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DIGITAL COVER

Innovation Leaders

SILICON VALLEY MECHANICAL'S

EMMANUEL MENDOZA
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ON HOW NEW TECHNOLOGY
TRANSFORMED SHOP OPERATIONS

A **bnp** PUBLICATION
media

SPECIAL
USING DATA
TRACKING
TO INCREASE
PROFITABILITY



500 FT

Up in the air



Two years ago, Cass Sheet Metal began the exterior copper restoration on Detroit's 500-foot tall Book Tower building, an iconic and historic centerpiece in the city's downtown skyline built in 1926. As the sun set on the restoration and the project came to a close this year, SNIPS recently paid the job site a visit to capture the crew working up in the air during magic hour; and what we saw was nothing less than.

Written by Emell Derra Adolphus
Photos by Josh Scott



500 FT

PART I

“Architectural sheet metal is uniquely different from job-in to job-out,” explains Glenn Parvin, president and owner of Cass Sheet Metal. “It is very rare that you have the same thing happening repeatedly unless it is a repetitive building.” Even for a seasoned architectural sheet metal contractor like Parvin, there is always a level of surprise and creativity involved in order taking on a new installation. But whereas some contractors might find that level of the unknown frustrating, Parvin finds it fun.

“In fact, one of our taglines on our advertising is, ‘Challenge is what we thrive on,’” he says, so when the time came to find a contractor to restore the copper roofing and siding at the long forgotten Book Tower in downtown Detroit, Michigan, Cass Sheet Metal was at the top of the list.

“Bedrock Detroit purchased the building and began a restoration of the outside and the copperwork. What’s really neat for Cass Sheet Metal and the reputation that we developed is, we were single-sourced. And that’s a pretty proud moment,” says Parvin. “The owner brought us in, we looked at it and started establishing prices.”

Built in 1926, the Book Tower is currently under a reported \$313 million rehabilitation that will include 95 residential units, 180,000-square-foot of retail and office space

“We had to figure out how to get to places,” explains Cass Sheet Metal president and owner Glenn Parvin. “We’re working off of 40-foot ladders, coming out of a large five-foot wide gutter, 500 feet in the air to repair various aspects of the Tower.” Photo by Josh Scott.



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and a planned hotel on the premises..

“The challenging aspect on this restoration job is that the Book Tower has been vacated since the '80s. And it has been in disrepair and failing and the copper roof has failed,” says Parvin. “They’ve allowed me great latitude and allowed me to be part of the team in decision-making as to how we are going to attack certain questionable details. Even though it’s a great structure, not everything built back in the '20s necessarily was always the right way either. So we’ve made some modifications when we could, keeping it in historically significant.”

PART II

A 500-foot high, gothic styled tower, the Book Tower was constructed by renowned Detroit architect Louis Kamper and is one of the most prominent designs in the city of Detroit. It is laden with copper, copperwork, includes built-in gutters, a batten seam copper roof with a near 20/12 pitch, steeply slopped, and 1600 linear feet of water tables or watersheds on four different floors.

Walker Restoration Consultants determined the specifications on the project in deciding what would be repaired and what would be replaced.

CONTINUED ...



From this view, the Book Tower’s green copper roof is unmistakable.



The Cass Sheet Metal crew on top of the Book Tower. “Getting a job like this is a huge feather in Cass Sheet Metal’s cap, for now and forever,” says Parvin.

Up in the air at the Book Tower in downtown Detroit, Michigan with Cass Sheet Metal. Photo by Josh Scott.



“We estimated 40 different line items of new copperwork, copper repairs on certain items, copper repairs around the building,” explains Parvin. “We had to figure out how to get to places ... We’re working off of 40-foot ladders, coming out of a large five-foot wide gutter, 500 feet in the air to repair various aspects of the Tower.”

Overall, Cass Sheet metal replaced windowsills on many floors with copper, bullnose fabricated components, a lot of custom fascia panels on floors 35 and 36 and custom stamping replication.

“All built-in gutters up top were replaced, tying them into the batten seam roof. They wanted to save as much of the batten seam roof as they could,” Parvin says. “The copper on the dormers was laden with mastic asphalt. There are six dormers on the tower so all the copper dormer work has been redone. And that’s been part of the changes and additions of our scope. We had a scope, but

when you’re dealing with a restoration that’s 500 feet in the air, and something that was built in the 1920s, you’re going to uncover a lot of things.”

Cass Sheet Metal has now been on the site for two years for a contract that will grow to around \$2 million, Parvin says.

“Getting a job like this is a huge feather in Cass Sheet Metal’s cap, from now and forever,” he says. “We’ve done a tremendous amount of problem solving and detail work and that gives me a great sense of pride. We are on the last leg, we are on the last elevation. And it’s going to be bittersweet to finish.”

He adds, “We’ve all talked about it. While every job has to end, the friendships earned, respect earned, you’re on a significant structure in downtown Detroit that everyone knows that you’re on, and when it comes to an end it is bittersweet. But at the end of the day, we are real proud of it.” —