

CDS Building Movers, Ltd.

Ottawa, Ontario Canada

by John Sweetnam

Often family enterprises come by way of necessity or opportunity. Just as often these choices are placed so squarely in front of you that you do not consider all the possibilities or do the real math. CDS Building Movers was no exception. It was probably just as well because one would hardly start such a business in structural moving if all the challenges were laid out clearly before us.

Our family had always been in a business. First, a farm, then my dad selling building materials to re-building houses after WW.11. At the age of 12 I had been assigned the task of dragging old 50-ton jacks under aging houses built on sagging foundations to rise up the floors while we renovated them for sale. This was an ongoing winter project. From these humble beginnings my father moved into building mobile and modular homes and various buildings of prefabricated designs. In late 1969, after I completed university requirements, we purchased property near Ottawa to develop a Florida type community of homes with no basements. These were for a specific group of retirees, called snowbirds, who had winter homes in Florida. These folks would be able to downsize, have a new home without a basement leaving them with extra cash for travel and fun. With some great surprise we "discovered" Canadians needed basements for all the "stuff" they had collected over the years. Soon we were calling the local building mover, David Drummond of Almonte, to lift the houses so full basements could be constructed. Due to health considerations in 1986, David was re-



A method to cut the bonnet (cap) of a structure allowing minimal reconnection time saves thousands of dollars in utility crews costs. The process allows for slicing each truss, or rafter, and replaces two rows of shingles. This increases the speed of the move 10 fold and often permits delivery of the structure set in place in one day. The roof, is transported on an air-ride float behind the house during the move, and can be set in less than two hours on a standard house using a small contractor for reattachment. Bracing leaves the roof stronger in some structures.



Woodhouse Museum in Cornwall on move day. A hydraulic lifting bolster beam permits side shuttle and lifting over and setting down on the new foundation.

quired to reduce his work efforts for a time. Over a pot of tea on the back porch of his house, just as I was leaving for china, a deal was negotiated a deal to purchase some of the assets of Drummond Movers without me really knowing what I was getting our family into. Thankfully David had agreed to mentor a new team Ed Allsopp and I would build. While out intentions were to start small we soon learned you always need one more truck, one more piece of equipment and one more special tool.

A major beneficial decision was to become a member of the International Association of Structural Movers (IASM), and attend the annual conference in Orlando, Florida in the late 1980's. There we meet folk like Tommy Youngblood, and Pat Burdette who showed us around their yards, and talked about some of their jobs as they showed us their equipment. We also met many other fine movers during the conference. In the parking lots and at truck tailgate discussions we were drawn to a very special group of people that make moving structures a profession. More importantly they were all willing to share a "trick or technique" that has made all the difference in our success. Being at that conference felt like being a kid in a candy store. We took home many beneficial ideas that have proven extremely important in our day-to-day activities.

Just as important we met manufacturers of dollies and unified jacking systems. As with all movers each challenge often demands unique solutions. As we all know securing necessary permits in a timely fashion and persuading utility companies to work together to make successful moves is always a challenge.

One of our first major decisions was to design a quick method of lifting the top portion of a roof to keep the loaded height to our legal limit in Ontario of 14 feet. This proved to be a wise move as we were then able to move our struc-



In 1944 we moved this building that was constructed in 1904 over the foundation of a church that was the original town hall of Walkersville, now known as Windsor. The structure, on the property of Hiram-Walker Distillery, was moved for the Walkersville Historical Society as a heritage (historical) building and became an art gallery at the new location. Total tonnage, with steel, was 750 tons, 158 tons on the fifth wheel of the 1980 Auto Car tractor with a 65,000 planetary rear-axle. The truck was originally used to move 100-ton steel ingots at the Defasco Steel Mill in Hamilton Ontario.



Winter move to an island five miles across water 120 feet deep. There is a trick to moving across ice. After checking the thickness, about 30 centimeters minimum, enough speed is needed to keep going through snow drifts so as to not start a wave action under the ice that begins to happen at speeds over 22 kilometers per hour. The higher speed can cause the ice to break or crack.



This 55-ton rock, chosen by the church priest, was quarried by CDS to be used by a new Catholic Church in Carleton Place, Ontario for the Christening Bath in the NaÖve of the new Church. CDS contracted to move the stone 55 miles from a quarry and place it in the exact spot of the finished grade for the church. When it was determined engineers had made an error CDS returned to raise the stone another 17 and one quarter inches. The month was January. Temperature was 17 degrees. Weather was freezing rain. What a way to spend an off day donating your time.

tures quickly without the need to interface with different utility companies of the 12 municipalities where most of our work was performed. We were then able to move a building every 3 days. And permits were less of a problem as we upgraded our dolly system.

In 1992 CDS did its first major heritage (historical) project in Kingston, Ontario for Queens University. The University wanted to build a new library in the heart of the campus that required structures for most of a city block to be removed. Fortunately the University owned several parking lots to where the structures could be moved. The project, as many now are, was to move and renovate the structures to include new building codes with handicap and basement apartment access. To accomplish this CDS joined in partnership with a construction company that would handle the renovation portion of the project. Forming alliances with other companies has assisted in our successfully securing jobs, with confidence and integrity, on larger projects more distant from our base in Ottawa. The University project enabled us to acquire more steel and tools. We now had the equipment and experience necessary to be available for larger projects. This was far from the original vision shared over a cup tea years before.

Since the successful University project CDS has relocated many specialized heritage projects and thereby adding to our experience and equipment inventory. As all structural movers know one never always has enough of the right equipment for every job. Each project demands

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These are three of seven buildings donated to Corrections Canada by Queens University, Kingston. Corrections Canada will use the buildings for a training center in Kingston for training guards for the Canadian Federal Prison System across the country.

This move required much pre-planning. Beginning at 5:00 am on a Sunday and being completed 12 hours later the building traveled a circuitous eight miles through the central core of the city, through two major hospital zones and a major fire station area. Utilities and hydro were disconnected. CDS paid the City of Kingston \$125,000 for pruning of trees along the route. The Kingston Public Utilities Commission paid a similar charge for hydro changes and upgrades necessitated by the move.

As usual IASM members attended to provide equipment, expertise and encouragement to support the profession: Charlie & Roger Matthews of Thornhill, Jim Tedford of Youngs Point and Laurie McCulloch Building Moving & Mech. of Whitby plus others.



Ed Allsopp, Gib Drummond, Crew Chief Dave Drummond and John Sweetnam, CDS Owner reviews updates of the weather, utility crews and other facets of the difficult move.