

Real Estate Journal

THE LARGEST WEEKLY COMMERCIAL/INVESTMENT NEWSPAPER COVERING THE STATE

G&R Construction's experience with historical restoration and renovation projects helps to integrate old into new



Historic restoration and renovation are labors of love - drawing upon the passions of architects and contractors alike to recreate original designs, to integrate old into new, and to utilize new methods and materials to inject new life into time-worn structures. Historically significant buildings, such as those found on private secondary school and college campuses, represent the traditions and reputations of these institutions, demanding respect from architects and builders. Not for the faint of heart, historical restoration and renovation is fraught with challenges, involving every discipline of design, engineering and construction.

Founded in 1962, G&R Construction is building a legacy as one of the premier - and competitive - renovation and restoration general contractors in eastern Massachusetts. "It's always been one of our strong suits," said Bob Morel, second-generation company president. "Our experience in this specialized market gives us the foresight to see what's ahead, anticipate concerns and finish each project strong."

One of G&R Construction's renovations

"We take pride in self-performing much of the work," said Morel. "We encourage our carpenters, many of whom learned their craft on private, high-end residential construction projects, to maintain their pride in workmanship and quality that is often lost on commercial projects."

John Curtis Library
Hanover, Mass.

In 2000, the town of Hanover selected J. Stewart Roberts Associates, Inc. Architects and G&R Const. to redesign and construct an addition to the 93-year-old John Curtis Library. Hanover wanted to use the original brick and slate "Carnegie-esque" library as the anchoring element of a new and modern facility with two wings flanking a central atrium. A steel-frame addition built in 1968 was demolished, providing J. Stewart Roberts the opportunity to design a facility with consistent proportions and an eye towards the future.

"G&R Construction was a thoughtful contractor," said Philip O'Brien, LEED AP, principal, J. Stewart Roberts. "There were no chaotic eleventh-hour phone calls requesting direction. To the contrary, G&R anticipated the challenges of the project and asked for direction well in advance of scheduled operations. We appreciated their approach as it allowed us to provide the very best client-centered construction administration services."

Needham Public Library
Needham, Mass.

Working closely with Ann Beha Architects of Boston, G&R Const. built a contemporary 40,000 s/f addition to the Needham Public Library's existing 8,000 s/f Georgian Revival style building, originally constructed in 1915. Additions to the library built in 1961 and 1981 were demolished, making way for the new marble, slate and brick-clad win, completed in March 2006. The building earned LEED Silver certification from the USGBC.

Milton Library
Milton, Mass.

G&R is currently restoring and renovating the Milton Library, replacing a two-story addition built in 1958 and a four-story structure that, prior to construction, connected it to the original building built in 1904 with a new four-level addition matching the height of the three-story historic structure. Schwartz/Silver Architects of Boston are the project architects.

"On historic restoration and renovation projects, matching new materials with old is a constant challenge," said Dan Aylward, senior project manager for G&R. "We bring a variety of expert resources to identify the origins of certain materials, like the Indiana limestone or the Italian marble in the existing section of the Milton Library."

Upon completion, the original building will be completely renovated and serve as the centerpiece of the new facility. Overall space will be increased 48% from the existing facility, with the largest increase assigned to meeting space. HVAC, electrical, lighting, security and data wiring systems will be completely removed and replaced with state-of-the-art equipment.

"The secret to our success is the pride we take in our work," said Aylward. "We understand that the owner and architects have been associated with our jobs for a much longer period of time. It's our job to communicate their concerns and expectations to our subcontractors - and vice-versa, our subs' questions to the owner and architect - so the entire project team is on the same page."