





THE DOORS

of Wheaton College

by Ben Dorsey

Travel due west of Chicago nearly 30 miles to find the suburban community of Wheaton, Illinois. This picturesque small city is noteworthy for its history, notable citizenry, and its namesake college.



Blanchard Hall

Twin Traditions

Wheaton College is a Christian, liberal arts college and graduate school with “twin traditions of quality academics and deep faith.” It consistently ranks very high among liberal arts colleges for undergraduate teaching and always within the top 100 liberal arts colleges.

The college was founded in 1860. One year previous, William Wheaton, one of the founders of the city, had donated land to the former Illinois Institute which had been founded by Wesleyan Methodists.

A new President renamed the Institute to Wheaton College in honor of their benefactor and officially separated the college from any denominational support.

This man, Jonathan Blanchard, was a dedicated reformer and staunch abolitionist. Under his leadership, the college became a stop on the Underground Railroad.

He also lobbied for universal co-education. As a result, Wheaton College was the only school in Illinois with a college-level women’s program at the time. In 1866 the college also graduated its first student of color.

Blanchard Hall

Aptly, the oldest building on campus is named Blanchard Hall. Built in 1853, it sits at the center of campus with striking Romanesque architecture. Its prominent octagonal tower, and the remainder of its envelope, is constructed of native Illinois limestone with the last stone set in 1872.

Today, Blanchard Hall is home to the offices of the President, Provost, Vice-Presidents and Academic Affairs. Departments of Humanities, Social Sciences, Human Resources, and Purchasing also have their homes here.

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Oldest Building, New Doors

While it's the oldest building on campus, Blanchard Hall boasts some of the newest doors. Replacing the iconic entrances to a building which sits on the U.S. National Registry of Historical Places is not something to be taken lightly.

For the main entrance, as well as secondary entrances, Wheaton chose doors that feature face sheets of fiber reinforced polymer (FRP) in a magnificent, Mastergrain wood grain finish.

The face sheet is nested in an aluminum chassis and filled with poured-in-place, closed-cell foam. All six door pairs were painted in Corinthian White to complement the existing architecture.

While vision lites are featured on each of the doors, the main entrance pair received the first use of a decorative snap trim. This trim enriches the door appearance while reinforcing the historical nature of the building. It has no visible fasteners on either door side.

McAlister Hall

Now due for interior renovation, McAlister Hall is the former home of the Wheaton Conservatory of Music. This building was completed in 1962 with considerable funding from the estate of Amelie McAlister Upshur in memory of her father, William H. McAlister.

Both entrances and architecture of McAlister Hall were designed to naturally draw the eyes heavenward. Entrances to McAlister Hall consist of pairs of colonial wood grain doors. Despite the deep grains and realistic wood appearance, the FR/aluminum hybrid doors offer remarkable resilience to weathering and aging.



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Todd M. Beamer Student Center

Edman Memorial Chapel

Edman Chapel was named for Wheaton's fourth president, V. Raymond Edman. It was constructed as part of Wheaton's centennial in 1960.

It features a large auditorium, with capacity for 2400, as well as a 50-stop, 70-rank Casavant Tracker pipe organ. It is used for chapels, concerts, and commencements as well as other community events. Colonial-style doors welcome all to events at Edman Chapel. SL-18 doors form the main entrances to Edman. But the doors were customized by being sanded smooth, removing the wood grain but maintaining the colonial pattern.

Williston Hall

Constructed in 1895, Williston is the oldest residence hall on the campus. For some time, it was known as either Women's Building, Ladies Hall, or Red Castle by campus co-eds.

It was named Williston Hall about 1933 in honor of John Payson Williston, inventor of indelible ink, friend of Jonathan Blanchard, and early benefactor of the college. In 1937 it became the on-campus home of Ruth Bell.

A few years later, her friends would introduce her to a strapping fellow student who had been nicknamed "Preacher." She and Billy Graham were married shortly after graduation in 1943.

Auxiliary exits of the "red castle" are FRP/aluminum hybrid doors with a sandstone finish.

Todd M. Beamer Student Center

This complex was dedicated in 2004 and named for one of the heroes of Flight 93 and two other Wheaton alumni killed in the 9/11 terror attacks.

