

# AUCH 100 YEARS

*100 Years of Building Trust*

GENERAL CONTRACTORS  
CONSTRUCTION MANAGERS

SINCE 1908

# 100 Years of Building Trust



This historical account of the George Auch Company's first century of construction in Southeast Michigan is dedicated to the following:

Our Past Presidents, for their leadership and foresight in guiding the firm through challenging times and positioning it for continued success for the next century.

Our Dedicated Employees, for their skills and hard work, and continuous focus on the work and the client, and for their passion in construction.

Our Clients who provide our firm with the opportunity to succeed.

# AUCH 100 YEARS

## *100 Years of Building Trust*

Written by Michael Hartman, Historian

### George W. Auch

left a teaching career to found his own construction company in 1908. From modest beginnings, with his earliest recorded expenses including 90 cents for carrots and medicine for the horse he purchased for 150 dollars, Auch outlasted his competitors by simply focusing on the individual needs of each client. This idea served the firm well as it developed a 100-year track record of delivering projects on time and on budget and grew into one of Southeastern Michigan's top construction managers. As George W. Auch Company positions itself to continue into the next 100 years, the firm operates from the same set of principles that helped it weather remarkable changes in construction technol-

ogy, economic growth and decline, demographic shifts from Detroit to the suburbs, and transitions to new generations of dedicated company leadership.

The Auch Company looks forward to the next century of building the churches, schools, commercial buildings, homes, and civic institutions that form the core of Southeast Michigan's social, economic, and cultural landscape, just as it has done for the past 100 years.

Detroit and the surrounding area have undergone significant change during the last century. Evolution of the built environment has been driven by economic forces – from the creation of the automobile to the emergence of today's global marketplace. At the turn of

the century, the burgeoning automobile industry led to a surge in manufacturing facility construction and attracted millions of immigrants to the United States. These immigrants required schools, churches, homes, and stores. Growth continued after the First World War, creating wealth that led to increased demand for large residences as Detroit's wealthier citizens moved to new neighborhoods and suburbs away from the center city. Manufacturing plummeted with the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s and the need for new facilities dried up. This lasted until war related manufacturing revived the United States economy. Construction, however, was tightly controlled by government restrictions on building materials and only projects approved by the federal government were allowed. After World War II, the Detroit economy enjoyed a brief boom as America's return to peacetime spending created new demands



**George W. Auch**

for manufactured goods. Early in the 1950s, the city of Detroit began to suffer through a loss of manufacturing. As industrial jobs moved to Detroit's suburbs and other parts of the United States, Southeastern Michigan's population followed, once again changing the built environment.

This continual change has presented challenges to construction companies. It is important to note that one of the firms first expenses recorded was \$150 for a horse

and ninety cents for carrots and medicine for the horse. Compare that with today's construction technologies, and the changes through which the construction market has traveled become readily apparent. One firm has met these continuing challenges for the past one hundred years – The George W. Auch Company. Through these one hundred years of dedicated client service the Auch Company has built the churches, schools, commercial



**George Auch and his class at Bethany Lutheran School the year before he founded the George W. Auch Company.**

buildings, health care facilities, homes, and civic institutions that form the core of south-east Michigan's social, economic, and cultural landscape.

### THE PRE-WAR YEARS

George W. Auch was born in 1868 in Sebewaing, Michigan, a small village nestled on the shore of Saginaw Bay, founded by his father, J. J. F. Auch. He left home in 1890 to attend Addison College, a Lutheran teachers college in Addison, Illinois, graduating in 1893. After graduation, Auch came to Detroit to teach at the Bethany Lutheran School on Detroit's east side. The east side of Detroit was home to Detroit's German community that had grown over the previous twenty years as a flood of immigrants was drawn by Detroit's economic opportunities. The social and cultural lives of individual neighborhoods in this section of town revolved around local churches. George Auch quickly became a fixture in his local neighborhood, moving into a home just a few blocks from the Bethany Lutheran Church, a small parish on Meldrum Avenue. After a little over a decade as a teacher at the Bethany Lutheran School, George Auch decided that his teachers salary was not enough to support his growing family of nine children, and left his position to start his own construction business, establishing the firm's first office at 3646 Mt. Elliot.

