

SPRING 2023

# 093000 CONTRACTOR

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FOUR-FLOOR LAW FIRM BUILDOUT--CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

## FEATURED INSIDE

Post-Pandemic Tile and Styles

IMTEF and IMI Benefits for Women and Families

Pedestal-Supported Tile Assemblies



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Michael Kriss  
Krisstone LLC  
TCAA President

## THE ROAD WE CHOSE

**H**ello my fellow TCAA members.

In this Spring 2023 issue of our magazine, I have decided to write about positive, optimistic, and encouraging developments in our industry because, after all, it is spring!

Bidding is still very strong despite the current light workload, which leads me to believe that a full recovery of the construction industry is not far away. Our finish trade is always a reliable indicator of the current state of construction. I would say that we are at least one to one and a half years behind, and I hope that the current downturn will not last very long.

There is a never-ending stream of new tile products coming to the market, as well as new setting materials, which will make our industry better and more attractive to end users. Tiles are getting bigger and bigger, changing their names to panels, and setting materials are becoming lighter and lighter, making them easier to handle and work with.

Over 35 years ago, when I started in this business, we had mosaic tiles of 1" x 1" or 2"

x 2", ceramic tiles of 4-1/4" x 4-1/4" or 6" x 6", and natural stone tiles of 12" x 12" in maybe ten different colors at most. Look at us now! We are getting better and better at handling and installing large-format tiles, as well as porcelain panels of different sizes and thicknesses. Who would have thought that we would be using modern-day tile cutters to cut 3/8" thick porcelain tiles instead of wet-saws, and that cutting would be so much better and faster? Who would have thought that those tile cutters would be 8' 0" long and work better than the bridge saw in the shop environment, after all, you cannot bring a bridge saw to the job site! I cannot wait to see what the future will bring us.

I admit that being in the finish trades is not always rosy and easy. We are the last ones on the job, and the first ones to be blamed for delays. We are always "not fast enough" and "don't have enough manpower," but we still get the job done, and our product is the one that everybody is looking at, not what is hidden behind it.

During our association meetings, we all get together and complain about various aspects of our business: how hard it is to deal with general contractors and architects, how hard it is to compete against non-union contractors, and how hard it is to get materials on time. But after those meetings, we return to our offices and continue doing the work we love, walking the road we chose! I am so glad I chose this industry and feel very proud to show my grandkids the work I have done. And maybe, just maybe, after I am long gone, they will take their grandkids to show them the work their great-grandfather did.

On another note, I refuse to lose hope of celebrating the end of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and believe in Ukraine's Victory. Thank you and Glory to Ukraine! 🇺🇦



## THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'....

Credit: Freepik.com



**O**f course, any self-respecting baby boomer would recognize this title and lyric from the song written and sung by Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” It was also the theme of my 1971 senior yearbook. All of us at 18, graduating from high school, looked out at the world with great anticipation, excitement, hope, optimism, and maybe, just maybe, a little trepidation. But overall, it just seemed like we could do anything! So I, like many others, went off to further my education in some form or fashion. For me, it was an interest in civil engineering, just like my father.

Civil engineering has many facets, from transportation to environmental, to structural to construction. I was able to incorporate cooperative educational work experiences with my academic studies. I first worked in road construction and structural design. But in the spring of 1975, I went to work for Cleveland Marble Mosaic Co., and guess what? I have been in the tile and stone

business ever since! In four short years, my unlimited horizons had pretty much settled on a career and craft that has been part of mankind for most of the history of human civilization. Ah, so much for tackling the whole world and changing it, you might say? But here is the crazy thing: my career and this craft have done nothing but change... constantly.

When I started my career, floors were 1x1 and 2x2 mosaics; walls were 4 1/4 glazed tiles; and a large format tile was a 6x6 quarry tile. Today, floor tiles start at 12”x 24,” the same for walls, and a large format tile can be 5’x 10’. Now that’s change! I almost have to fall back to my chemistry courses in college just to understand what all of the myriad types of setting and grouting products are and what their performance capabilities are.

