



Shaw Brothers thinking big: Workers put final touches on Gorham headquarters

By Robert Lowell
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GORHAM – On a stretched-out lift, a worker Tuesday polished wood trim 40 feet high in the atrium above the main entrance of Gorham’s newest, multimillion-dollar development.



Danny Shaw, left, and Jon Shaw on the stairway inside the new headquarters for Shaw Brothers Construction. Behind them, employee David Bogart of Portland gives new meaning to the phrase “industrial cleaning” as he uses a Genie Lift to reach light fixtures and wood trim 40 feet in the atrium above the main entrance. (Photo by Rich Obrey)

The new headquarters for Shaw Brothers Construction Inc. is nearly complete, and it’s impressive.

“It’s a spectacular facility,” Tom Ellsworth, director of Gorham Economic Development Corp., said Tuesday. “We couldn’t be happier, we’re proud of the project, we’re proud of Shaw Brothers.”

The building interior features pricey woodwork, and there is upscale landscaping outside. The brick, 48,500-square-foot headquarters includes a two-story home office and shops along with a 25,200-square-foot warehouse at the 125-acre site. The project includes storage for 65,000 gallons of gasoline and diesel to fuel its fleet of trucks and heavy equipment.

It’s the third new headquarters for the company that the brothers Danny and Jon Shaw founded in 1977. Prepping for another move, they sold their Main Street headquarters late last year.

“We needed more room and couldn’t buy land next to us,” Danny Shaw, 54, company treasurer, said.

Construction of the company’s new headquarters got under way two years ago. This week, mechanics and other shop personnel reported to work at the company’s new building at a former brick-manufacturing site on Mosher Road. Company office staff will move in after Thanksgiving week.

“We’re right on schedule,” Jon Shaw, 57, company president, said Tuesday as he viewed the project progress.

“It’s going to be good for the town,” Jon Shaw said.

Raised in town and from a dairy farming family, Jon Shaw graduated Gorham High School in 1973 and Danny, 1975.

The company constructs highways, installs utilities, and other major site jobs. The company widened sections of the Maine Turnpike several years ago and built the Bernard P. Rines Bypass that opened in Gorham in December 2008.

Growing from two employees when it started, Shaw Brothers Construction employs 160, including office staff. It owns Commercial Paving in Scarborough, five quarries and 12 gravel pits, which includes the acquisition at auction last week of a 111-acre Windham quarry and the 96-acre Libby Pit in Standish, both formerly owned by Busque Construction in Windham.

Shaw Brothers crews are currently working in several Maine communities. Work includes the Maine Power Reliability Project, a Central Maine Power program to upgrade the system.

“The bulk of our work this year,” said Jon Shaw, has been power related. “We’ve been lucky and had a decent year,” he said.

The downturned economy didn’t deter the brothers from launching their own construction project and serving as their own general contractor.

“The economy is so slow there are a lot of subs (sub contractors) available now at reasonable prices,” Danny Shaw said.

The brothers didn’t disclose a cost of its new headquarters.

“We don’t really know,” Jon Shaw said.

“We didn’t start with a budget,” Danny Shaw said. “It is what it is.”

Here’s what it is: A two-story brick and granite office building featuring mahogany paneling and woodwork on the ground floor and cherry woodwork on the upper floor. Desks and office furniture are custom made and built in.

Visitors will be greeted in the lobby by a receptionist located behind a counter with a granite top. Granite treads will be installed on the stairway to the second level and the office is also equipped with a handicapped accessible elevator.

On both floors, the facility has kitchens and conference rooms – one with a 40-foot-long conference table. A workout room will have a treadmill, stationary bicycles and weights. Men and women will each have locker rooms.



Shops for mechanics include the latest in equipment and tool technology, along with radiant floor heat. “They love it,” Jon Shaw said.

Amenities for workers also include a kitchen, lunchroom and locker rooms, special tools room, mechanics library and large classroom for training.

There's a welding shop, which will allow for expanded fabrication work like re-building buckets for their earthmoving equipment. A high-tech ventilation system has been installed in the welding shop.

A dispatch area will have a big-screen TV for monitoring job sites.

The entire headquarters will be heated with waste fuel oil, with a natural gas backup system. Each office has a thermostat and lights flick on automatically when occupied.

"It's a very energy efficient building," Jon Shaw said.

The project is landscaped with an expanse of green lawn along Mosher Road and a row of sugar maple trees shipped in from Maryland.

While there's talk around town that the transplanted trees cost \$12,000 each, Danny Shaw would only describe the price as "expensive."

The company utilized local subcontractors as much as possible for their project. Sod for the lawn was produced at Daigle's farm in Gorham and Windham Millwork performed carpentry.

Their new headquarters is adjacent to its Brickyard Quarry and a future, permitted asphalt plant that would produce up to 400 tons per hour, according to information on its website.

Their intent is to build the asphalt plant, but they want to wrap up the headquarters project first. "We've got growing pains," Danny Shaw said.

The brothers' request for town approval for a quarry and asphalt plant touched off a storm of opposition, beginning as neighbors poured out for a site walk in a pelting rain in October 2006. A series of contentious public hearings packed the Town Council chambers for months and the approval process evolved into years.

The Shaws finally were granted town permission in the spring of 2008 for the quarry and an asphalt plant.

At the Brickyard Quarry, the company now usually blasts once a week, according to Danny Shaw.

This week, a quarry blast triggered a few calls to local dispatches. A Westbrook dispatcher said a couple of callers about 10:20 a.m. Monday heard the noise and one reported windows rattling.

A dispatcher at Cumberland County Regional Communications Center in Windham, which serves Gorham, said it received one call and that the company had alerted them ahead of time.

Danny Shaw confirmed the blast.

"It was 10 past 10, it was us," he said, after checking by cell phone with an employee.

If the town gets a blast from Mother Nature, Shaw Brothers is geared up to help. A generator has capability to power the entire facility, which has been designated a Maine disaster response center, available to make emergency repairs for the town and state. In case of emergencies, company workers would swing into action to assist utilities like Central Maine Power and Portland Water District.

"We do a lot of emergency work now," Jon Shaw said.

Expanded space will allow the company to be more organized and more efficient. Three shifts will be reduced to one.

But its crew will begin early.



“We start at 3 a.m.,” Danny Shaw said.

The construction company sold its former headquarters, a 21-acre site, at 511 Main St. in December 2010 to Down East Realty Trust in Bridgewater, Mass., for \$1,860,000, according to Gorham tax records.

It will house J.P. Noonan, a Massachusetts-based transportation company. J.P. Noonan has seven facilities in six states. It will relocate to Gorham from Baldwin with about 25 employees.

Ellsworth said Noonan would likely occupy the Gorham facility in mid December.

“We’re happy to have that company come to town,” Ellsworth said.

Shaw Brothers Construction began in a building on New Portland Road before moving up to Main Street. Now, 34 years later, it’s moving again.

“We’re planning to stay here for a while,” Jon Shaw said.
