

Facts & Figures

Owner: City of Philadelphia

Lessee: Friends of the Philadelphia Korean War Memorial, Philadelphia, PA

Type of Project: A new war memorial

Architect: VITETTA Architects & Engineers, Philadelphia, PA

Construction Manager: J.J. White, Inc., Philadelphia, PA

Size: 6,400 square feet

Cost: \$1 million

Construction Time: 1992 - May 2007

The Need: A memorial to honor the soldiers from the Korean War

The Challenge: Dealing with a limited budget



Photos courtesy of VITETTA Architects & Engineers



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Korean War Memorial

Although the Korean War is often called "The Forgotten War," the Veterans Organization of Philadelphia realized the long overdue need for a local memorial to commemorate the fallen soldiers as well as those lucky enough to return home from this four-year battle from 1950 to 1953.

The original design phase for the memorial began in 1992 with the demolition of the existing, abandoned structure located on the project's site. The project team then proceeded to develop the site and construct four 16-foot-tall, granite-clad columns surrounded by four granite walls — each column representing one year of the Korean War.

The granite walls were delicately sandblasted with information and photos regarding the Korean War. "Great care was taken by the entire project team to assure that the purity of the message, the intent of the design, and the passion and dedication of the veterans were met," said Jim Gallagher, senior project manager for J.J. White, Inc., the project's construction manager.

Since the funding for the memorial rested completely upon the Veterans Organization of Philadelphia, the budget for the project was limited and became its greatest challenge. In order to keep within the budget's constraints, certain compromises had to be made in the project's design to ensure the memorial came to fruition. Still, when the initial design and construction was finally completed in June 2002, all team members involved were very proud of what they had accomplished.

In 2005, in an unexpected stroke of luck, a new allocation of grants became available to the Veterans Organization of Philadelphia. According to VITETTA Architects & Engineers, the project's architect, this meant that the project team was

able to incorporate the modifications that were originally compromised in the initial phase of construction. Rocks and additional landscaping were added in an effort to replicate the nature of where the battles took place. The old brick pavers and landscaping were replaced with a large granite platform, which creates a plaza that surrounds the memorial. Engraved granite pavers that honor veterans were also incorporated into the design. In addition, a local artist was commissioned to create a bronze sculpture of an American soldier facing the monument in a kneeling and bowing posture, which symbolizes the spirit of the soldiers who returned home and the memory of those who didn't.

After years of hard work and a little fine tuning, the project was officially completed and dedicated in May 2007 — on Memorial Day. According to Gallagher, J.J. White was honored to be involved with the project and in spite of many opinions and visions, all egos were left at the curb. Cooperation and consensus prevailed all around for a rare, but true team effort by a great group of people. ■

— Barbara Rockafellow

