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Farmer Construction Celebrates 50 Years in Business

FARMER CONSTRUCTION IS A PHENOMENON.

Over its enviable 50-year history, it has earned a solid reputation that resounds through the city of Victoria and the province of BC. The family-run company is tightly organized and soundly managed, and its long record of success is testimony to this fact. By Maureen Licata



The company's client list would be the envy of any general contractor with such clients as BC Buildings Corporation, BC Transit, Defence Construction Canada, Royal Bank of Canada, McDonald's Restaurants, Royal Roads University, Canadian Tire Corporation and Holt Renfrew to just name a few of the still growing list. To reach the milestone of 50 years in business, now in its third generation as a family operation, Farmer Construction has relied upon quality staff and an uncompromising commitment to quality work.

Founded in 1951 by George Farmer, the company has evolved from a fledgling operation to the \$75 million-per-year organization that it is today. Its success has been hard earned and well deserved.

"Fifty years in a high risk business such as construction is somewhat unusual," says President Bill Johnson, P. Eng. "Profit margins are slim and constantly operating on the leading edge brings a certain excitement to our workday that most industries don't have."

A Tightly Run Organization

"We are meticulous about knowing where money is spent," says Johnson. "Each day, our foremen enter the quantities of work that have been done. We know how we are doing on each unit of work on a bi-weekly basis. We monitor work activities on site as a project proceeds. It helps us to both meet our estimated costs and to estimate future work. We use historical costs to ensure that our estimates are accurate."

Besides the respect for its own workers, Farmer Construction values the rapport between its workers and subcontractors. "Everyone works together on projects," he says. "Our workers are proficient with good production skills."

"Each project is unique. Two jobs may seem identical, but sites will be different and our subcontractors working on each project may be different."

(Opposite)
Palm Court in the Fairmont Empress Hotel.

(Top to Bottom)
Royal British Columbia Museum and Carrillon Tower;
Centra Gas Administrative Headquarters in Victoria;
Langara College, Vancouver;
Advanced Light Rapid Transit in Vancouver.

“Interacting with our counterparts on projects, such as owners and design professionals is often a challenge requiring a team approach.”



Farmer Construction's 3rd generation owners standing in front of Victoria's luxury Shoal Point Condominium project: (left to right) Lyle Scroggs, Vice President and General Superintendent; Barry Scroggs, Vice President and Contract Estimator and Bill Johnson, P.Eng., President.

“The best laid plans must often be altered. A client may request changes, building codes may be changed, material suppliers may not be able to be timely, and weather is often a factor which is uncontrollable,” says Bill. “We have a master plan and schedule but flexibility is a must. We deal with abnormal conditions on an as required basis.”

“Interacting with our counterparts on projects, such as owners and design profes-

sionals is often a challenge requiring a team approach. Team members from all disciplines need to interact with each other,” says Johnson. “We strive to create an overall team spirit for the project which is essential in making a project successful for all.”

The partners of generations two and three at Farmer Construction have always worked well together. “We provide checks and balances for each other and ultimately make better decisions,” he reflects.

Farmer Construction believes that their most important resource is their human resource. “Our staff, from senior office and field personnel to our most recent hires are the resource, properly directed that has resulted in our success over the years”, Bill says. “The cyclical nature of our industry often requires that our highest skilled supervisory staff may have to do other work. For instance superintendents may have to act as foremen at times. It is

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Farmer Construction has been recognized for its renovations, restorations and heritage reproductions as well as high-rise residential and other unique projects.



Examples of interior finishing work: (Top) Palm Court in the Fairmont Empress Hotel. (Bottom - left to right) MacMillan Bloedel Research Center, Burnaby; Holt Renfrew in Vancouver's Pacific Center; Baptist Church, Victoria.

important to keep our senior supervisors active regardless of our work volume. Occasionally some supervisors pick up their tools and return to their trade for a period", he explains.

"Taking on these alternate roles within the company helps to build respect for other employees, and keeps the company functioning in top form."

Farmer Construction's versatility is well known. Quality workmanship has been demonstrated in all types of construction.

Interior finishing is carried out by the company's skilled craftspeople, and examples of their work can be found in churches, hotels, university buildings and corporate headquarters. Farmer Construction has been recognized for its renovations, restorations and heritage reproductions as well as high-rise residential and other unique projects.

