohio National Guard, the RTI will include two wings of hotel rooms, a physical training area and classrooms.

Continuing the focus on Columbus, where Dunlop & Johnston maintains a full-time project superintendent, the firm recently completed the city's Fire Training Center that incorporates four training structures. The

two-story, 26,099-square-foot practical skills building resembles a fully functional fire station and includes six high bays for storing training apparatus. Besides a test course, it also contains a wet area for sprinkler and standpipe training as well as two classrooms featuring state-of-the-art teaching technology. The six-story, 1,672-square-foot training tower provides for high-rise and search-and-rescue training. Each tower level

has removable floor grates, allowing for multi-level confined-space simulations. For live-fire training, a two-story, 1,239-square-foot burn building offers a natural-gas-fired burn simulator on each floor and in the attic. The roof simulator, a single-story, 763-square-foot structure, provides for training in roof-structure ventilation techniques.

And in time for the 2009-2010 school-year opening, Dunlop &

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HELPING HAND Dunlop & Johnston has completed numerous projects for the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, such as the VAMC Canteen (above).

Johnston completed construction on Sycamore Creek Elementary School in Pickerington, just east of Columbus.

In addition, the company, through joint ventures, has numerous general-contractor projects slated or underway at the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Cleveland. (See the September 2010 issue of *Properties* for details.)

Succeeding with educational, healthcare and repeat work

Reflecting the strongest segments of the construction market, the majority of Dunlop & Johnston's current work is related to the public sector, with many projects belonging to educational and healthcare clients. Through aggressive





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REVEALING RANGE A sampling of the company's portfolio shows an assortment of project types: (clockwise from top left) St. Anselm Catholic Church in Chesterland, Lord & Taylor at Columbus' Polaris Mall, Brooklyn Fire Station and University of Akron's Guzzetta Hall Addition.

bidding and the ability to build a backlog of work, Dunlop & Johnston has been able to keep company employment steady while those backlog projects come due. Also aiding activity, Dunlop & Johnston has strove to maintain relationships with satisfied clients, enabling the firm to benefit from repeat business. For example, Dunlop & Johnston was responsible for buildout for a prominent Cleveland law firm as it relocated downtown in the late 1980s. The law firm is still a client, with Dunlop & Johnston maintaining a day-to-day presence there and participating in all of the firm's expansion and renovation work.

Wearing numerous hats

The focus on general contracting and the extension of its working range to central Ohio is a product of Dunlop & Johnston's constant reassessment of the construction market throughout its 100-year history. With initial expertise in carpentry, the private company branched out into whole construction work early on, according to Randy, whose father, Bill Spencer, preceded him as Dunlop & Johnston president.

The building boom of the 1910s created a need for companies to run entire projects as construction managers or general contractors, and Dunlop & Johnston stepped in to help fill that void. During this period, the firm found a large amount of work constructing and adding on to local churches. Incorporated in 1936, Dunlop & Johnston continued as a general contractor and construction manager from its headquarters on Lee Road in Cleveland Heights.

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PAST PROJECTS Throughout the past century, Dunlop & Johnston has worked on a number of landmark area projects. In the late '60s, the company poured the shell for Shamu's aquatic home at Aurora's Sea World (left) and in the '60s it performed work at Cleveland Municipal Stadium. The company also completed projects at Cleveland Hopkins Airport in the 1960s and the Gateway sports complex in the 1990s.

In 1973, the company relocated to Miles Avenue in Warrensville Heights, adding on to its property as the business grew. Eventually, Dunlop & Johnston outgrew its maze of cramped, dark buildings and additions, opting in 2005 to build its new headquarters in Valley City. In the meantime, the company began taking on more concrete work, developing a strong presence in construction of parking-lot structures and related poured-frame concrete work. Among

projects of this era, Dunlop & Johnston erected the main parking garage for Cleveland Hopkins Airport in the early-1960s, performed façade, escalator and bleacher construction at the old Cleveland Municipal Stadium in the late '60s and early '70s, and in 1969 poured the shell for Shamu's aquatic home at Sea World in Aurora.

By the mid-1990s, coming off completion of the Gateway parking garage adjacent to the new sports complex in Downtown Cleveland, Dunlop &

Johnston began shifting away from concrete work, refocusing on its commercial general-contracting core principle. The shift manifested itself in an influx of retail, office and institutional projects for private, public and government clients. That focus continues to this day.

In the business from the ground up

The Spencers have been in the Dunlop & Johnston business family for more than 35 years. Bill began his

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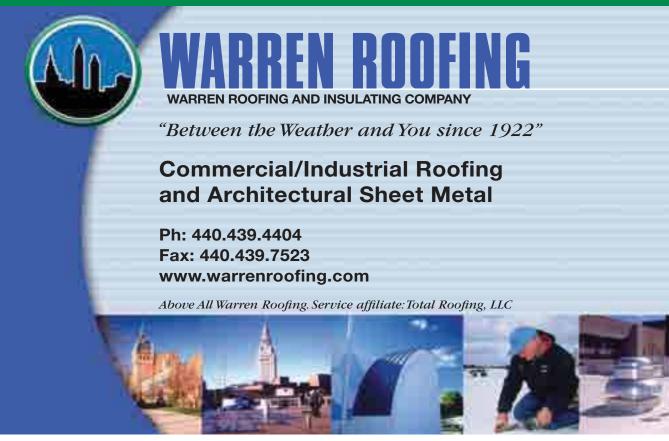
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CLEAR CHOICE When Jones Day decided to refresh the look of an atrium at its world headquarters, the firm selected Dunlop & Johnston to see the work through.

career at the firm in the mid-'70s as a project manager, then estimator, and worked his way up until 2001 when he took over as owner. Bill's entry into the business roughly coincided with the retirement of then-owner Craig Dunlop, the last direct descendant of the original owners still with Dunlop & Johnston. While in high school, Randy began part-time work with Dunlop & Johnston as a general laborer and over 25 years has held nearly every position within the company. Now 41, Randy reflects on how his job path has influenced his management style.

