Mars’ Cheese Castle

The Mars’ Cheese Castle is a family-owned Wisconsin landmark business owned by the Ventura and Wehrmeister families and was established in 1947. Their building was to be torn down due to the I-94 freeway expansion near Kenosha, Wisconsin. MSI General Corporation was contracted to design and build them their new facility.

The program was simple: Build a veritable castle that their parents, the founders of the business, would have been proud of. Such a challenging, but also rewarding and extremely fun project does not come along very often for an architect, so MSI General relished the opportunity.

MSI General needed to find a concrete masonry unit that was versatile enough to create the effect necessary to pull off the medieval appearance. County Materials’ Castle Rock concrete block was a perfect fit. With its split face cut stone appearance, it became the primary building material for the project. An oversized white split face veneer masonry unit was chosen for the base of the building to help create the right scale for this design.

Several other “castle-like” elements incorporated into the design include:
- Pre-colored Horizon block accent ledge between the base of the building and the Castle Rock CMU
- Corbelled masonry arches beneath masonry embattlements at the tops of the walls
- A stamped and colored concrete walkway with a wood board pattern and steel chains to simulate a drawbridge
- Precast concrete arches at the entries
- Arched aluminum windows
- Precast concrete bench supports mimicking the arches of the windows
- Hefty wood timber framing at the benches, window canopies, and the Beer Garden Arbor

All of these innovative materials and distinctive design elements helped create a robust and majestic building image, still within eyesight of the I-94 corridor, beckoning travelers (and locals too!) to come and explore all that the new Mars’ Cheese Castle has to offer.
Judges’ Comments
This business is an icon of Wisconsin. The iconography use of materials inside and out supports an image to the point of branding. It almost looks like cheese ... whimsical ... concrete that looks edible. The crenulations and corbelling are consistent with a castle design and just a lot of fun. It is hard to get a happy feeling out of CMUs, but this project does. Yummy!
Best of Show & Best of Concrete Masonry
Mars’ Cheese Castle
The new Marathon City Fire Department is ample proof of how concrete masonry units provide lasting durability, solid economic savings and community enhancement.

Heritage Collection Designer Concrete Brick in rich burgundy tones comprises the majority of the façade for the new station. Concrete brick masonry was chosen for its strength, low maintenance and inherent fire resistance characteristics. The brick also compliments the neighboring swim center built years before.

The fire station’s front entrance and accent banding is further highlighted with lighter colored oversize Premier Elite concrete masonry units featuring a shotblast surface texture and custom chamfering.

Additional gray smooth concrete block were used as back-up walls and painted on their exposed side in the interior.

The architect selected a multi-wythe concrete masonry wall system because it met all the building criteria that his firm and the community were looking for in the new station. It also provides more separation from the harsh Wisconsin environment, greater economic value and a higher value.

Considering the use of heavy equipment and fast-paced activities around and within the station, highly durable concrete masonry units were an easy choice. In addition, the noncombustible qualities of CMUs, ensures this important community building has added safety and protection, just like the services it provides to area residents.
Judges' Comments
This is a worthy effort in design with nice proportions overall. It is a nice study in the use of materials. The created main entry is playful. It is clearly an entrance that competes with the five equipment doors. The signage, utilizing the badge of courage, is tastefully done.
UW-Oshkosh Sage Hall

The masonry (Endicott Medium Ironspot #46) was chosen for its intrinsic beauty and for its resemblance to the brick of the Neo-Gothic 1918 Dempsey Hall, an early academic building on the UW Oshkosh campus. Dempsey Hall can be seen from the large student lounge on the third floor of Sage Hall.

The soft curvature of the south façade adds interest to a long, fully exposed four-story wall of faculty office windows. During the day, the play of light varies across the reflective finish of the masonry. Inside, behind the curved façade, the floor plate is widened in places where additional floor space is needed, and the long corridor that accesses the faculty offices, departmental labs and other resources is visually shortened by the curve as well.

The curved north façade of the one-story lecture hall building echoes this gesture and adds visual interest to another wall with a repetitive pattern of windows. Inside, the curve makes the entrance area generous and adds room for café seating and gathering space outside the two lecture halls, each of which seats 260 people.
Judges’ Comments
This is a handsome building. Its composition is appealing. Good detailing is utilized to interrupt the severity of mass. It is a worthy effort. The radius walls, angular corners and good use and proportion of materials give a unique identity to the building reflective of good design.
Best of Clay Masonry
UW-Oshkosh Sage Hall

[Diagram of building sections and details]

A401
A10
WALL SECTION AT CAVITY WALL
WINDOWS WITH MASONRY
1/2" = 1'-0"
The St. Paul Catholic Church project, located in Mosinee, WI, began construction in September 2010. The dedication of the newly constructed church was held on November 6, 2011. The previous St. Paul Catholic Church was constructed in 1922 and had been remodeled several times, and the decision was made that it was time to construct a newer, updated building to hold mass services. Plans for the church to expand into a larger, handicapped accessible building began with a capital campaign in 2002 as the church prepared to celebrate their 125th anniversary in 2003.

The new St. Paul Catholic Church is handicapped accessible and provides seating for 640 people with an overflow section that allows seating for an additional 168 people. Several items from the old church building were also incorporated into the new construction including stained glass windows, Stations of the Cross, the Last Supper scene and statues of The Risen Christ, St. Anthony, The Sacred heart, Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. The new St. Paul Catholic Church also includes several meeting rooms, a kitchen and additional storage spaces.

The St. Paul Catholic Church was constructed using 118,000 Cloud Ceramics Navajo Blend Wiretex Bricks throughout the interior and exterior of the entire project, including the bell tower and narthex area. These clay bricks have high quality standards and far exceed specifications and expectations. The masonry products used during construction will provide the dependability and durability needed for the St. Paul Catholic Church project to be enjoyed as a place of worship and gathering for many years to come.
Judges’ Comments
Fresh – clean – crisp. Good modern interpretation of borrowed iconic elements and harmonious use of materials and decoration. The brick, as pattern and orientation, is well done with a good balance using dark and light brick for a unified composition. The excellent brickwork can stand close scrutiny. There is a thoughtful use of highlights at openings, windows and top of wall that creates a dialog between materials.
Excellence in Clay Masonry
St. Paul Catholic Church