A PROUD HISTORY

Unistress is part of a family of construction companies that date back to 1936. That’s our founder, Basilio Petricca, on the right in the photo at right.

Basilio Petricca, an Italian immigrant who worked as a laborer, saved enough money to start his own small business. Basilio embodied the Old World work ethic and lived the New World dream. His capacity for work was legendary. He’d stay on a job in Springfield or Boston all week, cooking for himself and living in a small tent, then hitch a ride back home to Pittsfield on the weekend. By the 1940’s, he had moved up from shovels and wheelbarrows to buying his first piece of heavy equipment—a big, snorting, coal-burning steam shovel, the first of its kind in Western Massachusetts.

In 1949 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers let out bids for the job of harnessing the Hoosic River in North Adams – the largest and most expensive single public works project ever undertaken in Western Massachusetts. For years the unpredictable river had been flooding the land, washing away bridges and toppling buildings. Petricca Construction won five of the six contracts, worth $11 million (over $100 million in today’s dollars).
Basilio Petricca built his work force from twenty to three hundred men virtually overnight, and for the next eleven years worked on the Hoosic River – digging deeper channels, grading the banks, building sidewalls and stilling basins and a concrete chute that ran for several miles to contain the river.

Petricca Construction finished all five of its segments on schedule. In December 1952, when the federal government officially accepted the second phase of the work, Petricca was praised for finishing that part of the job fifty-eight days ahead of schedule.

The Hoosic River flood control structures still stand more than sixty years later, and have withstood the challenges of many storms and floods.

Unistress has since retired Basilio's tent, but still operates with that same work ethic and dedication. We take on large, complex jobs and continuously expand our capabilities by responding to our customers' project requirements with bold innovation and imagination.