R. BAKER & Son

OUTRIGGER

Rigging, Dismantling & Demolition News from R. BAKER & SON

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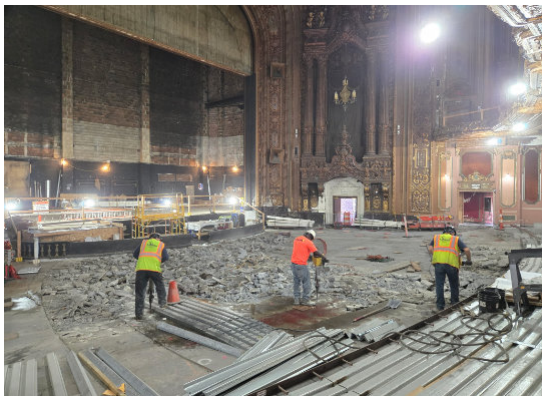
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Entrusted Once Again with an American Treasure

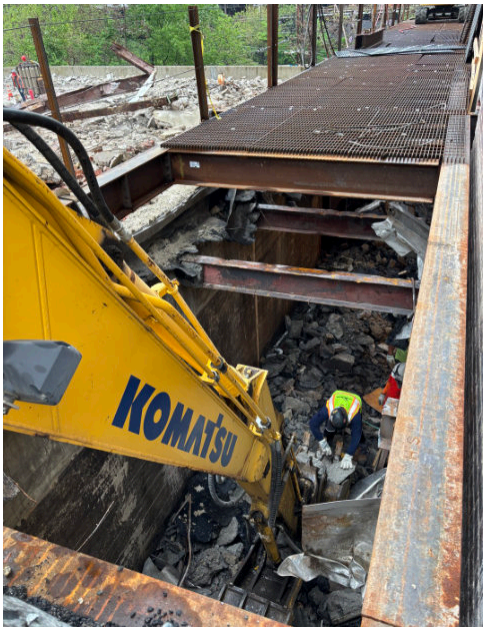
R. Baker & Son joins the $130 million restoration of the Loew's Jersey Theatre.

When the Loew's Jersey Theatre opened on Journal Square on September 28, 1929, it was one of five lavish "Wonder Theatres" Loew's built around New York City, and the only one on the Jersey side of the Hudson. Designed by the renowned firm Rapp & Rapp, the theatre drew moviegoers by the thousands and hosted legends like Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, and Duke Ellington. It outlasted the Depression and a 1970s triplex conversion, but by the 1980s it had gone dark and was headed for demolition. Local residents fought to save it, Jersey City bought the building in 1993, and in 2022 it was named a National Historic Landmark.

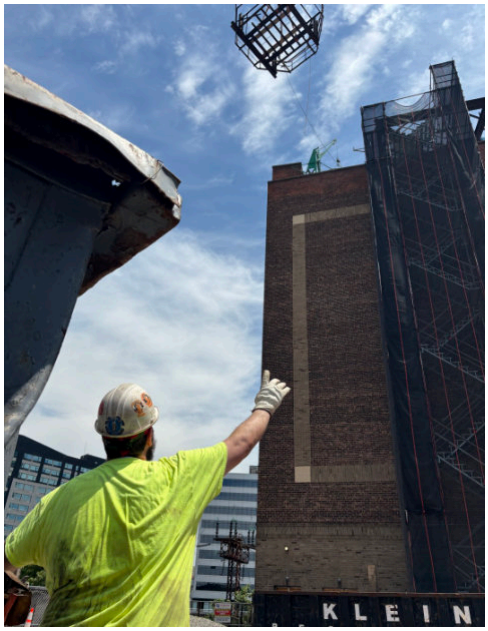
Nearly a century after opening night, the Loew's Jersey Theatre has reopened following a $130 million restoration. The project brought back its ornate interiors and replaced the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems that will carry it into its next hundred years. Its original crystal chandelier is slated to return in 2027. For decades, owners have trusted R. Baker & Son to help preserve some of America's most treasured buildings, and we're proud to count the Loew's Jersey among them. Take a look at our crews at work below.



To protect the ornate interior, crews removed the topping slab by hand with jackhammers instead of heavy equipment.



Lower-level cleanout: excavator boom lowered through a deck opening to remove construction debris, with a crew member working below.



A rigger signals the crane as a section of the water tower framework comes down from the theatre roof. Crews cut the steel to size on the ground so it fits the recycling containers.



A gantry hoist set over a guarded floor opening was one of three ways crews got MEP and wall debris out of the basement. Conveyors and an excavator bucket handled the rest.

Decommissioning, Demolition, and Rigging Behind the Power Plant Comeback



The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence is driving a sharp rise in electricity use. AI data centers need large, steady supplies of power, and building new generation and transmission infrastructure can take years. In response, utilities and energy companies are taking a second look at facilities once expected to stay closed, including nuclear stations and other power plants, and turning to existing sites to help meet demand. For contractors like R. Baker & Son, this shift is creating a new chapter of work at some of the country's most complex industrial sites.

