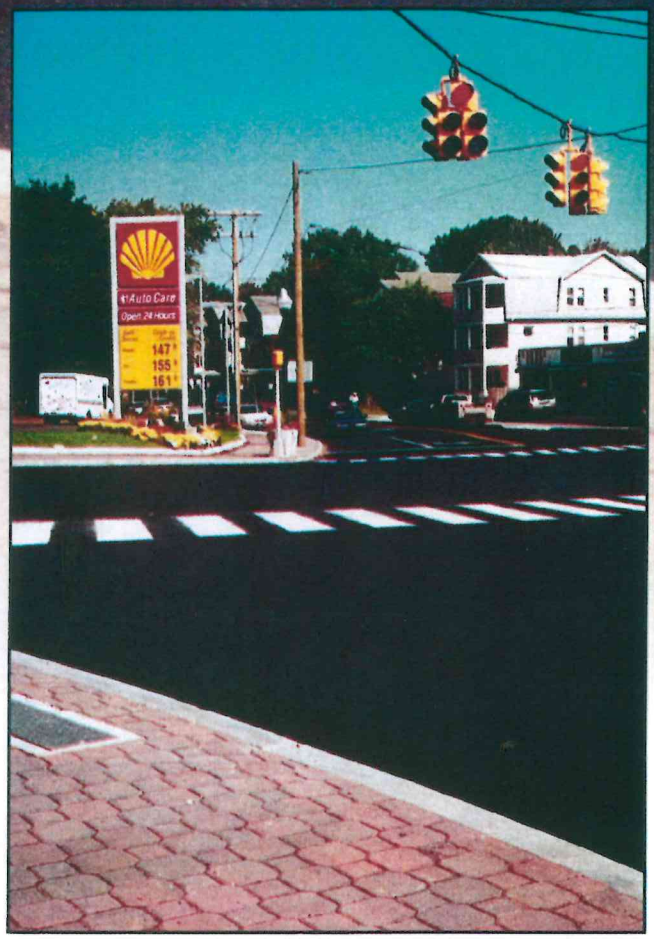
Utility Contractor Rebuilds West Hartford Street

Although pipe installation is its forte, VMS Construction bid the entire $4.2-million road job because of the 6,000 feet of drainage work

Story and photos by **Paul Fournier**



VMS Construction Co. of Vernon, Conn., is first and foremost an underground utility contractor, but one of the largest jobs it has ever done was the reconstruction of more than a mile of Park Road in West Hartford, Conn.

"We bid the job because of the amount of pipe on it," said Victor M. Serrambana Jr., vice president of VMS. "When Dad established this company in 1982, he set it up as an underground utility construction company. All of our equipment is designed primarily for pipe work. But a large part of this particular job involved the installation of 6000 feet of large, reinforced concrete pipe."

Victor Sr., 56, the president and founder of VMS, is a 35-year veteran of underground utility and concrete construction. His son, a professional engineer and a graduate of Worcester Polytechnical Institute with a Masters degree in Civil Engineering, has worked with the company since he was 13. Now 31, Victor Jr. shares responsibilities for the management of projects with his father, and is involved in all project estimating.