There is no record to explain Auch's decision to leave his teaching career and enter into a seemingly unrelated field. The growth of Detroit's east side provided opportunities, however, and the nature of the local construction market helped him, as it was common at the time for most of the construction in the German areas of the east side to be completed by local contractors. Still, he was taking a

## 1908 Detroit... Where Life was Worth Living!

Adopted as the city's official slogan, "Where Life is Worth Living" reflected Detroit's optimism during the firm's early years. In both Detroit and the world, a number of developments signaled the emergence of the modern era during the firm's early years.



In 1909 Woodward Avenue became the country's first stretch of roadway paved with concrete.

In 1908 Detroit's first modern amusement park, Electric Park, opened to the public.



In 1908, The Belle Isle Casino opened, providing an opulent setting for social events.

The Ford Motor Company introduced the Model T in 1908.



Ty Cobb led the 1908 Detroit Tigers into the World Series.



**The firm worked out of this office on Mt. Elliot from 1908 until 1985.**

tremendous leap of faith, and most likely he had little idea that his company would one day grow into one of Southeast Michigan’s premier construction management firms. It was however, his commitment to quality and the relationships he developed that launched his small firm and these attributes continue to form the core of the George W. Auch Company’s values since 1908.

The Detroit into which George Auch launched his firm was experiencing tremendous change. When Auch arrived in 1893, the United States was just entering an economic depression that would last throughout most of the 1890s. Things picked up a bit in the early 1900s, but economic recession hit again in 1907. It is not clear why George Auch decided to launch his construction firm in the face of another economic downturn that saw Detroit’s building permits drop by 25% between in 1907 and 1908. George Auch and his partner, Herman

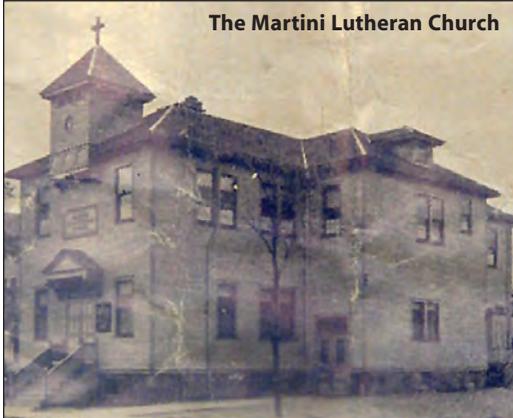
Winkler, were either blind to the economic environment or farsighted enough to see the growth on the horizon. Perhaps they noted that in the midst of the economic downturn, the production of passenger cars increased nearly fifty percent from 1907 to 1908. They might have recognized the significance of local developments in the auto industry as the Ford Motor Company introduced its new car, the Model T, and William Durant purchased the Buick, Olds, Cadillac and Oakland car companies to create General Motors. In 1908, America’s car manufacturers produced 64,000 passenger cars. By 1912, 356,000 cars rolled out of America’s plants.

The boom in automobile manufacturing created a strong demand for construction services throughout Detroit. More significantly, for Winkler and Auch, Detroit’s east side became the site of much of this industrial growth and the growing population created a demand for new churches and schools. It was this demand that drove the success of Auch and Winkler during their early years.

Auch and Winkler’s early success arose from the relationships George Auch had developed as a teacher and a member of the local German community, and the firm grew along



**The Auch Company built it's early success in the market for religious buildings. This early advertisement highlighted the firm's church projects.**



**The small frame church above, Zion Lutheran, was built in 1912 and was the firm's first church project as general contractor.**



**The firm's first school project, the St. Thomas Lutheran School, was completed in 1912.**

with Detroit. Between 1908 and 1912, the firm focused predominately on small residential construction projects; then in 1912 the firm's long history as a builder of schools and churches began. The first break came when Auch's position within his own parish led Bethany Lutheran Church to select him to build its new parish hall. Success with this project, helped develop a reputation as the preferred builder for Detroit's Lutheran church community. In just a few years Auch and Winkler completed schools for St. Thomas Lutheran Church, St. Matthews, and St. Peters German Lutheran Church. They also built a parish hall at St. Peters Church and St. Matthews, in addition to halls completed for

Zion Lutheran Church, which was at the time the one of the largest Lutheran churches in the United States. Although the firm was not yet large enough to take on the construction of most church sanctuaries, they did complete their first church in 1912 when they built a small chapel for Zion Lutheran Church on Sylvester Street on Detroit's east side.

The firm's early success is reflected in the accounts recorded in its first ledger book. In 1909, the firm's first full-year of operation, revenues totaled \$21,035. Then in 1910, they grew to \$35,865 and they doubled by 1911 when the firm earned revenues of \$77,050. Although this figure, roughly equal to \$1.6 million in today's dollars, is not large in comparison to the firm's present revenues, it is a sign of the firm's success in the highly competitive construction market. In 1913, as part of its growth, the company joined the Detroit Builders and Traders Exchange.

