

THE JOURNAL RECORD SECTION B

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ELEVATIONS

HELMERICH CENTER FOR AMERICAN RESEARCH

New vistas for Gilcrease



The 40-percent exterior glass surface like this seen in the great hall will provide views for museum workers and guests. COURTESY RENDERINGS

BY KIRBY LEE DAVIS
THE JOURNAL RECORD

TULSA — The Helmerich Center for American Research provided some interesting architectural challenges for the St. Louis firm Hastings and Chivetta.

Carved into the Osage Hills upholding northwest Tulsa's Gilcrease Museum, the \$19 million addition will provide 35,000 square feet of display, storage and research space when Key Construction finishes the two-story project in May. Its green roof will align with the museum's existing parking lot, somewhat hiding its existence.

"It really is kind of a surprise," said Kevin Magness, director of the architectural firm's Tulsa office. "No one really knows it's there until you're led down there."

That Hastings and Chivetta design also seeks to blend this addition with the 140,000-square-foot museum's original construction elements, all cobbled together over time from numerous structures dating back to the original homestead of oilman and Western heritage collector Thomas Gilcrease.

"I think it just ties the whole thing together," Magness said. "The west facade is all glass. The east facade and the north is all stone."

The efforts required some balancing as the project grew. Blueprints called for a 25,000-square-foot addition when Key Construction broke ground on the then-projected \$15 million center in June 2012.

"There was no connection between the two build-



The \$19 million addition will provide 35,000 square feet of display, storage and research space.

ings," Magness said of those plans. "We've now connected the two buildings in a subterranean gallery."

With its 5,000-square-foot protective vault and 1,600-square-foot library, the Helmerich addition will provide a new home for the Gilcrease Library and Archive, a collection of some 100,000 rare books, documents and artifacts of the American frontier.

The museum also holds more than 10,000 sculptures, paintings and drawings, anchored by one of the world's most complete Charles Russell and Frederic Remington collections, and 300,000-plus Native American archeological artifacts.

"One of the initiatives we have taken is to digitize the entire collection," said museum Executive Director Duane H. King. The addition will enable that through its digitization studio, conservation laboratory and other preservation resources.

These elements fit efforts by the University of Tulsa, which manages the museum, to make many of these Gilcrease documents and artworks more available for historical review and appreciation. Included in the design is a 3,600-square-foot meeting hall, able to hold 300 seats, along with a research library, galleries, videoconferencing room, and other meeting and education spaces.

"This will enable us to bring groups in to the research center for dinners or private events and not only be surrounded by wonderful things in the collection but also have a very nice view of the Osage Hills," King said.

From its different elevation and positioning, Magness said the 40-percent exterior glass surface in the Helmerich addition will unveil new vistas to museum workers and guests. To protect the paintings and documents, Magness said the addition incorporates adjustable electrochromic glass to control heat and light exposures. King looks forward to installing that glass in other museum areas.

"The views are incredible," Magness said of the Helmerich center. "There's a large meeting hall on the northwest corner of the building. It's up high enough that you're looking over the treetops to the Osage Hills."

Named for lead donors Walter and Peggy Helmerich, the addition will be dedicated on Sept. 4. King said its academic opening will come in February.

"It's going to be a wonderful addition to the campus," he said.

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ELEVATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF TULSA ARCH

Passage with purpose



A two-story gothic arch will allow passage between a housing and student services office addition at Fifth Place and Florence Avenue at the University of Tulsa. COURTESY RENDERING

BY KIRBY LEE DAVIS
THE JOURNAL RECORD

TULSA — It's easy to understand the public's fascination with arches. This form-fitting concept of balancing and distributing stress seems both organic and sophisticated, economic and artistic, which may explain one reason why so many are found at institutions of higher learning.

The University of Tulsa will add one more to its beautiful campus in the summer of 2015 with a three-story housing and student services office addition at Fifth Place and Florence Avenue.

That steel and precast panel design somewhat represents an arch itself, with a new plaza to rise within its C-shaped structure. Three hundred student beds will fill about 70,000 square feet of the brick-and-stone edifice, while the other 36,000 square feet will house the Holmes Student Center.

Bridging the two will soar a two-story gothic arch,

allowing students easy access through the development.

"The plaza's going to be real nice, but the arch makes the project," said Kevin Magness, the Tulsa office director for the St. Louis architectural firm Hastings and Chivetta. "Without it, it would just be another collegiate gothic building. With it, it's a real nice collegiate gothic building."

The arch might seem to play a connecting role between two buildings.

"There was a big design element to keep them separate," Magness said. "You don't want students in your offices and you don't want workers in your dorm, either."

But that separation comes from the planned purpose, not the construction. Magness said the arch actually represents a passageway element in a single building design, with a third-floor corridor over the arch that can connect the two sides.

That points to the portal's central purpose, pre-

venting the new structure from acting as a pedestrian barrier from one side of the campus to the other.

"We worked hard to make it work, because with the proportions of the building, it was actually kind of difficult to make it a gothic arch," Magness said. "We didn't want to block access, even if it's just visual access, from the main part of the campus to the Allen Chapman Activity Center."

Key Construction will raise the \$39 million project, which includes not just the office and dorms, but also exterior plaza renovations around the Allen Chapman Activity Center, street-scaping and other related efforts.

Outside of the extra windows cut into the dorm section, Magness said the new structures follow similar themes running throughout the campus — which isn't too surprising, since Hastings and Chivetta designed many of the structures added by TU over the last decade.

"It's typical of our work on campus," he said.

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