

# Add-ons at Two Elevators

HIGHER RAIL RATES INSPIRE EXPANSIONS AT MICHIGAN AG COMMODITIES



Michigan Agricultural Commodities' grain elevator at Brown City, MI, with new 500,000-bushel steel storage tank at far right. Photos by Ed Zdrojewski.



## Michigan Agricultural Commodities Lansing, MI • 517-627-0200

**Founded:** 1976  
**Storage capacity:** 40 million bushels at seven locations  
**Annual volume:** 35 million bushels  
**Number of employees:** 110  
**Crops handled:** Corn, soybeans, soft red and soft white winter wheat, dry edible beans and soybeans, oats, rye, seed rye, sugar beet pellets  
**Services:** Grain handling and merchandising, agronomy

**Key personnel:**

- Bruce Sutherland, president
- Chuck Kunisch, general manager
- Duane Geiger, operations manager/safety director
- Mike Metzger, Marlette plant manager
- Bob Howard, Marlette merchandiser
- Jenny St. George, office manager
- Joe Berry, Brown City plant manager
- Karen Warner, Brown City merchandiser
- Chris Stanley, maintenance supervisor.

## Supplier List

<b>Aeration fans</b> .....	Chicago Blower	<b>Gravel</b> .....	Bechtel Gravel
<b>Aeration system</b> .....	Safe-Grain,	<b>Level indicators</b> .....	Safe-Grain
<b>Aeration fan controllers</b> ..	AgriDry LLC	<b>Manlift</b> .....	Alimak Hek Inc.
<b>Bin sweeps</b> .....	Brock Grain Systems	<b>Millwright</b> .....	D S Services Inc.
<b>Bucket elevator</b> .....	GSI	<b>Moisture meter</b> .....	DICKEY-john
<b>Catwalks</b> .....	Warrior Mfg. LLC	<b>Scale automation</b> .....	Cultura
<b>Concrete</b> ...Hillis Concrete & Masonry			Technologies/Proceres
<b>Contractor</b> .....	in-house	<b>Scale installation</b> .....	Kennedy Scales
<b>Conveyors (drag)</b> .....	GSI	<b>Steel storage</b> .....	Brock Grain Systems,
<b>Electrical contractor</b> ...	Maurer Electric		MFS/York/Stormor
<b>Elevator buckets</b> .....	Maxi-Lift, Inc.	<b>Steel tank erection</b> .....	D & K
<b>Engineering</b> .....	SKS Engineers LLC,		Construction
	Clear Creek & Associates Inc., Nohr	<b>Tower support system</b> ..	Warrior Mfg.
	Wortmann Engineering		LLC
<b>Excavation</b> .....	Tromley Excavating	<b>Truck probe</b> .....	Gamet Mfg. Inc.
<b>Falling number tester</b> .....	Perten	<b>Truck scale</b> .....	Fairbanks Scales
	Instruments		

General Manager Chuck Kunisch, left, and Operations Manager Duane Geiger.







*Elevator at Marlette, MI, with new 20,000-bph leg and receiving pit at far right.*

**M**erchandising grain is relatively simple when all you have to do is load it onto shuttle trains and send it to the same customers year-in and year-out. Handling the carry in the market becomes more challenging when that is no longer an option.

“The truth is, we can’t rely on the services of the Class I railroads any more,” says Chuck Kunisch, general manager for two Michigan Agricultural Commodities (MAC) elevators in Marlette (989-635-3578) and Brown City, MI (810-346-2711) and a 20-year veteran with the privately-held company. “CSX recently raised its freight rates for corn to the point where it’s priced us out of the market.”

Cutting back with CSX meant losing some feed markets in the southeastern states, but truck markets remain for the large volumes of corn that MAC originates in the Michigan Thumb region. These include a number of grain processors, feed manufacturers, and ethanol plants around southeast Michigan and southwest Ontario.

As a result, MAC decided to add more storage and handling capacity, in order to handle increasingly large fall harvests while increasing shipping via truck to reach the markets that are available more locally.

“Our company mandate is to get customers through our facility in 15 minutes or less at the peak of harvest, so they can get back out into the fields,” says Kunisch. “So far this harvest (November 2017), we’re averaging about 10 minutes.”

At both locations, MAC acted as

its own in-house general contractor. Among the subcontractors the company hired:

- D S Services Inc., Cass City, MI (989-872-3318), performed millwright services.
- Maurer Electric Inc., Bad Axe, MI (989-269-8171), was the electrical contractor.
- Performing engineering work on various phases of the projects were: SKS Engineers LLC, Decatur, IL (217-877-2100); Clear Creek & Associates Inc., Goshen, IN (877-740-3542); and Nohr Wortmann Engineering, Yankton, SD (605-665-1214).
- Tromley Excavating, Brown City (810-346-2015), did excavation work at the Brown City location.
- Bechtel Sand & Gravel, Brown City, supplied high-quality 21AA-grade gravel for the Brown City project.
- Jason S. Hillis Concrete & Masonry LLC, Emmett, MI (810-650-7945), poured concrete at both locations.

#### **Marlette, MI**

At the 4-million-bushel elevator in Marlette, MAC added a second receiving pit adjacent to its original pit. The pit feeds a 15,000-bph, 200-foot-tall GSI leg equipped with 16x8 Maxi-Lift Gray CC-MAX elevator buckets mounted on a 10-inch belt.

At the top of the leg, a 15,000-bph GSI/Riley overhead drag conveyor carries grain to existing grain handling equipment serving various existing storage tanks around the elevator.

Kunisch notes that the new receiv-

ing pit is contributing to shorter lines during harvest.

Also contributing to shorter lines at Marlette is a new, second truck scale serving outbound traffic. The 90-foot Fairbanks pit-type scale include kiosks installed by Kennedy Scales. Coon Rapids, MN (763-784-1022), that ties into a Cultura oneWeigh scale automation system to speed up traffic across the scales. The installation also includes a new Gamet Apollo truck probe.

MAC also installed new grain testing equipment in the nearby office building, including a GAC 2500 moisture meter and a Perten falling number tester for wheat.

Construction at Marlette began in August and was completed in October.

#### **Brown City, MI**

The focus of the project at Brown City, about 15 miles to the southeast of Marlette, was the addition of a 500,000-bushel Brock corrugated steel tank. The addition brings total storage



*Closeup of new leg and receiving pit (far right) at Marlette.*

capacity at Brown City to approximately 3.6 million bushels. Work began at the end of February and was completed in June.

The new tank stands 90 feet in diameter, 85 feet tall at the eaves, and 110 feet tall at the peak. The flat-bottom tank is equipped with outside stiffeners and a Brock Model 3000SR zero-entry sweep auger. Kunisch notes that the sweep auger can pick up 60,000 bushels of grain in four hours of operation.

A set of four 50-hp Chicago Blower centrifugal fans operated by an Agri-Dry Bullseye controller provide roughly 1/7 cfm per bushel of aeration with the assistance of eight roof exhausters and 42 vents.

The tank is filled and emptied using 20,000-bph GSI/Riley drag conveyors.

Additional storage includes an overhead 5,000-bushel Stormor surge tank for truck loading fed by another 20,000-bph overhead GSI/Riley conveyor.

In addition to the storage, MAC installed a new 200-foot-tall Alimak Hek rack-and-pinion manlift near the steel storage complex. "The idea is to encourage preventive maintenance by making it easier than climbing long ladders," Kunisch says.

*Ed Zdrojewski, editor*



*New outbound truck scale and truck probe at Marlette.*



*Closeup of the new 500,000-bushel Brock tank at Brown City.*