Installation practices have also evolved. If a tile setter tells you on the job, “Yeah, but this is the way we have always installed it,” it’s time for that installer to address his/her skills, or it’s time for you, as a contractor, to find a new employee. That’s why programs such as the skills updates taught and tested through local IUBAC training centers and as found in the Advanced Certifications for Tile Installers (ACT) are so important.

Probably the biggest changes have come in communications. I use the plural because

the type and methods of communicating are almost limitless now. If I walked into a contractor's office and asked to do a quantity takeoff in their plan room from a set of paper plans, the receptionist (if there is one) would wonder what planet I was from. Our foremen aren't even allowed on a job site without a computer tablet. Classroom education for apprentices is, more and more, being conducted remotely and at times and places more convenient to their lives' schedules. And while communications have seen great advancements in detail, speed, and certainly quantity, it is human interactions that are, to my mind, being lost or given much less importance than they should.

It is the one-on-one direct interaction between two human beings that can answer questions and concerns most efficiently and directly, without misunderstandings and a lot less rancor. Yes, the times they

are a-changin', but it is through human conversation and the applied skills of artisans that ideas of design and function evolve from concepts into beautifully installed ceramic tile and stone works of art. And these creations have truly stood the test of time. ■■

John Trendell  
*TCAA Labor Committee Chair  
 Trendell Consulting LLC*

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**Laura Grilli**  
Director of Product Design,  
Daltile

# A Post-Pandemic World Emerges in Tile and Styles

**A**s any good interior designer knows, the secret to a well-appointed home is to select materials that reflect your personality, dreams, and motivations. A key to energizing each new day is filling the environments in which we live, work, and play with the colors and styles that bring us the most joy. Also as more and more individuals work from home and the place of residence takes on multiple purposes, the current trends in tile reflect the growing movement toward homes that spark inspiration, motivation, with comfort and personal style.

“Style and design surround us — impacting how we feel, the personality of a room, or the energy of a space,” said Laura Grilli, director of product design for Daltile. “As a fashion-driven brand, Daltile is an innovator of hotly-anticipated trends in interior design, color, and tile. The Daltile Trend Report 2023 serves as a guide to help designers, architects, contractors, and homeowners create fresh, breathtaking spaces.”

In the Daltile 2023 Trend Report, a post-pandemic mood emerges with bold statements, like elevate, dream, and seize the day, with an understanding of the impact

of luxury and tender living.

## Elevate Life and Experience Playful Joy

Positivity has become one of the most effective antidotes to counteract the pessimism of the last two years and the trend toward elevating one's life embodies a bold positivity, celebrating with mood-boosting colors; tactile fabrics; bold patterns;



Daltile, Panoramic Sapphire Status

oversized proportions; visuals that are playful, quirky, silly; and objects embedded with positive memories.

Colors in this trend embody the desire for fun, surprise, humor, and engagement by unleashing vibrant hues such as bright oranges, yellows, greens, blues, and fuchsia. These bright colors are partnering with psychedelic patterns and round shapes, bringing back the vibrant moods of the 60s and 70s. Such avant-basic design broadcasts loud retro vibes through unconventional shapes (think curvy, wavy, elliptical), bold

geometric forms, sculptural silhouettes, and magic eye prints. The energy and optimism of the 80s is also back via the new maximalist aesthetic blending bold patterns, oversized proportions, multicolor effects, color blocks, bouclé and velvet fabrics, floral motifs, and the iconic Barbiecore.

### **Dreamscape, a Digital Oasis**

This new trend is influenced by the desire to escape the demands, disappointments, and pressures of the physical world while finding relaxation, fulfillment, and, many times, a new identity in the digital world.



Daltile, Stencil





Daltile, Miramo

The rise of gaming, virtual reality, “phygital” interactions, and the metaverse has developed a familiarity with digital visuals that have, over time, created an actual affinity for those types of aesthetics, because they can bring a sense of calm and escape.

As with all trends, color is the foundation of interior design, falling under this umbrella.

