

# The Case for DCS



## Partnership With DCS Helps Henry Frerk Sons Develop Its Restoration Business

Dynamic Color Solutions and Chicago-based **Henry Frerk Sons** have a lot in common. They're both family-owned businesses that have evolved over many years—DCS was founded over 100 years ago, and Frerk was established 140 years ago. DCS and Frerk have been doing business together for more than 90 years, making Henry Frerk Sons DCS' oldest customer. Both are taking this long-term, symbiotic customer relationship to a whole new level.

Henry Frerk, the company's founder, was born in Prussia in 1848. He described himself as a "sawed-off and hammered down German." After settling in Chicago, Frerk married Albertine Belitz and started a family. He began a commission merchant business with produce sales, and it morphed into lumber and



The historic Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright as two large rectangles that seem to slide past one another. Henry Frerk Sons' work on the floors during restoration was crucial to the project's success.



Long-time DCS customer Henry Frerk Sons was called in to match the Robie House's magnesite concrete floors.

building material sales. The rebuilding of Chicago after the big fire of 1871 fueled the company's initial growth.

Henry died in 1910 and his two sons, Alfred and Otto, took over the business, dropping lumber and focusing on coal and hard building materials. The company became Henry Frerk Sons, Inc. By the 1960s, Henry Frerk Sons bought a concrete mobile truck (just invented in 1964) instead of a more conventional barrel mixer. Today, Frerk—run by Kenn Wolf along with his son Vice President Matthew Wolf—has one of the largest concrete mobile truck fleets in Chicago.



Dynamic Color Solutions, Inc.  
2024 S. Lenox Street | Milwaukee, WI 53207  
P 800-657-0737 | F 414-769-2585  
E [info@dynamiccolorsolutions.com](mailto:info@dynamiccolorsolutions.com)

*The Color of Today's Architecture*  
[dynamiccolorsolutions.com](http://dynamiccolorsolutions.com)

# The Case for DCS Henry Frerk Sons

## Known Nationwide for Concrete and Masonry Restoration

Nowhere is the great relationship between Henry Frerk Sons and DCS more evident than in Frerk's growing concrete and masonry restoration business, which has taken off under Matthew Wolf. Since joining the company in 2008, he has built and staffed a special restoration lab and gained Frerk a national reputation for helping architects and contractors come up with tuckpointing masonry mortars and concrete patching mortars that meet correct historical color and performance standards,

"I'd never have been able to launch this business without DCS," Wolf said of the growing restoration operation, which has supplied the mortars for a number of historically significant projects.

"DCS provided us with a complete library of color samples and the metal channels to make samples for our customers. They are a great partner, really one of our top suppliers. I wish all of our vendors could be more like DCS," he added.

Wolf, who has degrees in art history, architecture, and business, has assembled a team that includes Elisabeth Logman, with a degree in historic preservation from the Chicago Art Institute, and lab assistant MacKenna Smith, with a degree in art history.

## Color and Performance Play an Important Part in Restoration

Logman noted that matching historic building materials involves getting both color and performance characteristics right. "Today's masonry buildings typically have walls with control joints. Older buildings typically used lime mortars, which are much softer than today's mortars," she said.

Sometimes—as was the case with the floor of a historic Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home, The Frederick C. Robie House—restoration involves matching a material no longer in common use.



Sample prepared by Henry Frerk Sons next to a section of the original magnesite floor of the historic Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Robie House.

The Robie House floors are made of magnesite, a magnesium-based integrally-colored concrete material popular in the mid-1900s primarily as industrial flooring. The original product also contained sawdust, which was thought to make the floor warmer and more comfortable to stand on.

"It took a lot of experimentation to come up with a mix design that matched both the performance characteristics and color of the original material," Logman said.

Another high profile project—repairing the concrete facade of Chicago's Promontory Apartments, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's first highrise building, built in 1947—involved "devising a non-shrinking form-and-pour mortar specifically designed to match the aggregate texture and paste color of the original material," Wolf said. "It took two months to get it dialed in."

"We've been around a long time. We're now restoring some of the buildings in Chicago that we helped to build just after the Chicago fire," Wolf said. "Working with DCS is one of the things that's helping us do it. We have a symbiotic relationship with them. They're a great partner."