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Library Building Reveals History



**FOCUS:
Trenchless
Underground**

Library Building *Reveals History*

Site work for \$9-million structure in Burrillville, R.I., bares layers of 19th-century mills

BY PAUL FOURNIER

Excavation for a new library and related work at a major redevelopment project in Burrillville, R.I., is uncovering vestiges of the saw mills, grist mills, and later, the textile factories that were built in succession near the banks of the Clear River.

“The site contractor would hit a slab of concrete for one mill, then below that another concrete slab for a previous mill, and finally a wood floor set on stone for one of the early 1800s mills,” said Dan Joubert, clerk of the works for the town of Burrillville. Joubert, a construction consultant with more than 30 years in the industry, also pointed out the unusual occurrence of another sign of antiquity – giant glacial boulders.

Hundreds of these relics from North America’s last Ice Age were unearthed all over the site, with some of them measuring up to 5 cubic yards. Site contractor Catalano Construction of

Cumberland, R.I., is breaking up the boulders with hydraulic hammers and then feeding the pieces into a portable crusher. All crushed stone, as well as most of the demolition debris generated by the project, is being reused at the site.

Under construction by E.W. Burman of Warwick, R.I., the new library is one part of an ambitious redevelopment project, according to Christine Langlois, deputy planner for the Burrillville Planning Department.



Christine Langlois, deputy planner for the Burrillville Planning Department, explains redevelopment program.



Ironworkers set beam for new Burrillville, R.I., library under construction by E.W. Burman.

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Dam built in 1850s created a pond on the Clear River to provide dependable water supply for mills. (D. Joubert photo)



AA Wrecking Co. uses a Cat excavator equipped with a grapple to tear down old mill buildings. (D. Joubert photo)



With Clocktower building earmarked for renovation in background, Catalano Construction's John Deere excavator loads demolition debris on a Mack truck.



Hundreds of glacial boulders, some as big as five cubic yards, were unearthed on the site. (D. Joubert photo)

"The Jesse Smith Library is actually Phase II of the Stillwater Mill Complex, which is based on a Master Plan prepared for the Burrillville Redevelopment Authority," explained Langlois. "Phase I consists of Stillwater Heights, an elderly housing project being developed by Community Builders, a non-profit group, under a HUD grant."

Phase III of the multimillion-dollar development is the renovation and conversion of the so-called 'Clocktower Building' of Mill #4 into low-cost housing by another non-profit organization, the Neighborhood Development Group, she said.

Also planned for the site are retail shops, with such residential units as apartments or condominiums on the second floor – reminiscent of Old World villages.

Work began at the site in August 2006, with AA Wrecking Co. of Johnston, R.I., knocking down three of the old mill buildings to make room for the new construction. Brick, masonry block and concrete from the buildings were pulverized in a portable crusher and later reused as base material under the building pad and roads and parking lots.

As designed by architects Newport Collaborative, the 24,000-square-foot

library has spread concrete footings, a concrete foundation wall, structural steel frame, regular concrete slab on grade, and a lightweight concrete slab on steel deck pans for the second level. The two stairwells and single elevator core are framed of masonry block.

Greenville Ready Mix of Smithfield, R.I., is supplying the concrete, while Catalano crews are placing the 4-inch to 6-inch flatwork concrete, and Mount Hope Contractors of Bristol, R.I., is forming and placing the walls.

All columns are 6-inch by 6-inch tubular steel and beams are 12-inch to 18-inch wide flange. Steel is fabricated by

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Greenville Ready Mix truck supplies concrete to workers as they place spread footings. (D. Joubert photo)



Key construction personnel: Richard Hawes, E.W. Burman project manager; Dan Joubert, clerk of the works; Sherman Vogelaar, E.W. Burman superintendent.



Burrillville Town Council member Kevin Blais adds his name to those of other town residents written on the final, "topping off" beam.



Shattered boulders and demolition debris are pulverized by mobile Terex/Pegson crusher for reuse on-site. (D. Joubert photo)



An ironworker hooks up a string of beams for the Link-Belt crane operator.

Storrow Metal, a Canadian company, and is being erected by Ajax Construction. The Burrillville subcontractor is employing a Link-Belt hydraulic crane to hoist steel.

A striking architectural feature of the new library design is its use of exposed laminated timber trusses for the roof. Manufactured by Western Wood Structures, an Oregon company, the timbers

are 60-feet long and weigh about 6,500 pounds apiece.

Burman's \$5.6-million building contract – the remaining project costs are for planning, engineering, site work, and contingencies – is being managed by Richard Hawes, project manager, and Sherman Vogelaar, superintendent. Both agreed the job is on schedule, with building occupancy targeted for March 2008. ■

(A special thanks to Dan Joubert, clerk-of-the-works, for providing several of the photos used in this article.)

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The multimillion-dollar Stillwater Mill redevelopment is taking place at the site of the defunct Stillwater Worsted Mills Inc., which closed its doors in 1963. Located alongside the Clear River, a tributary of the Blackstone River, the site was home to a succession of mills in the Harrisville Village of the Town of Burrillville, R.I. Clear River water powered saw mills and grist mills in the early 1800s, then a cotton mill, a textile mill, and in the early 1900s, the first concrete fireproof mill in New England. During World Wars I and II, the Stillwater mills provided the material for soldiers' uniforms, blankets and other fine woolen and worsted cloth. According to the July 2004 Redevelopment Plan prepared by Gates, Leighton & Associates Inc. and New England Economic Development Services Inc., the news of the mill moving its cloth production to Virginia in 1963 "came as a blow to the 250 workers in the mill and the residents of Burrillville as a whole. It was the end of an era in manufacturing in Burrillville."