Blues, purples, greens, metallics, and black make up the dreamscape/digital oasis palette. Mixed in are geometric shapes, ethereal lighting, and flowing movements. Metallic touches, slick finishes, and precision designs are hallmarks of this interior design style that generously embraces the stereotypical look of science fiction and futuristic ambience.

### Seize the Day, Live for the Present

The mindset of living in the moment while making space for nostalgia and comforting memories bridges impulse with quality time. It is about rediscovering traditional craftsmanship techniques and materials.

A palette of earthy colors, focused on beiges, creams, light browns, and a fabulous terracotta brings together finishes and materials that celebrate the beauty of desert dry touch and raw materials such as crude clay but with attention to comfort. There is also an emphasis on cords like macramé, glazed tiles made from natural materials such as volcanic lava, and plenty of handcraft finishing in this look. Forms and shapes draw



Daltile, Quartetto

inspiration from modern Mediterranean and southwestern boho styles that give life to tactile and comforting interiors by combining organic shapes, irregular and imperfect forms, and plenty of arches. Patterns also draw inspiration from dry and cracked earth and uneven natural surfaces.

### **Essential Luxury-Newly Defined Elegance**

The notion of luxury has been changing, refreshing the traditional indicators of splendor, and today it is about enjoying moments of indulgence in a new way — blending beauty with heritage and pop culture, crafts with high-end technology and sustainability, and multicultural inspiration with art deco and gothic references.

This new luxury combines finishes and

materials that celebrate uniqueness, giving life to lavish and multi-ethnic spaces, blending precious stones, colorful marbles, and onyx with velvet, lacquered wood, and golden finishes. Forms and shapes draw inspiration mainly from the design of ancient civilizations, while colors communicate richness and sophistication. This color scheme explores dark shades and includes hues from gothic style, black marble, precious red and green stones, and dark brown from prestigious wood. As for patterns, this emerging style focuses on exotic marble looks blended with animal print and tribal themes to create lavish and cozy interiors.

### **Tender Living with Well-Being for All**

Care and compassion find their voice



through a mindset that reclaims care to the fullest: care for self, others, and the planet. This move toward the greater good fosters well-being, cocooning, inclusivity, and regeneration — expressing itself through biophilic design, multisensorial interaction, natural colors, sustainable practices, the beauty of imperfection, and neutral Scandinavian style.

This color scheme supports physical health and stimulates mindfulness. Its palette includes variations of off-white, smooth grays and beiges, colors inspired by nature's rare

beauty and slow crafts: green from deep forest to sage tones, sky and darker blues, burnet brown (think eggshells). Its finishes and materials celebrate nature and senses through organic and wavy shapes combined with fluted surfaces. This aesthetic also embraces imperfection, highlighting untreated surfaces such as exposed cement, kintsugi finishing, and texturized ceramics. Interiors combine Scandinavian minimalism with biophilic design — creating an organic modern style. A key hallmark of this style is connecting with nature, both indoors and outdoors. ■



Daltile, Kintsugi

# New IMTEF and IMI Benefits Support Women and Families

**I**n 2022, the International Masonry Training and Education Foundation (IMTEF) was pleased to announce a paid maternity disability benefit to support pregnant women craftworkers and new mothers represented by the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC).

The maternity benefit allows pregnant BAC craftworkers up to a total of 26 weeks of disability benefit for weeks they are unable to work at the trade because of their pregnancy and after delivery. Significantly, the benefit offers a guaranteed \$600 a week, the equivalent of \$15 an hour for a 40-hour workweek. Under the plan, women will receive six weeks of benefits after a traditional delivery, eight weeks following a c-section, and up to 20 weeks pre-delivery if they are medically unable to work.

Over the past several years, a record number of women have worked in the trades, signifying substantial growth despite the pandemic. Yet, they represent a small fraction of the overall construction industry. As the union masonry and tile industry continues to build a younger, more diverse

workforce, recruiting and retaining more women is key. For many tradeswomen, childcare access and pregnancy accommodations are essential in supporting their career growth, according to findings from a recent survey on tradeswomen retention and advancement conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). In fact, of respondents with children who considered leaving the trades, 70% said difficulty finding childcare, and 63% said lack of pregnancy accommodations, were important factors in their decision-making.