Auch and Winkler's success quickly led to the expansion of their business into commercial and industrial work as carpenter contractors. Demand for new commercial buildings



**Theater Construction has comprised a key part in the firm's work since it's beginning. The 1912 Arcade Theater was the firm's first theater project.**

rapidly increased as Detroit's economy and population expanded into to new areas. Gratiot Avenue served as a conduit for the expansion of commercial areas from downtown to the city's border on the east side, and Auch and Winkler completed a number of projects on Gratiot Avenue during this time. The firm's first commercial project was the Schwarz Brothers Hardware store on Gratiot. As carpenter contractors, Auch and Winkler went on to build several more commercial buildings along Gratiot, including one of the first buildings for the Gardner-White furniture company at the corner of Mack and Gratiot. Their reputation led to expansion beyond the east side of Detroit. By 1914 they completed a number of combination store and flat buildings on the west side.

It was also during this period that the firm completed its first theater project, the Arcade Theater on Hastings Street. Although the Arcade was just a small theater for which Auch completed the carpentry work and it set the stage for the firm's growth into movie theater construction in the post-war years.



**The 1911 Central Savings Bank branch, for which Auch and Winkler completed the carpentry work, was the first of many bank projects for firm. The Auch Company went onto complete 13 additional branch banks for The Central Savings Bank in the 1920's.**

The pre-war years also saw the firm launch its practice into bank construction, an area that would become one of the company's focuses for a number of years after World War I. The firm's relationship with the Central Savings Bank and its successors demonstrates the George W. Auch Company's long history of quality work that keeps its clients coming back. The firm's first bank project came in 1911 with the carpenter contract on a branch bank for the Central Savings Bank. By the end of the 1920s the George W. Auch Company would complete 13 additional projects for the Central Savings Bank.

Booming automobile manufacturing spurred industrial growth throughout Detroit and supported the growth of countless smaller industrial concerns. Auch and Winkler seized the opportunity to add the construction of manufacturing facilities to its practice, beginning with the construction of a small

manufacturing plant for the Detroit Steel Cooperage Company in 1912. After a few additional small jobs as carpenter contractors, Auch and Winkler moved into larger projects when they completed a second story addition to a building on the plant of the Michigan Stove Works, one of Detroit's largest manufacturers at the time.

Auch and Winkler also completed a number of residential projects during these early years – once again, building a reputation for quality work that would lead to a significant expansion in residential construction after World War I. The firm's first residential projects consisted of smaller homes and additions in George Auch's own neighborhood, many of which were completed for fellow Bethany Lutheran Church members. From this beginning, the firm expanded its residential construction practice throughout the east side and by 1912 completed its first project outside the Detroit city limits, when it built a home in Grosse Pointe Park. The firm's residential practice would slow after 1912, as efforts were focused on larger commercial and industrial projects, but the groundwork was laid for work as the

builder of several homes in the area's prestigious neighborhoods in the 1920s.

**WARTIME CONSTRUCTION AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

World War I brought about tremendous changes in the American economy and the construction industry. The consolidation of manufacturing into large-scale corporations had lasting effects on the United States economy and helped create a post-war economic boom. The war was, therefore, a time of prosperity for many manufacturers. Construction companies were not as fortunate, however, as War Industry Board ruled that no construction could take place unless approved by the Board. This effectively ended residential and commercial construction. For the entire period in which United States troops fought in the war, from April 1917 to November 1918, Auch undertook just one project, a carpentry contract for the Charles Bohn Foundry Company.

The United States economy quickly returned to its expansion, ushering in the Roaring Twenties, following the country's relatively short-lived involvement in the war. Detroit's Roaring Twenties were characterized by an economic boom built on the expansion

**1910s**  
in American History



World War I



1912  
The Titanic Sinks



Women's Right  
to Vote



**The carpentry contract for the Fruehauf factory was one of the firm's few projects during the building slowdown of the First World War.**

of the auto industry and the rise in the size of corporations. It was during the 1920s that the modern industrial economy emerged, characterized by large-scale factory manufacturing and the development of large corporations. This economic expansion created wealth in Detroit, leading to the development of a boom market in residential, commercial, and industrial construction. Interestingly, the demand for church buildings slackened during this time of economic boom and cultural change. Auch demonstrated its flexibility by moving into new areas of practice and developing into a full service general contractor by the mid-1920s.