"I was very fortunate to start out in the field, hanging from buildings, freezing in the cold weather and getting dirty," he explains. "That has instilled in me the fact that the people who make these projects happen are the ones in the field. It has given me the understanding of what it takes to get a job done. This work is not easy, but then again, if it were easy, everyone would be doing it."

The acronym SQSP describes the core values of Dunlop & Johnston: Safety, Quality, Schedules and Profitability, which, in that order, guide every decision and every project, according to Randy.

"We train, train," he says, "both inhouse and with the Construction Employers Association."

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The commitment to safety training as well as training to perform jobs correctly and efficiently has paid dividends. Dunlop & Johnston has received CEA's Contractors Safety Award for 15 years running — since the award-program's inception. Additionally, the company is a member of the OSHA Elite Program

in Northern Ohio and participates in the Northeast Ohio Construction Safety Council.

Just as Dunlop & Johnston relies on experienced and well-trained subcontractors at its job sites, it also relies on its experienced and well-trained roster of project managers and superintendents, as well as laborers and in-office estimators and support staff, to succeed. And succeed it has over the past 100 years, earning a reputation as an "on schedule and on budget" contractor, according to Randy. And it continues, to exceed its annual financial goals, he says.

"Our veteran superintendents know safety and they know quality," Randy says, noting that those qualities result in proper scheduling and good relationships with subcontractors and clients alike.

Randy again credits the Dunlop & Johnson staff, and the company's general contracting strength for its ability to weather tough times.

"Of course, it is always challenging to find work," he says, "but it is testimony to the people we have that we have been busy through a difficult industry period, which results from our focus on our core competency in general contracting."

hats off

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Poised for a Bright Future

With 100 years under its belt, Dunlop & Johnston is ready for another century of hard work & success

By Randy Spencer Dunlop & Johnston, Inc.

ooking to the future here at Dunlop & Johnston, we must first look at the past. Throughout its history, the company has seen many technological advances in the industry. When my father first started at Dunlop & Johnston, the company was already well over 50 years old. He told me of the advancement from slide rules to calculators.

Fast-forwarding, I personally have seen the replacement of the old ammonia-smelling blueprint copier with the wide-format print machine. We had also gone from sending out postcards inviting subcontractors to submit proposals on a project that the company was bidding on, to the miracle of sending out faxes. This, of course, is now 'old school,' with the widespread use of e-mail. The projects have also become

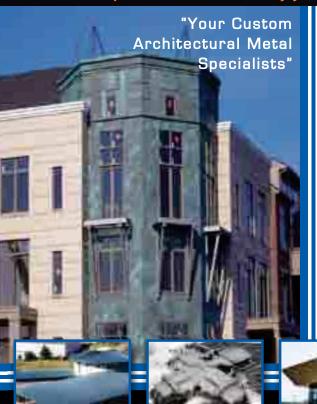
more sophisticated with our computerized project scheduling becoming as intricate as the CAD-designed projects that we are constructing.

The one thing that hasn't changed over time is the fact that hard work yields hard results. My father taught me what I believe his father (a lifelong bricklayer) taught him: It is the people that make the project a success. Every detail boils down to a person executing

that detail, be it a carpenter forming a foundation or a project manager ensuring timely delivery of the materials for the superintendent. Success at any level of measure is earned, and when the people at all levels work in harmony as a team, the level of success compounds exponentially.

This was reinforced as I started working for Dunlop & Johnston in that I was exposed to the kind of people who

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Celebrating 100 Years

believed in this simple principle. With each summer, or Christmas vacation, the tool belt went on and I became acquainted with more and more people of the company, many of whom I still know and consider my best of friends. From the field tradesmen to the superintendents, to the project managers and office staff, the men and women all had

in them a sense of quality and pride that came from working for such an established company. This is the same pride that I feel in myself today and can't help but boast that the current employees at the company share that same sense of tradition.

Looking to the future, the technology continues to evolve. LEED projects

and environmental stewardship have taken firm holds in the industry. Building information modeling (BIM) is the wave of the future and design/build seems to be contemplated more and more. With all of this, it still boils down to our having a family of individuals with a simple work ethic: We will earn our success.

At Dunlop & Johnston Inc., we will endeavor in all facets, both internally and externally, to deliver on our promises to our treasured clients, as well as our valued subcontractors and suppliers, to earn their satisfaction. Dunlop & Johnston's positive reputation was established long before I came around and we will do everything in our minds and hearts to preserve and strengthen it over the next 100 years. It is these previously established principles that have stood the test of time and will guide our way.





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