



FAMILY TIES

CONTRACTOR'S ROOTS RUN DEEP IN THE NORTHEAST



LEFT TO RIGHT: ANTHONY, MATT AND JIM CONTE

Public buildings are a cornerstone of countless communities throughout America, and represent a link to the past.

In Fairfield County, Connecticut, many of the schools, courthouses and firehouses built in the 1950's, '60s and '70s were constructed by the Conte Company, a third generation family business that began in 1948.

The company formed when three Italian immigrant brothers started building houses on small parcels they purchased in Norwalk, Conn., recalls James Conte, who learned the construction trade as a youth from his father, Anthony. As the company grew, two of the brothers departed, and Anthony Conte transitioned into public work—renovating schools and building new ones.

Today, Jim Conte is the senior patriarch of the company, while three of his sons play lead roles. Matt heads up the expanding helical pile division, while Anthony heads the site work division. Another son, Michael, manages the entire office. A fourth, son, Mark, is captain of the Norwalk Fire Dept., and helps out in the office on a part-time basis.

Over the years, the Conte Company has evolved into a multi-faceted firm that handles specialized construction for varied commercial and heavy industrial customers who often require ongoing maintenance beyond the building phase.

A long-term project in Waterbury, Conn. demonstrates what the company does best.

Conte began the work last year by removing the foundations of a former brass manufacturing plant near the Naugatuck River. A new \$40 million manufacturing plant is being constructed on the 11-acre site, with Conte serving as the general contractor. Once the project is complete in 2018, Conte will continue to serve as a maintenance contractor.

“We’ve become pretty proficient at it in the sense that we’re a preferred contractor



Jim Conte

COMPANY PROFILE

CONTE COMPANY

Employees: 40

Location: Norwalk, Conn.

Cat® equipment: 246 Skid Steer Loader, 303C CR Mini Excavator, 303.5C CR Mini Excavator, 304E Mini Excavator (2), 906H2 Compact Wheel Loader, 924G Wheel Loader, 314C LCR Hydraulic Excavator, 320C Hydraulic Excavator, 323F Hydraulic Excavator, 336E Hydraulic Excavator, 420D IT Backhoe Loader, M315D Wheeled Excavator, D3C Dozer, CS44 Vibratory Soil Compactor, 730 Articulated Truck

Services include:

- General Contracting
- Construction Management
- Maintenance
- Site Development/Excavating
- Helical Piles
- Demolition
- Structural Repairs
- Design/Build

on many of these types of projects,” Jim says. “We have the ability to understand what they’re trying to produce and how they’re trying to produce it.

“On most of the projects we’ve done, we end up as a maintenance contractor on the job,” he continues. “So we have a crew that is strictly maintaining and upgrading the projects we’ve completed 30 years ago. We still have crews on one project that we started 42 years ago that is one of our major customers.”

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Helical pile division grows

A newer division within the company specializes in installing helical piles, which are a steel screw-in piling and ground anchoring system used for building deep foundations. The division is led by Jim's son, Matt, who received an engineering degree from Syracuse University. One of Matt's professors from college helped develop a commercial version of helical piles, which gave him prior knowledge before the system hit the market.

Since its inception in 2007, Conte's helical pile division has grown steadily, and holds more than 50 percent of the AB Chance (a helical manufacturer) market in New England.

"The soils in the northeast actually work pretty well with the helical pile system," Matt says. "And with the type of industrial work that we do, a driven pile or a vibratory pile is not allowed. The helical pile system is not as cumbersome on a site that's more sensitive because it's just screwed into the ground with small equipment."

Owing to Conte's previous work with chemical companies and heavy industrial customers, the helical pile division has led to projects with customers like the U.S. Navy, energy facilities, nuclear substations, airports, Dow Chemical, and other chemical plants.

"We can actually go out and do the type of work with small equipment where other types of piles driven in the ground require much bigger equipment," Matt says. "So that's why we went that route. There aren't a lot of companies in this part of the country who do what we do—we're one of the few companies in the Northeast who can implement, design and install helicals."

On many jobsites, Conte uses a Cat® 314C Small Excavator to bore into the soil and drive the helical piles.