## 1920s in American History

Although industrial projects did not play a

significant role in the firm's work during this period, one project is worth particular note. In 1919, Auch completed the carpentry contract for the construction of the Fruehauf Trailer Company's new manufacturing plant. This new plant was emblematic of the kind of industrial innovation and growth driving Detroit's economy and Auch's participation in the construction showed its expanding capabilities as a construction firm.

Drawing on its early experience in residential construction, Auch launched into the construction of larger homes in many of the Detroit area's prestigious neighborhoods. During the 1920s the firm built homes in Detroit's Indian Village and Boston-Edison neighborhoods as Detroit's wealthy sought to move out of the downtown in search of more land and clean air. The trend of the wealthy moving out of downtown continued throughout the post-World War I period, and by the mid-1920s many of Detroit's wealthier citizens were moving outside of the city to suburbs such as Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park, and Birmingham. The George W. Auch Company's first opportunity in this new market came in 1922, with the carpentry contract for a home in Grosse Pointe. Then, the next year, the compa-



1920 - WWJ becomes the first radio station to broadcast regular programming.



1920 - Babe Ruth sets home run record and helps usher in baseball's modern era.



1920 - Detroiters stock-up on the eve of prohibition.



1927 - Detroit's Charles Lindbergh is first to fly solo across the Atlantic



**The above houses are just a few among the several built by the Auch Company during the 1920's.**

ny completed its largest residential project of the period by completing the carpentry work for four homes built on Burns Avenue in Detroit's Indian Village neighborhood. This helped cement a reputation for quality work, and by the end of the decade the firm completed several projects as general contractor. In addition to a number of projects in Grosse Pointe and Grosse Pointe Park, the firm built a number of homes in Birmingham, becoming the favored contractor for well-known local architect Wallace Frost.

Not surprisingly, the tremendous expansion of wealth in Detroit and the expansion of Detroit's population led to an increased demand for branch banks in Detroit's new neighborhoods. Building on its previous relationship with Central Savings Bank, the firm completed several branch bank projects during the 1920s and by 1923 became the bank's

preferred general contractor for its branch locations. The firm completed many projects on main thoroughfares at the city's outskirts, following population growth and demonstrating the flow of Detroit's citizens out of the central city that would eventually result in suburbanization.

The 1920s also witnessed an interesting sidelight in the firm's history as its founder temporarily expanded his business interests into automobile and dairy sales. In 1922, George

Auch joined fellow contractor Otto Misch in establishing Modern Sales and Service, a Ford Motor Company dealership located on Jefferson Avenue just east of downtown. George Auch also went into the creamery



**This 1923 branch bank for the Central Savings Bank was the firm's first bank project as the general contractor.**

business as partner in the Belle Isle Creamery Company. Auch continued in these business ventures until the depression of the 1930s.

The economic downturn that became the Great Depression began in the late 1920s, even before the stock market crash in October 1929. In August 1929, the Michigan Contractor and Builder reported a decline in construction from the previous year, but explained it away as a market correction to inflated building activity arising from speculative residential building. The editors proclaimed that once things settled down, investment dollars would return to the construction industry. By September, observers could not be so sanguine about future prospects as the Michigan Contractor and Builder reported a 49% decline in the value of construction projects in Detroit compared to the previous September. Then on October 29, 1929 the infamous stock market crash thrust the economic decline into the headlines and began the decade long Great Depression.

relationships and reputation built over the previous two decades. The firm survived on residential projects planned before the onset of the depression during the first few years of the downturn. It then returned to its past in a way, by taking carpentry contracts on a few large jobs for George Auch's business partner Otto Misch. In 1931, George Auch returned to his old neighborhood as carpenter contractor for the construction of the new Trinity Lutheran Church on Gratiot Avenue. Then in 1934, the firm won the carpentry contract on an addition to the United States Marine Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia. These two projects provided the firm with enough income to get them through the first half of the depression. The carpentry contract US Marine Hospital also marked the firm's entrance into the healthcare construction, a field in which the firm continues to serve clients.

In addition to the economic downturn during the 1930s, the firm was also struck in 1937 by the death of its founder, George W. Auch. The firm persevered however, thanks to the foundation that George Auch had built during its first three decades. In fact, the firm emerged from the Depression in good shape due to the reputation and relationships he had built.