The company engineers do much of the conceptual design associated with the shoring, underpinning and seismic restraint

anchors often required in buildings "in-house", resulting in a cost saving and a reduction in time needed to complete the project. They also construct tilt-up buildings on a design build basis. "Up to four storeys, tilt-ups can be built quickly, require a minimum of maintenance and offer attractive architectural features," Bill advises.

Our engineers also design all of our formwork and temporary shoring "in-house" and in most cases we incorporate our own inventory of shoring equipment



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“Our company has always invested a portion of our profits in the equipment we require to ensure our future competitiveness.”



High Rise concrete construction: (Top) Harbourside Condominiums and Hotel on Victoria's Inner Harbour. (Bottom - left to right) Dallas Place, an early example of multi-story construction in Victoria; Roberts House Apartments, Victoria; The Beacon Condominiums, Nanaimo.

in the design,” Johnson says. “Our company has always invested a portion of our profits in the equipment we require to ensure our future competitiveness.”

Being active in Construction Association affairs has always been an important part of the company staying on the leading edge of the ever changing industry. “George Farmer was active in the Victoria Builders Exchange years ago and passed this very important philosophy along to the next generation,” Johnson recounts.

The company has accumulated a host of individual and corporate awards that decorate the walls of corporate headquarters. These include the Robert Stollery Award from the Canadian Construction Association. It was received by Chairman, Brian Scroggs for leadership and excellence in the construction industry. He also received the Robert Saunders Memorial Award in 1998 for “commitment and dedication in support of the Canadian Construction Industry”.

In 1997, the company received the Coles Hewitt Award of Excellence from the Amalgamated Construction Association for General Contractor (under \$5 million) for the Delano structural retrofit. The complex project in Vancouver demanded ingenuity and hard work.

Condominium owners and the developer of the project became concerned when the project showed signs of deflection of the concrete parking garage roof. Comprised of three four-storey wood frame

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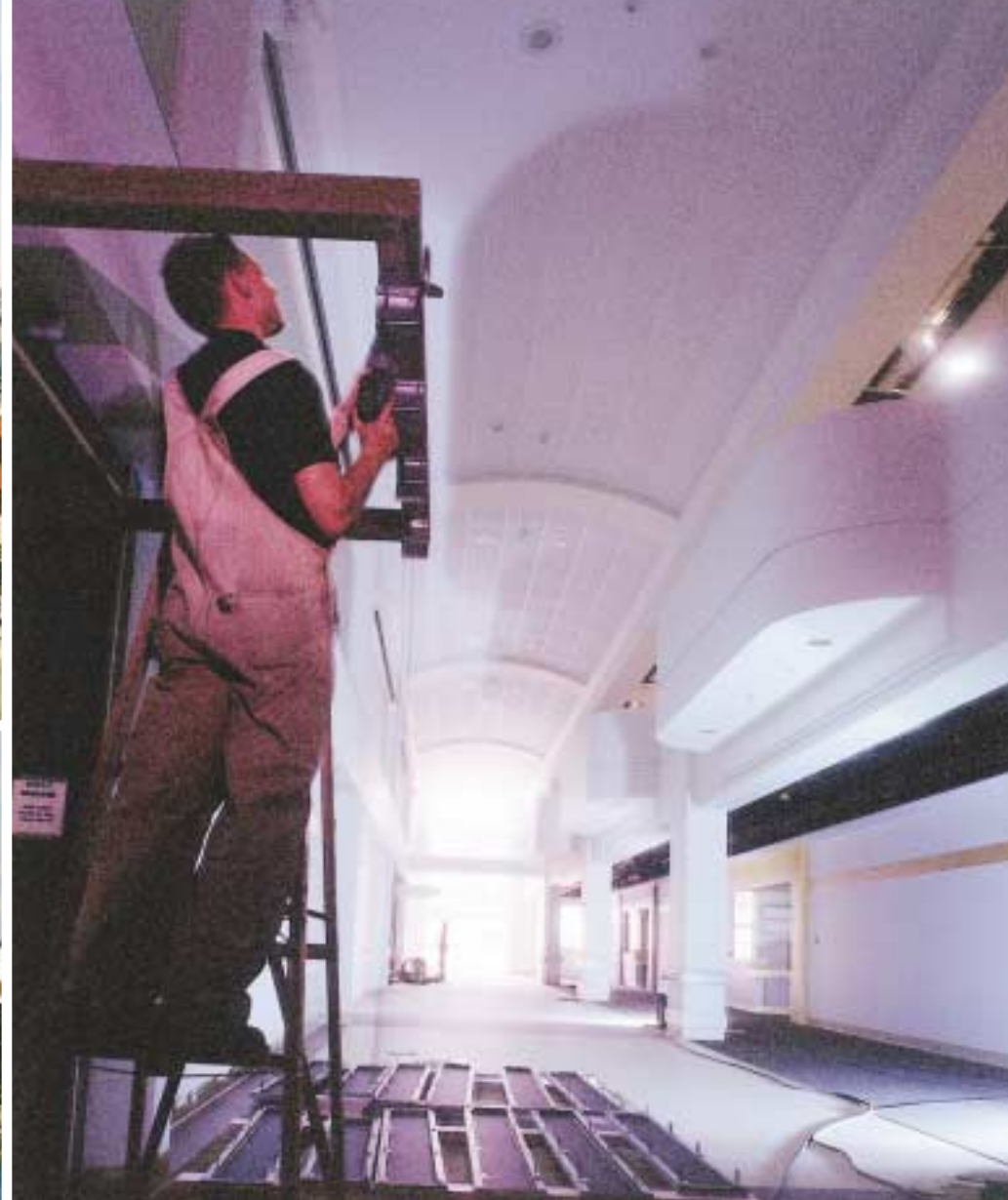


