Dean’s Study Restoration Showcases Craftsmanship

The University Chapel was completed in 1928. Ralph Adams Cram, the supervising architect for the project, constructed the large chapel in an architectural style based on the fourteenth century English Gothic. Today, the Chapel is the scene of many weddings, memorials, concerts, and several ceremonial, non-denominational events held by the University. On the side of the Chapel facing Dickinson and McCosh halls there is the Dean’s Study—a beautiful little room used by celebrants and others as a “backstage area.” The same care and quality construction went into making this small room as went into the rest of the Chapel. It has fine oak paneling, decorative plaster, and beautiful leaded-glass windows.

In late 2011, a catastrophic steam leak caused by an errant contractor destroyed much of the interior. It was decided that the shops of Grounds and Building Maintenance would do the restoration as it was determined that they could do it at a cost that was significantly lower, while maintaining or exceeding the quality of the original work. The team that performed the work included Patrick Casey, William Collins, Arlester Fleming, Kevin Gafgen, Tom Graziano, Jason Harris, Hans Martini, Aaron Rothermel, Timothy Wallace, and Richard Wardle. These carpenters, painters, and other craftsman bring exceptional skills and allow our shops to bid on jobs which ordinarily would have to be contracted out.
“The restoration of the Dean's Study in the Chapel was a work of superior skill, effort, and patience over the course of many months,” said Dean of Religious Life Alison Bowden. “We would walk in on any given day to find it deconstructed piece by piece, down to the studs, then gradually reconstructed. Warped, stained paneling came down, doors were removed, plaster and paint were scraped and repaired. Then pieces of gleaming new paneling would appear, square by square. From the plaster molding emerged leaves, vines, and clusters of grapes in green, gold and purple. The ceiling became bright white. The cabinetry returned more beautiful than before. The whole room was restored to its original glory of 1928, when the Chapel was dedicated. The Dean's Study is one of the most gracious rooms on campus, and is lovelier now than before the steam leak. We have the deepest admiration for the craftsmanship of all who worked on the project.”