It houses the main campus dining center, a snack bar, coffee shop, convenience store, campus post office, and the Coray Alumni Gymnasium. The latter is used for banquets, concerts, lectures, and conferences.

Entrances to the various portions of the Center use monumental aluminum stile and rail doors that are finished in dark bronze anodizing to complement fenestration finishes.

Despite the high glass content, the doors chosen by Wheaton for this are thermally efficient—a necessary characteristic for weather in the Chicago area.

Student Services Building

Adjacent to the Student Center is the Student Services Building. It houses the campus bookstore, registrar, financial aid offices, and more. The Student Services Building is an ever-popular destination for the nearly 3000 Wheaton students.

Like the Student Center, it uses monumental doors, this time finished with clear anodizing.



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Edman Memorial Chapel

McManis-Evans Hall

These joined buildings, built in 1937 and 1945 respectively, form a residence hall housing up to 288 students in 9 gender-specific wings on five floors.

Wheaton's dorms have been ranked among the Top 20 Best College Dorms in America, according to Town & Country magazine. Throughout 2016, the building was outfitted with new colonial wood grain doors. Each of the many exterior doors of McManis-Evans feature half lites with integrated muntins.

Chrouser Sports Complex

This \$15 million complex was completed in 2000 to become the new home of Wheaton athletics. Within its walls are housed three student recreational gyms, an elevated jogging track, a climbing wall, a huge weight room, a physiology lab, classrooms and conference rooms, the Eckert Recreation Center, the Lederhouse Natatorium, and the King Arena.

Because of the varied nature of the facility, several models of doors are used throughout, including aluminum monumental doors, FRP/aluminum hybrid doors, and other hybrid doors. Some models are especially suited to rough usage associated with athletic environments.



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McCully Stadium

This stadium is home to Wheaton Thunder football and track & field events. While the grandstand portion of the stadium is not extremely large, it does accommodate men and women locker rooms, public restrooms, concessions, and equipment storage. The doors selected for this application are FRP/aluminum hybrid doors finished in blue to complement Wheaton Thunder blue. The doors are perfectly suited to the rugged exterior of McCully Stadium.

Faith in Every Project

The man responsible for doors, and other construction activity on the campus, is Andrey Kovalev.

He manages the Construction Services and Maintenance team of the overall Facilities Department. This department is responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of the 75 buildings and 118 acres that make up the campus. With over \$500 million in facility assets, it is daunting work.

Kovalev joined the facilities department in 2000 and by 2004 had assumed leadership of the Construction Services and Maintenance team.

This team provides leadership & management

for building and renovation projects as well as carpentry, electrical, paint, and landscaping services. Kovalev manages eight full-time employees and a number of part-time student employees.

Their work is project-based with a master schedule. However, priorities can change daily as Kovalev attempts to meet the needs of ongoing student and staff use of facilities as well as attending to the needs of community guests who also use these resources. "My work is to schedule and prioritize," Kovalev says. "It is challenging because there never seems to be enough time. And managing the various schedules for my team members is challenging because they do not always understand why priorities change."

Reflecting the faith that is prevalent on campus, Kovalev continues, "Each morning, I pray for wisdom to make priority changes, adjust schedules, and help my team understand the importance of our projects—especially amidst changes. It's not like typical construction projects where phases move forward in a predictable way. We need to be flexible in terms of priorities and that is not always easy for project-focused employees."

Enhancing the Heritage

Beyond the facilities already mentioned, well-chosen doors and frames, sidelites and transoms are found in numerous other buildings on the Wheaton campus, including the most popular facility on campus, the Billy Graham Center.

It was dedicated in 1980 in conjunction with a crusade led by Billy Graham himself. Perhaps no other facility here reflects the faith of the administration, staff, and student body more than this building.

As such faith continues to spread across the world from this campus in Wheaton, Illinois, their carefully chosen products will continue to preserve and enhance this important heritage.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ben Dorsey is a product marketing veteran for commercial and institutional buildings. He has worked with entrance systems, building automation, fenestration products, mechanical systems, and other building products. He earned a bachelor's degree in Scientific & Technical Communication from Bowling Green State University (Ohio).

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