

History Repeats Itself

Knickerbocker Roofing & Paving Co. Inc. restores Chicago's historical Pulaski Park Field House

by *Krista Reisdorf*

Polish population and culture are well-known and integral parts of Chicago's identity-Polish legacies and landmarks are present throughout the city. And one such historical spot, the Pulaski Park Field House, recently had its roof system restored by **Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving Co. Inc.**, Harvey, Ill. A piece of history In 1912, Pulaski Park was created by the West Park Commission in West Town, a predominantly Polish neighborhood in Chicago. The park was named after Casimir Pulaski, a Polish war hero during the Revolutionary War who fought for the American cause and is known as the Father of the American Cavalry.

In 1914, architect William Carbys Zimmerman designed a three-story brick field house on the park's grounds. The field house was constructed using Eastern European architecture familiar to the immigrant community. Therefore, retaining the historical value and appearance was a priority when Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving began the project in March 2003.

Restoring an original



The original 1914 Pulaski Park Field House had a green Ludowici Roof Tile roof system on the 49,100-square-foot (4561-m²) facility, which has a 12-in-12 (45-degree) slope. A Spanish clay tile roof system was installed on the 6,000-square-foot (557-m²) veranda on the south side of the building, which has a 3-in-12 (14-degree) slope. Both roof systems had a 1 1/8-inch- (29-mm-) thick tongue-and-groove wood deck substrate.

The roof system has gone through changes since 1914. It was removed in 1947 and replaced with an asphalt shingle roof system on top of 1/2-inch- (13-mm-) thick wood fiberboard insulation. That was re-covered with a laminated asphalt shingle roof system, which had been in place for eight or nine years when Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving began the Pulaski Park Field House project.

A distinctive quality of the roof is the dormers and eyebrows located throughout, with copper on the eyebrows and laminated shingles installed on the dormers and sides.

Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving determined from visual signs of age and wear that the copper valleys had been reused from a previous reroofing project and believed the "K"-style gutter system was reused, as well. The roof drainage system also contained galvanized downspouts.

Recreating history



Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving received the Pulaski Park Field House project after answering a request for a design-build proposal from the Chicago Park District. It was determined the building restoration would include retention of the historical appearance. The company was asked to perform engineering and architectural design work to replace the entire roof system and some of the deteriorated deck and install new copper valleys and flashings. It also was asked to replicate the original tile in style and color.

Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving performed somewhat unconventional research when planning the reroofing process.

"We used pictures and the original specifications and drawings from the Chicago Park District archives to assist in replicating the original tile design, color and copper ornamentation, including fabricating and installing a missing copper spire," says Christopher Cronin, president of Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving. "Several original tiles were found in the attic eave. We sent them to Ludowici Roof Tile to recreate the original tile design and color. The original spire was made of copper as was the 120-foot- (36-m-) high tower upon which it sits. The new spire also was used in the upgrade of the lightning protection system."

The main roof system then was replaced with Ludowici Roof Tile's Classic XL Tile in custom-manufactured green. The veranda roof system was replaced with a simulated tile design, Bitec-SBS Mineral Design T-76-71, installed in cold adhesive to avoid the use of flame on the old structure. Cronin says half the veranda deck and several support joists were replaced and tile was not used on the veranda roof system because it would be susceptible to damage from falling ice and baseballs.

Various safety methods were employed for the project, including Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)-compliant safety harnesses with safety ropes and daily safety meetings. The company also used scaffolding with safety netting; roof brackets with OSHA-compliant wood planks; ground work areas surrounded by perimeter fencing; and overhead protection at the building entrances.

Although there were not many problems getting the materials to the job site, Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving had to face challenges with regard to the fact the field house still was open for daily programs during the project, including a summer day camp with 150 children. Cronin says the company also had to safely work within a "compressed inner-city neighborhood site" and used scaffolding and portable fencing to overcome those challenges. The scaffolding provided safety, a work platform and material storage; the fencing offered safety and security and controlled pedestrian traffic.



Worth it

The work that went into carefully restoring the historical landmark paid off for all those involved. The Pulaski Park Field House won the 2004 Chicago Landmark Award for Preservation Excellence-Tile Roof Restoration.

The award was presented to Tim Mitchell, general superintendent of the Chicago Park District, and special recognition was given to Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving.

Only 18 projects were selected by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks to receive the Chicago Landmark Award, which "honors outstanding projects that involved notable improvement to individual Chicago landmarks or to buildings within Chicago Landmarks districts."

Besides the recognition of the award, Cronin says the people involved and the end product also made it worth it.

"Everyone from the Chicago Park District to the local community was supportive," he says. "Restoring this highly used inner-city park to its historical, classic beauty truly was rewarding."

Krista Reisdorf is associate editor of Professional Roofing magazine.

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Project name: Pulaski Park Field House

Project location: Chicago

Project duration: March 19, 2003-Oct. 28, 2003

Roof system type: Clay tile

Roofing contractor: Knickerbocker Roofing and Paving Co. Inc., Harvey, Ill.

Tile manufacturer: Ludowici Roof Tile, New Lexington, Ohio