(Above) Royal Bank Main Branch, Victoria.

(Right) Laurel Point Condominiums and Hotel on Victoria's Inner Harbour

(Middle) The main concourse of the Royal Jubilee Hospital Diagnostic and Treatment Building in Victoria nearing completion.

(Opposite) The Canadian Auto Workers office building, New Westminster.



and guarantee full encapsulation. They were also concerned about architecturally matching the soffits of the beams and capitals with the existing structure which had been formed using plywood.

Farmer Construction submitted with its bid an unsolicited alternate proposal for forming both the sides and soffits of the beams and capitals, and pumping the concrete under pressure, into the forms. This alternate proposal submitted by the company featured a considerable cost savings.

Coordinated by Bill Johnson and in conjunction with the company's team of "in-house" engineers and technicians, a formwork system and formwork details were designed that permitted the installation of

the concrete under extremely high pressure. A custom structural concrete mix was designed such that the concrete could flow 200 feet from the pump to the point of placement. It would then be injected into the form and flow another 40 feet within the formwork without vibrating the concrete. The reinforcing steel would be fully encapsulated. It was a requirement that the concrete be able to resist short and long term shrinkage and create positive contact at the interface of the existing concrete soffits.

To facilitate the process, "guillotine" valves were designed and constructed. These allowed the concrete to enter the formwork and then to maintain the pressure even after the pumping had been completed.

buildings resting on a common single-level reinforced concrete parking garage, the Delano project ran into difficulty soon after it was constructed. Farmer Construction stepped in to remedy the situation.

Initially, the developer hired a consulting engineering firm to assess the structure and to offer recommendations for correcting the problem. It was decided that the required structural modifications had to be sympathetic with the existing concrete garage and that all work would be performed within the envelope of the parking garage so as to minimize disturbance to the owners.

The engineers opted for a structural system of 40 reinforced concrete beams and 25 column capitals bonded to the underside of the existing garage ceiling. As well, the design featured the addition of some new columns and footings. Seventy existing footings were to be exposed and structurally reinforced, fifteen columns

widened, and three-inch-thick shotcrete panels added to the underside of the garage roof. At the interface between new concrete and old, high-pressure water was to be used to roughen the existing concrete to a quarter-inch amplitude. The design stipulated that the sides of the beams and capitals would be formed, and 8000 dowels would be installed along with bottom reinforcing steel. The design contemplated using shotcrete for the soffit beams.

Once the people at Farmer Construction reviewed the project specifications, they questioned whether they could construct the retrofit as envisioned by the engineering firm. Having substantial experience with shotcrete, they were uncertain if they could successfully direct the concrete by shotcrete method in a single 18-inch lift to the underside of the structure. It would be necessary to shoot the concrete through the closely spaced bottom reinforcing steel

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Seated left to right are Terry Farmer, Brian Scroggs and Murray Farmer, responsible for leading the Farmer Group of companies for over 25 years.

Historical Background

From single-family homes to institutional, industrial and commercial projects built for government and large private sector clients, Victoria-based **Farmer Construction Ltd.** has achieved excellence in its half-century history.

