



ENGINEERING THE BEST

ARTISAN ENGINEERING BRINGS AN EXPERT EYE TO EVEN THE LARGEST OF PROJECTS

by Joel Cornell

As John Higgins developed as a structural engineer, his talent, skill and clearly displayed ability quickly saw him to a management position with the largest structural engineering firm in the State of Vermont. Having grown up in the state, and graduated from the University of Vermont in 1992, Higgins found a great dedication to the region and its unique architectural stylings within himself.

However, deeply involved with the management of the engineering design work, rather than with the authoring of design documents, Higgins felt his creative control slipping away.

"I found myself presenting other people's documents as my own, and I never wanted that to be the case," Higgins said. "My time was almost entirely consumed with managing the processes of other engineers, rather than acting as an engineering myself. I knew that the creative fulfillment of good design is what brought me into the industry, and so I left that position and began my own company: the pinnacle of creative control."

In 2003, Higgins founded Artisan Engineering as the principal engineer. To this day, his only expansion has been the hiring of an assistant engineer, Mark Johnson. The entire scope of the firm, a full suite of structural engineering services including; feasibility studies, existing conditional assessments and code analysis to structural engineering design documents and construction administration, is all performed by Higgins and Johnson.

"I've been intentionally fighting to keep my company small," Higgins said. "I work directly with all of my clients, architects, builders, suppliers and contractors. Lasting relationships are all too necessary in this industry, and always being there in person when your design or construction partner has any issue is a key to that."

Although Artisan Engineering has shown a fondness for custom residential work in the New England region, Higgins' adept ability to solve a vast array of problems for his clients has taken the

firm across the country. Even despite the economy, Artisan Engineering has seen nothing but growth. Although the size and scope of projects have certainly dropped, the number of projects coming through their doors has never been higher.

"Custom residential is the ideal for me because there's a soul unique to residential work. There is a flexibility there that respects the ideas of everyone involved, from the contractor and the client to the architects and other designers. When a project comes to us, I frequently find myself taking their existing plans and ideas and making numerous but slight improvements; all moving one step at a time in one direction so that everyone maintains some semblance of ownership."

So very much of design is based on past experiences and relationships. In such a small firm, with such a portfolio of experience and quality, Artisan Engineering's fast-paced rise to the highest tiers of engineering has not been a surprise to his happy clients.