"That's a relatively small machine that can actually drive a pretty good size

helical pile, whereas other contractors are using 20- to 25-ton machines to run a pile driver of the size that we run with our 314 excavator," Matt says. "This makes it a lot easier for mobilization, and it's a much smaller piece of equipment to bring on the jobsite, so that's why Caterpillar has been great for us."

Another advantage is the hydraulics of the smaller Cat excavators.

"They have more powerful hydraulic flow rates," Matt says. "The smaller equipment is stronger and it can lift a bigger pile driver. We can now use a three-ton, where maybe with another brand we would have to use a four-ton pile driver—and there's a big difference between those two sizes when you're going underneath a building or going inside a garage or a basement."

"We have rented a couple smaller pieces of Cat machinery to squeeze into smaller areas," he continues. "By renting a Cat machine as opposed to another brand, we're actually able to lift a 400-pound pile driver with a two-ton machine or even a one-ton machine, and it still has the power to spin the piles into the ground. To have that ability with a smaller machine is a real advantage for us."

Versatile attachments

Jim Conte made his first purchase of Cat equipment in 1990 when the company was starting a new project that required the acquisition of additional equipment.

"At that point, it seemed like a good idea to start fresh with new equipment and we gave it a shot," he says. "And we haven't left since."



Anthony Conte noted he likes the interchangeability of Cat attachments, which increase versatility for the entire fleet, and provide the ability to do more with less.

"We own nothing but Cat equipment in all different shapes and sizes," he says. "All our machines are equipped with quick couplers, which make switching attachments easy. Each machine is able to operate with the various attachments, which is one thing we've always liked about Caterpillar—with our backhoe and wheel loader the attachments work on all the machines. And all three of our mini excavators can use the same attachments."

Attachments are an important part

of Conte's equipment fleet, especially working in the Northeast.

"We're always working in rock or poor soil conditions," Anthony says. "So having equipment with versatile attachments—whether it be a hammer, a pile driver, an auger, or a different style bucket—it helps us perform our work that much faster and more effectively."

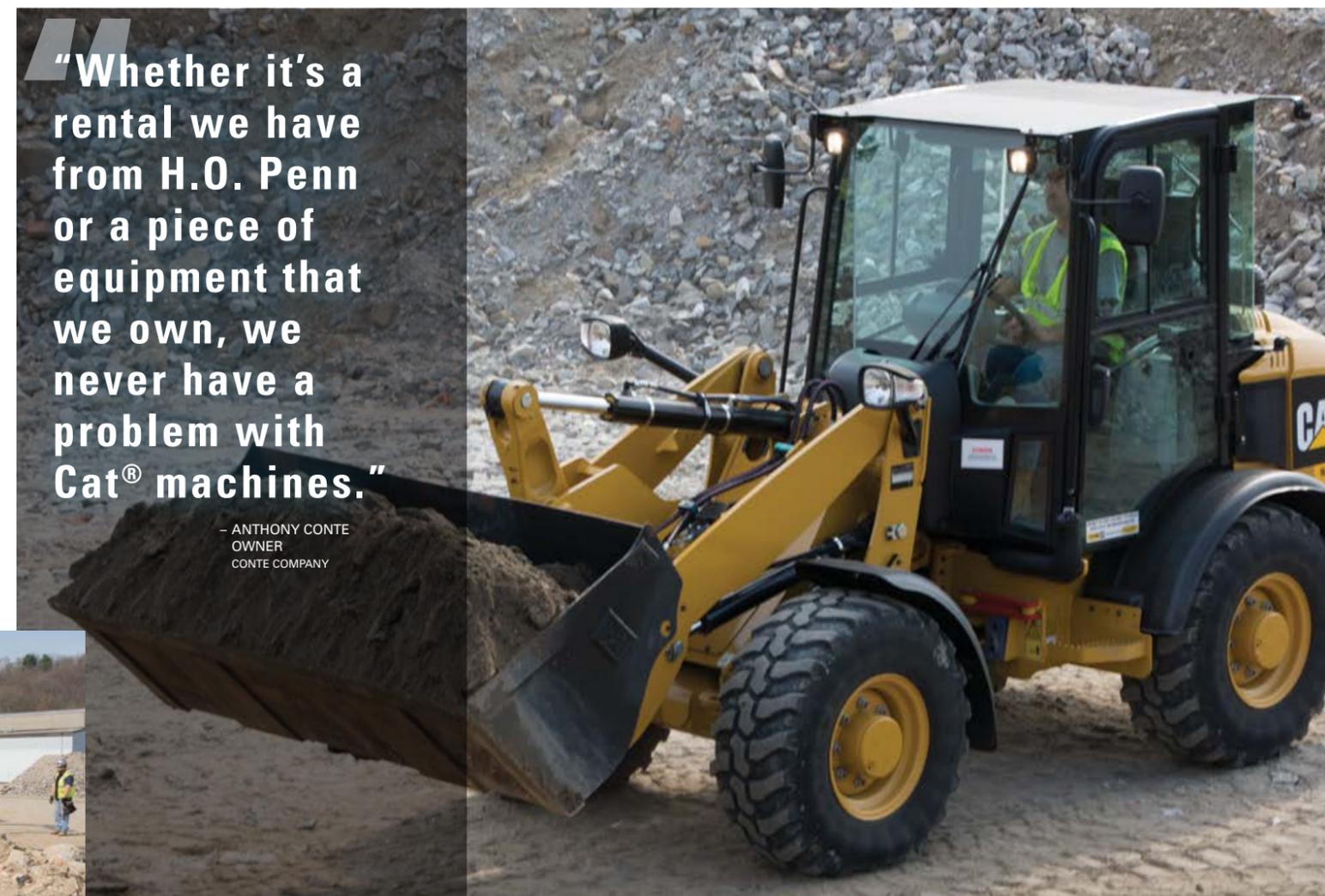
"Whether it's a rental we have from H. O. Penn or a piece of equipment that we own, we never have a problem with Cat machines."

