

As the 20th century began, life for the average Iowan looked pretty much the same as it had in their grandfathers' day. Families lived from season to season off the land, and survival in rural Iowa meant you were successful.....

But across America a revolution was taking place that would forever change how Iowans lived. An America of industry and commerce filled with hopes, dreams and opportunities was emerging.

An America that was on the move.....

A man named Henry Ford had a vision: to build a motor car for the multitude. By October of 1908, the Model T was ready for production.

To kick off the promotion, Henry entered two Model T's in the transcontinental race from New York City to Seattle. They won that race and established the Model T as the most rugged, dependable car on the road...at the amazing price of only \$290.

By the mid 20's, the Ford Motor Company had turned out over 15 million Model T cars worldwide!

Always a visionary, Henry Ford saw the future and made it happen!

In Iowa, the real challenge of course was in just getting around...but the commitment was there. A pole tax required every able-bodied man to donate 3 days a year to building and maintaining roads and bridges.

So by the time the Model T was becoming available, Iowa had over 100,000 miles of roads. Of course, dirt roads have their own problems. But Iowa industry was indeed on the move!



In 1905, a young man who managed a lumberyard in Kimballton, Iowa, began to have a dream...to enter into the emerging construction industry.

That year, T.G. (Thorvald George) Jensen, at age 30, started Kimballton Construction Company.

The business consisted of three concrete factories, which made blocks for foundations, circular tiles and culverts. They soon began to imprint designs on the blocks and these can still be seen on buildings in Kimballton today.

Before long, T.G. decided to expand into bridge building and founded Jensen Construction Company in 1912.

This work and T.G.'s vision would lead to a family business that has been building bridges for over 90 years.

The young company began to see success. T.G. was civic-minded and used his construction expertise to benefit the community.

In 1924, T.G. built a swimming pool and park for the city of Kimballton.

Family life in town was enriched for over 20 years by this donation, called



## Jensen Park.

T.G. and his wife Kristina had eight children. A family man, T.G. encouraged his sons to work on the "bridge gang" during the summer. Small towns lacked lodging and eating facilities, so as teenagers, T.G.'s sons assisted as cooks and miscellaneous construction help.



As each son finished his formal education, he naturally joined the company. Erling Jensen was first and began to keep the company books in 1928.

Change was going on everywhere! Road conditions were starting to improve in Iowa. We now had over 780,000 registered vehicles accounting for 85% of the total highway traffic. But, there were less than 1,000 miles of pavement in Iowa!

The future looked promising....

Suddenly, the Great Depression was here....



People and businesses were struggling everywhere. For a new organization, this period was a true test of commitment.

The Depression had its effect, but changes were still taking place.

As 1932 rolled in, Jensen Construction would begin building bridge projects in states as far away as Texas.



This was also the year T.G. Jensen would retire from managing the company to become active in the political arena. He would go on to serve as an Iowa State Representative in 1935 - 36.

The foundation now existed for a new generation of Jensens to take over the family business.

T.G.'s son Evald completed his engineering degree from Iowa State College in 1933. At age 22, he joined the company. Together with his brother Erling, they managed the operations. In 1939, they moved the company offices to Des Moines.



In 1940, Bernhardt, at age 24, was the third son to join the company. He was an engineer. The youngest son, Gerald, came on board after serving in the Navy during WWII.

By the 1940's, Iowa had over 5,000 miles of pavement with a life expectancy of 20 years.

Contractors were proud! They were part of developing better bridges and road surfaces.

During this period, Jensen Construction had begun expanding operations to other states, but suddenly, world conditions would directly affect Jensen and all Iowa contractors.

The country experienced restricted highway construction due to the war.

In 1942, Jensen Construction found itself forming a joint venture with E.A. Kramme to do war-related contracts. They began to work with municipalities and public utilities.



Technology was affecting the way people lived and worked. The federal government was helping farm families get electricity through the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) and telephones were everywhere.

Jensen Construction was active in this electrification process. Their utility work involved setting hi-line poles with a boom truck, an innovative idea that saved time and money.



Ammunitions Plant projects gave them work at the Sioux Falls, SD, airfield, the Sunflower Plant near Fonner Springs, KS, and paving work to gain access to the Des Moines Ammunitions Plant near Ankeny which is now the John Deere Plant.

After the war, the venture was dissolved and Jensen Construction went back to what it did best, building bridges.



The company now had expertise in grading, paving, sanitary and storm sewers, hi-line work, water lines and disposal plants.

The 1950's brought war in Korea.