# 1930s

in American History

George W. Auch Company survived the depression, when many other firms disappeared, due to the



A Detroitter advertises for work during the Great Depression



President Roosevelt took to the airwaves to reassure Americans with programs like the WPA and the CCC.



Detroitters march in a 1930 anti-prohibition parade.



Workers in the 1936 Flint sit-down strike helped create the modern labor movement.



**During the Great Depression the George Auch Company returned to carpentry work on large projects to make ends meet. Trinity Lutheran Church and Salem Lutheran Church were two of the projects completed during this time.**



The construction industry in Detroit had ground to a halt for the most part. For example, the most of firm's project load in 1934 consisted of home repairs and updates financed by loans from the federal government's Home Owners Loan Commission. These projects were only worth a few hundred dollars each, so they were not enough to maintain the firm's financial health or the ability to make the payments on its office, resulting in the bank foreclosing and taking over ownership. Fortunately, the bank could not sell the building and the company remained in its office as a tenant of the bank.

Prohibition ended in 1934 and Detroit's brewers moved quickly to begin beer production. During the first few years after prohibition, George W. Auch Company completed several projects for Detroit's breweries. Beginning, as it had several times in the past,

with carpentry contracts to gain entrance into the new market, the firm completed carpentry work on a new stock and fermenting cellar for the Prost Brewing Company. This led to the general contract for the construction of a new bottling works for Detroit's Koppitz-Melchers Brewing Company in 1936, the Jackson Brewing Company in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1937, and the Schmidt Brewing company in 1938. Each of these brewery contracts increased the scale of the firm's work and newspaper coverage of these large projects put the firm in the public eye.

The 1930s were also marked by an important development in the firm's history with the advent of its healthcare practice. In addition to the US Marine Hospital project that helped to keep the firm afloat in 1934, Auch won the general contract for a large addition to Detroit's Evangelical Deaconess Hospital in 1936. In 1938, the firm built a new men's dormitory at the Ionia State Hospital for the State of Michigan. These first healthcare projects required the construction of fairly simple hos-

**Builder Dies**

GEORGE W. AUCH,  
G. W. Auch  
Is Dead at 69

Served on School Board  
and as Alderman

George W. Auch, Detroit building contractor, who was twice president of the Board of Education and who formerly served as alderman from the Fifteenth Ward, died Sunday at his home, 1224 Thorse Mile drive, Grosse Pointe Park, at the age of 69. He had never completely recovered from the effects of an automobile accident last April.

He was born, as was his wife, in Schwanau, Mich., the town having been founded by his father, J. J. F. Auch. After being graduated from Addison College, Addison, Ill., he came to Detroit in 1893, and for 12 years was a teacher at the Bethany Lutheran Parochial School, Medford avenue and Palford street.

In 1905, Mr. Auch established the building firm at 2646 Mt. Elliott avenue, bearing his name, and erected many of the large buildings on the East Side, particularly Lutheran churches.

In politics Mr. Auch was a Republican. He served as a school inspector from the Fifteenth Ward under the old elective system from 1913 to 1917 and was alderman from 1916 to 1928. He was elected president of the Builders & Traders Exchange in 1929.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p. m. Thursday at the Messiah Lutheran Church, Lakewood and Kercheval avenues, where the body will lie in state from noon until 2 p. m. The body now is at the residence. Burial will be in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Besides his widow, Sophia, Mr. Auch leaves five sons, Fred, Otto E., John W., George W., Jr. and Herman H., and four daughters, Mrs. Clara Grase, Mrs. Adeline Jinsky, Mrs. Beatha Gaskow, and Miss Martha Auch. There are 12 grandchildren.



**The Schmidt Brewery bottling plant as featured in the Detroit News.**

pital rooms. As healthcare grew more technologically complex over time, the projects that would eventually become one of the firm's core markets required seamless integration of public spaces with the advanced technologies utilized by today's healthcare industry.

As the modern movie industry emerged in the 1930s, theater owners required ever larg-

er theaters to meet demand. The George Auch Company entered this challenging market segment in 1913 when it worked as the carpentry contractor on the Arcade Theater on High Street in Detroit. The firm's theater practice took off in earnest in the late 1930s when it developed a relationship with architect Charles Agree, one of Michigan's preeminent theater designers. This collaboration resulted in the Bijou Theater in Mt. Clemens in 1938, alterations to Detroit's Adams Theater and the construction of the Royal Theater and the Dearborn Theater in 1940, and the State Theater in Ann Arbor in 1942.

