

# A Century of Transformation

The Story of Knutson Construction Services



## Modest Beginnings

Knutson Construction Services had modest beginnings. In 1902, Thor Knutson, an immigrant from Norway, worked as a dollar-a-day carpenter. By 1910 he had fulfilled his goal of paying off his father's farm debts in Norway, and the following year founded a company in Minnesota, Standard Construction. His carpentry expertise, emphasis on accurate estimating, and his team of trusted employees quickly earned him clients.

During World War I Standard Construction Co. was awarded \$23 million in government contracts employing more than 3,000 men. Planes were able to use Wold Chamberlain Field when the company completed renovations in just two months. In addition to bringing the project \$900,000 under budget, Knutson and his team received high praise from the Army engineers. Although wartime economic ups and downs crushed many businesses and construction companies, Thor Knutson's successes during that time were attributed to a simple rule of thumb: Honesty.

Thor's son, Donald, earned degrees in architecture and engineering from the University of Minnesota, and at the age of 33, in 1954, had become president of Standard Construction Co.

## Shaping the Twin Cities

Many landmark buildings bear the mark of Knutson's construction expertise. Over the years, Knutson has worked on libraries, museums, hospitals, government facilities, environmental facilities, and schools. From 1961 to 1975, the company had exclusive rights to a 16-block section of Minneapolis near Washington and Hennepin Avenues. Projects realized during this era included the Northwestern National Life Insurance building, Minneapolis Public Library, Federal Reserve Bank Building, the old Sheraton-Ritz Hotel and IBM buildings, and the Northern States Power Co. building, among others. In other areas of the Twin Cities they built the Northwest Airlines hangar, Hennepin Government Center, and several hospitals. In 1966, Standard Construction Co. changed its name to Knutson Construction.

## A New Era of Leadership

By 1984, another generation was sitting at the helm of the company. Donald's son Bruce became the acting president, but because his true passion was architecture, his father put the company up for sale in 1985 upon retirement.

John Curry and Jim Michael first met as 18-year-old college students, and remained close friends. Jim Michael was a successful real estate and property developer



across the United States while John Curry had spent most of his professional career with Dayton's before becoming president of Knutson Construction from 1974 to 1983. After having retired, John and Jim formed a partnership in 1985 and purchased the company. Curry was named president and CEO and Michael served as chairman of Michael/Curry Companies, the new holding company for Knutson Construction.



The process of keeping the company in the Knutson family did not stop when John Curry stepped on board. On September 15, 1986, his son Steve joined the company as Vice President and Assistant to the President. With marketing and management being his forte and with several summers of construction experience during college breaks, Steve was no stranger to the industry. Since 1992, Steve Curry has been President and CEO of Knutson Construction.

## Growth & Expansion

Over the next five years, the company continued to grow. Knutson opened its Iowa City office in 1982; added the Cabarrus Construction Company, Inc. from North Carolina in 1992; and the Rochester Office joined the Michael/Curry family in 1997. To establish a seamless identity throughout the four locations, Knutson Construction Companies became Knutson Construction Services as it is known today.

## Enduring Relationships

Nearly a century later, Knutson has been transformed into one of the leading construction firms in the upper Midwest. Our skilled and passionate construction professionals provide a backbone of strong and enduring client relationships. We have excellent partnerships with architects, engineers, and trusted legions of subcontractors throughout the communities we serve. And most important, Thor's emphasis on integrity remains at the core of Knutson's relationships.