





Over a

# CENTURY

*of Diverse Construction Solutions*



**Written by William Young**

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**M**cMullen & Pitz Construction Company has over a century of experience in America's construction industry. In 1918, Oliver McMullen, the owner of a small construction company in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, teamed up with businessman Arthur Pitz to form the company that still bears their names. This new company touted a special focus on marine construction with attention paid to Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and the surrounding areas.

The company performed projects in dredging work and dock wall construction for its first few years until landing a large contract for the City of Milwaukee in 1921 for work on Jones Island, a man-made island encompassing the wastewater treatment facility for the greater Milwaukee area. This project is remembered as the one that established McMullen & Pitz and enabled it to ascend to the next level.

Oliver McMullen left the business less than a decade after its inception, selling his interests to contractor Emil Weber but keeping his name on the banner. Weber would become the company's secretary-treasurer, and Arthur Pitz took over running the company with Weber until the former's death a decade or so later, with Arthur's son Willott taking his place.

Willott 'Bubby' Pitz fully took over as company president in 1959 and remained so until his death in 1997, a period noted for bringing the company forward into the modern age. During his three decades as company head, Pitz is credited with introducing newer models of cranes, hiring a new staff of engineers, and landing contracts for new projects for marine infrastructure (i.e. barge work, dredging) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. ▶▶





- ▶ Willott's son Erich eventually took over for his father in 1997 and, unfortunately, passed away himself in October 2020. Until Erich's children can take over management, Vice President Ted Jennejohn is working to bridge the gap between the two generations, as McMullen & Pitz still stands as a family-owned company with over one hundred years to its name and a pillar in its community.

It has always operated as a small company—today sporting around fifteen employees—but it manages to compete successfully with hundred-million-dollar corporations on construction bids. This competitive spirit gives its customers the personal touch of a small business without losing out on large-scale construction services.

The company's family name has also given it a lasting positive reputation. "We put the results over the profits," says Jennejohn. "If we did our job, the profits will be there." Close, personal attention is what he feels separates the company's approach to customer service. As a client's main point of contact, he meets one-on-one to develop solutions and offer support from beginning to end. He finds that many customers like the single point of contact approach to service, and it inspires the company's mission to be as good as its word.





Over the past few years, McMullen & Pitz has increased its revenues by around 50 percent, allowing it to invest further in its equipment, its employees, and the business overall. This success has also permitted it to move forward in modernizing its equipment and approaches, which improves both employee and customer satisfaction.

These upgrades are always necessary, especially where the marine industry is concerned, because a lot of the work is underwater and has obstacles such as low visibility. This is one of few companies in the construction industry with the experience and equipment to overcome these challenges as well as the ability to self-perform nearly every job without the need for multiple subcontractors, making it an in-demand solutions provider for its market and area.

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***“From land-based construction to marine construction to dive work, we can wear a lot of different hats.”***

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McMullen & Pitz continues to keep busy, with its recent projects ranging in size and complexity. One of the company’s most recent involvements was upgrading the terminal for The Lake Michigan Carferry, the SS Badger. The terminal, an extension of US Highway 10, connects Wisconsin to Lower Michigan across Lake Michigan and is a key piece of state infrastructure. The SS Badger itself is also one of the last steam-powered ships in existence, imbuing it with significant historical and economic value.

The workforce had to rebuild the crumbling dock terminal during the winter of 2020 to be ready for May. The \$4.3 million job is the largest single contract in company history. The complex project went swimmingly as the company completed its work on time and within budget, amidst a lot of public attention. ▶▶





- ▶ Other successful projects include a contract in the fall of 2019 for the City of Wausau to upgrade its wastewater system pipelines under the Wisconsin River. This was done while dealing with record rainfall levels and a short project window, challenges the company met on time to the delight of the community. McMullen & Pitz also continues to work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, including a recent project involving the installation of over four thousand feet of steel sheet piling along the Fox River. This project also faced material procurement challenges and difficult underground conditions but was also completed ahead of schedule, a feature that is a signature of the business.



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***"We put the results over the profits."***

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These approaches are nothing without an able workforce, and Jennejohn feels that the company's relatively small size is what helps it nurture this type of atmosphere. "If I hire someone, I am committing to them as they are making a commitment to me to do a safe job," he explains. "We rely on each other."

This commitment helps to deal with external challenges such as an ongoing national labor shortage in the construction field. With McMullen & Pitz's low turnover rate, Jennejohn is relieved not to have to look for workers who may prove unreliable when the existing workforce is so experienced. He continues a commitment to both customer and worker that has been a company value for over one hundred years.

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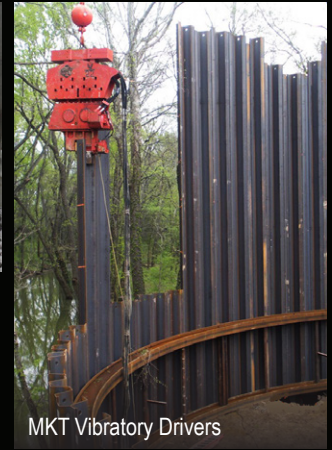
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Over 2022, McMullen & Pitz will investigate expanding its foundation services. Currently, not much drilling work is done by the company, but as equipment continues to be modernized, new machine attachments allow for deep foundation and geotechnical work. The company wants to expand its services to take on any job necessary in the industry and even larger projects.

Jennejohn notes that construction will always have a constant flow of ups and downs, especially when factoring in recent developments like national inflation and widespread material shortages, which can make procurement and meeting project schedules difficult. Long-lasting relationships with trustworthy

vendors are always a great help to mitigate such challenges, and Jennejohn credits the company's business relationships for helping to deal with these problems head-on.

The goal of McMullen & Pitz is not to expand too rapidly as the company is unwilling to sacrifice quality. Instead, further expansion will permit the company to accept more projects and bring its brand of construction solutions to more customers in need. "From land-based construction, to marine construction, to dive work, we can wear a lot of different hats and provide a lot of different services," says Jennejohn, summing up the company's multifaceted approach to the construction sector. ■

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