

Keeping History Fresh

Heather & Little Ltd. Continues Its Excellence with Architectural Restorations

Dangling in the air, dozens of stories on top of the Georgia State Capitol Building to airlift an iconic statue for renovation can be nerve-wracking for the craziest of thrill-seekers. But for Cameron Forbes, it's just another day in the office.

Forbes serves as the vice president of Heather & Little Ltd, a premier producer of custom ornamental sheet metal in Ontario, Canada, and is best known for their historic renovations — like the restoration job done on the Georgia State Capitol domed roof and its Lady Freedom statue.

Heather & Little has worked with the Copper Development Association (CDA) in the past, as a preeminent authority in copper architectural systems design and installation.

“Generally [CDA] will contact us for technical information on difficult installation or restoration issues if they come across any project that is unusual,” Forbes said. “Many times they’ll check to see if we have any projects in the works.”

Heather & Little received recognition in the North American Copper in Architecture Awards (NACIA) from the Copper Development Association (CDA) and the Canadian Copper & Brass Development Association (CCBDA) for the second straight year for their outstanding work in the following projects: Onondaga County Courthouse, New Brunswick Legislative Assembly Building, Wovoka residential project and the St. Patrick’s Basilica.

“Generally, the biggest part of our work is in restoration with architectural metal, but we do immense copper roofing in Canada and high profile projects in the U.S,” Forbes said.

Last year, the premiere restoration company was honored for its one-of-a-kind craftsmanship in the historic Plaza Hotel renovations in Manhattan and the Library of Parliament building in Ottawa, Canada.

While their work is nearly always breathtaking for the general public to gawk at, Heather & Little has been doing great work since it first opened its doors in 1925. Depending on the work-load, there are as many as 70 or as few as 15 highly-skilled metalsmiths on staff. Mostly, the tradesmen are hired from within from their five-year apprenticeship program.

“Many who serve in the apprenticeship program have worked here all their lives,” Forbes said. “The last six or seven people who retired have been here for about 50 years.”

A lot of the restorations they complete display amazing detail with different types of metal. Specifically, they utilize copper in many of their building projects.

“Copper is probably one of the most user-friendly materials out there,” Forbes said. “It can be heated, stretched, bent and formed into just about anything. Considering that and its longevity, it’s probably one of the best metals you can use.”

Aside from the NACIA awards, Heather & Little also received a Gold Circle Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the roofing industry, for the work they’ve done on the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, and the Roofing in Canada Award for their work on the Library in Ottawa.

Currently, you can see them hone their craft as they are in the midst of restoring the Montreal City Hall building, which Forbes describes as “phenomenal ornamental copper work.”

They will also be starting the next phase of the restoration process for the New Brunswick Legislative Building and St. Patrick’s Basilica.

But when asked which project was one of the most memorable, Forbes still recalls the airlift job in Georgia.

“We felt it was necessary to airlift the statue to our shop to get the results we were looking for,” Forbes said. “When people come to us, they want something to look exactly how it was originally crafted, but with better workmanship and technique.”