

# Engineering has played a major role in several city projects

By **Michelle Machado**  
*Record Staff Writer*

STOCKTON — For a half-century, Siegfried Engineering Inc. has shaped, and been shaped by, the growth of Stockton and the surrounding region.

Siegfried's work has been wide-ranging and far-reaching: The civil engineering firm has had a hand in projects from downtown redevelopment efforts such as the cineplex and events center to master-planned communities such as Lincoln Village West and Brookside Estates.

Siegfried also provided underlying work for San Joaquin Delta College and Sherwood and Weberstown malls, all midtown Stockton landmarks.

"They've done a ton of projects," said James Giottonini, public works director for city of Stockton.

But most of the firm's work may go largely unnoticed.

"We get little recognition, because we do all the groundwork ahead of the structural building," said Lex Corrales, Siegfried Engineering president.

That foundational work encompasses civil engineering, structural engineering, land surveying and planning services.

During the past 50 years, as the region's population has grown, so has public and private demand for those services, making Siegfried Engineering into the largest firm of its kind based



**Siegfried**  
Founder of  
R. W. Siegfried  
& Associates

in the county.

The firm has grown from five employees and less than \$100,000 in fees in 1955 to 40 employees and \$4 million in fees last year.

"I felt the opportunity was here. I figured the area was growing, and I didn't know if the firm I was with was going to grow with it," said Robert W. Siegfried, who founded his firm as R. W. Siegfried & Associates when Stockton's population was just more than 75,000.

That Siegfried was in Stockton to embrace that opportunity was providential.

After earning a civil engineering degree from Washington State University in 1942, Siegfried enlisted in the Navy, where he served in the Civil Engineering Corps at Guadalcanal and other Pacific islands.

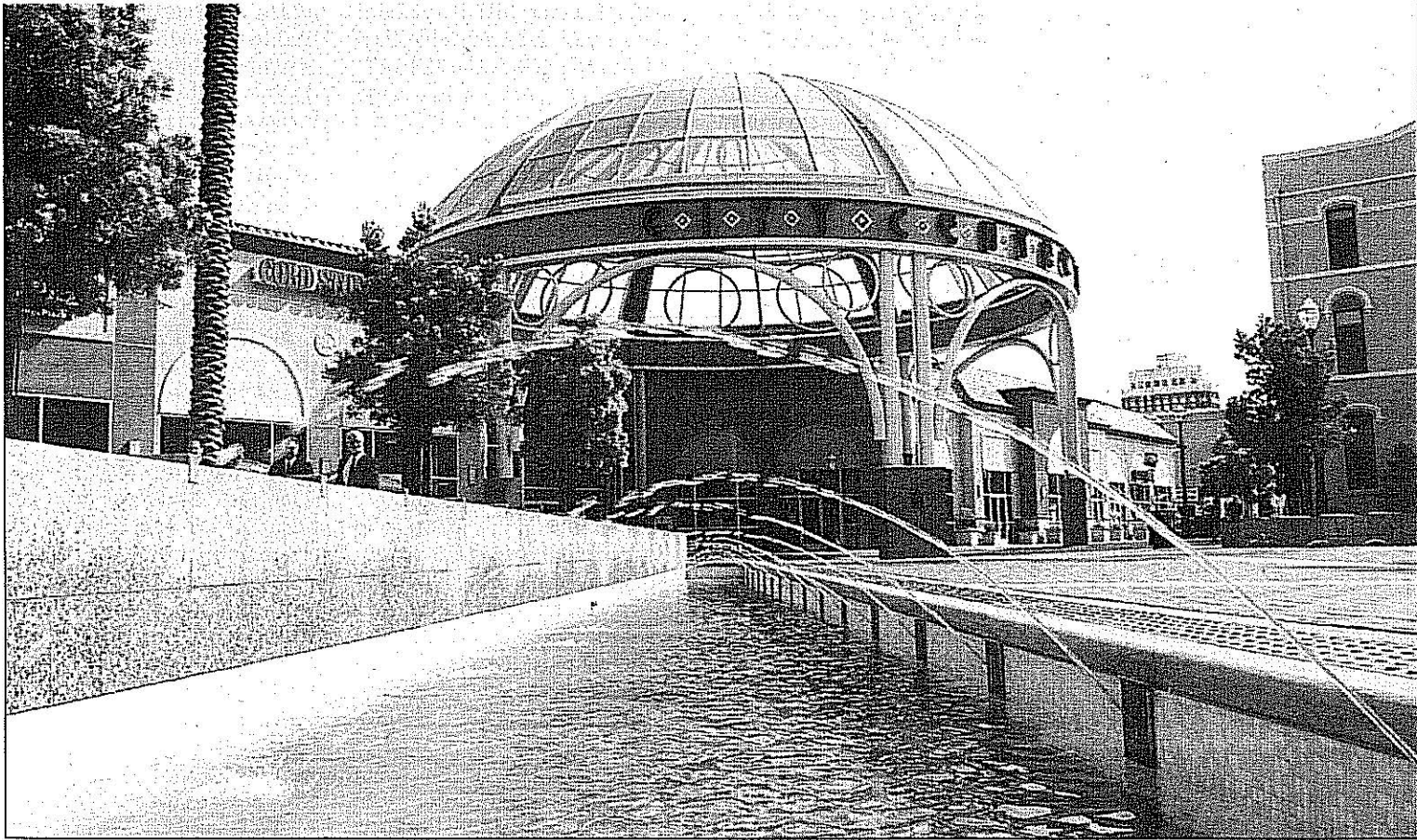
While there, Siegfried contracted malaria, which led to months of hospitalization and threats of medical discharge.

