

Craters and Freighters packs, ships items from artwork to machinery

With a unique place in the market, Craters and Freighters has maintained a steady revenue since opening in Omaha five years ago.

The company provides specialty packaging and handling for items that are too heavy, oversized, awkward, valuable or time sensitive for conventional shipping methods.

"We package, ship and insure so we are an all-inclusive resource for clients," said Mike Jones, owner and president of the Omaha franchise. "We provide prompt quotes, design the crates on site, do on site packaging and offer full value insurance."

The Craters and Freighters franchise originated in Colorado when founder Diane Gibson, who worked for a packaging company, saw the need for specialty packaging and handling to preserve unique items and products in transit.

Jones became interested in buying a franchise while he worked for West Corp. as a data center support engineer and saw a need locally for this type of company.

"I was responsible for the planning, build out and moving of equipment nationally," he said.

Jones' clients range from companies shipping equipment and parts to individuals and museums shipping artwork and other fragile or valuable pieces.

"We are really proud of a shipment we did for the Library of Congress from the Union Pacific Railroad Museum," he said. "We were contacted by the Library of Congress to ship a rocking chair that Abraham Lincoln had used in his law office."

"The chair had to be white-gloved and very carefully packaged."

The process of building the crate and shipping took 10 days.

"We built a crate inside a crate for better protection. It had a floater base and soft foam lining. The piece is part of a two-year national tour of presidential memorabilia. We made the crate to survive the two years of transit. We designed it with removable doors so the chair could be pulled out, the

crate stored and then the chair put back in the crate for the next leg of the trip."

Jones has also sent art from local collectors to Christie's auction house in New York City and to a museum in Herkimer, N.Y.

"The art we sent to Herkimer was from the 1700s," he said. "The museum was opening a wing for these items."

For companies, Craters and Freighters have shipped augers to Indonesia and piping to Australia among its other national and international business.

"Companies are bombarded with logistic challenges and are looking for ways to minimize inventory risk, reduce costs and extend product life cycles," Jones said. "When companies ship in-house they often tend to underestimate shock, vibration and how far a package can be dropped. A cargo container can travel 70 feet with each roll of the ship, and that can happen seven to 10 times each minute."

There are also international shipping requirements that must be met.

"Lumber has to be heat treated and stamped showing that we have followed all the regulations," Jones said. "The wood is heated to keep the bugs out so there are no bugs transported between countries in the shipping process."

He said there are also new rules stating that no single piece of lumber can have a piece of bark on it larger than a credit card or longer than an inch and an eighth, because the bark can become re-infested with bugs even after the heat treatment.

"Ours is a service that is always needed, so when one area of the economy slows, another aspect of business generally picks up," Jones said. "Over the last five years, we have built a clientele that even if business slows for them, they still use us."

An additional service that Jones has considered is shrink-wrapping.

"Sometimes machinery does not need to be crated for transport, but it does need to be protected from the elements," he said. "Some of the other franchises have already started doing it. It is a way to add



Owner Mike Jones ... The Omaha franchise fills a need in shipping unique items, such as a rocking chair that Abraham Lincoln used to the Union Pacific Railroad Museum.

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