Early in his career, George Farmer didn't intend to be at the helm of a highly regarded construction management organization. Instead, he became a free-lance mechanic after graduating from a local high school. Later he learned the plastering trade, and during the Depression years, he performed in-home contracts. Industrious and willing to learn, George soon entered the carpentry trade and, after his marriage, embarked on building his own home in 1938. When funds ran out, he opted to return to his previous work as a mechanic, reasoning that the difficult years of the Depression would continue.

"George's father saw things in a different light," wrote CB Fisher [The Daily Colonist, March 25, 1962]. "He prevailed on the young couple to accept a loan to finish their home and start another on speculation. Working long hours, George erected the two homes in excellent time. The Farmers moved into the second after selling the first, with drapes and furniture, for \$250 down."

Next he purchased two empty adjacent lots and soon had built two more houses. "He drove nails from 7 a.m. till nearly midnight seven days a week," wrote Fisher.

Though work slowed during the Second World War, George still built custom homes, and later in groups of 40 for National Defence. The postwar boom accelerated the pace of building in the city, and his skills were again in demand. Often signing three contracts per day, he asked his clients to forward a \$1000 good faith deposit.

"I didn't have any money," he said in the aforementioned article. "I was sincere and expected them to be. I had to have the money to get operating. And even then, it was hard to get certain materials."

Though the supply of nails was limited, George had "buckets" of them in his office in the basement of his home, prior to moving to the office building he constructed in 1951. "It still houses the company," says Brian Scroggs, Chairman of the Board and George's nephew.

George hired staff and began to delve into bigger and more complex projects in 1950. Heavy construction and engineering, institutional work, underground and bridge building were added to his list of capabilities. To carry out a wide range of jobs, he hired more people with diverse abilities.

George successfully tackled the Ash River power station on the Great Central Lake, one of his most difficult challenges. Familiar structures including the Gorge Road Hospital, Esquimalt Arena, and the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal also bear the Farmer footprint. In 1962, the company comprised upward of 350 people.

"You get a great satisfaction when you are producing something that you know is well built," said George, in the Daily Colonist article.

Local residents were introduced to the company and its work by the prevalence of Farmer Construction signs in front of new single family homes. "A Farmer-built home was a big deal," says Brian. "Realtors would tell their clients. It was a selling point."

By the 1960s, the company was undertaking more specialized work, says Brian, who has racked up 49 years with the company. "We blasted man holes and planted electrical lines underground in the city. The business evolved into whatever needed doing."

To complete their projects, heavy equipment was required. "We had some of the first hydraulic back hoes on Vancouver Island," he says. "That gave us an edge and was a lucrative area. We bought our first crane in 1964, when we were working on the Crofton pulp mill. George always bought equipment that augmented business."

The creation of Mutual Equipment Rental allowed him to rent construction equipment to other contractors in the area, while supplying the needs of his company. In later years, it became Commercial Crane after Mutual purchased the Vancouver-based company.

Murray, George's son, served as an estimator and manager of special projects for the company. He then took over the management of Mutual. In 1980, he established himself in Vancouver and purchased Commercial Crane.

"Commercial Crane was active throughout BC," says Brian. "There were 38 cranes available." Four years ago, it was sold to Sterling Crane. "The crane rental business was consolidating," he explains.

Terry Farmer, another of George's sons, became a part of the Farmer group of companies, managing "Explorer Developments" the real estate development arm of the company. He also entertained an interest in the hotel industry, following his father's lead. George had built Victoria's Executive House hotel on speculation. He then constructed and co-owned the Chateau Victoria in the early 1970s. "Terry became George's eyes and did the day-to-day work in the running of the hotel," says Brian.

In 1977, the Chateau Victoria was sold by George, and the next year the Doric Motel was purchased by the second generation. The Stay'n Save hotel chain was created and Terry became its president. The chain was renamed and now welcomes travellers to Accent Inns and Blue Ridge Inns with six locations throughout BC. Terry remains in charge, as President and CEO.

Also in 1978, the company decided to enter the US market and opened an office in Seattle, Washington. Wayne Farmer, another of George's sons, served as its president. In 1982, a decision was reached to withdraw from the US market, and the office was closed two years later. Since Wayne had established himself in the Pacific Northwest city, he opted to remain there, selling his interest in the company to Terry, Murray, and Brian.

