



James G. Staat

Tuckpointing and Waterproofing





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Preserving history, building a legacy

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History and architecture have always been inextricably linked. From ancient ruins to the most gravity-defying postmodern structures, our buildings tell stories, and like any world-changing book or glass-encased document, it's our duty to preserve them.

If the structure happens to be in or near St. Louis, Missouri, there's a decent chance James G. Staat Tuckpointing & Waterproofing (JGS) will have a hand in keeping that history intact.

"There's a lot of history in St. Louis, and we're proud of the work we've done to make sure these buildings last another 100 or 200 years," says James Staat, founder and owner of JGS. "In some ways, it's just easier to tear some of these things down. But that's our past. We should be trying to preserve it."



The lord's work

On St. Louis' southeast side, less than two blocks from the banks of the Mississippi River, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet is a totem of the city's pioneering past. Built in 1841, the convent has undergone plenty of upgrades, highlighted by the construction of a federal-style three-story brick chapel in 1897.

Inside the steeply-pitched nave, ornate renaissance woodwork and gorgeous chandeliers lend the space a breezy, warming air. Priceless relics abound, including the chapel's original bell, cast in Lyon, France, in 1838.

But it's on the convent's exterior that JGS plied its craft: tuckpointing. For the unfamiliar, the process involves removing and replacing damaged mortar, protecting the structure while accentuating the building's aesthetic, by creating a more chromatically uniform look.

Owing to the age of the mortar, the Sisters of St. Joseph required an unusually delicate approach. For each section, including the gables, JGS deployed as many as three man-lifts, one for each 10-foot story of brick. After replacing the mortar, large Kevlar sheets were applied to the repaired section for up to 72 hours to ensure the material was properly set.

The project also required JGS to replace hundreds of decayed bricks, with stronger ones culled from the site, as well as historically contemporary bricks—some of them from hundreds of miles away.

"When the mortar is setting, it's very sensitive to the elements, so we really have to pay attention to the weather and shut down the process during the winter," Staat explains. "It's a very long, meticulous process that requires a lot of attention to detail."





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Adding to the story

Seven miles northwest of the convent, a stone's throw from Forest Park, sits the Chase Park Plaza Royal Sonesta hotel. Built in 1929, the hotel remains one of the city's most recognizable—and one of JGS's biggest projects in recent memory.

In the job's first phase, JGS tuckpointed 23 stories of the building's exterior, notable for its mix of brick and terracotta stone. According to Staat, much of the terracotta had to be cautiously taken out and reinstalled.

"Thousands upon thousands of people see this building every day," Staat says. "So, it wasn't just the size of the project; we wanted to make sure it looked as good and the closest to the original as possible."

For Staat, the Chase Park renovation represents what he calls "a testament to how far the company has come" since its 1984 founding.

Having spearheaded restorations that run the architectural gamut—from schools and hospitals to centuries-old icons—JGS is poised for a new era of growth, buoyed by the company's multigenerational management.





For more than three decades, Jim Staat and the team at James G. Staat have used their renovation expertise to ensure St. Louis's most historic buildings continue to stand the test of time.

Pointing in the right direction

Such success hasn't been without challenges, however. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, which nearly brought the construction industry to a grinding halt, the company had to look beyond its St. Louis roots.

"We've expanded our geographic footprint considerably over the last decade," Staat says. "It wasn't easy to do; we were going places we weren't very familiar with. But looking back, it's one of the best decisions we've made."

Since 2011, the company has more than doubled its annual revenue, while building a portfolio spanning the public-private gamut—and featuring services from waterproofing and masonry restoration to graffiti removal and electrical work.

Staat's sons are both staples on the jobsite. And while the elder Staat works mostly in the office these days, he says nothing can replace the thrill of working with his team—and his two boys.

"I'm proud every day that I get to work with them," Staat says. "They have a natural talent for it. I know the company's going to be in good hands for a long time."

Only, family isn't just a word for the company masthead. For JGS's eponymous founder, it's a focus that extends to the jobsite, where teamwork is paramount and pride the mortar holding the whole thing together.

"Everyone here understands the stakes of what we're doing," Staat says. "We're keeping history intact. When people 100 years from now look at and enjoy some of these buildings—we're proud of that." •



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