But a closed plant can't simply be switched back on. Years out of service can leave equipment degraded, systems outdated, and buildings in need of repair. Bringing a plant back online may require decommissioning and recommissioning work, inspections and testing, replacement of worn or obsolete components, and upgrades to meet current safety and operating standards. These are areas where R. Baker & Son's experience in decommissioning and heavy rigging becomes essential, from safely removing aging equipment to setting new components in tight, sensitive spaces.

Depending on the facility's condition, the work may also call for selective demolition, removing damaged or unnecessary structures and equipment before rebuilding or modernizing essential areas. Selective demolition requires precision and careful planning so that the parts of a plant worth saving stay protected while everything else is cleared away. R. Baker & Son has spent decades doing exactly that kind of controlled, detail-driven work.

Reviving an older facility allows owners to make use of existing land, grid connections, and power infrastructure. The opportunity is clear: dependable generation can come online sooner than it would if starting from scratch. The challenge is making sure each site can operate safely and reliably after extensive restoration. With the right partners on the ground, including experienced teams like R. Baker & Son, these plants can be prepared to power the next generation of technology.

Big Protection, Small Price: 20 Job-Site Safety Essentials

At R. Baker & Son, we've been reflecting on how far job-site safety has come, and it got us asking: which inexpensive devices have done the most to prevent injuries and save lives? Think of it as the safety dollar store. Here's our top 20:

- Cones and warning signs
- Disposable coveralls
- Dust masks and approved respirators
- Earplugs and earmuffs
- Emergency eyewash bottles or stations
- Fire blankets
- Fire extinguishers
- First-aid kits
- Flashlights and headlamps
- GFCI outlets and portable GFCI devices
- High-visibility vests
- Lockout/tagout locks and tags
- Pocket voltage testers
- Safety glasses
- Safety netting
- Toe boards
- Tool lanyards and tethering straps
- Two-way radios
- Whistles and audible alarms
- Work gloves

The value of these items isn't their price. It's how consistently they're provided, used, inspected, and replaced. A ten-dollar pair of safety glasses can prevent a life-changing eye injury. A pocket voltage tester can prevent electrocution. A tool lanyard can keep a dropped tool from injuring someone below.

The safety dollar store isn't about buying the cheapest protection. It's about recognizing that small, affordable controls, used correctly every time, save lives. At R. Baker & Son, that belief shapes every project, because getting every worker home safe is the job that matters most.



Raising the Gateway: The Story of How Rigging Crews Built the St. Louis Arch

Most visitors to the Gateway Arch see a smooth, silver curve rising 630 feet over the Mississippi. What they don't see is the rigging, welding, and nerve it took to get it there. For anyone in our trade, the Arch is one of the boldest rigging jobs ever pulled off.

Two Legs, One Impossible Angle

Construction began in February 1963, with MacDonald Construction Company building Eero Saarinen's design. The concept was simple to sketch and brutal to build: two legs of hollow, triangular steel sections the crews called "cans," rising independently and curving inward to meet at a single point 630 feet up. Every section had to land at a precise angle, or the legs would never meet. Standard cranes handled the first 72 feet. After that, the crews needed something new.



Climbing Derricks That Built Their Own Track

Enter the creeper derrick. Two of these 100-ton rigs, one per leg, climbed the Arch as it rose, riding rail track bolted to the back of each leg with adjustable supports that hugged the changing curve. As each section went up, the derrick climbed onto it and reached for the next.

At 530 feet, the derricks worked in tandem to lift a 225-foot stabilizing truss between the legs. It kept the top-heavy structure from swaying or buckling under its own weight and wind load while the final sections went in. That's the kind of call that separates a good crew from a great one: knowing the structure needs help before it becomes a problem.

The Final Piece

On October 28, 1965, only the keystone remained. That morning, the sun heated the south leg enough that the expanding steel tightened the gap. The St. Louis Fire Department hosed down the leg to shrink it back, and crews used hydraulic jacks to spread the legs just enough to guide the keystone home. With that, the Arch became a single, self-supporting structure after two years and eight months of work.

Why It Still Matters

The biggest rigging challenges rarely have off-the-shelf solutions. The crews didn't have a derrick that could climb a curved, narrowing structure, so they built one. When the sun's heat shrank the gap, they used fire hoses and jacks. Plan for the load, plan for the angle, and plan for the day the structure doesn't cooperate.

More than sixty years later, the Arch is still one of the best arguments for getting the rigging right the first time.

Explore R. Baker & Son's Environmental Services

Demolition and rigging may be what we're known for, but R. Baker & Son also handles the decontamination and remediation work most contractors avoid. Our OSHA-trained crews are experts in environmental remediation, with a fleet of excavators, pressure washers, duct cleaning rigs, and line pigging equipment to back them up.

Pipe and Line Work: Pipeline cleaning with our patented P3 pigging process, line flushing, and first line breaks
Equipment and Vessel Cleaning: Tank, column, and vessel cleaning, power washing and steam cleaning, and ARMEX surface cleaning and coating removal
Facility Services: HVAC and duct cleaning, non-ACM insulation removal, scarification, and HEPA vacuuming

Have a cleanup project coming up? Contact our team to talk through your scope and schedule. Visit rbaker.com to see our experience and case studies.