Unfortunately for the firm, its growth into these new areas of practice was interrupted by World War II. The U.S. government tightly restricted building materials for the duration of the war, curtailing any construction projects not deemed essential for the war effort. The firm's project lists from 1942 to 1945 consists of a few large-scale industrial projects, but these allowed the firm to showcase its abilities on a new scale.

# 1940s

in American History





The Royal Theatre in Detroit and the State Theater in Ann Arbor were products of the firm's relationship with architect Charles Agree.



while expanding its services to clients in Detroit's suburbs, particularly in its traditional practice areas of churches, schools, and bank buildings.

The George W. Auch's postwar history interestingly parallels its early history, as churches and schools provided a large portion of its work. As people moved out of Detroit or to outlying areas of the city, they often moved with their church congregations. One of the first actions that people undertook was to

## POSTWAR PROSPERITY

The post-war construction market reflected the changes occurring in Southeastern Michigan as manufacturers moved out of Detroit to its suburbs and other regions of the country. Southeastern Michigan's population also began to shift out of Detroit, opening new markets for the firm. This migration altered the local construction market but the firm successfully navigated the changing landscape to remain one of the area's top construction firms. The George W. Auch Company entered into a new period in its history with an increasing number of its projects coming from the suburbs. Fortunately, the firm had built its reputation in the construction of buildings that the expanding population required as it moved, so the shift in Detroit's population opened up opportunities where it closed them for others. The George W. Auch Company continued to serve clients in Detroit

build new churches and parochial schools. Many congregations also added on to their schools because their original turn of the century buildings no longer met their needs. The firm's first project of the post war era was the school and chapel for Mary Magdalene Parish in Detroit. Then in 1949, two projects in Detroit's suburbs marked the movement of Auch out of Detroit. In 1949, St. Peters Evangelical Lutheran Church chose Auch for the construction of its new church and school in its new suburban home in Eastpointe. At the same time, Auch was building the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ferndale. The firm's reputation quickly led to additional projects, building schools for St. Paul's Lutheran in Royal Oak and Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Birmingham. Auch's success with suburban church projects continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s with projects in Dearborn for Cherry Hill Presbyterian Church and for St. Paul's Lutheran Church.



**St. Gertrude's School**



**St. Suzanne School**



**Bethany Lutheran School**

Auch also expanded its practice in the construction of spiritual spaces when it became a preferred contractor of the Archdiocese of Detroit, which led to a number of projects for local parishes. In the 1950s, the firm built rectories for Our Lady of the Rosary and Our Lady of Good Counsel parishes, activity buildings for St. Brigids and Epiphany parishes, a school for St. Suzanne parish, and completed the alterations to the Archdiocese's chancery. In 1960, Auch built the new sanctuary for St. Colman Parish in Farmington Hills.

In 1955, Auch returned to its roots when it built the new educational building for Bethany Lutheran Parish, which had moved from its original home on Detroit's old German east side to a new location on Outer Drive. The same year the firm finished an educational building for Mt. Zion Lutheran Church.

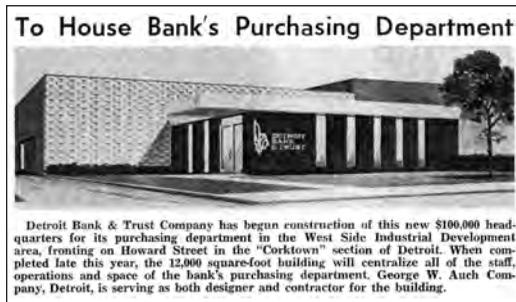
The firm's long-term relationships with local banks followed the same pattern with the construction of branch banks in outlying areas of Detroit and the suburbs. During the 1950s and 1960s, the firm constructed banks

# 1950s

in American History



Television, Rock and Roll and other new forms of entertainment defined America's cultural landscape. The Cold War tensions that hovered over American life are shown in the above brochure on how to build fallout shelters in schools.



**The Detroit Bank and Trust building in 1965 as featured in the Michigan Contractor and Builder.**

in seven different suburbs. By the end of the 1960s, Auch apparently had expanded its services for its long-time banking clients to include design because a 1965 issue of the Michigan Contractor and Builder highlighted the construction of a Detroit Bank and Trust branch in Detroit's Corktown, noting that Auch designed and built the structure. Bank buildings continued as a core part of the firm's work up through the 1970s.

