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From jail to hotel, The Liberty Hotel’s historically accurate replacement windows contribute to its architectural heritage

When baseball superstar Babe Ruth toured Boston’s Charles Street Jail in 1925, he famously quipped: “This isn’t a jail, it’s a hotel,” a prediction that has since come true. Now known as The Liberty Hotel, this 298-room, high-end hospitality destination retains its architectural heritage with its famed rotunda, jail-themed bars and restaurants, and its historically accurate replacement windows.

***Daylighting Ahead of Its Time***

Architect Gridley James Fox Bryant, widely considered Boston’s most accomplished architect of 19th century, designed the original penitentiary. A proponent of the “Granite Style,” Bryant embraced the many technological and social changes of the age, forming strategic partnerships with other architects and reformers. On the Charles Street Jail, he collaborated with Rev. Louis Dwight, a prominent Yale-educated penologist with an active interest in and advocacy for prison reform.

Owing much of its character to the Romanesque and Renaissance forms used in its design, the building consists of an octagonal central building featuring four circular “ocular” windows and four radiating wings, each with large three-story arched windows highlighted by articulated wedge-shaped, stone “voussoirs” characteristic of French design.

With respect to Bryant’s intention and inspired by his progressive vision of the future, Cambridge Seven Associates worked with preservation architect Ann Beha Architects (ABA), and developers Carpenter & Company to reimagine the property as an exclusive hotel and hospitality venue. The designers and architects collaborated with historians and conservationists from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Boston Landmarks Commission, the National Park Service and the Boston Redevelopment Authority to ensure that the end result was a careful balance between preservation and dynamic new use.

***Adaptive Reuse Delivers Historic Authenticity and Guest Comfort***

To match exact, historic details, Custom Window™ by Wausau 8300 Series windows include true divided lites and custom-machined grilles to honor the landmark structures in which they are installed. Wausau, and the Apogee Renovation team, are all part of Apogee Enterprises, Inc.

“New England is filled with historic properties that have old steel-framed, single-pane windows,” said Kevin Robbins, director of the Apogee Renovation team. “In the years prior to World War II, glassmaking technology limited the size of individual glass lites. Custom Window by Wausau’s products carefully mimic the sightlines, true divided lights and arched tops of these original windows, and bring the high performance of modern aluminum frames and low-e glass.” Thermal barrier framing also contributes to building’s energy saving goals and condensation resistance.

***Character-Defining Details and Durable Finishes***

The Apogee Renovation team and Wausau work with architects, building teams and state historic preservation offices to assist in obtaining necessary aesthetic and performance approvals, gaining tax credits and achieving long-term objectives.

“Thoughtful, historic renovation achieves high standards for technical and operational performance, preserves character-defining features, while successfully meeting the needs of the users now and long into the future,” emphasized Robbins. “Replication is about the entire opening, not just the window. The product must be easy to install and anchor correctly. Appropriate sills and trim must be provided to complete the window and blend it seamlessly with the opening and the building itself.”

Custom Window by Wausau products include fixed and project-in or project-out casements; self-balancing double-hung windows; fixed and projected, simulated double-hung windows; hopper vents and historic glazing inserts for entrances. Custom profiles can be designed for panning, perimeter framing or muntins, including panning systems with “T” mullions to echo existing profiles.

These aluminum components contain up to 70 percent recycled content. Linetec can provide both stretch-forming to curve the window’s aluminum framing members and durable finishes in a choice of more than 50,000 colors and wood grain options. Dual-color finishing can be accommodated to match different interior and exterior color schemes. Painted finishes may be requested with ultra-low volatile organic compounds (VOC) and VOC-free content. VOC-free anodize finishes also may be selected, such as a patina-free copper.

Where conservators can sample complete stratigraphies, and original colors are unlikely to have degraded, Linetec can provide custom-formulated, in-house blended fluoropolymer paints to meet authenticity goals – not only for exterior colors, but also in lobbies, entrance vestibules, corridors, auditoriums, libraries and other interior public spaces.

***Successful Restoration and Reinvention***

The 90-foot-high interior lobby rotunda of The Liberty Hotel maintains much of its historic structure and aesthetic. Along with the preserved catwalks and wrought-iron work, the building’s original function and 1850’s styling continues in theme with a restaurant called “Clink.” A bar in the jail’s former “drunk tank” goes by “Alibi” and a private patio for summer cocktails is simply referred to as “The Yard.”

Through restoration, reuse and reinvention, this once abandoned structure was reborn as a vital commercial development that complements the urban fabric of its Beacon Hill neighborhood., The Liberty Hotel now is part of The Luxury Collection – a group of unique hotels and resorts enabling the most discerning traveler to collect a world of authentic and enriching experiences indigenous to each destination that capture the sense of both luxury and place.

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***The Liberty Hotel; 215 Charles St., Boston, MA 02114; https://libertyhotel.com***

* Owner: A Luxury Collection Hotel & Resorts; https://the-luxury-collection.marriott.com
* Developer: Carpenter & Company, Inc.; Cambridge, Massachusetts; http://carpenterandcompanyinc.com
* Architect – renovation: Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc.; Cambridge, Massachusetts; https://cambridgeseven.com
* Architect – preservation: Ann Beha Architects; Boston; http://annbeha.com
* Glazing systems – window manufacturer: Custom Window, now a brand of Wausau Window and Wall Systems, an Apogee Enterprises company; Wausau, Wisconsin; http://www.wausauwindow.com
* Photos: Bill Horsman Photography

To learn more about Apogee’s Building Retrofit Strategy Team’s personnel, services and success stories, please visit <http://apog.com/renovation.html> or contact Kevin Robbins at [krobbins@apog.com](mailto:krobbins@apog.com), 715-409-0821.

*Apogee Enterprises, Inc.’s Building Retrofit Strategy Team, in conjunction with its businesses, assists building owners and property managers to evaluate the benefits of window renovation and upgrades, such as improving the appearance of the building, saving energy, downsizing HVAC loading, reducing maintenance, lowering vacancy rates, increasing rental rates and enhancing the value of the building.*

*Apogee’s business units supporting these building retrofit strategies include Alumicor; EFCO Corporation; Harmon, Inc.; Linetec; Sotawall; Tubelite Inc.; Viracon, Inc.; and Wausau Window and Wall Systems.*

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