In order to be eligible for the benefit, participants must perform at least 1,000 of "Covered Employment" under a Collective Bargaining Agreement or Other Written Agreement, for which contributions must be paid to the International Masonry Institute (IMI) or to IMTEF. There is no additional contribution required from employers or BAC Administrative District Councils or Local Unions provided that this condition is met.

The post-birth benefit must be used without interruption in the weeks immediately





# MATERNITY BENEFIT

## BENEFIT



\$600 a week for up to 6 weeks immediately following a traditional delivery, or up to 8 weeks following a c-section.



\$600 per week if you are certified by your physician to be unable to work due to a pregnancy-related physical illness or condition (no sooner than your 4th month of pregnancy).



Your total combined benefit for pre- and post-delivery periods is capped at 26 weeks.



# IMTEF

## ELIGIBILITY

*To be eligible, you must:*



Be a BAC craftworker in the U.S.



Have performed at least 1,000 hours of “Covered Employment” for which required contributions have been paid within the 12 months immediately preceding the onset of your pregnancy-related disability or the birth of your child(ren).



1-866-975-4091

following childbirth. The pre-delivery disability benefit may also be used on an intermittent basis for weeks a participant is disabled if the medical certification supports such use. If the participant returns to employment for two weeks or more between

those weeks of disability, new medical certification will be required. The benefit may not be used on a part-time basis. The plan is also not available for routine prenatal care. The IMTEF Disability Benefit is available pre-delivery only if a participant's

doctor certifies that she is unable to work at the trade due to a pregnancy-related physical illness or condition.

To participate in the IMTEF Maternity Disability Benefit, participants should submit a Benefit Request Form as soon as possible, but no later than ninety (90) days following a qualified healthcare provider's determination that she is unable to continue working at the trade due to a physical limitation resulting from her pregnancy or following the delivery of her child(ren). Forms can be obtained and filed at [www.amalgamatedbenefits.com/AEBA/IMTEF](http://www.amalgamatedbenefits.com/AEBA/IMTEF) or by calling the Amalgamated Employee Benefits Administrators (AEBA) Disability Benefits Claim Department at 1-866-975-4091.

Beyond maternity care, an additional benefit to help working parents meet their childcare needs is offered by IMI, which

offers a 10% childcare discount on weekly tuition at KinderCare Education's 1,700 centers. IMI and IMTEF's new benefits build on other important programs in which BAC and signatory contractors participate – focused on recruiting and retaining underserved communities, including women, into our workforce. IMI and IMTEF welcome feedback on these programs, and other ways in which our organizations can collaborate to ensure an inclusive and vibrant masonry and tile community.

For more information, including frequently asked questions about eligibility and special circumstances, visit [www.amalgamatedbenefits.com](http://www.amalgamatedbenefits.com).

*Information provided by the International Masonry Training and Education Foundation (IMTEF).* ■



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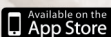


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Lobby reception: Florim Direx Classico 12x24.

## Trostrud Mosaic & Tile Co., Inc.

• Chicago, Illinois

### Award-Winning Project

**A** four-floor buildout in a new Chicago high-rise is giving a global and distinguished law firm a clean, modern look. With project areas including a reception floor, conference rooms, a café, and partner offices, the tile work was awarded to Trostrud Mosaic & Tile Co., Inc. (Trostrud) and was completed in December 2022.

### Project Breakdown

Of the four floors, three were typical floors consisting of 12" x 24" tile on the elevator lobby floors and Florim-gauged porcelain panels on the elevator lobby walls. One ADA-compliant restroom on each floor and a large tile backsplash in the coffee pantry were included in the project, as well as a custom wall mural in the café. However, the greatest challenges proved to be the reception and conference floors of 11,000 square feet of 12" x 24" floor tile and

approximately eighty 63" x 126" gauged porcelain tile panels.