Demographic changes of the 1950s and 1960s, also created demand for theater renovations and construction. As the population shift to the suburbs created new demands for movie theaters, downtown theaters modernized their facilities in an attempt to hold on to their clientele. The Auch Company completed renovations projects for the Family and Rialto Theaters in Detroit, the Woods Theater in Grosse Pointe Woods, and the Regents Theater in Flint. The firm also built theaters in Southgate and Ypsilanti.

The end of the 1960's marked a turning point as the leadership of the firm turned over for the first time in three decades. Fred Auch Sr. retired in 1968 as his brother Hank



**The 14-story Blue Cross Blue Shield building in Southfield demonstrates the firm's emergence into large scale commercial construction.**

succeeded him as President, serving until 1976 when Bill Auch, the third generation of Auch's, took over to lead the firm. Bill, in turn, would be succeeded by his brother Fred Auch Jr. in 1985. These three leaders steered the company through a number of dramatic changes that helped set the foundation for today's firm. Over the next couple of decades they would lead the firm into a new era, marked most significantly by a restructuring of the ownership, expansion through the acquisition of the J.A. Fredman Company, and tremendous growth in revenues.

Since its 1908 founding, the Auch Company had operated as a partnership, and in 1969, new leadership decided that it was time to update the firm's structure as ownership changed from a partnership to corporation. Initially family members owned 100% of the company's stock. Then in 1975, key employees were permitted to buy stock in the company, which promoted employee motivation and set the stage for today's inclusive corporate culture.



**Walled Lake Northern High School was completed as part of the firm's major construction management contract with the Michigan school district.**

The change in corporate ownership marked the beginning of the modern era for the firm. Despite its long-success, the firm was still a relatively small company in 1970, earning revenues of \$1.9 million on 53 projects. By the end of the decade, the firm's annual revenues would increase more than fourfold, reaching \$8.6 million in 1980. This growth arose partly from an increase in the number of projects to 70, but more significantly from the size of the projects, as revenue per project increased by more than 200 percent.

The firm's growth was driven by its entrance into healthcare construction. Beginning in 1970 with projects for Harper Hospital, the firm progressively expanded its health care practice. The project list for the 1970s, for example, contains more than twenty projects completed for Harper Hospital alone. Many of the projects were small renovations or installations, but the record indicates how Auch built this relationship over the decade. The success with Harper Hospital then led to additional healthcare projects with Sinai and Oakwood hospitals. Subsequently, the firm's overall success led to an explosion in healthcare projects in the 1980s.

Continued expansion characterized the 1980s, as annual revenues reached \$28.8 million by the end of the decade, a 200 percent increase from the beginning of the decade. The firm's expansion was driven by the natural increase in number and scope of projects and the 1985 acquisition of the J.A. Fredman Company. The acquisition increased the capabilities of the firm. It also marked a new

# 1960's

in American History



The 1960's were a time of great social, cultural and technological change in all aspects of American life.

era in the firm's history as the Auch Company moved out of its offices on Mt. Elliot into the offices that the Fredman Company had occupied in Pontiac. The change symbolizes the firm's history, with its beginnings on Detroit's east side, both in the location of the office and its early projects, and then the move to the suburbs, again both in the location of the office and the bulk of its projects.

Healthcare continued to drive the firm's expansion in the 1980s as Providence, Grace, and Henry Ford Hospitals became key clients. The Auch Company built its relationship with each of these hospitals by proving itself over a series of projects and by the end of the decade was recognized as one of the preeminent healthcare contractors in Southeastern Michigan.

The firm also expanded its commercial practice during the 1980s. A number of projects for various airlines at Metro Airport brought in \$25 million in projects over the



Photo by Lark Photography

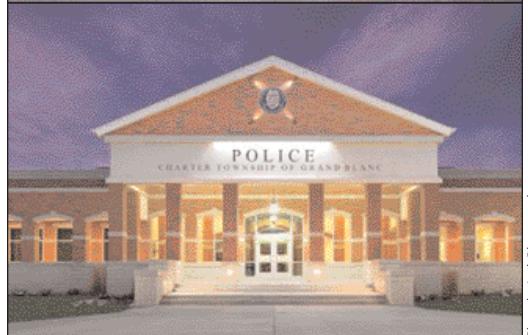


Photo by Lark Photography

**The Canton Administrative Building (top) and the Grand Blanc Police Headquarters (above) are just a few of the firm's recent municipal projects.**



Combined Regional Emergency Service Training Complex



Oakland Community College, Southfield Campus

**As part of its \$91 million construction management contract with Oakland Community College, The Auch Company completed the renovations to the Southfield Campus and the Combined Regional Emergency Service Training Complex at the Auburn Hills Campus.**



Photo by Lark Photography

**Henry Ford Hospital West Pavilion Vertical Expansion.**



Photo by Hobbs and Black Architects

**Henry Ford Hospital Wyandotte Center for Health Services.**

second half of the decade. Auch also completed a \$33 million 14-story office building for Blue Cross Blue Shield, a \$12 million warehouse for Toys“R”Us, and a \$10 million project for the United Parcel Service. The value of each individual project exceeds the firm’s entire annual revenue of just a few short years in the past – a fact that demonstrates the Auch Company’s explosive growth.

