

Our First DISTRIBUTION CENTER

Part One

— LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #267 —

Comparing our original building of 1977 to our first Distribution Center, of 2020/21, is like comparing the Wright Brothers’ first airplane to Air Force One. Our original building was 1,536 sq. ft. and of “pole-frame” construction; it was made with the same building process they use on farms for equipment storage—wooden poles and sheet metal siding. We added a concrete floor, utilities and a restroom, finished out the walls and ceiling—it only took 35 days, start to finish. For the next 11 years, we added on three times, using the same “pole-frame” construction, ending with 10,000 sq. ft.

In the summer of 1988, we purchased 12 acres on the southeast corner of exit 121 off Interstate 70—West Van Horn Tavern Road. This time we upgraded to “metal-frame” construction and

built a 30,000 square foot combination warehouse and office building; later we named it the Washington building—

we moved in during January of

1989. Over the next 30 years, we acquired adjacent vacant acreage and built the Jefferson building; and we acquired two adjacent lots with older buildings and refurbished/expanded them—Roosevelt and Lincoln buildings. We also expanded the original Washington building three times. In the end, we had 189,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space—in “metal-frame” constructed buildings.

So now, thirty years later, 2018, it was time for more warehouse space, more office space and more parking



Groundbreaking began on 18 May. This stake marks the location of the southeast corner of the building. The cut, at this point, was 4.0 feet.

space. We had bought the land (200 acres) ten years earlier, and now began planning for our first “stand alone” Distribution Center. Building a new, large distribution center is a really, really big deal; it takes an unimaginable amount of planning from all engaged parties and more lead time than nearly anything we’ve ever done—oh, and it’s expensive!

For this building we chose the “tilt-up” concrete

“...last as long as the pyramids.”

construction method and settled on 360,000 sq. ft. for the initial build. In “tilt-up” the wall sections of the building are cast flat from concrete, in two parts, with insulation in between; then lifted/tilted into position with a big crane. Window openings and doorways are framed out before the casting process begins.

Preparing the building pad itself was quite a process; modern technology has allowed us to build warehouse floors designed to last practically as long as the pyramids. The first wall slab was tilted up on 27 August, the last on 21 October—55 days. That’s the end of part one!



Larry Potterfield
Corner of US Highway 40 & State Route J
Just west of Columbia, Missouri
21 October 2020

Fifty-five days after tilting up the first section of wall, the last section is moved into position. Shortly thereafter, the big red crane was disassembled and trucked to its next job site.



Wall sections are poured in two steps; first, three inches of concrete is poured over wire mesh, then 2-1/2' sheets of Styrofoam insulation are attached.