Notes From The Director

The last few weeks have been pretty busy. I attended the Northeast Precast Concrete Association Winter Conference which included a full day of educational presentations. Later that week I set up a display table to represent PCANY at the Eastern NY celebration of Engineer’s Week in Albany. Over 800 engineers were registered for this two-day event giving me the opportunity to show off our member’s accomplishments with a looping Power Point presentation comprised of past projects from our newsletter. The PCANY 2015 Buyer's Guide turned out to be a popular giveaway with nearly 30 hard copies being handed out (I could have given away more but I ran out). If you are receiving this newsletter and your firm is not yet a member, please consider joining to get your listing in the Buyer's Guide and to help support our efforts to educate and promote the use of quality precast concrete products. You can apply for membership right on our website.

Finally, I had the extreme pleasure of attending The Precast Show in Orlando last week as a committee member and speaker. This event included hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of attendees from all over the US, Canada, and beyond. NPCA offered many educational programs for attendees in the areas of production, quality, technical, sustainability, and management. I am already looking forward to next year’s show in Nashville.

Warmest Regards,

Ronald E. Thornton, P.E.
Franklin Falls Bridge over Saranac River

Submitted by: Erin S. Bullard, Barton & Loguidice, D.P.C.

The Franklin Falls Bridge over the Saranac River serves as an important link for the communities both east and west of the structure as it is the only major crossing of the Saranac River between Saranac Lake and Clayburg. Closing the bridge to traffic for construction required that the traveling public utilize a 28 mile detour that winded through the northern Adirondacks. So, getting the bridge back open as quickly as possible was a major goal for this project. Precast concrete abutments and prestressed concrete beams were specified in order to help expedite construction.

The original Franklin Falls bridge was constructed in 1949 and consisted of an 80 foot long, multiple steel girder superstructure supported on gravity abutments to bedrock. The original abutments were constructed on a bedrock shelf, with water depths exceeding 30 feet immediately in front of the footings. In addition to the deep water, the site encompassed numerous design challenges including: bedrock elevations varying from 10 to 25 feet below the roadway surface; bedrock outcrops on both approaches, which limited alignment alternatives and restricted the area to operate cranes and other equipment; high voltage transmission lines located upstream of the bridge; and a power generating dam located just downstream. When evaluating alternatives, conventional replacement would have closed the bridge for too long and money was simply not available for a temporary on-site detour structure. Also, constructing the bridge on a new upstream alignment was infeasible due to the proximity of high voltage overhead transmission lines that could not be relocated. For these reasons, it was decided to close the road to traffic and replace the existing structure with precast concrete components in order to minimize closure time.

The new abutments were constructed approximately 10 feet behind the existing substructures, which allowed for much of the work to be completed prior to shutting the road down to traffic. New precast abutments are supported on drilled 8-inch diameter micropiles installed 10 feet into bedrock and cut and capped approximately 6 inches below the pavement. This allowed the pile foundation to be installed and covered while maintaining traffic through the site.

The new 100'-0" long prestressed concrete box beam superstructure with an asphalt wearing surface was then installed on the precast abutments. All work was completed and the bridge was re-opened to traffic on the 19th day following the closure.

Project Credits:

Owner: Franklin County, NY
Engineer: Barton & Loguidice, DPC, Syracuse, NY
Contractor: Commercial Contracting, Malone, NY
Precast Sub-Structure: The Fort Miller Company, Schuylerville, NY
Prestressed Beams: Jefferson Concrete Corp. Watertown, NY
Erie Canal Parking Area Retaining Wall

Submitted by Mike Kistner of Kistner Concrete Products

This project included earthwork and approximately 2000 Sq. ft. of limestone retaining wall. Constructing a 17’ high retaining wall with limestone was both structurally challenging and cost-prohibitive. The solution to this challenge was an architecturally pleasing and locally manufactured precast gravity wall with a limestone face. Redi-Rock Retaining Wall System meets NYSDOT Specification 554 “Mechanically Stabilized Wall Systems”. The wall is located in a designated historical area at the foot of Pine St. in downtown Lockport, NY (Also the location of Historic Erie Canal Locks 34 & 35). As such, it was imperative that the wall fit the historic nature of the area. Redi-Rock Limestone was the perfect solution for a natural & historic look.

Project Credits:
Owner: City of Lockport, NY
Contractor: Empire Dismantlement, Grand Island, NY
Engineer: CRA Engineering
Surveyor: Apex Consulting,
Precast Manufacturer: Kistner Concrete Products, Lockport, NY

As a bagpiper, I play many gigs. Recently I was asked by a funeral director to play at a graveside service for a homeless man. He had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper’s cemetery in the back country. As I was not familiar with the backwoods, I got lost and, being a typical man, I didn’t stop for directions.

I finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral guy had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight. There were only the diggers and crew left and they were eating lunch.

I felt badly and apologized to the men for being late. I went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. I didn’t know what else to do, so I started to play.

The workers put down their lunches and began to gather around. I played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends. I played like I’ve never played before for this homeless man. And as I played ‘Amazing Grace,’ the workers began to weep. They wept, I wept, we all wept together. When I finished I packed up my bagpipes and started for my car. Though my head hung low, my heart was full. As I opened the door to my car, I heard one of the workers say, “I never seen nothin’ like that before and I’ve been putting in septic tanks for twenty years.”

On the Lighter Side
Happy St. Patrick’s Day
Oldcastle Precast to Supply Prospect Plaza Housing

Oldcastle Precast Building Systems was selected as the primary precast concrete contractor for phase 1 of NYC Housing Authority’s new facilities at Prospect Plaza in the Oceanhill-Brownsville community of Brooklyn.  (See article)

PCA Supports Stronger Building Codes to Limit Fire Damage

The Portland Cement Association (PCA) has expressed its support for stronger building codes following a January fire at the Avalon at Edgewater complex in New Jersey, which displaced almost 1000 residents. The fire spread rapidly through the building due to the wood-frame truss construction used. (See article)

Spring PCANY/DOT Meetings Scheduled

Mark your calendars for our Spring 2015 meetings to be held Thursday April 23 with our morning session at AGC Headquarters, 10 Airline Dr. and the afternoon joint meeting with NYSDOT at 50 Wolf Rd. Election of 2015-2016 officers will be held during the morning session.

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