

WISCONSIN Constructor®

A Publication of the Associated General Contractors of Wisconsin

ISSUE 1 • 2009

Quasius Construction

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT LAST



Quasius Construction

by Mark Crawford

It is not easy staying in business for over a century—it requires steady vision, unwavering commitment to quality and integrity, and the desire to listen closely to a client's needs.

"We make our clients' concerns, our concerns," says Matt Quasius, Director of Operations for Quasius Construction Inc., a general contractor based in Sheboygan for 118 years. "That is the way we have done business since my great grandfather started the company in 1891", he adds.

Today, Quasius Construction provides general construction, construction management, and design-build delivery services. It specializes in the industrial, retail, office/medical, commercial, and institutional markets and self-performs demolition, rough and finish carpentry, masonry, concrete, and millwork.

"About 30 to 40 percent of our volume comes through hard bidding," says Quasius. "The remaining 60 to 70 percent is a mix of design/build and negotiated general contractor work." Anchored by a strong base of repeat clients, Quasius Construction generates annual sales of about \$20 million, making it a leading construction firm in eastern Wisconsin.



Sheboygan — home of Quasius Construction since 1891.

A skilled carpenter, George Quasius founded the company in 1891 and focused largely on building private homes in Sheboygan and eastern Wisconsin. In the 1930s his sons, Arthur, Raymond and Leslie, joined the firm and helped expand it into light commercial and industrial construction. Being on the leading edge of new markets has always been a trademark of Quasius Construction—in the 1970s and 1980s it moved aggressively into the retail market, constructing 40 department and discount stores for the H.C. Prange Company over a three-state area. It also did much of the extensive renovation that transformed Kohler's American Club into a luxury hotel complex. In 1993, David Quasius, George's grandson, became President. Matt Quasius, Director of Operations, joined the company in 2003 and represents the fourth-generation of Quasius leadership.

Quasius Construction continues to evolve, responding to changing markets and incorporating new technologies and services to provide as much added value for clients as possible. "We are always looking for ways to do things better," says Quasius. "We have greatly expanded our project management team and our focus and ability to deliver a multitude of construction services. Every employee is focused on building relationships. We want to be the first call when a client has a building-related question or is contemplating work. From site selection and feasibility analysis to preliminary design and cost benefit analysis, our mission is to provide the options that enable our clients to make smart and informed business decisions."

"We strive to do what is in our customer's best interest. Which is occasionally not what they initially ask us to do" says Quasius. "For example, we had an opportunity to submit a design-build proposal to a prospective client for a large addition. The company explained what they were looking for and asked for a conceptual plan and budget. After a lot of head-scratching, we came to the conclusion that their proposed plan really did not fit their needs. As a result, we presented four options—three variations on what they had requested and a completely differ-



Jefferson Elementary School — Sheboygan, WI

ent fourth option. After a lengthy Friday meeting in which option 4 was not being embraced we left their office thinking, 'Well, it was worth a try.' With a weekend to think about it, we got the call Monday morning that they'd like to talk more about option 4. That is the one they went with and we have done other projects for them since. They told us they liked 'that we didn't just do what they had asked, we did much more – we understood their needs and presented options.'"

Workforce Excellence

As a union contractor, Quasius Construction is signatory to the Carpenters, Laborers, and Masons and employs the top talent in the area. This is reflected by the high quality of work, outstanding safety record, and low worker turnover. Dave Quasius, President, has been working in the family business since 1972. He states that "our commitment to building relationships is reflected company wide. We are excep-

tionally proud of our ability to retain high-caliber people throughout the organization. Many of our field personnel have 20 or more years of experience with Quasius. Vice presidents and owners, Steve Woods and Gerry Jochman, joined Quasius in 1985. Additionally, front office staff Lisa Evraets and Jenifer Wilke celebrate 20 and 30 year anniversaries with Quasius in 2009."

"With that kind of tenure, it is important not to get too comfortable with the status quo. The best way to keep getting better and more efficient, as well as add value for clients, is through education and training," continues Dave. This includes keeping clients informed about different delivery systems and building techniques and materials, including energy efficiency and green building.

Quasius Construction encourages continuing education training for both field and office personnel. "Working



Sheboygan Police Department — Sheboygan, WI



Longfellow Elementary — Sheboygan, WI

together with local and regional union trainers, we routinely host hands-on and classroom training sessions for our workforce on a variety of important topics," says Dave. "We've been especially impressed with our local carpenters and their willingness to partner with us to offer project-specific onsite training sessions, such as scaffolding, forklift, and OSHA. Several of our employees individually compiled over 100 hours of training for 2008."

