



Multnomah Athletic Club

Project Spotlight



PROJECT:
Multnomah Athletic Club
Portland, Oregon

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM:
GBD Architects,
Portland, Oregon

GENERAL CONTRACTOR:
R&H Construction
Portland, Oregon

TILE CONTRACTOR:
Schonert & Associates, Inc.
Clackamas, Oregon

LATICRETE SUPPLIER:
United Tile
Portland, Oregon

LATICRETE MANUFACTURING PLANT:
Lebanon, OR

LATICRETE Adds Some Muscle To 120 Year-Old Athletic Club

By Ron Treister

Founded in downtown Portland, Oregon in 1891, the Multnomah Athletic Club, better known as “The MAC”, was built on a foundation consisting of uncompromising standards. The initial organizers were, for the most part, members of the Portland Football and Cricket Club who wanted to expand local athletic opportunities. They assured both press and public that the Portland Amateur Athletic Club (original name) would be devoted to physical and social advancement... “strictly first-class... and, no professional athlete would be allowed.” In March of 1891, one month after the club opened its doors, membership stood at 200 and the initiation fee was raised from \$10 to \$25.

Today, The MAC has over 20,000 members and is the largest athletic club in North America. There obviously have been many changes and challenges during its rich history.

For example, in July of 1910, a major fire broke out in downtown Portland, destroying, among other structures, the Multnomah Athletic Club’s clubhouse and new steel grandstand. The Club, almost immediately, announced plans for rebuilding the burned area. New construction would include a “first-class” building consisting of three floors above ground, basement and sub-basement below... 44 living rooms, one racquet court, four squash courts, two handball courts, a bigger gymnasium than the old one and a “swimming tank.” Eight months later, on April 5th, 1911, Teddy Roosevelt was invited to lay the new building’s cornerstone. Wielding a specially engraved silver trowel in front of 2,500 club members and 10,000 other observers, the ex-president ceremoniously “slung mortar.”

Fast forward to one century later. Mortar again, was being “slung.” A major renovation was called for in the club’s locker rooms and wet areas. This time, as it had been throughout the years, MAC members demanded that things were to be done “first-class.” With eyes on the future, across-the-board decisions were made to use the highest quality, finest tile installation system offered. The MAC property committee looked at many options before concluding that the LATICRETE System®, for so many reasons,

offered optimal solutions with high-performance products to be specified for this ambitious undertaking.

Mark Ellington, Facilities Director of the Multnomah Athletic Club stated, “The last two times our locker rooms were worked on were in 1964 and 1974. Basically, patchwork repair was done to fix some plumbing and to change fixtures. In the last few years, this whole area looked diminished, dated, worn out and rundown. A committee was put together to investigate options in upgrading these wet areas. Quite frankly,” Ellington continued, “our club is run by member committees, and there was some resistance by membership to this renovation project. This was based both upon cost and also due to a perception that ‘nothing was wrong.’

“Finally, after witnessing firsthand some structural issues below the floors and behind the walls that consisted of broken pipes, corroded electrical connections and more, the scales were tipped and the committee voted to move forward with the renovation process.

“Our club has over 80,000 square feet of wall and floor space. Over the years, we’ve used the LATICRETE System and have had great success with it. One reason we opted for these products was due to their lifetime warranty. When decisions are made at Multnomah Athletic Club, they are never based upon the short term but rather, on the long run. We look at total lifecycle costs and how specific products fit into our strategic planning. When forecasting, we want the highest value. We have no questions whatsoever about receiving that with LATICRETE materials.”

Because of the numerous walls, angles and drainage slopes within the locker room renovation, the tile installer, Schonert & Associates, Inc. Commercial Tile Contractors, had to tear out many areas in order to get the best “start courses” prior to the tile installation. “They did an incredible job,” added Ellington. “The space now is very plumb, very level. And because the space below the locker room is occupied, we needed to waterproof the floor before any tile was installed. In the past, we experienced significant leaking in areas that were not waterproofed and thus, recognized the necessity of this construction component. The Schonert



people applied HYDRO BAN® waterproofing membrane quickly and efficiently.”