Material shortages caused tight federal regulations on construction, so contractors tried to "watch the overhead and keep the pencil sharp."

Sound advice, even for today!



Following the advice, in 1952, the principals of Jensen Construction became partners with a cousin, Kelly Jensen. They formed a separate company named United Contractors which would also build bridges throughout Iowa.

This partnership would continue during these difficult and challenging times of the industry.

Even under these circumstances, at the close of 1952, construction moved into first place as

the largest industry in the United States.

We also had a new President, Dwight D. Eisenhower.



"Ike" was a President committed to a national interstate road system and so in June 1956, the Federal-Aid Highway Act was signed by President Eisenhower and became law.

Close to 25 billion dollars were authorized over a 13 year period to build a 41,000 mile national system of interstate highways.

The immediate impact on Iowa was huge!

Design standards called for 702 miles of four lane highways and a grand total of 1,395 structures of varying sizes to cross over the roadway system.

During this time, United Contractors and Jensen Construction secured many bridge contracts over Interstate 80.

Significant projects included the Des Moines River Bridge in 1958. This project incorporated the first pre-cast post-tensioned beam ever used in Iowa.

Jensen also built the aluminum bridge across N.W. 86th Street. This was one of seven aluminum bridges built in the United States.

The late 1950's also brought tough union tactics.

In 1957, Jensen Construction was working on a Missouri River Bridge project.

Halfway across the river project, Omaha unions met the company with resistance to Jensen's open shop agreement. The company got an injunction to cease the interference. A few days later the Jensen Des Moines office was bombed. An FBI investigation labeled the bombing a professional job.

Fortunately, as Iowa looked to the future, the coming decades were filled with promise...

Erling Jensen became president of Jensen Construction in 1960.

The I-235 Des Moines freeway was beginning and Jensen Construction won several contracts, including one for the Des Moines River Bridge. This was a 16 pier project with a contract price of 1.4 million dollars.





The Freeway project would continue to provide several bridge contracts for Jensen along and adjacent to I-235.

Growth and new prosperity were everywhere, and John F. Kennedy became president.

The 1960's were like no other decade in history...Integration...The Vietnam War... the Assassination of President Kennedy...Peace Movements...The Beatles...Landing a man on the moon...

"Society" was exploring new boundaries.



With construction projects and growth projected for the future, more leadership was needed within Jensen Construction.

James Rasmussen, a son-in-law of Evald joined the company as vice-president.



States Construction Co. was formed as an overlay company of Jensen Construction in 1972. And, as part of the expanding family business, Evald's son-in-law, Irvin Ibsen, became president of that division.

The state of Oklahoma opened substantial growth for Jensen Construction throughout the 70's providing projects in grading, bridge building, and drilling.

Due to an Oklahoma Preference Law that gave Oklahoma Corporations a 5% advantage on the bidding process, Jensen Construction of Oklahoma was formed.

When the law was repealed, States Construction Company, and later, Jensen Construction Company, the Iowa Corporation, would bid and build Oklahoma projects.

In 1976, Jensen Construction received its largest contract to date, the I-440 Arkansas River Bridge at Little Rock. This project had a value of 26 million dollars and was bonded by USF&G, beginning a relationship that still exists today.

The project consisted of placing 25 million pounds of structural steel, spanning the navigational channel. Erection was completed by the use of company-designed and built false work and lifting devices. This included the assembly of three deck barges to support a 300 ton capacity 4100 ringer crane. Maximum picks were 128 ton girders, 28 feet deep and 132 feet in length.

Structural steel was purchased from Kawada Industries, Japan and delivered by barge to Little Rock, Arkansas. This project not only produced a healthy profit, but provided much of the steel erection equipment and methods the company uses today. It propelled Jensen Construction into large erection work, now and for the future.

In 1978, Jensen began its venture into foundation work of drill shafts, to support bridge piers. This technical work provided another level of expertise and skill that aided the bid process for future projects.

The 1980's saw Jensen Construction pick up major contracts for bridge work in Shreveport, LA. As projects became more complex, the company was sometimes required to be quite creative.

Bridge work on the Missouri River, the Grand River in Oklahoma, and the Lake Tenkiller crossing, required drilling on the bottom of the hard rock flooring. On two of these structures, 135 ft. Bulb-Tee beams that weighed 60 tons needed to be set.

Jensen people developed an aerial crane to transport and erect the girders.

This system worked very well and has allowed Jensen to erect large girders over large bodies of water without the use of large cranes.

