




Wetwall™
— A WILSONART COMPANY —

WETWALL CASE STUDY

Flagler College Residence Hall Bathrooms | St. Augustine, FL

Wetwall™ Panel Systems Are the Ideal Solution for
Meeting the Needs of 21st Century Students



Just by looking at Ponce Hall, you know it has a story to tell. With its terracotta reliefs and coquina stone arches, the stately Spanish Renaissance Revival masterpiece in St. Augustine, FL, is a U.S. National Historic Landmark and on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. But the building's true charm reveals itself through the vignettes in its historical narrative.





FLAGLER COLLEGE RESIDENCE HALL

PROJECT TYPE

Multi-Family Housing Complex

LOCATION

Flagler College
St. Augustine, FL
flagler.edu

ARCHITECT & INTERIOR DESIGNER

Lane Architecture, PA
Jacksonville, FL
lanearch.com

INSTALLER

A. D. Davis Construction Corp.
St. Augustine, FL
addavis.com

PRODUCTS

Wetwall™ in Tahiti Sands

The Ponce, as it is colloquially known, began its life in 1888 as the Hotel Ponce de Leon — the first of many luxury hotels along Florida's east coast opened by oil magnate Henry M. Flagler. It was designed by the Carrère & Hastings architecture firm which shaped much of America's early architecture. It was one of the country's first buildings wired for electricity from the onset and Thomas Edison installed its original generators. An art colony occupied the hotel in the early 20th Century, and later, during WWII, a Coast Guard training center.

In 1968, Flagler College was founded in St. Augustine, and the Hotel Ponce de Leon soon became Ponce Hall — the school's administrative and residential centerpiece that still stands as its marquee architectural structure today.

Ponce Hall serves as a residence hall that currently houses dozens of Flagler students in its east and west wings during the spring and fall semesters. A renovation of the building, launched in 2022, is underway with the east wing completed in 2023 and the west wing

being completed in 2025. The primary goal of the project is to modernize the building's performance to meet the demands of 21st century college students and staff, all while maintaining The Ponce's architectural charm.

This is where the revolutionary Wetwall™ Water Proof Wall Panel System factors in.

The spaces that were once hotel guest rooms have made way for rooms that house students during academic semesters. The original building, however, was not designed with bathrooms or showers in each suite, and part of the college's objective with the modernization effort was to change that to improve the student resident experience.

Roughly 100 bathrooms with showers were installed in the east wing, with another 100 coming with the west wing upgrade. Wetwall panels have become a key material in the renovation — not just for their aesthetic fit and durable performance, but also because their ease of handling and installation proved instrumental for the project's tight timelines.



REVIVING A MASTERPIECE

Over the last 130-plus years, The Ponce has been augmented, adapted, and transformed to suit its evolving uses. Today, its interior is still emblazoned with the intricate murals, Tiffany stained glass windows, and ornate wood detailing of its past.

The latest renovation ushers in its most significant performance upgrades to date. In addition to adding bathrooms to all residences, antiquated electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems were updated. However, the first phase of the renovation — the east wing — did not come without its fair share of challenges.

First, was that it started rather suddenly. And progressed quickly.

“We had a pipe break that made this the perfect opportunity to turn a crisis into a gift,” said Laura Stevenson, Flagler College Chief of Staff and Assistant to the President.

“We had been looking toward a modernization project for the future, but once we saw the damage that was caused by the pipe bursting, it made it obvious that this was the time to undertake a thorough renovation and restoration of The Ponce.”

There’s no great time for plumbing lines to burst, but they somehow manage to find especially inopportune times to do so. In the case of The Ponce, it occurred just before students were to begin moving in for the Fall 2022 semester, so the east wing could not be occupied. That meant Lane Architecture and A. D. Davis Construction Corp., who were responsible for the design and construction, had to work quickly.

“We had less than a year to design, build and move all the furniture in before students returned for the 2023-24 academic year,” said Lane Architecture Michael Blake, the project architect.



“The project started in October 2022 and our charge was to have it ready to occupy by the following August.”

The Ponce also presented a logistical challenge to overcome in meeting the project timeline: delivering and staging products for installation.

The east side of the building offers a very small lay down area, which meant only one truck at a time could deliver materials. And the limited interior space meant once inside, materials needed to be staged almost immediately.