Quasius Construction has been a member of the AGC since 1989. "We've been extremely pleased with the AGC, as our 20 years of membership will attest. From the AGC's advocacy work on both state and nationwide levels, to its safety and educational programs we believe the vision and mission of the AGC to be right on. It is especially difficult for small and medium size contractors to be experts in everything. That's where membership with the AGC can be a tremendous benefit."

Communication skills are paramount for safety, efficiency, quality. "From shop foremen to the President, the importance of good communication cannot be overemphasized," Quasius says. "Projects aren't completed individually—it takes a large team, from architects and engineers to subcontractors and suppliers, working with our project management and field forces, to get the job done. Great communication results in a high-quality product, on-time and within-budget delivery, and satisfied owners."

Outstanding communication is also essential for building relationships among employees, clients, and the community. "Quasius Construction and our employees are very active with several local not-for-profits, including the YMCA, Bookworm Gardens, RCS Empowers (a rehabilitation center), Rebuilding Together, and the John Michael Kohler Arts Center," says Quasius. "At our annual holiday party we encourage guests to donate to a Salvation Army Kettle and the company then matches the amount collected. For our 2008 event, Quasius Construction raised \$8,000 for the Salvation Army."

In addition to financial contributions, the company recently built and



Sharon S. Richardson Hospice —
Sheboygan Falls, WI



donated a ten-position awards platform for the National YMCA gymnastics competition. President Dave Quasius, along with other Sheboygan business people and celebrities, participated in a "Dancing with the Stars" fundraiser for Lakeland College. Quasius Construction is also partnering with the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and artist Anne Wallace to install an original, public art piece that celebrates the community and the individual stories of local families that make the community unique. Quasius will form and pour the sidewalks and work with the artist and community volunteers to stamp the stories and embed imagery into the sidewalks – paving the way for a walk through local history.

Selected Projects

Sheboygan Police Department, Sheboygan

This \$6.7-million project was completed in November 2008. The new headquarters for the Sheboygan Police Department consists of 33,626 square feet of offices, specialty spaces, lockers, interview rooms, evidence processing, and municipal courtroom and 10,517 square feet of vehicle garage and drive-

through sally port. "The new building is located on an old landfill that was closed and covered in the 1960s," says project manager and vice president Gerald Jochman. "Foundations were reinforced with geopiers compacted under strip footings." The steel-frame construction supports horizontal metal siding and decorative masonry. The courtroom is covered with insulated channel glass on two sides for maximum natural light.

"Quasius was very easy to work with," says Sheboygan Chief Tim Eirich. "They were always accessible and had the best interest of the city and police department at heart. Team leaders were quick to point out deficiencies in our plan and how we could save money and still have the building we wanted. They saved the city about \$300,000."

Sharon S. Richardson Hospice, Sheboygan Falls

A community hospice home for terminally ill patients, this \$5.8-million, 29,878-square-foot building provides three patient wings with 18 rooms, complete food preparation and dining facilities, nursing stations, family lounges, library, and chapel and set in a

beautifully rural setting. The grounds are landscaped with natural flower gardens, a gazebo, paths, and pond.

High clerestory lighting is provided in all the wings, which are laid out in a 60-degree fan from each other "to allow better views of the gardens and outdoor landscaping from each room, incorporating the maximum natural light and beauty," says Jochman. The layout was challenging because each wing has several sawtooth walls that maximize exposure to the outdoors, with double-wide French doors that allow patients to be wheeled outside their rooms if they desired.

"The onsite job superintendent and other staff were readily available and responsive as daily decisions needed to be made," says Nichol Slabe, administrator and CEO for the hospice. "The weekly construction meetings were a helpful communication tool that brought owner representatives together with all the key contractor representatives to address questions and issues in a timely manner. Everyone who visits our center is impressed with the design and construction of this beautiful building."



Bethlehem United Church of Christ — Kiel, WI



Lakeland College, South Hall — Sheboygan, WI



Stefanie H. Weill Center — Sheboygan, WI

**Jefferson Elementary School,
Sheboygan**

This \$7.1-million, 58,000-square foot elementary school for the Sheboygan Area School District was built in 2005-2006. "The structural steel support skeleton was designed for a possible future third floor," says project manager Steve Woods. "As a cost-savings measure, the exterior walls are structural-steel stud curtain walls with sheathing and facebrick. An interesting design detail was salvaging some of the stone arches and columns from the existing building for reuse on the interior of the new school."

