

**THE HASS BROTHERS**  
**Valley Construction Company**  
*Building on Traditions*

At the age of 12 or 13, most boys are limited to building basic backyard forts. But for brothers John, Jim and Bill Hass this was never the case. To them, building things meant going to work on a real construction site. Their father, Arthur J. Hass, founded Valley Construction Co., performing various small paving jobs around the Quad Cities. He started the company in 1923 on less than \$3,000 with only a used steam concrete mixer and horse-drawn roller. The loss of both parents at a young age forced Art to recognize early on that hard work would be the sole key to his success. His story is one familiar to the era. Art's grandfather had emigrated from Germany to the United States in the 1850s and his father, Walter Hass, was born in Davenport. A building contractor and alderman for the city, Walter Hass built the first structurally formed concrete building in Davenport, the former Peterson Paper building, which still stands on the Southeast corner of Pershing and Second Street.

Born just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Walter's son, Arthur J. Hass was indeed a product of his time. The United States had established itself as a world power and the American dream was alive in everyone's mind. For the first time in history, America's population was higher in urban areas than rural parts of the country. Paved road systems were soon needed to accommodate increasing commercial and automobile traffic, creating new opportunities in the construction market.

Art Hass took advantage of these openings. In 1922, he joined Western States Paving, becoming well versed in road construction techniques used during the period. The following year, at the age of 21, he left to establish Valley Construction Co. with financial help from a local investor.

Incorporated in 1925, Valley Construction focused on quality and customer satisfaction. One of its first jobs involved paving city streets in nearby Clinton, Iowa. From those profits, Valley was able to buy a new Rex paver and expand its paving ventures. With work continuing to grow around the area, Art bought a new 1928 Model A Ford company car, which the company still has as a reminder of those early years. Even the Depression of the 1930s could not overtake such determination. In the interest of continuing to serve his customers, Art found himself borrowing against his life insurance policy during this period just to keep the company going. WWII helped to create government work on Arsenal Island in the next decade, while the housing boom of the Fifties provided additional work constructing new subdivisions, as well as county and municipal work throughout the area. Then, in 1958, Valley began building the approaches for the Iowa Illinois Memorial Bridge, now the I-74 Bridge. Although it was an extremely large project, Valley had proven over the years it was just the type of work the company was qualified to do.

What Art Hass hadn't realized at the time was that the most important road he would pave would be for his sons. Today the Hass brothers say their father will always be an inspiration, along with the family support their mother provided. Their father's legacy exemplifies many companies that expanded under profound leadership. Seeing his dedication allowed second-generation owners John, Jim and Bill to take the reigns with a solid vision for the future. None of them had ever questioned whether or not they would join the business, and through the 1960s they came to work as full-time members of the Valley team. Each brother had developed a passion for working in the industry, and clearly, no one was more poised to handle the transition.

Since then, John, Jim and Bill have diversified Valley Construction into a multi-faceted business. They operate concrete paving, asphalt, underground utilities and industrial divisions while also performing demolition, grading and site development services. Chairman of the Board John Hass is

highly active in the community. As past president of the Rock Island Chamber of Commerce, Development Association of Rock Island and the Rock Island Economic Growth Corp, John serves as director of one of our area's largest banks and is an influential economic development leader in the Quad Cities. He has also been a police commissioner for the City of Rock Island for 32 years. Brother Jim Hass oversees Valley's real estate developments and farming operations. He is a licensed attorney and has been instrumental in planning some of this area's most prestigious subdivisions. Jim sits on many community organizational boards, currently serving as chair of the Trinity Medical Center Board. Bill Hass manages Valley's construction operations and coordinates all field activities for the company, visiting every job site on a near daily basis. He also gives his time serving on the Rock Island County Sheriff's Department Merit Board. Together, the three Hass brothers have over 100 years of combined business experience.

The third generation of the Hass family is a significant part of Valley's operations as well. Gregory Hass is an active management leader vastly involved with labor and political relations, and set to be the next president of the Associated General Contractors of Illinois in Springfield, a large Illinois construction trade association.

Since taking ownership of the company, the Hass Brothers have overseen numerous large projects and earned recognition for Valley as one of our area's most respected full-service contractors. Under their ownership, Valley consistently employs the latest technology on all of its projects, maintaining its own asphalt and portable concrete plants. Valley purchased Timberline Construction in 1970, adding to its earthwork and grading capabilities. Eight years later the company began development of the 168-acre Wildwood subdivision in Rock Island and Moline, the largest project of its kind in the Illinois Quad Cities.

The following decade, Valley bought Central Engineering, a large Davenport area contractor. Soon after, the company was awarded two of the biggest paving operations to impact both sides of the river – the expansion of the John Deere Road corridor in Illinois and the east end of 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in Iowa. These areas would explode with growth over the next several years, further placing Valley in our community's history.

All the brothers agree that the best part of their job is seeing the results of their efforts firsthand. They often remember the joy their father took in pointing out projects Valley had completed. Now they, too recognize the same feeling, perhaps on an even greater scale. The family of employees at Valley Construction numbers approximately 200, with many supplying decades of continuous service. Some are second-generation employees committed to carrying on their family's work at Valley. "Much of our success is attributable to God's blessings, our dedicated employees and the support of our wives and families," the Hasses say.

For a company like Valley to operate effectively, plenty of attention is focused on the relationship between labor and management. The company has an excellent reputation among the Building Trade Unions with a Hass family member serving on each of the union negotiating committees. Safety is also imperative for Valley Construction. The incident rate is typically thirty to forty percent less than the national average and the company consistently receives recognition for its safety performance, even when work includes demanding projects like those for the nuclear and chemical industries. In fact, the brothers just completed construction on their fifth nuclear storage pad facility under the scrutiny of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission... how far things have come!

To be sure, the journey for John, Jim and Bill does not end here. Driving around the Quad Cities we travel their roads, admire the sites they have developed and the facilities they've constructed. Their contributions to both their company and our community are such that it's hard to know what to expect next. Of course, they will never stop being brothers, always keeping the Valley family at the forefront of business and continuing to build on their father's traditions of hard work and business excellence.