“What we wound up doing,” said Reese Davis Vice President of A. D. Davis

① PREP

Prepare existing wall surfaces and remove rough plumbing and fitting.

② DRY FIT

Perform a rough dry fit for each panel, mark seam locations and mark drill plumbing locations.

③ ADHERE

Apply adhesive to the panel and work from back wall panels to wing panels to finishing and trim if needed.

④ SEAL

Apply the color-matched sealant to all corners, seams between panels, and gaps between top and bottom panels.

For more detailed instructions, see our Wetwall Installation Guidelines.

Construction Corp, “is bring in one floor of material at a time. It was a real coordination effort between us as the GC and all of our subcontractors.”

Fortunately, Wetwall is durable enough to withstand the high-touch transport and staging — and lightweight and seamless enough to keep installation moving at a speedy pace.

“With a project like this, we couldn’t have gone over on our schedule because students were moving in,” explained Davis. “The same installers who were installing the Wetwall were also doing trim carpentry for us. Wetwall was so fast and easy for them to install that we would basically do a floor of showers a week, which gave them so much more time to do some of the intricate trim work. That was huge.”

RUGGED TIMELESSNESS

Beyond the timeline was a different kind of test of time: timelessness. Wetwall needed to aesthetically respect the

Ponce’s architectural past while offering the robustness and ease of maintenance to withstand high use into the future.

“It needed to be able to stand up to the wear and tear of an 18-year-old living away from home for the first time,” noted Stevenson, “and our maintenance staff needed something that’s easy to manage for scheduled cleanings.”

Sumner Coddington of Lane Architecture was the project’s interior designer, and she was responsible for all the material selection.

“My first inclination was to use a large format tile,” she said. “But we didn’t have the manpower, or the time to install all that tile in a hundred showers in a few months.”

Wetwall was fast to install, but it also met the college’s most important performance need: as few grout lines as possible for easier cleaning.

“If the showers are not taken care of regularly, then all of a sudden we have all this grout to scrub, it just doesn’t lead to a really great environment in terms of our ability to access it and clean it appropriately,” explained Stevenson. “Wetwall met that need.”

A LOOK FOR THE AGES

From an aesthetic perspective, renovating a National Historic Landmark — especially one with the design cachet of The Ponce — can be intimidating.

“What works in a traditional residence hall is not going to work in The Ponce,” said Stevenson. “It can’t just be a plastic wall covering or something like that. We’ve got the light wood rail, crown molding, beautiful hardwood doors — all these architectural elements that are a little bit more elevated than what you would have in your traditional residence hall.”

“We kind of wanted to be neutral or at least not attention grabbing,” said Coddington. “Wetwall was really great because there are a lot of patterns and colors to choose from, and for the most part, they are very neutral.”

She selected Wetwall’s Tahiti Sands finish. The neutral tones of the panels create an off-white limestone texture with an earthy flair that feels at home amid the building’s abundance of textured wood and stone.

BRINGING THE PAST FORWARD

The restoration and modernization of Ponce Hall, integrating historical charm with 21st-century functionality, culminates a narrative woven through



over a century of architectural and educational evolution. The renovation project was not only a preservation effort but also a significant upgrade to meet the current and future needs of Flagler College students.

The strategic use of Wetwall panels played a pivotal role in this transformation. With their durability and ease of installation, these panels were critical in meeting the project's tight timelines and stringent quality and aesthetic needs.

“Wetwall,” said Coddington, “was just seamless in many ways.”

Wetwall® Features & Benefits



PATENTED WATERPROOF PANEL SYSTEM

Installs seamlessly with customizable tongue and-groove panels & color-matched sealant.



DARING DESIGNS

Looks like marble, stone or wood—including abstract patterns—and weighs a lot less.



SCRATCH- AND SCUFF-RESISTANT AEON™ TECHNOLOGY

Does double duty: works hard in busy bathrooms & looks luxe longer.



ANTIMICROBIAL PROTECTION

Inhibits the growth of bacteria, mold and mildew, cleans easily and won't wash off.



SPEEDY INSTALLATION & DELIVERY

In hand in 2 weeks, in the bathroom in 2.5 hours. Plus, exceptional, reliable service.



Learn how Wetwall can transform your commercial project
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