He requested reassignment to the mainland and was sent in 1944 to Stockton to lead construction of the \$35 million Naval Supply Depot at Rough and Ready Island.

"It was 1,400 acres of farmland when I first came to Stockton," Siegfried said.

Housing was in short supply, so Siegfried, and his bride, Gracie, were put up temporarily at the Hotel Stockton, the site of the firm's golden anniversary party April 20.

When the war ended, he decid-



CALIXTRO ROMIAS/The Record

## City Centre Cinema.

ed to join an existing local civil engineering firm as a partner and settle permanently in Stockton.

A decade later, he founded his own firm as sole-proprietor, joined by Arnold Schamber and Jim Yost, who in 1967 became firm shareholders.

In the 1960s, Yost became lead engineer for Lincoln Village West — the first master-planned community to incorporate underground electric and cable service infrastructure and to carve a lake, slip-covered marina and waterways from dry land.

The subdivision became a model for other water-oriented com-

munities in Stockton and elsewhere, built upon many of Yost's original engineering concepts.

"From an engineering standpoint, Siegfried was very cutting edge," said Fritz Grupe, Lincoln Village West's developer.

The firm's work has earned the respect and confidence of its many clients, a reputation important in gaining financing and moving projects forward, Grupe said.

Also important, he said, was Siegfried's sizable staff that could handle projects of significant scope.

For Siegfried, though, staff

dedication was most important.

"The thing that makes any business is its employees," said Siegfried, who noted that many employees accumulated 25 or more years of service with the firm.

Corrales credited Siegfried with hiring with an eye toward the future.

"He didn't hire for a specific project but for the long haul," Corrales said.