### Challenges and Solutions

In a scope review with the general contractor, Clune Construction (Clune VP and Project Manager Rachel Munkvold and VP and Superintendent Mary Shea), and the architect, Gensler (Sue Harrington and Erin Sherman), the superintendent requested that Trostrud's project foreman, Chris Crague, lay out all the floor tile on the reception conference floor.

"I was shocked to learn that they wanted this to begin the following week because at that point, the space was completely empty, lacking any layout of any kind," says Brad Trostrud, president of Trostrud Mosaic & Tile Co., Inc. "It was then that I learned the entire floor would be built to the grid of the floor tile. In my 38 years of





Reception feature wall: Rexi I Classico thin GPT panels.

experience, I have never encountered a similar situation.” The intent was to place walls and glass tracks in the floor tile grid so everything aligned. Crague and his finisher laid out the entire 11,000 square feet of floor tile while remembering to add the required movement joints.

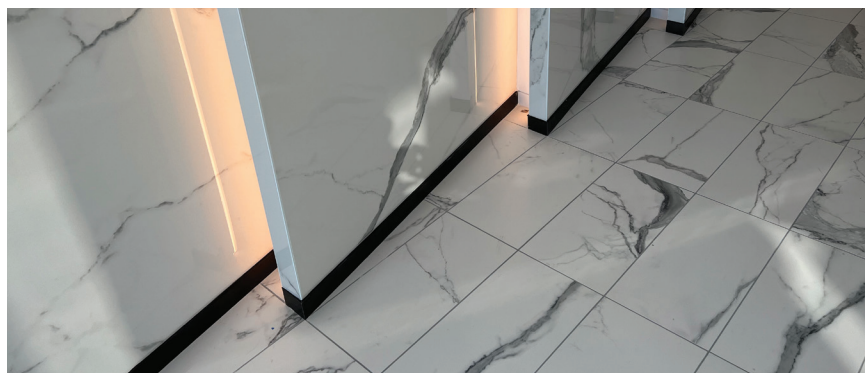
During the floor layout, Trostrud was asked to assist another subcontractor who was tasked with pouring the self-leveling compound. They intended to make a substrate that would meet the floor flatness requirements for tile installation. However, it soon became apparent that there were better solutions than the self-leveler for this project, as the existing slab had variances that exceeded three inches. A few weeks later, they received a call and were asked to prep their own subfloors.

“We mobilized a few days later to begin the prep work,” explains Brad. “Chris [Crague] worked closely with the millwork contractor to determine where the floors needed to be level versus where we could tip or bend

the substrate on a tile joint to keep the floor as close to the existing slab as possible. Our preferred patch compound is Mapei’s Planipatch. We created tracks with the patch, connecting laser set spots to form a grid and filling in the tracks with the patch. This ensured we achieved the flattest floor possible.”



Elevator lobby to reception area.



Top left: Artica custom manual at cafe'. Top right: Trostrud crew: Ozzie Terrazas, Paul Bray, Jason Deel, Tony Reiter, Tom Macke, and Chris Crague. Bottom: Detail of thin GPT panels, reception feature wall at floor.

Trostrud used 941 25-pound bags of patch and 197 gallons of Planipatch Plus. Upon completion of the leveling and installation, the team was happily informed that the law firm, partners, and the architect said that the tile installation was one of the finest and flattest they had ever seen.

Another big concern for Trostrud was the panels on the feature wall behind the reception desk and the elevator lobby walls. The panel walls were angled out from the walls vertically. The panels needed would be 12 feet in height and approximately five feet/six inches in width. The solution was to install them horizontally, using three panels per wall surface.

“The architect had drawn the panel stopping with a mitered edge, then returning approximately four inches with a stop. We

decided to use a Schluter FINEC edging profile at the miter for protection and a Schluter Jolly to make the stop,” says Brad. Gensler chose the matte white finish in both locations. Behind the stop was LED lighting running up the wall, across the ceiling, and down the matching panel side.

