

## Article

# Clifford Masonry sorts out 100 Adelaide jigsaw puzzle

comments: 0 views: 748 label: Projects

by label: Dan O'Reilly Sep 26, 2014

When Clifford Masonry Limited returns to a downtown Toronto construction site in 2015, it will mark one more stage in a large multi-facet jigsaw puzzle for the masonry restoration firm.



Clifford Masonry president Sam Trigila, architectural conservator Donovan Pauly, and project manager Rob Laurie examine a glass mosaic transom now being restored in the company's plant. Designed by Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald and his son, the panel was originally above the entry on the south elevation of the old Concourse Building. - Photo: Dan O'Reilly

This puzzle is a 3-D one comprised of AutoCAD drawings, countless photographs, intensive assessments, and precise measurements, says project manager Rob Laurie

In 2013 Clifford removed more than 3,000 heritage elements from the 1928 Art Deco Concourse Building at 100 Adelaide Street West just before it was torn down to make way for Oxford Properties Group's 42-storey EY Tower. (designed by Kohn Pederson Fox Associates with Toronto-based WZMH Architects).

They will be reincorporated in into east and south facades of the new tower which is now being built on the same spot.

Included in that list were 945 architectural Terracotta pieces, 900 cast stones (also known as Roman Stones), eight spandrel panels, and the 1,550 glazed bricks and components which made up two thunderbirds and a sunburst, these were specially decorated mosaics on the west elevation, says Laurie.

Also recovered were four ceiling murals designed by Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald and a domed ceiling. The murals will be hung on walls in the lobby of the new tower, while the domed ceiling will be re-erected in its original configuration in the vestibule, he says.

Before that removal occurred, however, a full assessment of the configuration, size, and condition had to be conducted. Every single piece had to be photographed and numbered and that information, plus field notes by the company's drafting department, was used to create AutoCad drawings.

"They (the drawings) are needed to ensure each and every piece is re-installed its original location."

The actual salvage operation was divided into six separate steps and took about three months to complete. Many of the pieces could only be removed with hand tools and chisels to minimize damage to the heritage elements, says Laurie.

Every piece was given an identification number and transported to Clifford's large plant where follow up assessments and repairs were conducted. As an example of the painstaking work involved, Laurie points to the thunderbirds and sunburst.

"We dry laid the bricks onto the floor to ensure all pieces are accounted for and to access any existing damage. The brick that required repairs were placed on work benches and repaired using Jahn repair mortars," says Laurie, explaining that these are mortars which are specifically formulated to simulate the properties of the brick.

"We are currently generating glazing samples to ensure that the colour of the new glaze replicates the colour of the existing glaze."

Restoration of the terracotta and stone pieces are in various stages of completion, he says.

The pace of the repair and restoration is often determined by details such as whether the colour of a replacement part compliments the entire unit, says Clifford Masonry president Sam Trigila.

"It is something you can't make rash decisions on," says Trigila, pointing out that the final decision making authority rests with Goldsmith Borgal & Company Ltd, Architects, the project heritage architects.

A point of pride for Trigilia is that Clifford is one of—if not the only—masonry restoration firm with its own in house architectural conservator. That person is Donovan Pauly and he's overseeing the restoration of a glass mosaic transom panel which was above the entry on the south elevation.

Commissioned by the original Concourse Building architects, the transom was designed and executed by MacDonald and his son Thoreau, says Pauly.

Extensive measures were necessary to safeguard the mural while it was being cut away from the wall including placing a protective film over the glass surface.

"There was a real concern that the mosaic panel could become unstable and crack or even crumble in the delicate removal process."

Elaborate and detailed cleaning and repair measures were also required in the shop. The panel is comprised of hundreds of small individual glass elements and one of the most time consuming tasks has been cutting out the damaged ones. Replacing them with new ones hasn't been easy either, he says.

"The individual glass elements are difficult to match and some of the colours of glass used in the piece are specific to when the building was constructed in the 1920's and are not readily available," says Pauly, explaining a limited number of new pieces have had to be sourced from manufacturers in Italy and Mexico.

Re-erection of the elements on the EY Tower will start next spring and will take until December to complete, says Laurie. It will take about a month just to set up the scaffolding and mast climbers, he says.

The façade elements will extend to the 13th floor, which will be the same height as the 16-storey Concourse Building, says Mark Cote, vice president of development for Oxford Properties. Construction of the EY Tower started in July 2013 and will be completed by March 2017, says Cote.

*Sep 26, 2014*

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