As George advanced in age, the second generation of the company took control in 1977. Brian assumed the position of president in 1980, and looked after construction, and with Farmer's three sons began a four-way partnership. When Wayne departed in 1982, the three continued to run the Farmer group of companies.

In 1998, the third generation was installed. Now Brian's two sons, Lyle and Barry, along with Bill Johnson, are leading the company's enviable tradition into the new millennium. Bill came on board in 1974. Barry, the company's Vice President and Contract Estimator, has spent 27 years with the company, beginning as a full-time carpentry apprentice. It's been 28 years since his brother Lyle, Vice President and General Superintendent, first joined Farmer Construction.

The younger Scroggs children "always wanted to build things", says Lyle. "We used to cut plywood and use our dad's tools. We'd also go to the projects dad was running. Barry and I climbed on cranes and we walked through the formwork of buildings. It was a great adventure for kids."

As boys, they were "exposed to building", says Barry. "We built our own go carts. We weren't much like today's kids. We had a love for building."

Brian originally believed that three to five years would be necessary to transfer the company to the third generation. "Now I can see that it will be done by the end of the fourth year. Initially, they didn't have enough assets. Now they've grown the company. A transition in a family business is difficult to achieve from many perspectives, including the tax aspect. It doesn't just happen. A second generation is fairly common, but the third is quite rare."

In the same way that the owners of the company are family members, employees feel as if they are part of the family. "The family atmosphere is an important facet of the company," says Barry. "We hold a Christmas party every year and we continue to invite all retired employees who once worked in either the office or management. We show them our appreciation for their work."

Key personnel including superintendents, foremen and office staff attend the festive event. "Usually 60 employees plus guests attend and they represent 650 years of service to our company," says Bill. "Some of those who are now retired started in 1946, 5 years before Farmer Construction was incorporated."

A summer picnic is also on the agenda. George Farmer initiated the event. "Races used to be held and it wasn't unusual to spend over \$1500 on prizes," says Brian. "Pop, ice cream and other treats were also available." The picnic was discontinued

for several years until Barry decided to re-institute it four years ago.

At least one half of the employees at Farmer Construction have worked for the company for 15 or more years. "It's a big part of our history and it has given us the ability to function in the marketplace," says Bill. "We value the contribution of the people who work for our company."

Instead of looking for employees outside the company, Farmer Construction has a policy of promoting from within. "It's part of our corporate culture," says Brian. "We train people and advance them, and when we need someone, we look in house. Up to 14 years are required to train a person to be a Class A superintendent."

Barry rose through the company ranks as a contract estimator. "That's another whole area of expertise that requires at least 10 years to learn," Brian says. "There are so many jobs in the construction industry for which a person cannot be specifically trained in school, and must learn through work experience. There are no special programs for a foreman or superintendent, for example. We have to create our own training. The construction industry is unique. There is a lot of room for a person to make his or her own way in our industry without many extra years of post secondary education."

Employees who are hired for junior positions and have the aptitude to organize can be groomed to be superintendents. A Class A superintendent can "build almost any building", says Brian. "He can manage people on site, including the subtrades, and can keep the project on track. He also understands the issues of safety and the delegation of duties, among others."

His own career path exemplifies the Farmer ideal. He began as a carpentry apprentice, graduated to foreman, then to superintendent, general superintendent, manager of operations, president and finally chairman.

"I always look forward to going to work, even though the hours are often long and stressful," says Brian. "I enjoy what I do."

There is a pride that is felt company-wide. "Our employees are proud of the buildings they construct," he says. "In order for a construction business to survive nowadays, this must be the case. We are union contractors and have our own apprenticeship program in partnership with the union, and have won many awards. Our buildings are all high quality. And we hold our employees to high standards."

A recently received letter shows the level of satisfaction experienced by former clients of the company. Forty-one years ago, Brian, then a superintendent, built a home for a young couple. The letter states, "We ended up with a house which was not only a quality house, but has given us no trouble. In fact, we still haven't had to replace the roof. We have been singing your praises for 40 years."

Whether they've been big projects or small, Farmer Construction has always devoted itself to the task. ♦

"While the pump is still connected to the guillotine valve and while the form is 105 percent under pressure, we close the valve before we disengage the pump or even take the pressure off the pump," said Bill in "Sagging Problem Gets Concrete Solution" an article written by David Kosub in Heavy Construction News, April 1998. "Now the concrete within the form is contained under pressure."

