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# Contractor Profile...

## KRONENBERGER & SONS TURNS BACK THE CLOCK ON HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

History has been good to Kronenberger & Sons. A restoration construction

company based in Middletown, Connecticut, Kronenberger & Sons have turned the clock back on historical landmarks as far south as Virginia, north to the state of Maine. They're proud craftspeople with the knowledge, skills and experience to restore, preserve and adapt for contemporary use barns, carriage houses, covered bridges, churches, town halls and yes, even castles.

Today, Kronenberger & Sons are on top of the world; their services are well regarded and sought after by museums, municipalities, architects, historical societies and homeowners. Business is good, and there are plans to relocate and expand their home office in



central Connecticut. But the future wasn't always so bright.

Tom Kronenberger, Jr., and his brother, Brian, took over the business from their father, Tom, Sr., in 1987. Says Tom Jr., "At the time our father said, 'I'll help you guys as much as I can, but don't ask me to put any money into it.'"

It wasn't that the elder Tom didn't have faith in his two sons; it was just that he had founded the business in 1946 and spent the last 25 years as a developer building an entire authentic Victorian village for an extravagant millionaire. Tom Sr., had worked hard and wanted to retire. This was fine with Tom and Brian, because they were both in good financial positions. Tom ran a successful advertising business, while Brian was employed by a large developer on Long Island.

In the beginning, they were able to feed all the profits back into the business. And that was important, because there wasn't much state work available at the

time, and in order to get it you had to be bonded, which took a lot of money, especially for larger jobs. Soon they began attending trade shows promoting their business, working with historical societies and sponsoring house tours. Tom's advertising background helped in the promotion, while Brian maintained oversight of contracts and cash flow.

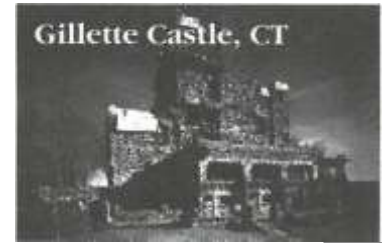
Nowadays, Kronenberger & Sons finds it easier to win bids; in fact, they may come in second or even third and still be awarded the bid just because their reputation precedes them. Both brothers have a passionate interest in historic preservation combined with level-headed professionalism. The detail put into a Kronenberger project is exemplary.

The Mark Twain House here in Connecticut is a perfect example. The \$1.1 million renovation completed in the spring of 1999 included a complete exterior restoration and repainting, extensive ornate wood carving, slate roofing and copperwork. But quite possibly the most intriguing element of the project was the reconstruction of the chimneys. The original chimneys were removed in the 18th century, but Tom came across an old stamp showing the Mark Twain House with its old chimneys still intact. Through the use of digital photography, Tom was able to blow up the image and actually count the number of bricks in the chimneys and measure their width; the result was a near perfect replication of the original chimney-work.

Says Tom, most of the renovation projects they come across have similar problems such as damage from water or fire, as well as structural damage from decay and rot. Some of the earlier repairs to these structures Tom refers to as "band-aide work." The Gillette Castle is an example; here Kronenberger & Sons had to remove three roofs built on top of each other before installing the new roofing system. Kronenberger & Sons

completed the \$2.2 million exterior renovation to Gillette Castle last summer, and they'll start the interior phase this spring.

Sanford & Hawley has worked with Kronenberger & Sons since 1987, and worked with Brian



even before that when he worked for the Long Island developer. Sanford & Hawley is a primary supplier of lumber to Kronenberger and Sons, as well as windows and shingles, and according to Tom, "just about anything we need." Adds Tom, "They'll help us with specialty items we need like locating a certain species of wood. They'll also deliver to us all over the place." Here at Sanford & Hawley we appreciate the faith and confidence Kronenberger & Sons puts in us, just as we appreciate all of our builder customers.

Tom is also very complimentary of the 80 people working for Kronenberger & Sons. "The most important part of any company is the people,"



he says. "We (Brian and myself) are just a rudder on a ship, but it's the people that keep the ship afloat."

If the last 14 years are any indication, it looks like smooth sailing for the crew of the S.S. Kronenberger & Sons, as they continue expanding their business, solidifying their reputation and exploring new projects. We wish them well.

Contact your Sanford & Hawley sales representative if you'd like your business, or current or past project, profiled in an upcoming issue of *Professional Advantage*.