Jim values the relationship they have with their Cat dealer. They know they can count on a consistently high level of service. Jim cites H.O. Penn's flexibility

when it comes to equipment acquisitions.

"There have been situations where we've had to make an adjustment because we didn't know the length of a project until we were really into it, and they work with us," he says. "If we need something, but we're not ready to purchase, we'll do a temporary plan. They've always worked with us to come up with a solution, and 99 percent of the time, we end up purchasing the equipment anyway."

Adds Anthony: "You're not going to beat the relationship that we have with H.O. Penn. They really stay on an even keel, whether it involves purchasing equipment, service, parts—there's never an issue, and they are always there for us no matter what we need." **OTJ**



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— ANTHONY CONTE
OWNER
CONTE COMPANY

WHAT HE LIKES ABOUT CAT® EQUIPMENT

The first piece of Cat equipment Conte Company purchased was a 320 Hydraulic Excavator, which it operates to this day following a rebuild in 2006.

"If you saw that machine right now, people still ask us if it's a brand new machine," says president Jim Conte. "Over the first 15 years of its life, we used it for everything, including heavy work like breaking rock and demolition."

Adds lead equipment operator Anthony Conte: "We put a hydraulic coupler on it and we bought a new demolition grapple, and we use that thing constantly. I do the demolition work, and I know what that machine has been through and it's never had a problem. We just don't have the breakdowns with Cat equipment. All of our equipment works the way it's supposed to."

WHAT HE LIKES ABOUT HIS CAT DEALER

"I've worked through the years with literally every equipment dealer in the Connecticut/New York area, and none of them can compare in my estimation to how H. O. Penn treats small companies like ourselves," Jim says. "We've always been treated like we are their most important customer, and we take a lot of pride in that. So it's a really good relationship."

"When we need to rent a machine, we call them up and it's always there," Anthony adds. "There's never a wait. It could be a paver, and it works. And, it's always a machine that comes brand new that's clean from the last guy that used it. I've rented equipment from other places in past years, and you never knew what you're going to get. You go to Caterpillar and there's never an issue. You're always in a good, safe machine. It's going on 20 years now with H. O. Penn, and they've been great. There's no reason to go anywhere else."