The end of the 1980s was marked by the expansion into the public K-12 market, which would lead to even more growth in the 1990s. The most significant development came in 1989, when Auch signed a construction management contract with Walled Lake Consolidated School District, one of the first construction management contracts with a

school district in Michigan. From its success with Walled Lake School, Auch expanded its service to a number of other school districts throughout Southeastern Michigan, growing into one of the leading school construction management firms in the state.

Expansion continued at a dizzying pace into the 1990s driven by healthcare, education, and public works projects. Corporate structure again underwent significant change in 1994 when Dave Hamilton purchased a majority share in the firm and restructured ownership to a non-family majority partnership. The firm’s new ownership led to tremendous growth. Spurred by the growth in the firm’s K-12 education and healthcare projects, 1999 revenues reached \$188 million on 155 projects. K-12 projects in



**Assarian Cancer Center at Providence Hospital.**



Photo courtesy of First United Methodist Church



**The Birmingham First United Methodist Church (top) and the Christ Church in Grosse Pointe Farms exemplify the firm's recent expertise in the construction of religious buildings.**

Detroit's far suburbs, which were experiencing tremendous population growth, formed a key part of this expansion. A 1999, CAM Magazine cover story estimated that twenty-six schools built by Auch opened in a single week. By 2004 this number would grow to 56 schools. Another key development was the seven-year, \$91 million construction management contract with Oakland Community College. The college would return to Auch in a few years to extend the contract through 2012.



**The Auch Company first completed a project for St. Peters Lutheran Church in 1912. In 2006 Auch built the congregation's new sanctuary in Macomb, Michigan.**

Healthcare continued to form a key part of the firm's work in 1990s. As healthcare technology became more complex, healthcare projects required greater expertise in making sure that the technology did not overwhelm the patient's experience. Projects completed in the 1990s for St. Joseph Mercy, for example, demonstrate this challenge. Innovations in medical technologies in the fields of radiology and cardiac care required the construction of high tech specialized facilities. Hospitals could not lose sight, however, that the environment needed to meet the needs of the patients, who were experiencing life changing medical issues. Auch has effectively developed an expertise in building



Photo by Meadows Photography

**The Southfield Public Library.**



**The renovations and addition to the Max M. Fisher Orchestra Hall harken back to the firm's long history of constructing performing arts spaces.**



Photography by Lark Photography

medical facilities that seamlessly incorporate technology with spaces that help patients through trying times.

New clients signal a return to the past for the Auch Company. Religious and cultural building projects harken back to the firm's early days, and since 2000, the firm has completed several church projects including St. Peters Lutheran Church, Christ Church in Grosse Pointe Farms and Birmingham's First United Methodist Church.

Two projects completed in 2003 further demonstrate that the firm's reputation continues to attract new clients. The first is the Southfield Public Library. Built to serve as the focus to Southfield's Civic Center, the library is one of the finest public libraries in the state. The second noteworthy project, the Max M. Fisher Theater renovation, demonstrates the firm's ties to the principles of its past and its modern capabilities. One hundred years ago, as the city of Detroit began its rapid

expansion, the Auch Company served the needs of clients throughout the city, building important cultural, commercial, and industrial buildings. Now 100 years later, the firm's Max M. Fisher Theater project is an important piece to Detroit's redevelopment.

Radical expansion over the past few decades has made the firm into the largest construction management firm dedicated to serving clients in Southeastern Michigan. Although the firm's growth marks a new stage in its history, it is made possible by the firm's traditions established by its founder George W. Auch. The past 100 years have shown that dedication to serving each individual client on each individual job is the recipe for long-term success. At the same time, the firm has demonstrated that it is not getting older without getting stronger. As the next 100 years begins, the George W. Auch Company is well positioned with the management, people, and systems to continue to serve its clients for the next 100 years.



# AUCH

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