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Spiritual Growth Causes Physical Growth

In 1922 Yale's first Catholic Chaplaincy was established under Rev. T. Lawrason Riggs. Within fifteen years a Catholic Chapel was constructed on Park Street in New Haven. Perhaps it was only fitting that a leap of faith was taken to move forward. That step of faith continued to grow; a student center was needed. In 1998 a capital campaign was announced in conjunction with the 60th anniversary celebration of St. Thomas More Chapel at Yale. It was a step of faith. "We announced the campaign before any money had been raised," said Kerry A. Robinson, Director of Development at St. Thomas More.

In regard to the Thomas E. Golden, Jr. Center, John Wilkinson, Owner's Representative for the Board of Trustees, said "We selected Petra as our Construction Manager. We had serious concerns with blending old and new designs and an extremely tight footprint for building and code issues. Frankly, the range of building approvals alone would test any company's endurance. Petra and the entire team created a stunning and workable solution." The first task was extensive abatement of hazardous materials to accommodate demolition of several structures on the site. Another challenge was working around a functioning chapel adjacent to the building. Not a Mass or weekly soup kitchen session was ever missed.

Renowned architect Cesar Pelli was known for use of multiple materials within his designs. This created



*The new
Thomas E. Golden,
Jr. Center opened
in December, 2006.*

additional challenges. Minnesota limestone was used as the exterior skin of the bell tower, window sills and the roof copings. Petra's proactive approach with the design team allowed the owner to reduce costs by identifying an alternate source for the limestone without compromising quality. One of Petra's hallmarks is communication. "They presented us with samples of custom railings to discuss whether the grain of the wood should be dominant or not. That kind of interaction rarely ever happens," noted David Coon, Senior Associate with Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects. Every member of the Petra team understands that meaningful communication with the client and design professionals eliminates surprises and disappointments.

The entire project is a blend of art, science, and skill. Some of the more notable features are as follows.

- The windows are custom African mahogany at the exterior with white oak on the interior. White oak trim had to be closely matched to the white oak interior of the windows, to present a consistent appearance.
- The meditation room floor is black

slate with dark charcoal grout. This circular room includes forty colored glass ten inch square windows, equally spaced to the top of the multi story room. The walls consist of three-quarter inch white oak slats with one-inch spacing, running from the floor to a custom funnel-shaped plastered ceiling, with a skylight.

- The millwork is magnificent, thanks to the owner's insight to select a level of quality and detail that will be admired for decades. Millwork tolerances were extremely tight.
- "Petra was a joy to work with. Some craftsmen wait a lifetime for a project like this - it's a very special building. They created a seamless transition from the old to the new working with common vision," said Gerry Reich of Albis Turlington Architects, who partnered with the design architect to prepare the construction documents.
- The project was so involved that it required a level of secondary leadership to ensure proper coordination. Petra foremen were

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assigned to specifically monitor and direct different segments of work, such as the highly complex millwork.

- “In addition to the many different materials and unique methods required, we had to work to extremely close tolerances to maintain the details of the design,” noted Brian Davies, Petra’s Project Manager.
- A structural glass roof system, strong enough to walk on.
- The Piazza is comprised of granite pavers with an inlaid design of three interlocking rings in Broughton-Moore stone from England, each approximately 20 feet in diameter, positioned next to the bell tower.
- The lighting systems include semi-custom light fixtures with dimmers and a sophisticated building lighting management system, coordinated to function with window shades and projectors in the lecture hall.
- “While we were working, Yale was conducting two dormitory projects right across the street. At times, Yale wanted to block the street off when we needed access to our site. It presented some serious challenges,” said Dave Cote, Petra’s Project Superintendent.
- “The detail is mind-boggling. Think about it - establishing all the woods, floors, doors, walls, panels, slates, railings, and trellises along with installing trim on windows inside and out. The high level of sophistication was extraordinary. They were dealing with proportions, heights, difficult alignments, matching to various materials, metal, wood and brick.

There were 26 window types. And it all blends a consistent feel and theme. Magnificent!” noted Gerry Reich.

- “It’s the greatest degree of teamwork I have ever experienced in over twenty years of doing this work. The design team, Owner, Construction Manager, and subcontractors worked together to a high degree of excellence,” said Al Pacelli, Petra’s Senior Project Manager.

Via this teamwork, all challenges, including budgets, means and methods, neighbor concerns, weather, schedule, utility challenges, special traffic requirements for crane use, mixed materials, and the blending of old and new, were successfully overcome. Throughout the project, Petra was proactive with the entire project team, providing a substantial cost reduction, without impacting the integrity of the design.

What’s more, the client’s expectations were exceeded and a facility was created to positively affect many lives for decades.

To discuss construction management or construction services, please call Guido Petra, President or Terry Wooding, Executive Vice President at 203-865-6043.



The new Piazza and bell tower

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