



PROJECT PROFILE

Hill Auditorium

Assessment and Repair of Terra Cotta Cornice Distress | Ann Arbor, MI



CLIENT

University of Michigan

BACKGROUND

First opening its doors in 1913 and originally designed by Albert Kahn, Hill Auditorium is rectangular in plan with approximate overall measurements of 143 feet in the east-west direction by 119 feet in the north-south direction. The seventeen-inch thick exterior walls primarily consist of multiwythe clay brick masonry with various accent features of limestone and terra cotta. One predominant feature located approximately 165 feet above grade is the ornate, multicoursed, cantilevered, terra cotta cornice assembly.

In a proactive, restorative manner to help maintain the durability and integrity of the historic venue, the client engaged WJE to perform an assessment of the uppermost projected terra cotta cornice around the perimeter of Hill Auditorium. The purpose of the assessment was to review the condition of the terra cotta units, determine the type and extent of distress, develop technical repair documents for restoration, and provide quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) during the restoration contractor's execution of the repairs.



SOLUTION

WJE performed an up-close visual survey of the terra cotta cornice and associated roof drainage elements above the main entrance of the building from grade, roof level, and from aerial lift. Based on our assessment, it was determined that the terra cotta units were in serviceable condition—however, accelerated deterioration had occurred from years of in-service exposure and water infiltration through the roofing system atop the cornice.

Working with university staff, WJE evaluated various options of repair treatment and work scope, including budgeting and schedule evaluation. Upon selection of an appropriate, historically sensitive approach, the WJE team provided subsequent design services consisting of developing technical repair documents, providing bidding assistance, and performing QA/QC construction period services during implementation of the multiyear repair effort.

