

# NETWORK

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## Setting High Standards

Carrier Mausoleums Construction (CMC) designs, fabricates and installs elegant glass-front niches at the iconic Neptune Society Columbarium of San Francisco

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# Setting High Standards

Carrier Mausoleums Construction (CMC) designs, fabricates and installs elegant glass-front niches at the iconic Neptune Society Columbarium of San Francisco

By Lisa Johnston

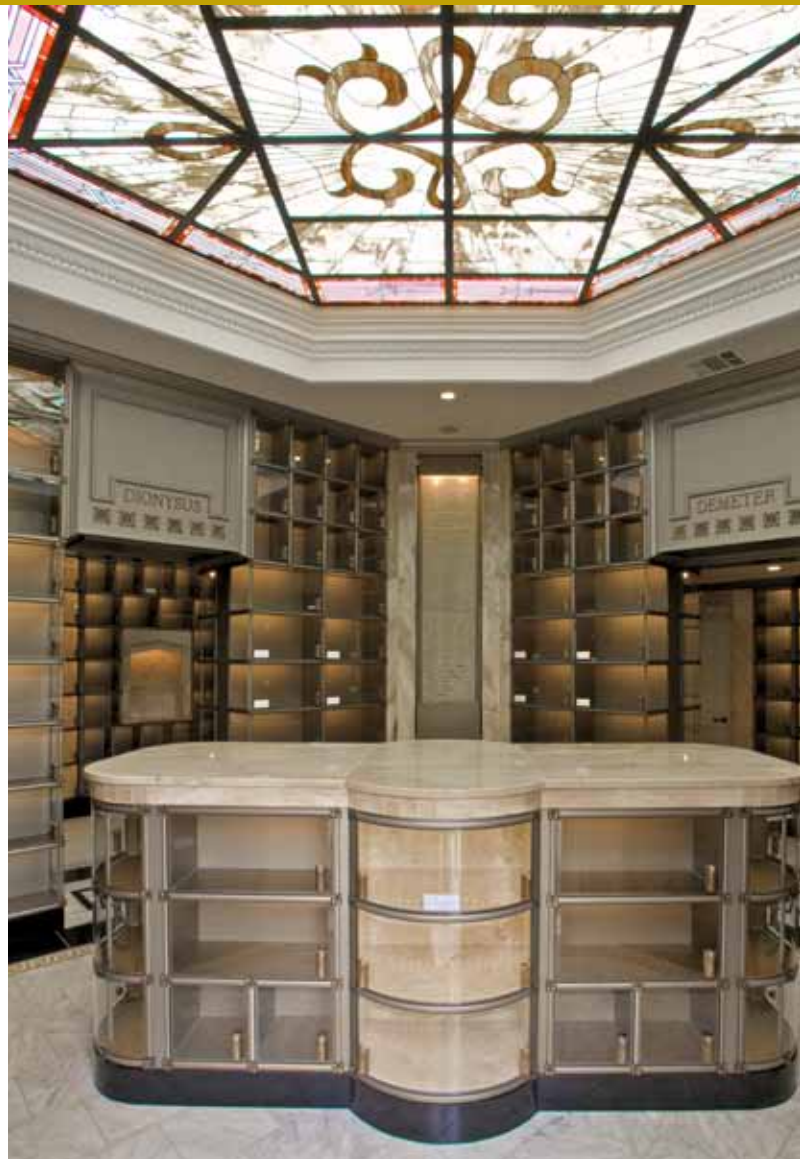
When the Neptune Society decided to expand its renowned columbarium they knew they had high architectural standards to meet. Erected in 1898, the stately building has become not only an architectural treasure but is also the only active non-denominational burial space in the city of San Francisco. As a result, when surveying the various glass-front niche fabricators they did not want the look of a prefabricated cut-and-paste system but a seamlessly integrated and truly amazing niche space that would rival the original building. In the end, they turned to the cremation niche leader – Carrier Mausoleums Construction (CMC) – to help them create what has become one of the most significant glass-fronted niche projects in all of North America.

“The existing columbarium that was built in the 1890s is the only thing that remains from the original Odd Fellows Cemetery,” says Joshua Lintz, senior director of marketing and strategic development with CMC. “There’s thousands of interred within the original building with very little space left. Greatly in need of new glass-front inventory, Stewart Enterprises and Neptune collectively lobbied for two or three decades for approval to add a new development to this registered landmark.”

When Stewart Enterprises and the society finally garnered the approvals to go ahead, they worked in conjunction with local architects to construct a new stand-alone columbarium called the Hall of the Olympians. Phase one of three broke ground in 2011 and the glass-front niches were designed, fabricated and impeccably installed by CMC, with plans to finish the additional phases two to four years down the road.

“I am so proud of being associated with this project; this is without a doubt the premier columbarium in one of the world’s most popular and best-known cities,” says Christine Hunsaker, senior vice president of Stewart Enterprises, owners of the Neptune Society Columbarium. “When you visit this columbarium, beauty surrounds, and every detail has been meticulously planned. From the design, material selection and quality of construction, simply nothing compares.”