Trials were conducted prior to beginning the actual project. Though adjustments were necessary, the process was sound and the project was successfully completed. Bill also saw the advantages of the technique and its relevance to other projects, particularly seismic upgrading.

"For projects such as parking garages, you don't particularly want walls because of drive aisles," he said in the Heavy Construction News article. "This will allow engineers retrofitting concrete to now detail the bonding of poured-in-place concrete beams to the underside of ceilings in order to keep the spans open."

Before its stellar performance on the Delano retrofit project, the company demonstrated its prowess in another type of construction project. In 1991, Farmer Construction received the Journal of Commerce General Contractor's Award of Excellence presented by the Amalgamated Construction Association in recognition of its work on the Forintek Western Research Facility located at the University of BC in Vancouver. An unusual aspect of the project was Farmer's involvement in the building geometry.



The Forintek Western Research Facility at the University of British Columbia Campus is a showcase of large scale wood product construction. It exemplifies Farmer Construction's commitment to quality and construction innovation.



"When we went to build the project, we found that the geometry of the members and the connectors had not been detailed by the consultants," said Bill in "Tribute to Wood and to Teamwork", an article in the Journal of Commerce, December 9, 1991.

Farmer gave its technicians the challenge to detail the Parallam and Glulam connectors. Once complete, the technicians attended on site to oversee the assembly of the various components.

The components were assembled on the ground and put into place in prefabricated assemblies.

Though the geometric assembly was uppermost in their minds, the crew had to remain aware of the fact that many of the structural components would be exposed as architectural features once the building was completed. All pieces had to be protected from any damage and weather while ensuring that they fit together perfectly.

Still today, Farmer Construction is displaying its innovative style. In British Columbia there are few contractors who have experience building "clean rooms", super clean spaces needed by high tech chip manufacturing firms.

"Two years ago, we built a 52,000 square foot facility for SDL Optics in Victoria," says Johnson. "The company manufactures laser pumps needed to transmit light signals along fibre optic strands. An extremely clean environment is required. The building contains both "clean rooms" and research and development spaces. Soon after, the company intended to expand and requested that Farmer build an additional 120,000 square feet. This is currently

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under construction.”

Before Farmer Construction commenced construction, staff and subcontractors were sent to San Jose, California to observe the “protocol” required and the electrical and mechanical aspects involved in construction of clean rooms. “It is a difficult process to learn the construction sequence and “clean room” protocol, so we wanted our people to observe this type of work on a project under construction.”

Three stages make up the process, says Bill. The first entails the construction of the building shell. Thereafter, all work is performed without the creation of any dust. Vacuums are running at all times - all trades must pick up any dust or dirt immediately. The protocol is very rigid and the total process goes through four basic stages or levels of protocol with workers dressed in special fibre free suits and booties to perform the final stages of the work. Cleanliness is the first priority - for instance the concrete floors are washed daily at shift end.

Though the downturn in the high-tech sector has meant a reduced demand for this type of construction, there will be additional requests in the future, says Johnson. “There will certainly be more in the Lower Mainland.”

Farmer Construction continues to achieve success while tackling challenging projects. As an example, the Young Building on the campus of Camosun College in Victoria is a standout. The company was awarded the tender to replace the exterior of the 1913 sandstone and brick covered building. “We took it back to the shell,”



says Johnson. “We put on a new exterior and completed a seismic upgrade. The sandstone was replaced with a replicated cast concrete material, inherently more durable than quarried sandstone.

Victoria’s Shoal Point waterfront condominium project demands Farmer Construction to react to changing scenarios. According to Johnson, “these are not standard repetitive suites”. The design is stepped and encompasses two different glazing systems. Brick, glass, precast and poured-in-place concrete, water landscaping, concrete sculptures, and the ocean’s mighty presence all combine to produce a unique mix of esthetic features.

Responding correctly to changing needs is another Farmer Construction hallmark. Once the hammerhead construction crane had been installed and the first phase of Shoal Point was more than three-quarters of the way toward completion, the developer decided to raise the floor of the 3 story high penthouse suite an additional

(Top) The Newton Library in Surrey.

(Right) The Crystal Ballroom in the Fairmont Empress Hotel.

(Opposite) A custom home in Victoria.



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four feet, which would improve the sight-lines for those living on the top storey. Unfortunately, the crane now stood four feet short, so the penthouse's glass cupola was prefabricated on the ground. A large mobile crane was then employed to transfer it to its lofty position.

