

For 100 years, Leicht has kept industry moving

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Things have changed a little since T.M. Leicht founded his hauling business in Green Bay with \$150 team of disabled horses and a flat wagon in 1903. What hasn't changed after 100 years is the dedicated service to local industry by Leicht Transfer & Storage Co.

That initial team of horses (one lame and one blind) has become a company that now features a fleet of tractors; dozens of dry vans, flatbeds and dry bulk tanks, and about 2.5 million square feet of warehouse storage space spread over 14 buildings in the metropolitan Green Bay area.

"This company was founded on values that hold true today," explained Bob Johnson, president and chief executive officer. "Do it safely, understand what the customer needs, do it right the first time, and be on the leading edge."

Leicht (pronounced lite) has remained under family ownership thought its century of existence. Russ Leicht, 60, a grandson of T.M. Leicht, is the current chairman and owner.

"That consistency ensures a real understanding of the culture of the company," Johnson said. "We have low turnover, and retain skilled materials handling people."

In an era when many firms are looking to expand outside of their home area, Leicht's customer base remains grounded with the paper industry of Northeastern Wisconsin. Proctor & Gamble, Georgia-Pacific and Green Bay Packaging have been core customers for Leicht since its inception, regardless of the specific plant ownership at the time.

In fact, GP recently awarded Leicht all of its third party consumer tissue products distribution shipping from Green Bay. By adding the East Mill business to the West Mill Business it already carried, Leicht is now one of GP's largest distribution centers nationwide. Leicht expects to have the opportunity to service GP beyond the Green Bay area down the road.

"We've had a long-term relationship with customers throughout this area," Johnson noted. "We've grown with them, and built a solid base by understanding what their need are."

Leicht today is far more than just a "hauling" business. A full-service provider of logistics services, the company offers complete supply chain management in addition to its visible warehousing and transportation services.

The company employs about 105 people, and is now under the umbrella of RGL Holdings, Inc., along with Checker Logistics in Neenah. Leicht and Checker serve more than 300 customers, most of which have operations within an hour or two of Green Bay.

T.M. Leicht began operations in a stable located at the corner of West Walnut Street and Broadway. He later moved into a building a little further south that now is home to DuBois Forman Wear. The engraved Leicht moniker is still visible on the cement doorframe facing Broadway.

Today, the Leicht home office sits on the south end of a State Street yard that also hosts some of Leicht's warehouse facilities.

Leicht made a considerable investment in technology recently to speed up the transportation process, including bar code scanners to track product movements, and Web-based access for customers to see real-time inventory levels.

"We need to have practical technology in place," Johnson stated. "Part of our ongoing viability is to be cost competitive on the supply chain side. It's our responsibility to work with our customers to figure out how to drive costs out of the system."

In light of the challenges currently facing the Wisconsin paper industry, Leicht management is focused on keeping the mills' costs down in order to help its prized customer base remain a viable part of the regional economy.

"If we've driven rework and cost out of the system, and we're on the leading edge of supply chain technology, then we'll be doing a big part in helping the mills be more competitive," Johnson stated. "We have the facilities, the people and the technology to do it."

Leicht's services include traditional warehouse storage and handling; distribution center services (including shuttle coordination, cross-dock services, and just-in-time product delivery); and supply chain consulting. Leicht facilities feature close to 200 dock doors, and all but one of its warehouse facilities have rail service.

The materials handling teams can handle boxing and crating for customers, rail/truck transfers, and overweight permits allow for extra-heavy cargo handling. Leicht has the space to store empty containers for its customers, and lift capabilities for both containers and chassis.

"We tailor our services to what the customer tells us they need," Johnson explained. "Or, in the process of us understanding their business, we can suggest services that they need."

Some of the company's niche areas include hauling mill rollers to and from refurbishing facilities, delivering steel to foundries, and bulk trucking of cement during paving season.

"Our customers are looking for partners to help them do more with less," added Steve Evans, Ph.D., Chief Logistics & Information Officer. "We can make their lives easier by bringing ideas to them."

The Neville Public Museum in Green Bay is featuring a display of historical photos from Leicht's first century of business through August 25.