HYDRO BAN was an ideal selection for MAC. It is a thin, load-bearing waterproofing/crack isolation membrane that doesn’t require the use of fabric in the field, covers or corners. A single component, self-curing liquid rubber polymer that forms a flexible, seamless waterproofing membrane, HYDRO BAN® bonds directly to a wide variety of substrates. “With this product, we knew problems due to water damage would be eliminated,” concluded Ellington.

Patrick Moore AIA, LEED AP, an Associate at GBD Architects in Portland, Oregon was heavily involved in the MAC locker room/wet areas renovation. “This may very well be the most tile work in one space that we’ve ever specified,” he stated. “The General Manager of the Club, since day one, brought the philosophy of ‘doing things right,’ and this mindset has permeated lots of decisions. So, to do things right, a property committee was put together relative to making decisions and then monitoring this project. It all started out with the lockers, which were old, badly beaten up and clearly needing replacement. After addressing that concern, the next item to be scrutinized had to do with failures in the club’s wet areas: the steam rooms, saunas, “hot rooms,” showers and sink areas. The committee decided to tackle both the locker project and the wet areas simultaneously.

“We wanted to minimize disruption to the overall daily functions at the club. So,” continued Moore, “we selected new lockers which were the same size basically as the older ones. And, we configured them in the same neighborhood design that existed previously, with member A’s locker still next to member B’s. Once that was determined, we then focused on the tile installation. We all knew LATICRETE products were bulletproof, and that’s a major reason why we specified the LATICRETE System. This club thinks ‘long-term,’ and because of that, we needed an installation system that would perform at high levels for 50 years, one that needed virtually no maintenance after the tile was installed... one that would last forever. After all, the large format Crossville tile selected was going to be in extremely high-use/high-abuse wet areas.”

Moore went on to say that because of the club’s “do it right” philosophy, they did look at other installation systems. “But, LATICRETE clearly was the best selection,” he exclaimed. “Mike Werner of LATICRETE not only explained in great detail the products’ lifetime

warranty details, he was also on-site during the bulk of the installation, right there with the Schonert people. As stated, this was the largest tile project we ever worked on; we needed all the support we could muster, and the support from Mike was as good as it gets. The entire tile installation process from beginning to end was done professionally in every aspect,” mentioned Moore.

Ken Wiedemann, a member of Multnomah Athletic Club for five decades, also served on the committee that made decisions about materials to be selected for the locker room restoration project. His business card reads “Kenneth E. Wiedemann, Chairman, United Tile. United Tile was the company that supplied the LATICRETE material to this project. “At first, I was a bit conflicted,” Wiedemann confessed. “We’re LATICRETE distributors and we believe in the product line. But as a longtime member of the club, and being on the property committee, this decision needed to be made collectively. We were very pleased when GBD specified LATICRETE and was approved by the property committee.

“There were three major reasons for this. One, the club’s focus on ‘doing it right the first time’ mandated that we select a product line that accomplished that objective. Second, the club had a history of proven success with LATICRETE® products. The club learned that cementitious grout is simply not good for the wet areas. SPECTRALOCK® PRO Grout offered the tiled floors, walls and counters of our wet areas color uniformity, durability, ease of installation and ease of maintenance they were seeking. Finally, the architects and club management were adamant that if there were ever any problems in the future with its tile installation, the vendor would stand behind its products with a lifetime warranty,” stated Wiedemann. “This was not a project for an organization here today and gone tomorrow. The club wanted the assurance it would get an installation that would last for years upon years. And, that is exactly what was received.”

Formed in 1891 by 26 football players, today Multnomah Athletic Club means as much to families as it does to athletes. A complete club, with first-rate facilities, superb cuisine, and fun social activities, MAC is a second home to many members. These members recognize the club’s locker room/wet areas restoration project was completed just as the Multnomah Athletic Club’s founding fathers would want it to be.

“First class.”



photos © Josh Partee 2011

