

South Coast Improvment Co. recognized as part of Hood Milk Bottle renovation

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Boston, MA The Boston Children's Museum received the 2021 Mayor Thomas M. Menino Legacy Award by Preservation Massachusetts for the renovation of the historic Hood Milk Bottle structure. South Coast Improvement Company (SCIC), a design-build general contractor serving New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, was the general contractor for this award-winning restoration of the iconic Hood Milk Bottle that stands between the Children's Museum and Fort Point Channel at 308 Congress St.

The Marion-based company began the renovation in August 2020 and wrapped up work in October 2020. Wessling Architects of Quincy, Mass provided the architectural services for the project.

"Having grown up a stone's throw from the Hood Milk bottle, I can tell you it was quite a thrill to work on this iconic structure. Add being part of an effort that receives the Legacy award and that's quite a bit more than icing on the cake," said Tom Quinlan, president of SCIC. "Kudos and congratulations to The Children's Museum and Hood for taking on this initiative. Much like a refreshing ice cold glass of milk, the renovation provided nourishment to all who walked through Fort Point Channel last summer."

The 2021 Mayor Thomas M. Menino Legacy Award recognizes preservation projects that are transformative, catalytic, embrace the community, create partnerships, and revitalize the best of the past to make something good for the future. The Hood Milk Bottle restoration is one of 19 projects from Plymouth to Springfield to be celebrated during the month of May, coinciding the National Historic Preservation Month, which celebrates the nation's heritage through historic places.

The Milk Bottle was built in 1934 by Arthur Gagner of Taunton, Mass., to dispense the homemade ice cream he produced. Standing 40 feet tall and weighing in at 15,000 lbs., the Milk Bottle was one of America's first fast-food drive-in restaurants and an authentic example of the "Coney Island" style of architecture.

The Milk Bottle stood as a landmark on Rte. 44 in Taunton until it was abandoned in 1967. Hood had the bottle refurbished and donated it to Boston Children's Museum. In 1977 the Milk Bottle was placed aboard a barge for its "Great Bottle Sail" through Boston Harbor to the Museum Wharf, now Children's Wharf at 308 Congress St.

"The challenge with this restoration was to maintain the historic character of this iconic structure while replacing constantly deteriorating exterior materials with more durable options for this waterfront location," said Scott Winkler, associate at Wessling. "We felt that the renewed commitment of Boston Children's Museum and Hood to maintain this important piece of history deserved to be recognized with a preservation award."

Work done on the Hood bottle included stripping the exterior down to the frame and installing new insulation, sheathing, siding, windows and doors. The interior received new plumbing, HVAC, and electrical, as well as a makeover so the facility can once again serve ice cream.

Funds for the project were donated by Hood's owners as a gift to the Children's Museum.