While numerous projects are underway, two are prime examples of the range of work that is commonplace for Farmer Construction. Since 1954 the company has been doing renovations at the venerable Fairmont Empress Hotel, a Victoria landmark. "When doing work in occupied buildings we have to be invisible and often silent," says Johnson. "We work progressively through a project's phases and at the Empress we often camouflage ourselves behind "look alike" hotel room doors, for example, so the guests won't be inconvenienced or disturbed."

Two years ago, Farmer Construction embarked on the creation of additional rooms on the hotel's eighth level. Once used by travelling salesmen, the area had been converted to a storage facility.

"The main building was built in 1900," says Superintendent Rick Hamilton. "It's basically a wood structure, while the Humboldt



(Opposite) Farmer Construction is continuing with extensive renovations in the Fairmont Empress Hotel, and constructed the Royal B.C. Museum in the background, and the Lower Causeway in the foreground.

(Top) The historical restoration of the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Center in Victoria.

(Bottom) The Chateau Victoria Hotel.



wing, finished in 1936, is a steel structure."

Sixteen new rooms were added to the attic space. An elevator was also added so that guests could make their way from the sixth to the eighth floor.

Rick has spent 15 of his 30 years with Farmer Construction off and on working at the Fairmont Empress. "We've converted offices in the main building to rooms. We've upgraded rooms and some rooms that were cut in half were later restored to their full size. Renovation of older buildings involves many unknowns which can lead to interesting mechanical, electrical or structural challenges."

A space that once housed a pub, within

the Empress, will have a new life as a spa, starting in December. "It will be a state-of-the-art facility with a mineral pool on site," Rick says.

Guests can experience manicures, pedicures or other services in the treatment rooms. Marble will cover the two floors and a feature stairway will blend marble with a decorative wrought iron railing. "They'll be able to see from top to bottom. It will be elaborate."

Bill Johnson adds "Our work at the hotel is prestigious and we and our craftspeople take a great deal of pride in adding to such a historic site."

Farmer Construction is in the process of completing a large facility, the Diagnostic and Treatment Centre, at the Royal Jubilee

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(Top) Victoria General Hospital Nursing Towers.

(Bottom, left) The \$80 million Royal Jubilee Hospital Diagnostic and Treatment Building nearing completion.

(Bottom, right) The Fraser Regional Correctional Center in Maple Ridge.



Hospital in Victoria. It's one of the largest projects the company has undertaken, and "it's the largest single institutional project underway in BC," says Johnson. Farmer Construction was awarded the contract in June of 1999. He contends that in his experience hospitals and prisons are the most difficult construction projects, due to the sophistication of the building systems.

"We were looking for experience in building high-tech hospitals," says Alan Traish, Project Officer for the Capital Health Region. "The bids were reviewed by the Capital Regional Hospital District, which pays 40 percent of costs. The Ministry of Health picks up the remaining portion. Originally, we expected the project to be completed by December 2001, but we've added another floor and reassigned some space, so it won't be finished until February 2002."

The existing buildings had "physically



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reached their life expectancy", he says. "The old concepts of hospital building configurations couldn't accommodate modern technology, and couldn't meet current building code requirements," he adds.

The new building will house diagnostic and treatment services consisting of surgical suites, laboratory, morgue, emergency, surgical day care, materials management, diagnostic imaging and other services.

Flexibility is an important asset in constructing a building, and this project demonstrated the need for that asset. After construction had commenced, doctors

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(Top, left) Sussex Place Office Building, Victoria. (Bottom, left) Heritage reproduction of the Best Western Carleton Plaza Hotel, Victoria. (Top, right) Elk Falls Pulp and Paper, Campbell River. (Middle, right) Westmin Resources Mine Tailings Ponds, Campbell River. (Bottom, right) Accent Inns (formerly Stay 'n Save Motor Inns), one of 5 such properties throughout B.C.

were concerned about the distances over which critical care patients would need to be transported between the operating room and other locations such as imaging. "It would have been two and one half football fields in length," Alan said.

So the government agreed to add another floor on to level five. This will provide the space for critical care beds. "A future renovation would have been far more costly, so we decided to proceed with the additional work while the base building was still under construction."

Looking Ahead

While engrossed in the matters of the day, Farmer Construction also looks toward the future. "We've never been a company to look quickly at expansion," says Johnson. "We continue to grow in a controlled manner as we develop capable people. Maybe we're set in our ways, but we like to grow from within. We do not intend to go to other geographic areas with their booming cyclical economies. We prefer to create our market share within British Columbia. We'll continue to con-

centrate on Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and other select areas of BC."