A lot of this was the result of working with CMC. Unlike other niche suppliers who are not a construction company,



**“CMC was the company that basically revolutionized the glass-front niche system by creating the first curved glass niches.” ~ Lintz**

CMC’s design-build capabilities offers custom-fabricated niches and the critical function of self-performed installation whereas other companies offer mostly a ready-to-assemble system or something they have brokered from a third party. At CMC, there is no one-size-fits-all mentality. For a project of this magnitude, hundreds of hours went into the design phase alone to ensure the new columbarium was a truly unique and stunning structure unlike any other currently in existence.

“CMC’s commitment to service, communication, creativity and quality is why we have carefully selected CMC as our exclusive partner for all our glass-front niches,” adds Hunsaker. “They are one of the easiest companies to do business with. And frankly, CMC supplies the industry’s finest glass-front niches.”

Lintz adds, "Reinforcing that, there are very few glass-front niche fabricators and manufacturers that actually have the ability to provide full-circle service from design, fabrication, delivery and installation. So when you have a project of this scope, there is not one company that can provide service at a level comparable to the CMC way. Consequently, Christine Hunsaker, who mentioned that this was a very elegant project and a particularly rare project because there is no other inurnment space available within city limits, recognized this about CMC. Therefore, you have this incredible demand and you have to be able to provide the most elegant and beautiful niches possible for what are very discerning customers."

The stunning niches were designed to fit seamlessly into the new Hall of the Olympians building. All finishes complement the other textures and esthetics found in the original columbarium, which also features predominantly glass-front niches. Prior to working with CMC, an exterior columbarium garden with granite niches was designed and built between two of the new stand-alone columbarium buildings to tie them both together as well as provide alternatively priced inventory. While the outside niches are selling at a notably slower rate, there has been great interest to date in the Hall of the Olympians niches, many of which were sold in the construction stage supported by photorealistic architectural renderings provided by CMC.



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beautify; they'll show photographs or have personal mementoes – whatever it is that is indicative of that person, their passions and the memories they have of them.”

The building itself was fairly complicated to work with, as there were many separate rooms and hallways to plan. While the first phase added approximately 1300 niches, the final project will see over 5300. CMC paid precise attention to the architectural features of the baroque and neoclassical design of the original structure, which was designed by notable architect Bernard J.S. Cahill. As a result, the new Hall of the Olympians boasts beautiful trim-work, stained glass windows and a wall-mounted cascading fountain. Further ambience is created by soft music playing in the background. However, before the niches were installed, the building was

According to Lintz, glass-front niche columbaria are gaining in popularity by families who choose cremation and are looking for ways to celebrate and personalize the life of their loved ones. “People want to be remembered and memorialized and the glass-front niche is a beautiful medium because it allows families to have an enclosed and protected space to visit, reflect and pay tribute. These columbaria can be quite inspirational as many families do wonderful things to

merely a shell with a series of empty linear walls so CMC used their distinctive marble-lined curved glass-fronts to enhance the uniqueness and visual appeal.

“CMC was the company that basically revolutionized the glass-front niche system by creating the first curved glass niches. These are being incorporated into a lot of our projects because they create an interesting element and break the rectilinear feel of standard columbaria and mausoleums,”

An advertisement for Sunset Memorial & Stone Ltd. The background is a photograph of a columbarium building with a fountain in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image.

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says Lintz. “In this particular project, infusing a rounded element was critical, so creating these feature niches and estate spaces were of importance to the management team who oversaw the project, and the response has been overwhelming so far.”

In addition to individual niches, the design also incorporated an assortment of companion niches as well as family estate niches that can hold multiple cremated remains and provide for ample opportunities to personalize and adorn. Many of these are marble lined and some are located on exclusive island units in the centre of the room adding a unique design and rich atmosphere. All niches also have LED lights creating a soft warm glow with a beautiful bronze effect as well as tastefully-appointed bronze flower vases provided by CMC’s new and up-and-coming Bronze Division.

The end result is that the Hall of the Olympians is being heralded as quite possibly the most innovative glass-front niche project on the market today.

“Projects like (this) are really going to change the way families are not only handled but how they are cared for with cremation services,” says Hunsaker. “This project that we’ve worked on in tandem with Carrier (CMC) is certainly going to be not only on the forefront of the whole industry, but really thought-provoking in nature. I cannot say enough about the quality and expertise of what CMC built with us, and already there is significant performance, financial suc-

**The end result is that the Hall of the Olympians is being heralded as quite possibly the most innovative glass-front niche project on the market today.**

cess and the San Francisco community at large is responding to this project in such a favourable way that it’s exceeded expectations.”

Lintz concludes, “This project is completely different; there’s conceivably never been a glass-front niche columbarium that’s been planned to this level of detail and located in such an iconic locale. And if you walk around any of CMC’s projects, you are going to see nothing short of projects that are remarkable but I think the experience of the Neptune Society Columbarium really sets the bar to the highest level. When you step into each of the rooms, it is so meticulously planned and the quality of finish-out results in an environment that is one-of-a-kind and highly introspective, making it quite possibly the finest glass-front niche columbarium in North America today.” **N**

## CMC 1/2