



Mill Creek Sports

Mill Creek, WA

Scott Mahlum started buying and selling baseball cards when he was 10 years old, continued through high school and college and now has been selling sports memorabilia for over 26 years as the owner and founder of Mill Creek Sports. In the past, Mahlum rented a retail space and had multiple warehouse locations to store items from photos and sports cards to autographed footballs and jerseys. He wanted to consolidate into one location where he could have his own building with both ample retail and warehouse space—and one suitable for football or other memorabilia signings with famous players and eager fans. Mahlum chose Harold Christensen, at Lance Mueller and Associates as his project architect. The resulting building is a two-story structure with a reinforced, load-bearing concrete masonry exterior. The new building offers 10,000 square feet of interior space with plenty of room for inventory, retail, and office space. Christensen says, “I knew Scott wanted a building that would stand out from concrete tilt-up or framed construction. He wanted it to have a regal look—to look nice and long lasting. He specifically mentioned he liked brick and block designs. We looked at photos of block buildings and he really liked the look of a YMCA we designed in Seattle using concrete masonry.”

Christensen considered tilt-up and framed construction before going with concrete masonry.



“Our office is known for tilt-up buildings, but we didn’t go with it for several reasons,” he says. The Mill Creek Sports building was too small to be conducive to using tilt-up. “You’d have to stack the panels, put a panel on the slab and do the same thing above. You would need to form, pour, then wait to form & pour on top of the lower panel—it wouldn’t be cost-effective,” says Christensen. “Then it came down to, is it going to be a block building, brick building, or frame building. And frame—in terms of appearance and longevity was not what the owner wanted.” Christensen says, “Because the owner wanted a building that was much higher quality than the norm, we chose concrete masonry.”

The building features a combination of smooth face, split face, ground face CMU with six different block types in varying colors and textures. “Some of that is to meet city code that requires texture changes and such,” says Christensen. “The lower face around the



inventory.” says Mahlum. The CMU exterior is a great choice because it’s non-combustible and the interior is protected with a sprinkler system. “The CMU also provides good theft protection,” says Christensen, “which narrows the focus to protecting the windows with alarms.”

The building provides the extra space Mahlum needed for Mill Creek Sports. “Before we moved to this location, we would have to take our sports players to multiple locations to do signings and now we have room in our warehouse to lay out hundreds of footballs and helmets for signings. During the busy holiday season we would send employees to ten different storage units to retrieve products. Now we don’t have to do that,” says Mahlum. “It’s a lot more efficient. I wish we could have done this building ten years ago,” he says. “We are happy as can be. It turned out fantastic.”

grade of the building is a charcoal color, rough face CMU—to help with soil and sprinkler systems—it won’t show dirt as much,” says Christensen. The main body of the building is a khaki color smooth-face CMU. Christensen used a soldier course, split-face CMU in sandstone above all the windows, which creates a nice “eyebrow.” There is split face CMU in sandstone in the middle band. The upper banding is ground-face CMU in sandstone color. Christensen says, “This design captured the regal aesthetic we wanted and is a building “built to last.”



Far beyond aesthetics and longevity, there are other good reasons for using concrete masonry. CMU creates “a good fortress” in many ways,” Christensen says, “which is important because there is sports memorabilia inside this building that can’t be replaced.” Mahlum echoes this concern by emphasizing that fire safety was a big factor in deciding on concrete masonry as a direction. “The thing that could really destroy our business would be fire because the biggest part of our business is

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