



Equipped for optimum slab handling

To accommodate a recent surge in demand, A. American Custom Flooring opened a second location in Illinois, and it operates a revolutionary state-of-the-art slab handling/storage system

by Michelle Stinnard



A. American Custom Flooring — a fabricator and installer of natural stone — now operates out of two locations in Illinois. The company's new Niles location houses a state-of-the-art conveyor/storage system for slabs and finished workpieces.

Due to enormous recent growth, A. American Custom Flooring, which specializes in the fabrication and installation of granite, Zodiac and Corian, now operates out

of two facilities in Illinois — one in Chicago and the newest addition in Niles — which together comprise a total of 300,000 square feet. With a staff of 50 between both locations, each of which

includes a showroom and a warehouse, the company produces an average of 50 to 60 kitchens per week per shift. And to accommodate the large volume of work, the company recently invested in a state-



According to the company's General Manager, David Goldman, the storage system — which was purchased about six months ago — is valuable for material handling and dealing with the logistics of production.

The storage system has the capacity to hold a total of 80 slabs on its platforms.



Employees of A. American Custom Flooring also utilize a Speedycut FK/ NC 800 bridge saw from Breton.

of-the-art conveyor/storage system for slabs and finished workpieces.

President John Capalnas explained that the company first began as a fabricator of DuPont Corian, but as time passed, more and more customers would inquire about granite countertops. "We

started to look into supplying granite for customers, and so we went to a fabricator that did the fabricating for us," he said. "In the meantime, we looked into fabricating the granite direct and saw that it would be a good opportunity to give our customers what they were

looking for — more dependability and reliability of products and quality."

Both of the company's shops are fully equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, including two Intermac Master Stone stoneworking centers from AGM, a Comandulli Synthesis

The newest addition to the company's shop is a Comandulli Synthesis automated edge profiler from AGM.

straight edge polishing machine — also purchased through AGM — a backsplash edging machine from Marmo Meccanica, an EnviroSystem water filtration system from Water Treatment Technologies, and a Breton Speedycut FK/NC 800 bridge saw.

State-of-the-art handling and storage

In addition to the advanced stoneworking machinery, perhaps the most advanced aspect of A. American's operation is its automated slab transport system, which was engineered and supplied by Breton.

According to the company's General Manager, David Goldman, the handling/storage system was purchased about six months ago, and it is invaluable for material handling and dealing with the logistics of production. "After we cut the stone, this machine allows us to store 80 jobs on its platforms," he said. "Then, using the machine's bar code system, we can locate a specific [workpiece] from any station within the facility. With this system, we can do a lot of different work at the same time."

Stone is transported through the plant on a series of conveyors, and they are loaded and unloaded by means of automatic tilting tables and vacuum lifters. The system also includes staging areas where many workpieces can be held in a centralized location.

Learning the technology

Given the advanced level of machinery at A. American, it is critical to ensure that the employees who run the most sophisticated equipment



Each shop also houses two Intermac Master Stone stoneworking centers from AGM.

to learn, depending on the machine. To cut down on training time, the company generally tries to hire people who are experienced in the CNC field.

Of course, in addition to running the advanced technology A. American has a complete area for finishing, where workers use a variety of hand tools and diamond pads for polishing and

According to Capalnas, homeowners comprise a large part of the company's production market. "Consumers such as restaurant and business owners, as well as builders also fuel our market," added the owner, who said they are currently working on expanding further into the developers market.



Additionally, the company utilizes an EnviroSystem water filtration system from Water Treatment Technologies.

The company specializes in kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities and bathtubs, fireplace surrounds and mantels, bar and table tops and stair facings. Some recent commercial installations in the U.S. include work for the Gap and Motorola retail stores, as well as a local library.

Capalnas said that one of the greatest challenges he faces today is low-cost competitors who do not place an emphasis on quality. "Keeping our prices low for our customers and offering the quality we do — compared to the lower-priced competitors that do not offer the same quality — is an issue," he said. "We address this challenge by doing the job more efficiently and more conveniently for the customer." □



A total of 50 workers are employed between the company's two locations.



Both of the company's locations include large showrooms.

A. American Custom Flooring Chicago and Niles, IL

Type of work: residential flooring and kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities and bathtubs, fireplace surrounds and mantels, bar and table tops and stair facings

Machinery: two AGM/Intermac Master Stone CNC stoneworking centers, AGM/Comandulli Synthesis edge profiler, backsplash edging machine from Marmo Meccanica; Breton Speedycut FK/NC 800 computer controlled bridge saw, EnviroSystem water filtration system from Water Treatment Technologies; complete Breton conveyor/storage system for slabs and finished workpieces

Number of Employees: 50

Production Rate: 50 to 60 a week per shift