

Case Study:
A CLOSER LOOK AT
The West Reading
Motor Club

Olde London

Reverse Aging

Restoring History with Thin Brick



A 1913-era, commercial brick building in West Reading, Pa., looked every bit its age when local developers Frank and Adam Cocuzza first laid eyes on it. But the structure’s history and location were perfect for the pair’s vision of an up-scale restaurant and bar in a neighborhood on the path to revitalization.

While modernization was obviously needed, the Cocuzzas wanted to do so in a way that would essentially reverse the building’s aging process, restoring it to its original brick beauty. When it was discovered that the majority of the original brick was not in a condition to achieve their vision, stucco was suggested as an alternative. Determined to avoid that route, the Cocuzzas found their solution with a thin brick system from Glen-Gery.

A Local Landmark

Originally founded as the West Reading Motor and Hardware Company, the building housed a number of businesses over the past century, including the original car dealership and hardware store, countless failed businesses during the Depression, and most recently, a vacuum cleaner store. Throughout its history, the building was most often the site of automotive dealerships, and was known as the place to go to purchase the latest new car, or to have an old one repaired. In its new incarnation, the Cocuzzas are paying homage to this history, by naming their venture the West Reading Motor Club. Inside, the 20,000 square-foot, three-story building’s design recaptures the automotive industry’s stylish art deco era of the 1940s and 1950s.

KEY PLAYERS :

Developer:
Frank and Adam Cocuzza

Mason Contractor:
Costea Construction Company

Remodeler:
Costea Construction Company

BRICK BREAKDOWN :

83,000+ thin brick and Thin Tech



Painted, Damaged Surfaces

The building was constructed entirely of brick, and while the brick on the front was in good shape, the sides of the building were not. "The brick on the sides had been painted blue and white," said Adam Cocuzza. "We tried to power wash it, but that removed a lot of the brick surface along with the paint. Using stucco over the brick was an option, but it wouldn't give us the historic look we wanted. Our building contractor, Corneliu Costea of Costea Construction, suggested brick veneer, saying that it would give us the needed balance of protection for the existing walls and preservation of the original building aesthetics."



The Glen-Gery Solution

Glen-Gery's thin brick and the Thin Tech® installation system were selected for the job, in an Olde London tumbled brick style that recreated the building's century-old look. In all, 83,000 thin bricks were installed.

Thin brick is real brick that has been custom manufactured to a thinner profile or cut down from a full brick. It is available to match full face brick in a wide variety of colors, textures and styles including extruded, molded, handmade, glazed and Klaycoat® units. The West Reading Motor Club building renovation included restoring the original full brick on the front, and adding very closely matching thin brick by Glen-Gery on the sides. Now completed, both the front and sides look beautiful.

Costea Construction's recommendation of thin brick was also driven by Glen-Gery's Thin Tech installation system, which delivers both performance and installation advantages. The system can be mounted over damaged surfaces, even several layers of different type of surfaces, solving the issue of the existing painted, damaged brick.

The Thin Tech System

Thin Tech is a mechanical support and spacing panel for mounting thin brick, stone or tile. The system can be installed on new or renovated buildings, and can be used for both exterior and interior applications.

Through the system, each brick, tile or stone is supported by a patented support tie that mechanically interlocks the masonry veneer to the panel. The support ties are placed on a 76-degree angle, allowing the mortar to surround the support tie and creating a positive masonry lock between the mortar and panel. A stucco embossed texture creates a greater surface area for maximum adhesion between the veneer and the panel.

Manufactured from G-90 galvanized steel with structural grade mechanical properties and a thermal set protective coating, the Thin Tech panels provide exceptional durability and strength. The hardened steel sheets help brace the wall, minimizing wall racking, and allowing fastening anywhere through the panel for even weight distribution or loading on the wall using industry standard fasteners. At the same time, the panels are lightweight, reducing footing and lintel requirements.

The Thin Tech Elite system specified for the West Reading Motor Club renovation offered a number of features designed for excellent weatherability. A true screen-drained wall system, the Elite panels offer superior drainage, bond strength, air flow and ventilation, and rain screen technology.

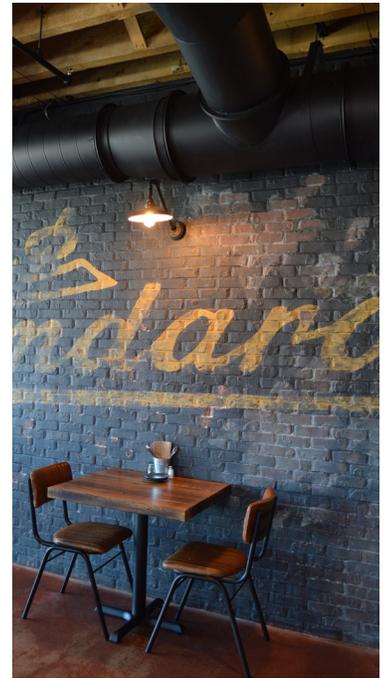
"The Thin Tech system helped keep the project moving and contributed to cost efficiencies."

—Adam Cocuzza

Time and Labor-Saving Advantages

While appreciating the aesthetic and performance advantages of thin brick and the Thin Tech system, Adam Cocuzza also values the time-and-labor saving advantages. "The Thin Tech system helped keep the project moving and contributed to cost efficiencies," he noted. That's due to what Corneliu Costea refers to as Thin Tech's cleaner system. "With Thin Tech, the brick panels have the coursing predetermined. We just mount the brick on the support ties, then come back and point the mortar. The pointing needs to be applied properly to assure the ultimate performance of the system. But, Thin-Tech helps the job move faster. Because the panel installation and mortar can all be done separately, weather delays are minimized." Costea also notes that because the Thin Tech Elite panels have a built-in drainage system, there is no need to install a drainage mat. "That saves additional time and labor," he said.





Custom Window Cutouts

One of the most striking design features of the West Reading Motor Club building are beautiful, hand-made mahogany windows. Glen-Gery's Thin Tech system also contributed to keeping the project on track while the windows were being crafted. "Costea Construction was able to move ahead with the thin brick installation, even though the windows weren't ready," said Adam Cocuzza. "They installed the panels and the brick around the existing window openings, leaving about a foot of space around them, and just adjusted the fit when the windows were installed. That could not have been done with full brick."

Interior Brick Walls

Inside the West Reading Motor Club, Glen-Gery thin brick was used to create the look of original exposed brick walls. "We kept the brick theme uniform and true to the building's origins," noted Cocuzza. "The interior brick gives the bar and restaurant areas a rugged, retro look that everyone loves. The Thin Tech system made it very easy to add this feature."

"Working with Glen-Gery has been a fantastic experience that helped bring it all together."

—Adam Cocuzza

Brick Comes Full Circle

The Nitro Bar on the second floor of the West Reading Motor Club is now open and the first-floor restaurant will be ready to go in the near future. Customer reaction has been very positive, and Adam Cocuzza feels his venture is living up to its social media hashtag *#BloodSweatAndMotorOil*. "This is a dream come true," he said. "Working with Glen-Gery has been a fantastic experience that helped bring it all together." In a fitting twist, Cocuzza believes the building's original brick may have been supplied by Glen-Gery. Founded in 1890, the company was active at the time the building was constructed, with a quarry and manufacturing facility nearby in Wyomissing, Pa. "We're trying to confirm it," said Cocuzza. "It would be pretty cool if our repeat choice of Glen-Gery brick brings this whole project full circle."

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