Safety, coordination, and planning were especially important for this two-phase project, which involved constructing the new school less than 10 feet from an occupied 1895 three-story school. With only limited space for construction materials and trailers on the inner-city site, extra care and planning were necessary to insure safe access for students, teachers, and parents while keeping the jobsite secure and all subcontractors productive.

"As with most school projects, finishing late was not an option," says Woods. "The aggressive schedule, hampered by delays in steel delivery, was achieved and the move from the old school to new school occurred as planned over spring break."

"This was a very complex project," states Wayne Kolzow, the recently retired coordinator of facilities services for the district. "Quasius was a valuable member of the project team and their expertise in construction management was an important component in each phase. They provided a high level of coordination and communication, which was critical to the successful completion of the project within the established timeline and budget."

**Bethlehem United Church of Christ,
Kiel**

Quasius Construction built this \$1.1-million, 11,900-square-foot church June through December 2005. Features include a sanctuary, gathering space, offices, classrooms, and kitchen. Construction consisted of wood framing with scissor trusses over the sanctuary. The existing steeple was renovated and stained-glass windows from the original church were salvaged as

design elements, blending the old with the new.

"We worked with the church building committee for three years while the decision to either build an addition to the existing church or a new church was debated," says Woods. "Only through multiple design options and cost-benefit analyses was consensus reached to build a new church, rather than add on to the existing building."

"Quasius was very professional," says Gene Radder, building and ground chairman for Bethlehem United Church of Christ. "I was in contact with them every morning at 6:45 to discuss what was going to get done that day, and it always got done. There was not a single change order and it came in at exactly the cost they promised. They showed tremendous leadership throughout the project and the quality of the building is above what we were expecting."

Lakeland College, South Hall, Herman

This \$2.08-million, 14,560-square-foot resident apartment complex accommodates 64 students. Features include 2,700 square feet of commons space, a two-story stone fireplace, large-screen TVs, and a serving kitchen. "The wood-frame exterior is clad with aluminum and brick veneer," says Jochman. "Two-story glass exposes the front of the commons at the entrance." Challenges included a very tight budget and the proximity of the construction site to a designated wetland area.

"The Quasius staff was easy to work with, knowledgeable, and professional," says Lew Apel, director of facility management and planning for Lakeland College. "They always responded right away to any questions or issues. We received a building that met our vision, being both functional and attractive, on time, and within budget."

Leonard Louis A. Gentine Center, Plymouth

Sargento Foods hired Quasius Construction in 2007 to undertake this \$2-million, 16,000-square-foot remodeling project, which consisted of remodeling a former mechanical fabrication shop into a modern technology center with



Leonard Louis A. Gentine Center — Plymouth, WI



both private and open office spaces and a multiple-use training center. (Quasius Construction built the original building in 1971.) According to Chris Meyer, Facility Engineer for Sargento Foods, "Quasius did an exceptional job of meshing the actual site conditions to plan and specification variances and the original warehouse and shop design to new 'open style' offices, and deciphering the actual needs and wishes of the Sargento design team (including one very persnickety Lou Gentine)."

"Windows and skylights were added to bring in an abundance of outside light," says Woods. "All exterior walls were rebuilt with structural steel studs with a detailed EIFS applied as the finished surface. With new MEP systems installed, this is essentially a new building."

The Future

Quasius Construction will keep doing business the way it always has – building relationships that last. The economy, of course, is a challenge, both for the company and its clients.

"With announcements of layoffs everywhere you look, it can be hard to keep in mind that not all companies are closing their doors or laying off employees," he says. "Many companies are holding their own, and those with

certain specialties are thriving. Tough times can separate leaders from the rest of the pack. With a proactive approach and a positive attitude, we plan to lead the way."

Overall, 2009 has been a little slower than the peak a few years ago, but steady. "The bid market has been very competitive but there are opportunities out there," says Quasius. "New projects are not quite as large as those we're completing now, but that is okay. As some projects in the pipeline have been put on hold, other opportunities have arisen. We are also taking advantage of the slowdown to update marketing material, revisit our strategic plan, and do more training."

Quasius Construction is also continuing to build its relationships with clients through this downturn. "We are doing our very best to partner with clients and prospects to get the most out of their construction planning, even if it is just answering questions about the market right now, building designs or material costs, financing options, or suggesting other ways to approach a decision they need to make," says Quasius. "They know they can depend on us to be there." ■

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