Dust defines brick plant job for Able Painting

BY THE

Paul Symchysn oversees the relationship between his firm, Able Painting Contractors, and Brampton Brick.

Ambient dust is a normal condition at many industrial painting sites, but in a brick manufacturing plant, the gritty residue becomes a genuine obstacle.

Nonetheless, it was an obstacle that Paul Symchysn of Able Painting Contractors in Toronto was able to overcome successfully.

And that success isn't achieved alone. It includes the proper combination of dedicated and highly professional employees, technical assistance and support from the coatings manufacturer and most importantly, the support of Brampton Brick, a major maker of decorative construction brick in North America.

Brampton Brick produces 120 million Queen-sized bricks each year out of this 250,000 square foot facility located in the Toronto suburb of Brampton. As a testament to the quality of Brampton's product, its production is sold out for 24 months in advance.

15 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Symchysn, a 37-year-old veteran of industrial and commercial coatings work, has 15 years of experience in commercial coatings to draw upon, including nine as the principal in Able Painting Contractors.

Before founding Able in 1991, he spent two years shadowing now-retired Stan A. Gillespie, the patriarch of A. Gillespie Painting and Paul's mentor. That experience proved valuable as he developed the one-year-old business relationship between Brampton Brick and Able Painting Contractors.

Able's first opportunity to work with Brampton Brick was renewal of the coatings on production machines and auxiliary equipment such as water tanks, conveyor systems and other related material-handling system components.

The common denominator in brick production is clay dust, even though Brampton's state-of-the-art dust collection system captures some 1,100 tons a day and recycles it into the product. It is reddish, exceedingly fine and can be found literally anywhere inside the plant, including the surfaces that Able had to coat on its first phase, as well as all subsequent phases of its work at Brampton.

BRICK

QUICK APPLICATION

"Our prep for the first phase was to carefully air blast the clay dust off the surfaces," explains Symchysn. "We also used tools such as wire brushes as needed. We then, as quickly as practical, applied our coatings with airless spray where we could and used the brush and roll method where the situation dictated."

The effect was noticeable to say the least.

The safety reds and yellows, the high gloss black on beams and the green on water tanks glistened by comparison to what had been the norm. The contrast was noted by Brampton officials — Paul remembers one summing it up by saying, "I really didn't think it could be done." The next step was to do the plant's walls.

Using Sherwin-Williams DTM Acrylic, DTM Wash Primer and Macropoxy 646, Able set about carefully coating the interior vertical walls throughout the brick plant.

"Recognizing that the reddish clay dust is an ongoing reality in this facility, we formulated a special color we call Clay Tan for Brampton Brick," Paul explains. "It harmonizes with the clay dust color, rather than creating a contrast as stark as a basic white color would."

As with the machine painting phase, "working around" Brampton's employees and processes was a major consideration. When the plant "slowed down" to a single 12-hour shift on Saturdays and Sundays, one of Able's regular teams doubled or tripled in size. During the week, Able personnel worked with Brampton department supervisors and plant manager Ziggy Pabla. Together, they determined where and when they could work throughout the course of the several weeks it took to do the walls.

"Communication at all levels really determines whether the job goes well," Symchysn explains.

As the walls neared completion, Brampton officials asked Symchysn if he could also paint the ceiling.

'DUE DILIGENCE'

"Naturally, we were interested," he says. "This gave me the opportunity to test which coatings would work best, then explain my findings to our customer. It's a natural for me, with my coatings chemistry background and knowledge of various ASTM test methods, to want to fully examine coatings options. I consider it 'due diligence' and I thoroughly enjoy doing it."

Symchysn likes to collaborate on such testing for optimum results.

"Rick Williams, Sherwin-Williams corrosion engineer, plays a key role in our testing of coatings," Symchysn adds. "He helps ensure that we and our customers are using the best products available. That teamwork really helps us to differentiate ourselves in this market and provide the reliability and results that customers expect."

Using pieces of the actual vinyl-coated insulation panels that comprise the plant's ceiling, Symchysn applied various coatings systems. After

New coatings, such as the safety yellow shown here, left an impression that was noticed by officials at Brampton Brick.

At a Glance

PROJECT
Brick manufacturing facility, Toronto

COATING SYSTEM
Primer: DTM Wash Primer, 2.0 mils dft
Intermediate: Macropoxy 646, 3.0-5.0 mils dft
Topcoat: DTM Acrylic, 5.0 mils dft

CONTRACTOR
Able Painting Contractors

Paul Symchysn (center) and his Able Painting crew used Sherwin-Williams DTM Acrylic to successfully complete the ceiling at Brampton Brick despite temperatures that pushed 110 degrees F.

comparative analysis, it became apparent that Sherwin-Williams DTM Acrylic would do the best job.

"We needed a coating that would bond with the acrylic surface and the adjacent structural steel, achieve the proper total dft of 5 mils, and adhere strongly, again all with only minimum prep work," Symchysn points out. "Our options were very limited, We still only had the option of air blasting the ceiling panels, doing minimal tool work on the surfaces and then using airless spray technology to apply the paint.

"In addition to getting the right coating for the ceiling, we needed to be able to do our work over the kilns and all the other equipment while it was operating. On the walls and machines, we used a combination of boom lifts, scissor lifts and scaffolding to help us get where we had to be.

"But for ceiling phase, we developed a swing stage, sized to fit the span between the I-beams and carry itself from the 52-foot center peak of the ceiling to the lower tops of the outside walls using just the force of gravity. The swing stage incorporates rollers that sit firmly on the I-beams of the structure and allow it to roll downward as it is guided by the painters, with primary and secondary safety lines in place."

As with the prep work on the walls, the ceiling was carefully air blasted, hand tools were used for touch up areas, a "stripe coat" was applied to areas that needed it, and then Clay Tan DTM Acrylic was applied to achieve the 5-mil dft. The airless spray also served to disperse any clay dust that might have settled on the ceiling since the air blast.

Temperatures at the ceiling still reached 110 degrees F despite painters doing most of the ceiling work during the winter. Symchysn made sure that safety remained a priority in such conditions.

"Safety is the single overriding concern I have on most jobs, so our painters worked a maximum of three hours on the swing stage. Then they descended and took a full hour break before resuming. They carefully monitored one another throughout the time they were at the ceiling."

In sort of a final coup, the doors of the kilns were successfully coated with Sherwin-Williams High Heat Flat Black while the kilns themselves were in full and continuous operation.

So, what's next for Able and Brampton Brick?

Right next to the existing plant, there is an addition rising which will increase Brampton Brick's capacity by about 50 percent.

Although nothing has been formalized yet, it's a good bet that Able's expertise and demonstrated competence could lead to significant coatings work in the new addition.