“This was the first time we would be cutting so many mitered edges on a 6 mm-panel surface,” Brad continues. “We had purchased a Sigma miter box and had done some mitering with mixed results. I knew that there must be a diamond blade designed for this application and gave a call to the ‘god of gauged porcelain panels’, none other than Crossville Ceramics’ Noah Chitty.” Chitty directed Brad to John Roberts, a tile tool manufacturer’s rep, who advised that the Montolit Red Lines SQUADRO blade would improve the quality



Conference room corridors.

and ease of mitering, advice that proved to be a mitering game changer. With the new blade in hand, Jason Deel, Trostrud's panel expert, began the panel installation.

Finally, in the café, Artica designed a "crashing wave" mosaic mural. The Gensler team requested a full dry lay of the mosaic mural. Gensler and the project manager reviewed the mural and decided to perform some impromptu surgery on the design. Chris Crague cut, snipped, and replaced some colors until the design team was satisfied.

"Overall, it was a great team that contributed to this project. The architect, contractor, managers, and subcontractors worked with a team mentality to find the best path for the project. When problems arise, as they always do, teamwork is how we can make it work. This kind of partnership produced an incredible buildout that we can all be

proud to have been part of."

*Trostrud Mosaic and Tile Co., Inc. was founded in 1929 and has been the recipient of several awards, most notably the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craft Workers Craft Award for Best Mosaic in 2015 and Best Tile Project in 2008. It received both TCAA's 1st Place Commercial Project award and achieved Trowel of Excellence certification in 2012. The project mentioned in this article received the NTCA's Five-Star Project award. Trostrud employs union trade installers and its top priority is to provide the best tile installations possible. ■*





By Scott Conwell, **FAIA, FCSI, CDT, LEED AP**  
Director of Industry Development  
International Masonry Institute

# PEDESTAL-SUPPORTED TILE ASSEMBLIES

**T**he outdoor living market has grown substantially in recent years, and the tile industry has benefited from this trend with the increased demand for conventional adhered tile in outdoor spaces. But another type of tile assembly, one that requires no mortar, is also gaining popularity: pedestal-supported porcelain tile pavers.

Historically, elevated roof pavers on exterior plazas and roof decks have been installed by the roofing or landscaping trades since these were considered primarily functional and utilitarian spaces. Now that we have a wider variety of architectural paving units available, including porcelain tile, outdoor spaces have become signature design features in not only single-family homes but also multifamily, hotel, and office building amenity space.

Unfortunately, the tile industry has been slow to adapt to the growing market of pedestal-supported porcelain tile assemblies, but as opportunities continue to grow, tile contractors are beginning to consider these types of projects. A few tile contractors, but not enough, have even embraced this work as a niche of their own. This article will cover the basics of pedestal-supported tile, including some of the inherent advantages as well as some cautions to be aware of.

## What is a pedestal-supported tile assembly?

In a pedestal-supported assembly, the tiles, often 24 in. x 24 in. x 2 cm porcelain, are elevated from the roof deck and supported by a system of pedestals. The pedestals are typically made of durable plastic material supporting the tiles between 1/2 in. and 18 in. above the finish roof. The pedestals bear on the roof which is typically sloped to drain. They are adjustable in height and typically have a leveling mechanism resulting in a flat and level tile surface. Joints between the tiles are left open so water can reach the roof drains below.

In addition to the tiles and the pedestals themselves, there are other components to the assemblies which vary by manufacturer. Most systems have alignment spacers or lugs, proprietary shims, optional trays that reside under the tile to guard against breakage from impact loads, optional mechanical anchors, and edge restraints to resist wind uplift. Some systems have couplers for achieving greater heights. There is typically a bearing pad or slip sheet over the roof membrane which the pedestal bears on. Because of the variety of proprietary systems on the market, it can be challenging for a tile contractor and their installers to become efficient in their installation.



