



ENGLISH CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

HOLDS THE KEYS TO RECESSION SUCCESS

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Countless businesses have felt the bitter and continuous sting of the current economic recession, but local contractor English Construction Company has found a way to fortify itself against financial ruin. Founded in 1909 by William Benjamin “W.B.” English, English Construction has sustained itself as an industry juggernaut by maintaining a commitment to its core values of integrity, relationships, service, quality, experience and diversity.

Their ideals have served them well. After more than 100 years in the business, English Construction maintains more than \$500 million of current projects on the books.

According to the company’s account of its own history, English Construction started in Altavista, Virginia, by building homes and selling lumber. W.B.’s two sons, Red and Curtis, each took over distinct parts of the original business and developed two different companies. Red picked up the lumber supply portion of his father’s business while Curtis formed the construction company known today as English Construction.

Beverley English Dalton and her husband, Douglass Dalton, still live in Altavista and now run the company. Beverley also serves on the Altavista town council, just like her father Curtis did for 52 years. And while much of the contractor’s equipment and supplies are still housed at its yard in Hurt, Virginia, English Construction bought most of the 600 block of Church Street in downtown Lynchburg in the 1990s, where the headquarters remain today.

If you’ve even so much as passed through Central Virginia, it’s a near guarantee that you’ve witnessed the handiwork of English Construction—the contractor is responsible for many of Lynchburg’s landmarks, such as the Houston Memorial Chapel at Randolph College, the John Lynch Bridge (often referred to as the 5th Street bridge), the Westminster Canterbury retirement community, the downtown post office, the Lynchburg federal courthouse, the renovation of the Craddock Terry Hotel and many more.

“It’s all about diversity,” Raymond A. Booth, English’s Special Projects Coordinator, said. “If you look at our website, you’ll see that English is one of the most diverse contractors in the state—we basically do all types of construction.”

Booth defines himself as a “born here, die here” native of Central Virginia, and while he’s only worked for English since 2000—after serving 25 years as Lynchburg’s public works director—he’s been involved with English Construction his whole life.

“I went to college on a scholarship from English,” Booth said. “Back in the 60s, English gave two scholarships to every high school in Campbell County.”

As the special projects coordinator, Booth has a hand in securing and developing most of English Construction’s projects. He references the company’s diversity as one of its keys to success, especially in a “down” economy where many contractors are forced into doing work for less money as a way to hopefully ride through the recession. ►►



On the streets (literally), English Construction is primarily known as a highway contractor because that’s where the company’s equipment is most visible. The company does work in eight states, and locally it built all or portions of the Madison Heights, Lynchburg, Chatham, Gretna and Altavista bypasses, along with numerous other major projects.

“But that’s less than one-third of our business,” Booth said. “Most of the business is industrial buildings and utility work. That’s why you don’t see it . . . it’s off the road.”

Highway development is at a low due to a lack of tax increases, Booth said, so healthcare, energy and higher education projects comprise much of English Construction’s current workload.

It’s simple: When one type of project cannot garner a sustainable income, English Construction shifts its focus to another facet of the industry that can generate an acceptable profit margin.

“If you get tied into one part of the industry and that goes down, you’re not going to have anywhere else to go,” Booth said with a chuckle. “The diversity of the industrial base in Lynchburg is what’s made Lynchburg so successful. . . . You look at places like Martinsville or Danville that are tied into one or two other particular industries, and you realize that this area was extremely fortunate to survive, for example, [General Electric] shutting down.”

Booth also attributes English Construction’s success to its dedication to quality craftsmanship and its employees. As of this printing, English Construction employs 600 people, many of whom have been with the company for decades.

There’s a low turnover rate at English Construction, simply because “English looks out for its employees,” Booth said.

For example, after an employee has been with English Construction for 10 years, the company provides partial college scholarships to the children and grandchildren of its workers (based on need).

After 50 years of employment—and many have reached this milestone—English Construction will send an employee and his or her spouse on a vacation anywhere in the world.

English Construction’s longest-tenured employee is Maurice Law, who has been with the company for 65 years, and has never worked anywhere else. When it came time for him and his wife to enjoy their English Construction -sponsored vacation, they spent two weeks in Australia.

“He said he’s working on his next 50 years,” Booth said of the 85-year-old employee. “He’s still very healthy and walks a couple of miles per day.”

English Construction gives back to more than its employees, however. There’s an “English Wing” at Centra Virginia Baptist Hospital in Lynchburg, and the English Baseball Stadium and W.C. English Geotechnical Research Laboratory on Virginia Tech’s campus that attest to English Construction’s philanthropy. Additionally, Beverley and her three sisters make yearly anonymous contributions to various charities.

“It’s all about being low key and fitting into the community,” Booth said.

English Construction plans to remain on the forefront of the construction industry. Booth says they also aim to remain diverse and to continue exploring new fields as a way to grow “with the times and stay ahead of the curve.” **LB**

Visit www.englishconst.com to learn more about English Construction’s history and current projects.



Raymond Booth (pictured above) oversees English Construction’s special projects. The century old company has only continued to grow, with half a billion dollars now on the books.