



A JAW-DROPPING FEAT

Dangling an 83,000-pound jaw crusher over the rocky ledge of a 200-foot precipice is, to put it lightly, “a little nerve-wracking.”

But for Mark Cerrone, Inc., tackling the unconventional is just part of the job.

It's no surprise that the New York-based company would be selected to help execute the Maid of the Mist project, a \$32 million construction job on the Niagara Gorge. The massive undertaking needed a seasoned company with experience taking on intricate projects and the ability to work with precision and on a tight deadline. Mark Cerrone, Inc. is a premier civil construction company in western New York that excels in specialized and challenging jobs, such as the Maid of the Mist project. The company was hired as a subcontractor by LP Ciminelli, which served as general contractor for the project.

The Maid of the Mist is a well-known tour boat enterprise in western New York that has been around since 1846. As the oldest company to navigate the waters of the Niagara Gorge, the Maid of the Mist's existence was threatened when the company lost its contract in 2009 following lawsuits of its no-bid contract. A California-based cruise operator won the bid, resulting in the termination of the Maid of the Mist's use of winter storage facilities located on the Canadian side of the gorge, as well as its rights to operate in Ontario.

The lack of storage facilities on the American side of the Niagara Gorge meant the Maid of the Mist would have to shut down – until New York Governor Andrew Cuomo amended the company's existing 40-year contract. The amendment required the Maid of the Mist to spend an additional \$32 million to revamp the historic Schoellkopf Power Station into a dry dock storage facility and maintenance building for the boats. This allowed the Maid of the Mist to continue under its 40-year agreement with the state signed in 2002. The company also agreed to pay an additional \$105 million to the state over the course of the contract.



"The Maid of the Mist has been a legacy in the waters for more than 100 years," said George Churakos, vice president of Mark Cerrone, Inc. "It's wonderful that they're able to carry out the tradition that they've started. It would be a tragedy to see it leave."

GOING OVER THE GORGE

Mark Cerrone, Inc. and LP Ciminelli spent months evaluating, planning and strategizing to determine the best methods and equipment to accomplish the job. They faced a number of uncontrollable environmental challenges, such as rain and wet conditions, which became a serious safety concern. Although the two companies have a strong working relationship and are accustomed to partnering on projects, the formidable topography and uncontrollable elements of the job site demanded finesse and expertise.

"When you're dropping guys 200 feet over the side of a gorge, you have to have a good working relationship," Churakos said. "It was a little nerve-racking to see a 40-ton piece of equipment being lowered. We were working on a structure that had fallen apart, so we didn't know what kind of rubble we would be running into. Our first and foremost concern was safety. But with the right plans in place, it came together quite well. We monitored it every day and we are very proud to say we had zero incidents."

The companies also had to navigate the regulations that came with working on a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Schoellkopf Power Station was built in 1895 and is famous for its catastrophic collapse in 1956, which resulted in an enormous loss of power for the state and the death of one worker. Two-thirds of the power plant were allowed to fall into the gorge or were destroyed soon after, leaving behind remnants of the plant and an industrial elevator shaft.

"We've worked on sites like this before, so we knew what to expect," Churakos said. "Some items had to be excavated and kept as artifacts, while other items had to be preserved as part of the site."





The project was divided into two phases – constructing the docks and lowering and assembling the 98-foot high, 157-ton marine crane that would hoist the boats out of the water; and building the storage facility and maintenance building. Phase one was completed in November and phase two is expected to be finished in the third quarter of 2014, Churakos said.

Mark Cerrone, Inc. was tasked with removing the rubble and leftover material from the Schoellkopf Power Station and scaling the rocky cliff to ensure its stability, as well as building the dock platform. Having rented a portable crusher from Baschmann Services in the past, the company turned once again to Baschmann and asked for the best way to process the mixture of limestone, concrete and debris from the fallen Schoellkopf Power Station, keeping in mind the limited footprint of the job site and the need to move the crusher around the site under its own power.

Mike Peters, an aggregate equipment sales representative for Baschmann Services, recommended the KPI-JCI and Astec Mobile Screens FT2640 Jaw Crusher to produce the necessary 3-inch-minus material, which would be reused on the site during construction of the storage facilities.

The FT2640 is a track-mounted Vanguard jaw crusher that will deliver up to 25 percent more tons per hour than comparable crushers, Peters said.

“At first, I was thinking that we would need to use an impact crusher with a closed-circuit screen, which allows you to achieve a much tighter spec on your product but takes up a little more real estate,” Peters said. “But after a site inspection and learning what the gradation needed to be, I felt comfortable that we could stay in spec using the FT2640 jaw crusher, which is easier to use and takes up much less space. Because there was no room for an additional stacking conveyor, we were able to windrow the material by moving the crusher a little at a time and keeping the finished product piles out of the way on the very busy and cramped job site.”

“It was a pleasure to work with the people from Mark Cerrone, Inc. and LP Ciminelli,” Peters continued.

“They are true professionals and really take pride in the job they do. Their operators were eager to learn

the safe and proper way to process material using the FT2640, and they did a great job of keeping production up without abusing the equipment."

TIGHT ON TIME, TIGHT ON SPACE

With a limited timeframe to complete its portion of the highly-publicized project, the company knew it could not afford to make any missteps. Baschmann Services visited Mark Cerrone Foreman Dave Rambino every single day to ensure smooth operation of the equipment.

"We only had two to three weeks to get the crushing equipment, and we had to use a dealer that was dependable and who could service us at any time if we had problems," Churakos said. "Quality of the equipment was of the utmost importance. Baschmann Services went above and beyond, and stopped by the site on a daily basis to make sure things were running smoothly. It was absolutely invaluable. We needed them there, and they provided us such peace of mind knowing that if anything went wrong, they had our backs. Luckily, the machine ran smoothly and we did not encounter any problems."

"If any of the equipment on the job site did not

perform, it was immediately pulled out with the crane and you were out," Peters said. "We had to perform. At Baschmann Services, we quickly put together a plan to give this project 24-hour-a-day service. If there was a problem, day or night, we had it covered by our factory-trained service personnel with fully-equipped service trucks."

"We would absolutely use the FT2640 again," Churakos said. "It was dependable and met our needs, and we like to buy American-made when possible. The machine lived up to what it said it would do, and for us, that was critical."

Now that Mark Cerrone, Inc. has completed its portion of the Maid of the Mist project, it looks forward to seeing the completion of the job in the near future.

"I think it means a lot to the state of New York to see the iconic Maid of the Mist continuing to run," Churakos said. "It's history that has been in the state for so long, and we're happy to have been a part of their continued success."

