

family-owned elevator expands

JOHN MARION, INC. responds to burgeoning grain yields with new storage, new receiving pit and leg.

As grain yields rise year after year in southeast Michigan, John Marion, Inc. (JMI) has been adding onto its three grain elevators to accommodate those bigger crops.

In 2020, the family-owned company expanded its branch elevator near Britton, MI (517-451-8347). That included a new 400,000-bushel Behlen corrugated steel tank, bringing total storage capacity at that location to roughly 2.2 million bushels, plus a second receiving pit and leg rated at 10,000-bph, and a new Probe-A-Load truck probe to serve a grain grading lab moved upstairs in the facility's two-story office building.

"Farmers are under pressure to get in and out of the elevator while good weather lasts during the harvest," says Ron Roehm, vice president and operations manager.

"The crop this year started out in good shape with ideal planting conditions," he continues. "Then we had a prolonged dry spell in August. So 2020 was an average to slightly below-average crop. Even so, it was still better than 2019, and we needed the space to avoid piling on the ground."

About JMI

While JMI is a Roehm family operation today, the company got its name from its founder, John Marion,

JOHN MARION, INC.

Saline, MI • 800-356-0784

Founded: 1965

Storage capacity: 3.4 million bushels at three locations

Annual volume: 5-6 million bushels

Annual sales: \$25-35 million

Number of employees: 20

Crops handled: Corn, soybeans, soft red winter wheat

Services: Grain handling and merchandising, agronomy, custom application, trucking

Key personnel at Britton:

- JoAnne Roehm, president/merchandiser
- Ron Roehm, vice president/operations manager
- Carrie Roehm, grain originator
- Carl Rachowiak, millwright
- Jan Latvala, engineer
- Chad Wagenschutz, ag operations
- Kyle Golab, ag operations

JMI
GRAIN ELEVATOR



MICHIGAN

Britton ★



John Marion, Inc.'s branch elevator outside of Britton, MI, with new 400,000-bushel Behlen tank at far right. Drone photo by Raines Aerial Photography, Wapakoneta, OH.

BRITTON SUPPLIER LIST

- **Aeration fans** • Sukup Mfg. Co.
- **Bin sweep** • Sioux Steel Co.
- **Bucket elevator** • Schlagel Inc.
- **Catwalk** • Global Fabrication
- **Conveyors** • Material Handling Equipment Sales
- **Distributor** • Schlagel Inc.
- **Electrical contractor** • Luckhardt Electric
- **Elevator buckets** • Maxi-Lift Inc.
- **General contractor** • in-house
- **Layout design** • Material Handling Equipment Sales
- **Millwright** • Latvala Bros. Inc.
- **Millwright service** • Frey Construction
- **Moisture meter** • DICKEY-john
- **Motors** • Toshiba International
- **Speed reducers** • Dodge
- **Steel storage** • Behlen Mfg. Co., Brock Grain Systems
- **Steel tank erection** • CTGS
- **Tower support system** • Global Mfg.
- **Truck probe** • Probe-A-Load, Inc.

president and president, respectively, and purchased the company outright from the Marions in 2001. (John Marion died in 2004.)

Expansions have continued at all three locations to the present day.

Today a new generation of Roehms, daughters Carrie and Carissa, are part of the family operation, as grain originator and operations assistant, respectively.

The company still makes use of one of the late John Marion's favorite questions: "Are you hustling?"

According to the JMI website: "He believed in getting the job done in the safest, most efficient way possible. Today, that still stands. We believe in providing excellent service, so our customers can get back to the field, while at the same time offering competitive prices for corn, soybeans, and soft red winter wheat."

Project at Britton

The 2020 project was the second phase of a two-phase project that began in 2017. The 2017 phase included another 400,000-bushel Behlen tank and an overhead 10,000-bushel Material Handling drag conveyor extending out from existing equipment. The ►

and his wife, Margaret. They built their first grain storage on Michigan Avenue in Saline, MI, near Ann Arbor in 1965.

"They started out by providing grain storage for their friends in the area," says President and Merchandiser JoAnne Roehm, "but it didn't take long for it to become a full-

fledged commercial grain operation."

Over the first 25 years of operation, the Marions added more storage, a grain dryer, and a fertilizer operation at Saline, then bought elevators at Britton in 1989 and Dundee, MI in 1992.

Ron Roehm joined the company in 1991 as location manager at Britton. He and JoAnne in 1997 took over as vice

conveyor was supported by a Global Mfg. tower.

For both phases of the project JMI acted as its own general contractor. The grain handler hired Latvala Bros. Inc., Ypsilanti, MI (734-485-7470), as millwright and Material Handling Equipment Sales, Delaware, OH (989-430-4005), either manufactured or procured most of the grain handling equipment. Latvala and Material Handling have worked on JMI projects since 2010.

The original plan in 2017 was eventually to place a new receiving pit and 5,000-bph leg inside the tower. Eventually, JMI wanted to increase that to 10,000 bph, and Material Handling, Global Fabrication, and the leg supplier Schlagel Inc. were able to upgrade the tower to support the larger leg.

Frey Construction, Wauseon, OH (419-446-2791), sold both Behlen tanks, which were erected by CTGS, Lewisburg, KY.

For both phases of the project, JMI specified that it wanted Behlen tanks. "We just think it's a better-quality tank, and we have a track record with them at our other locations," Ron Roehm says.

For the 2020 project, the newest



Closeup view of the new Behlen tank, which has two sidedraw spouts and a Daay bin paddle sweep. Photos by Ed Zdrojewski.



New 10,000-bph Schlagel receiving leg topped by a four-duct Schlagel SynchroSet distributor.



Duct leading from a Sukup 20-hp centrifugal fan is protected from snow and ice by a metal roof-like structure.

Behlen tank stands roughly 98 feet in diameter and 63 feet tall at the eave. The flat-bottom tank is equipped with outside stiffeners, two sidedraw spouts, and a Daay bin paddle sweep. However, there are no grain temperature monitoring cables. Grain Originator Carrie Roehm says the tank is expected to have numerous quick turnarounds, so grain temperature monitoring was deemed unnecessary.

Aeration is supplied at 1/10 cfm per bushel by a pair of Sukup 20-hp centrifugal fans. The ducting leading from the fans into the tank are protected from snow and ice during Michigan's

frequently harsh winters by a metal structure resembling a steep, peaked roof.

The Material Handling fill conveyor is a drag rated at 10,000-bph running out from existing equipment. The tank empties onto an above-ground Material Handling 5,000-bph drag conveyor running back to an existing leg.

The 2017 support tower now surrounds a 10,000-bph Schlagel leg, fed from a new 300-bushel mechanical receiving pit. The leg is outfitted with single row of Maxi-Lift 14x8 HD Max buckets mounted on a 16-inch belt.

The leg deposits grain into a Schlagel four-duct flatback SynchroSet electric distributor, which in turn, sends it out one of two existing conveyors. Plans for 2021 call for the addition of a pair of Brock overhead surge tanks, and the distributor will serve those, as well.

Also in 2020, JMI moved its grain grading lab upstairs to the second story of its office building and added a Probe-A-Load truck probe outside the lab to collect samples and send them pneumatically to a collection box. The lab also includes a DICKKEY-john GAC 2500 moisture meter and a Mid-Continent Industries Kicker dockage tester.

Ed Zdrojewski, editor