To deal with paving projects, Jensen formed a paving division to work in Arkansas, Iowa, and later, Texas. In 1985, a diamond grinding business was started under the umbrella of Jensen Construction. Subcontractors' inability to perform work on an Interstate project in Carlisle, Arkansas forced this issue.

A major turning point for the family business came in 1988.

With all the divisions and individual companies that existed, it was decided to consolidate many of the necessary common functions.

As a result, the Rasmussen Group, Inc. was formed.

One of the goals of this consolidation was to retain the



strengths of each company while streamlining costs. Functions such as E.E.O. compliance, safety and accounting functions from payroll to data entry, could be performed at one location.

Management and administrative support could now be tailored to fit individual company needs.

The original list of companies under the Rasmussen Group included Jensen Construction Company, Jensen Road Co., Jensen Paving Co., Louisiana Pre-Stress, and an equity interest in Hallett Construction Co.

Hallett was a key acquisition because they had a long history as significant player in the aggregate industry.

The primary purpose of this consortium was to efficiently assist each other and work together to achieve mutual goals.

Continued growth came quickly for the Rasmussen Group. More office space was needed, so in the winter of 1988, a second floor was added to the corporate building.

In July of 1989, Midwest Materials, a stone, brick, and sand bagging company was formed.

During this time, Concrete Textures Inc. took over the grinding operations begun by Jensen Paving Co. One of the first notable projects was grinding the runway at Cape Kennedy. The space shuttle was blowing out tires while landing. Grinding the runway alleviated this problem.

In 1990, Mu Inc., a part of the Jemoco Co., was purchased. The Jensen Paving Co. name was then dropped and the grinding division officially became known as Concrete Textures Inc., also called CTI.



Mass Company was acquired in 1991, making CTI one of the largest diamond grinding companies in world.

CTI was awarded several projects on Interstate 10 near Pensacola, Fla. This National Award-winning project involved over two million square yards of concrete grinding.

By 1994, CTI had gone international, working on a project at the LaHore Airport in Pakistan.



A major project that created a challenge for CTI was the first Dowel Bar Retrofit project ever let in the U.S. This Washington I-90 project required 62,000 dowel bars to be installed. In order to devise an efficient way to run these slots, a group built a machine that would cut slots at one time.

The machine was later named The Bandit Slot Machine. A patent was granted in 1996 on this innovative idea, and the company is currently receiving royalties from this

type of equipment.

In the early 1990's, Jensen Construction Co., in a joint venture with Elk Horn Construction Co., entered into a contract with the Calhoun County Navigational District in Texas.

They would build a large tanker port in Port Lavaca, Texas. This facility would allow tankers carrying liquid chemicals to unload from a 1500 foot pier. The chemicals would then be transported approximately five miles to the Formosa Co., a Taiwanese plastics plant. This was the first salt water port facility built by Jensen Construction.

As the Rasmussen Group continued the consolidation process, many of the physical maintenance, repair and fabrication functions of the individual companies were combined.

The Pine Bluff, Arkansas' repair and fabrication facility was created in 1982. They had worked extensively on the CTI slot cutting machine, totally remanufactured Hallett Materials' dredge that would be a major asset in the Porter Plant in Texas, had assisted Jensen Construction in major overhauls of cranes that were acquired in Mexico, and now continue to assist all companies with major and minor repairs throughout the Rasmussen Group territory.



In Des Moines, a large Hallett Materials construction and repair shop was at the end of its lease. A decision was made to consolidate the many construction and repair functions of Hallett and those of the bridge building business.

A new Rasmussen Group shop was created that was adjacent to the existing shop facilities located behind the corporate offices. The state-of-art shop opened with a ten ton overhead crane, washing stalls and office.

In March 1993, a local bridge construction company, Hartland Construction was purchased.

Three months later, The Rasmussen Group purchased a heavy hauling business, Crouse Contract Carriers. They renamed the firm Argee Transport Company and were incorporated in January 1994.



The business hauls equipment nationally and works with contractors, machinery dealers, construction companies, factories, auctions, fabricators, mills, and brokers. The name Argee Transport is quickly becoming recognized nationally.

Currently, the Rasmussen Group also includes Central Iowa Trucking, a regional dump trucking company, and Iowa State Ready-Mix Concrete, headquartered in Ames. All of the companies continue to be leaders in their specific industry, constantly adjusting to the changing markets. Today, James Rasmussen's sons, Kurt and Jeff run Rasmussen Group Inc. As always, the leaders look to the future of the national construction industry.