

TRUE CASE STUDIES

Harkins Hall Restoration - Providence College

Providence College was founded in 1917 through a joint effort of the Diocese of Providence and the Dominican Friars of the Providence of St. Joseph. The motivating force behind the development of the College was the late Rev. Matthew Harkins, D.D., Bishop of Providence. With donations of 17 acres of land from Bishop Harkins and funds from local Catholics, the College broke ground for the first campus building, Harkins Hall. Harkins Hall was designed by Architect Matthew Sullivan in the Collegiate Gothic style that was the prevailing architectural style on American university campuses of that era. Made of Indiana limestone and New England tapestry brick, Harkins Hall was once home to laboratories, an astronomical observatory, a chapel, a library and a gymnasium. Enrollment began with 71 students but quickly grew thus requiring a large addition to the original building in 1929. Today, with over 4,400 undergraduates at Providence College, Harkins Hall houses administrative offices as well as newly renovated lecture halls and classrooms, and a small chapel. This iconic structure is the symbolic anchor to this beautiful New England campus.

Challenges & Solutions

Rehabilitating this historic structure included the replacement of the old, drafty windows and renovating most of the interior rooms. New energy efficient windows that could meet the size requirements and coincide with the overall gothic design of the building where required. After discussions with all involved it was determined that Winco's 3250 series -Steel Replica window was exactly what was needed. The unique narrow sight lines of the 3250 series replicates the look of an old steel window while the optional SR-12 narrow washed style exterior grid system enhanced the feeling of the gothic design. Muntins between the glass and interior grids were also supplied in order to give the appearance of true-divided light.

Removal of the existing windows was going to be difficult because the frames were built into the surrounding walls. With fears of costly repairs to the interior and exterior walls caused by the removal of the existing perimeter window frames, it was determined that the frames were to remain in place. Through the use of a variety of panning systems and snap trims the new windows were designed to sit on top of and cover up the existing window frames thus saving time and money.

The old saying "Time is of the Essence" fit well for this project. Providence College had a very aggressive time schedule to meet. Students would soon be off on their summer hiatus and the project had to be completed prior to their return for the beginning of the fall semester. With over 450 window openings involved and a large number of them having either round or gothic arched tops this was a daunting task. The project had to be designed and field measured. Shop drawings had to be made and approved. Fabrication had to be coordinated to coincide with the other trades and the windows had to be shipped on time. Portions of the old windows had to be removed and the new windows had to be installed.

Keys to Success

Success on this project was achieved through our ability to listen to the needs and concerns of Providence College and the cohesive input from all involved. Proper construction management of this large project also played a key role in its success. In order to meet the very aggressive construction schedule and to supply over 450 somewhat complicated windows when they were needed on the job site, all lines of communication had to be wide open and managed properly.

End Results

In the end, this project was completed on time and under budget. By restoring this iconic building with an eye towards the historical Collegiate Gothic style in which it was designed, Providence College has been able to retain an element of its' history and yet at the same time upgrade the building with a cost-effective and energy-efficient window system.

Associated Firms:

Manufacturer: Winco Window Company / True Enterprises, Inc. (New England Representative)
Architect: Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates / General Contractor: Turgeon Construction Corp.
Installer: Massey's Plate Glass & Aluminum, Inc.

