

SMOOTH AS GLASS

Two-coat finish gives glass manufacturing facility a facelift

Perhaps there were higher-priority projects than an exterior paint job at Guardian Industries' glass production facility at Carleton, Mich.

But the fact of the matter is that Guardian has been basking in a very positive light lately. The company's involvement in community projects, ranging from Little League sponsorships to participation in Habitat for Humanity programs to being the area's largest United Way donor, is at an all-time high, keeping it constantly in the public eye. Thousands of area school children — as well as international visitors to Guardian's nearby corporate headquarters — annually tour the Carleton facility, considered the flagship in the fleet of 60 Guardian plants worldwide.

And recent championships in professional basketball (the Detroit Pistons) and professional hockey (the Tampa Bay Lightning) were won by teams that happen to be owned by Guardian Industries owner Bill Davidson.

Davidson happens to be a firm believer that an employee who is proud of the facility in which he or she works is a happy and productive employee, and one who will contribute to a profitable operation.



Above, Guardian's Regional Facilities Manager Don Tullman and Maintenance Planner Ron Duvall. At right, the long, curved "clamshells" on the roof of the Guardian facility created challenges for painters.

So in light of all the above, perhaps putting a new face on the 35-year-old building was a priority.

"We thought it was time," says Don Tullman, Guardian's regional facilities manager. "The president of the company (Russ Eibel) came down and looked at the building and asked me, 'Why don't we paint it?' I said, 'That'll cost some money.' He said, 'OK. Let's get it done.' That's how things tend to happen here."

MAKING IT HAPPEN

The task of making it happen fell to Trenton, Mich.-based Stathakis Painting, a versatile building maintenance and painting contractor that has been performing periodic interior maintenance painting at the plant since the late 1990s. But the building's exterior, at roughly 300,000 square feet, would be a project of much greater scale, and company president George Stathakis consulted his Sherwin-Williams Industrial and Marine representative, Dave Milon, before coming up with a specification.

According to Guardian Maintenance Planner Ron Duvall, the building had never undergone a repaint on its prefinished steel siding.

The original finish was generally in sound condition, but weathering had taken its toll, fading the light blue finish in some areas, and causing some light corrosion to occur in some areas of the steel substrate.

Given the exterior condition, Stathakis figured he'd be bidding the job based on a three-coat system, but Milon recommended a new product — BondPlex Waterbased Acrylic Coating — that could get the job done in two coats.

"I suggested the BondPlex to George because with this type of siding (prefinished steel), you could skip the prime coat, going from three coats to two, and realize a big savings in labor and materials," says Milon. "George has established a reputation for top quality, so I knew it was most important to him that the product could provide a premium finish. But using BondPlex wasn't just a time and cost-saver here — it can produce a great paint job."

After seeing the results of adhesion tests Milon ran with BondPlex, Stathakis didn't need much selling.

"I have a lot of faith in the information I get from Dave," says Stathakis. "The people at Sherwin-Williams really check things out."

And the fact that the waterborne coating was environment-friendly was a plus for Guardian, according to Tullman.

"It made sense for us," he says. "There are houses going up out here, and we want to be a good neighbor."

So by the end of April 2004, Stathakis Painting Operations Manager Dennis Stathakis was on-site, supervising a crew of eight that would power wash the building thoroughly,



Photo: Kurt Martin

Large “clamshells,” or ventilators on the roof of the building that disperse heat generated in the glass-making process, would be painted with surface temperatures up to 200 degrees F.

then spray two coats of BondPlex in a tan of earth tone, selected by Guardian for its consistency with other Guardian plants. In some areas, spot-priming of corroded surfaces with either Sherwin-Williams Pro-Cryl or KemKromik was necessary, depending on the surface heat of the substrate. New unfinished siding that had replaced corroded or damaged pieces in some areas would also receive spot priming.

7/24/365

While Duvall had confidence in the contractors’ ability to perform interior work, he had some initial concerns about painting that would occur outside.

“Most important was that they knew we work 7/24/365,” says Duvall. “We had to keep running a business here whether they were at work or not. Plus, we didn’t want any of the landscaping damaged while they were working out there.”

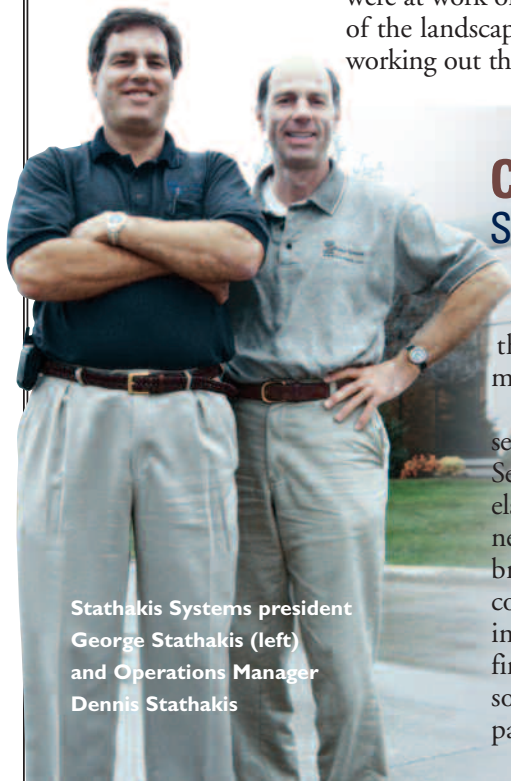
“But they were really transparent,” notes Duvall. “They were out of sight. The only way I knew they were here is because we’d have regular meetings with Dennis.”

For four months, the project moved along smoothly despite some challenges. Large “clamshells,” or ventilators on the roof of the building that disperse heat generated in the glass-making process, would be painted with surface temperatures up to 200 degrees F. And concrete batch towers measuring 168 feet high would be finished with H & C concrete stains pumped from ground level. Keeping the crane necessary for the high-altitude work out of the way of Guardian’s ground operations also proved to be a challenge.

But in the end, the painters had applied 1800 gallons of Bondplex and were finished by the end of August. The final result was “absolutely flawless,” according to Dennis Stathakis.

“The concept of doing this in the evenings or weekends doesn’t work here,” says Duvall. “There wasn’t a ton of corrosion, but this was still a big project. And to have it come off without a glitch is pretty remarkable.”

Adds Tullman, “As a result of this project, we have a building that our people are proud to walk into, and Bill Davidson thinks that’s pretty important. I’ve been with him for a few years, and I tend to believe it’s important, too. After all, he hasn’t had a loser yet.”



Stathakis Systems president George Stathakis (left) and Operations Manager Dennis Stathakis

CONTRACTOR SPOTLIGHT

Stathakis Systems, Trenton, Mich.

George Stathakis was barely out of high school in 1976 when he found the first customer for his fledgling maintenance business.

Nearly 30 years later, Stathakis still services that account — Co-Operative Services of Southfield, Mich. But little else remains the same for the entrepreneur, who runs Stathakis Systems with brothers Dennis and Chris, tackling commercial and residential as well as industrial painting tasks. Today, the firm runs three divisions and employs some 200 people. The company’s painting division accounts for about

40 percent of its overall business, and is growing at a rate of 15 to 20 percent a year, according to George Stathakis.

“Our motto is ‘Your answer to complete building maintenance,’” says Stathakis, who is PDCA-certified. “So we offer facility managers not only painting, but cleaning as well.”

The opportunity to single-source painting and cleaning tasks is attractive to customers, according to Stathakis.

“It’s a convenience,” he says. “Plus, I like to think we’re known for high-quality work.”