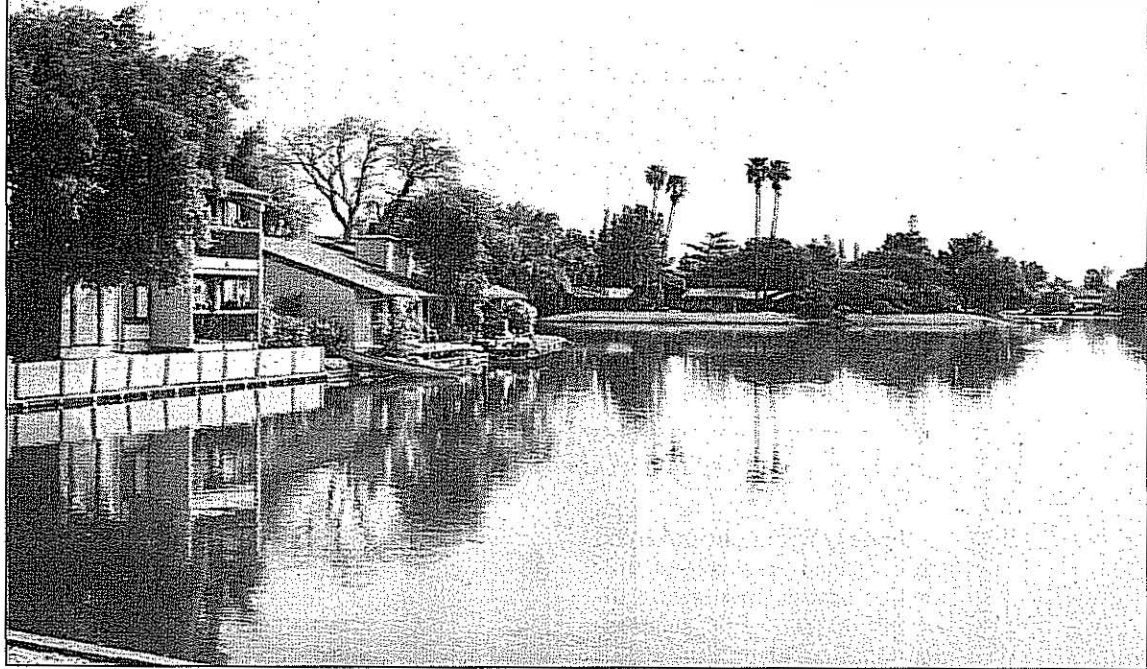
In 1966, the firm, having outgrown its office at El Dorado and Pine streets, purchased land at 4045 Coronado Ave. to build a 6,200-square-foot office building.

Subsequent additions would eventually nearly triple its square footage, providing evidence of the firm's growth.

In 1985, six more engineering associates became shareholders, including Corrales.

By 1988, the firm had 70 employees and was providing engineering services for sanitary sewers, sewer treatment plants, storm drainage systems, domestic water systems and other projects in many counties besides San Joaquin, including Amador, Calaveras, Sacramento, Stanislaus and Tuolumne.

Additionally, Schamber repre-



CALIXTRO ROMIAS/The Record

## Lake Lincoln at Lincoln Village West.

sented the firm as the city engineer for Manteca and Tracy, while Siegfried served for 45 years in the same capacity for Ripon, part of a common practice in which cities hire an outside engineer until they grow enough to have their own full-time engineer.

The firm also has for more than 40 years been the engineer for Stockton's redevelopment agency, said Steve Pinkerton, the agency's director.

"They helped define the footprint of downtown Stockton," he said.

In 1992, Siegfried retired from the firm after being beset by lingering health problems. Jim Yost succeeded Siegfried as company president, and the firm's name was changed to Siegfried Engineering Inc.

At about the same time, the firm made the transition from hand drawing to computer-

assisted design. Later technological developments spurred the firm to adopt Global Positioning System-based surveying using optical instruments.

More recently, the firm has changed its focus slightly, taking on more structural engineering and architectural design-work, especially for auto dealerships in the region.

In 1997, Yost handed the company reins to Wayne West, who retired in 2000. At that point, Lex Corrales took the top spot.

Corrales, who worked for the firm during college summer breaks, was picked up by the company following his graduation in 1967.

"I was quite green behind the ears," admitted Corrales, a Philippine emigrant whose previous work experience had been as a farm laborer.

Corrales said he grew up in the

firm, with Schamber—who taught Corrales to tie his first necktie and to play bridge—as a mentor.

On Corrales's first day of work following graduation, he found waiting for him his own office cubicle with a brand-new desk, bookcase, drafting table and drafting machine, he said.

Today, at 84, Siegfried still sits on the firm's board of directors and about once a week, comes into the office where his own office remains intact.

Corrales credits Siegfried, Schamber and Yost with providing the kind of leadership that carries a company forward.

"Because of the excellent reputation they first established, Siegfried Engineering stands today on a strong and stable foundation," Corrales said.

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