

Builder adds Kimmel Center to resume

Angelo Perryman performed interior construction work

By Ayana Jones

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As a commercial general contractor, one of the most notable projects that Angelo Perryman ever worked on in Philadelphia was the Pennsylvania Convention Center Reading Terminal train shed project.

Back in 1994, Perryman did field supervision for the Reading Terminal train shed project. In fact, it was that project that drew the Alabama native to the city.

Now, the president and CEO of Perryman Building and Construction Services can add another Philadelphia landmark to his company's notable list of accomplishments.

Last week marked the historic opening of The Kimmel Center for Performing Arts and many were left in awe over the building's unique design. Various construction firms had a role to play in putting it all together.

Perryman Building and Construction — which specializes in interior construction, furniture, fixtures and construction management — did the interior construction work for an area that many center goers won't get to see — a full floor of preparatory and dressing areas which are designed for those who are preparing for performances at The Kimmel Center.

The company also did a portion of Verizon Hall's concert seating area, which can accommodate 2,500 occupants.

"That's our claim to fame," Perryman says of his company's work at the center.

"Not only is it a one-of-a-kind...we came in at a time when it was already underway and were dealing with the logistics and coordination of management."

Perryman was brought into the project by Artis T. Ore Inc. (ATO Inc.) Building Enterprises — the construction co-managers of the new Kimmel Center.

ATO Inc. president and treasurer Artis T. Ore stated that they had spearheaded efforts to get more minority participation in the project. He noted that Perryman Construction was very involved in the drywall and carpentry work.

As someone who has been in the construction business for 21 years, Perryman says that there is "something" about standing back and looking at your work, knowing that you pulled the labor and materials together within a timeframe.

"It's almost like a father looking at his child that you involved so much of yourself in..." he stated in reference to the end result of his company's work at Verizon Hall.

He noted that the Kimmel Center project was challenging because it had difficulties from the standpoint that they were trying to create something that had never been created before.

Now that their work has been completed, Perryman is seeking to line up some projects for the future.

In 1998, Perryman officially opened his construction business in Philadelphia. But it was his father - Jimmy Perryman who originally started the family business in 1960 in Alabama.

Though his father wanted Perryman and his two brothers to eventually take over the business, they all veered off and did their own thing.

The younger Perryman opted to move around and garner some experience from other various firms such as Brown and Root from Houston, Texas. One of his brothers is a master electrician while the other is a nuclear engineer.

Today, he has 21 years of construction experience under his belt and has worked on major projects in Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Idaho, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

After his father died, the business went into a lull for a few years until Perryman decided to start it back up.

"It was something I know he left with us," he stated, noting that his father would often remind him that he'd been laying bricks since he was a youngster.

His company, which has about 16 employees, operates out of The Enterprise Center in West Philadelphia. Perryman says that he was drawn to The Enterprise Center because he realized it had a strong environment that would allow entrepreneurs the flexibility to develop their own business while they provide assistance.

As he sat in his office, he acknowledged that construction is a "tough" business.

"As an African-American owned company, you're constantly faced with the belief that you haven't been prepared enough to produce a person's dream project," Perryman says.

He admitted that is an aspect of the profession that is often difficult to accept.

He noted another challenge is when people ask you for things that you can't deliver.

"It's important to be viewed as a good contractor that does good work," Perryman commented, adding that his mother has always stressed, "your name goes further than you do."

Other projects that the Perryman name has been attached to include Loews Philadelphia Hotel and U.S. Airways Terminal F at the Philadelphia International Airport.