Now, as in the past, basic business sense breeds success. In the application for the award for the 1991 Forintek Western Research Facility, Bill wrote, "We believe the secret to being a successful general contractor involves the ability to develop a strategy or game plan for a project and then be able to constantly mould that game plan to accommodate current conditions."

Farmer Construction has consistently lived up to its words. ◆

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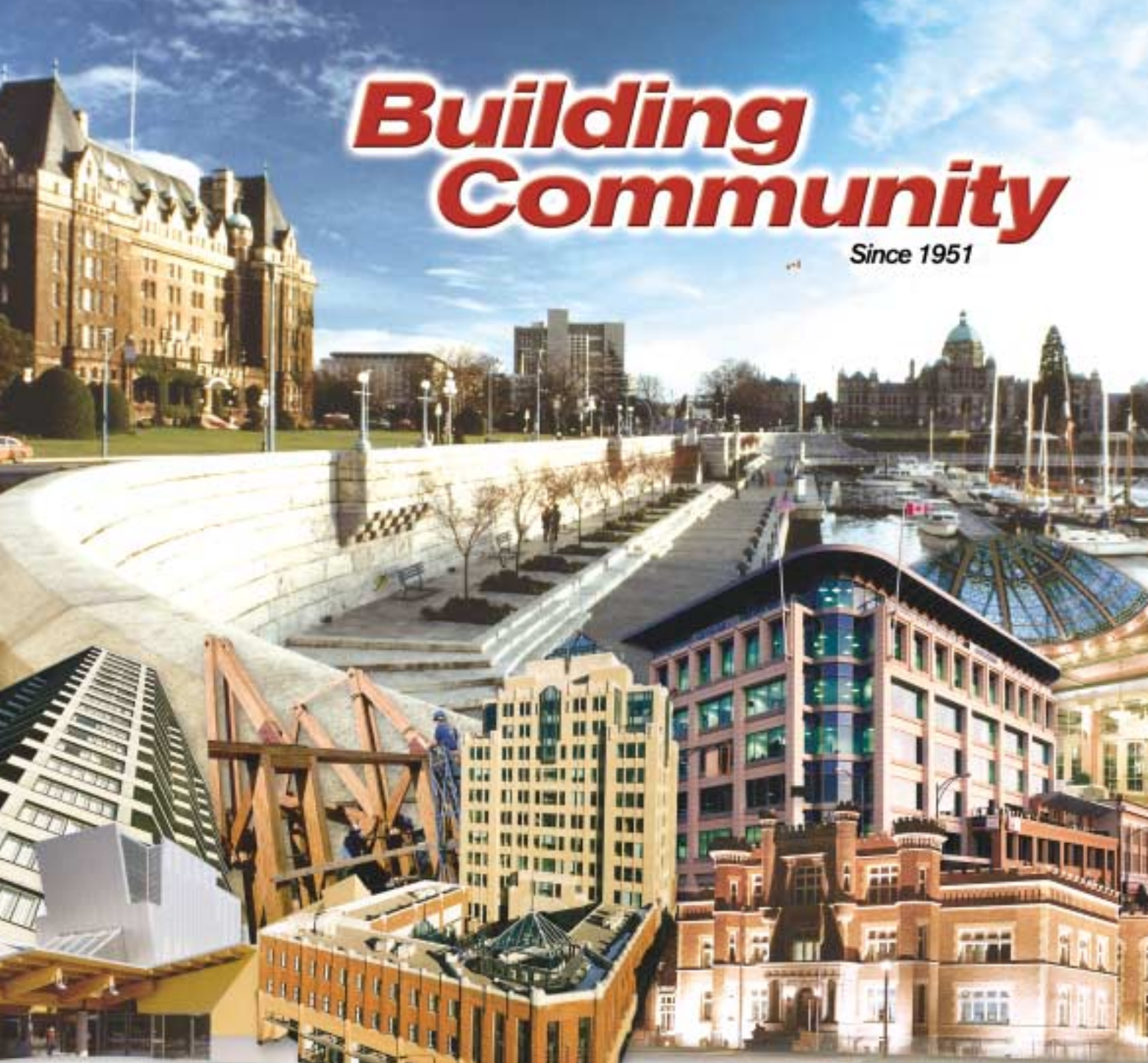
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