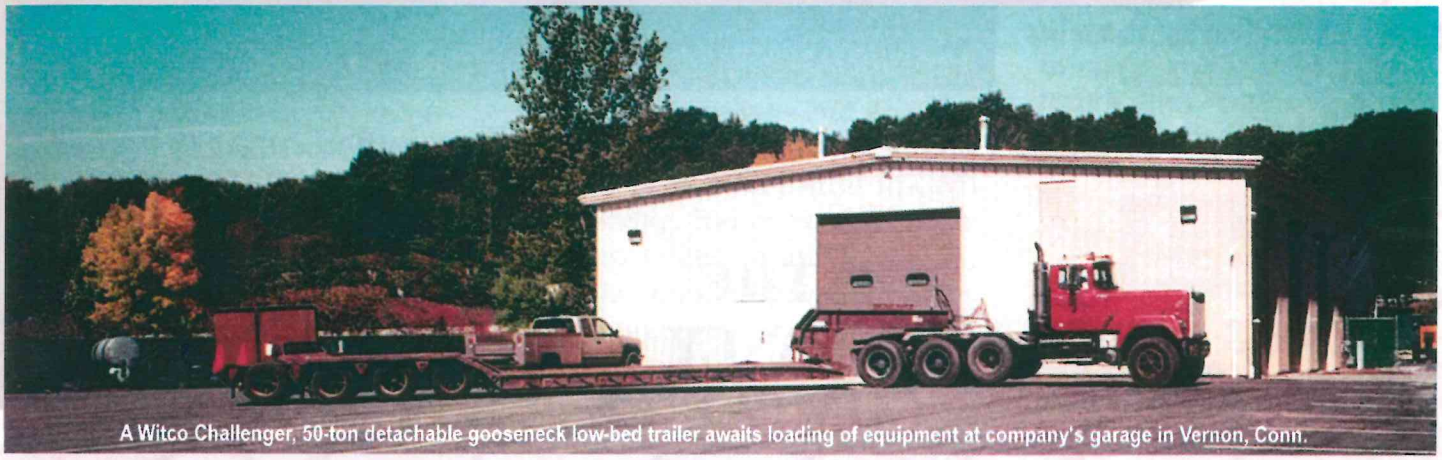
Since Park Road is a main collector road, the reconstruction was done under a contract with the Connecticut Department of Transportation, with Mohammed Bishtawi, P.E., the DOT inspector. VMS completely reconstructed the street. Its main purpose, beyond improving the flow of traffic, was to open up the business district and improve its appearance.

ABOVE RIGHT: Revamped intersection on reconstructed Park Road, West Hartford, Conn., features brick paver sidewalks, new pavement, and new traffic signals. ABOVE LEFT: VMS Construction's contract also called for installation of new curbs and antique-style light posts.

In line with the contract, VMS replaced virtually every exposed surface of the thoroughfare and

Victor Serrambana Jr. and Sr. pose in front of one of company trucks at Park Road Reconstruction office trailer.

A CAT 950 loader with a side-dump bucket prepares to feed backfill stone to CAT 345B excavator on subdivision job.


A Witco Challenger, 50-ton detachable gooseneck low-bed trailer awaits loading of equipment at company's garage in Vernon, Conn.

reconfigured all intersections. The work included peeling off two- to six inches of bituminous pavement, ripping up the existing, eight-inch-thick, wire-reinforced, concrete base, and replacing the old concrete and granite curbs. Following the installation of the new drainage system, new, wider sidewalks were built and covered with brick pavers, antique-style light posts were erected, and new pavement installed.

The new drainage system consists of reinforced concrete pipe up to 48 inches in diameter, plus precast concrete manholes. Crews had to work around many existing utilities such as gas lines, water mains and sewers. In addition, utility and cable TV wires crossing overhead from the south side to the north side of the street were removed and replaced with buried utilities enclosed in conduit.

There were several major subcontractors on the project: Tilcon Connecticut laid the asphalt pavement, Expert Stone installed the brick pavers, and Airway Electric Co. performed all electrical work for light posts and traffic signals. All reinforced concrete pipe was supplied by CSR/New England Pipe.

At the time of this coverage, VMS was also involved with other major projects, among them the


Company's 10,000-pound NPK demolition hammer is flanked by a Cat 235 excavating for sewer line.

performance of extensive sewer construction at a new housing subdivision in Ellington, Conn.

VMS usually gets involved in three to five jobs at a time, with total value of annual construction ranging anywhere from $2 million to $6 million each year. It has about 20 employees and two dozen pieces of heavy equipment and trucks, With such a major investment in equipment, the company rents equipment only when a particular job calls for a specialty piece, or if all owned equipment is busy on other jobs.

A case in point, two crews were assigned to the Ellington subdivision, and VMS supplemented its equipment with a rented CAT 345 excavator for the duration of this very job. ❖