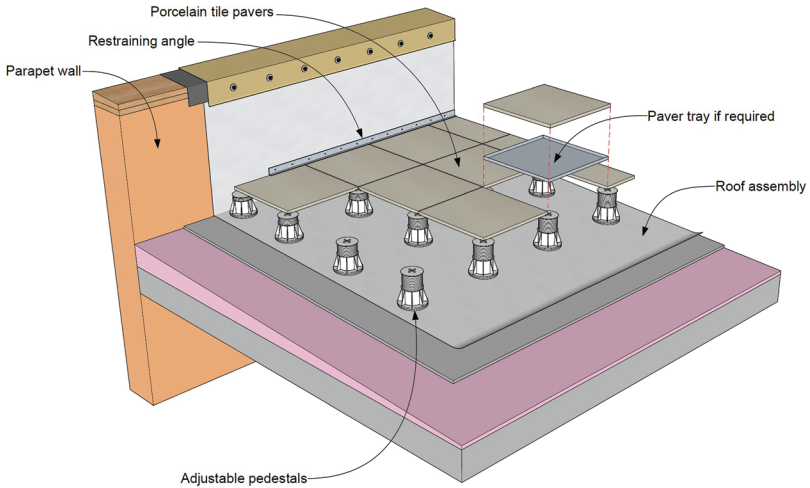


Figure 1. Pedestal supported porcelain pavers can transform rooftops to desirable outdoor amenity space.

### What are some benefits of this type of assembly?

Because the tiles are dry-laid onto the pedestals, this type of assembly does not use mortar of any kind. This translates to simplified and quick production, since there is no cure time, often resulting in substantial cost savings relative to a traditional mud bed or direct adhered application. No mortar also means no chance for efflorescence, the salts that sometimes leach from within the cementitious materials and become visible on the tile's surface.

The joints between the tiles don't require grouting; they are left open to allow storm water to reach the roof drains below. All the roof's slope is achieved below the tile assembly, precluding the need to split tiles to form contours for the rainwater runoff. The level surface of the finish tile assembly is an asset, making the outdoor space more usable.

### Who is responsible for design and installation

Because safety is of paramount concern, the

design professional (architect or engineer of record) is responsible for the design and the selection of the pedestal system. They analyze site-specific factors including local codes, deck elevation, project location, occupancy risk category, and deck design.

Wind loads are perhaps the most important design consideration when selecting a particular pedestal system. The design professional should do a wind analysis using the Ultimate Strength Design (USD) method described in ASCE 7, Minimum Design Loads and Associated Criteria for Buildings and Other Structures published by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Wind speed is just one of many variables in calculating wind pressure. Positive pressure signifies force pushing into an area, and negative pressure refers to force pulling on an area. Rooftops are subject to both negative uplift pressures and positive compressive pressures. Uplift typically happens near the roof edges,

which is why it is critical to restrain the pedestal-supported tile assembly at the perimeter.

Pedestal manufacturers offer different products complying with different wind load ratings, and only after a complete analysis of wind loads and other site-specific factors should a pedestal system be selected by the design professional. A tile contractor is typically not qualified to make these product selections, nor should they be expected to. The tile contractor is responsible for installation of the assembly in strict accordance with the manufacturer's requirements, including the use of the ancillary components like trays, hold-down clips, perimeter ledgers, and other devices that may be part of the wind-resistance system.

### What are some things to watch out for?

Unlike most conventional tile installation

methods, there are no ANSI, TCNA, or other industry standards for pedestal-supported tile assemblies. Currently we rely on the various manufacturer's instructions for best-practice installation.

Once installed, these assemblies require observation and maintenance. Pedestals may lose adjustment over time causing tiles to rock and create lippage. Manufacturers recommend periodic checks for rocking tiles, and adjusting or shimming as needed. They also recommend replacing broken spacer tabs as needed and making sure the edge restraints stay intact and structurally sound over time. Ideally, an owner should periodically remove pavers and clear any debris that may have accumulated underneath, but due to the weight of the pavers and the complexity of resetting them, this may not be a reasonable expectation. Routine

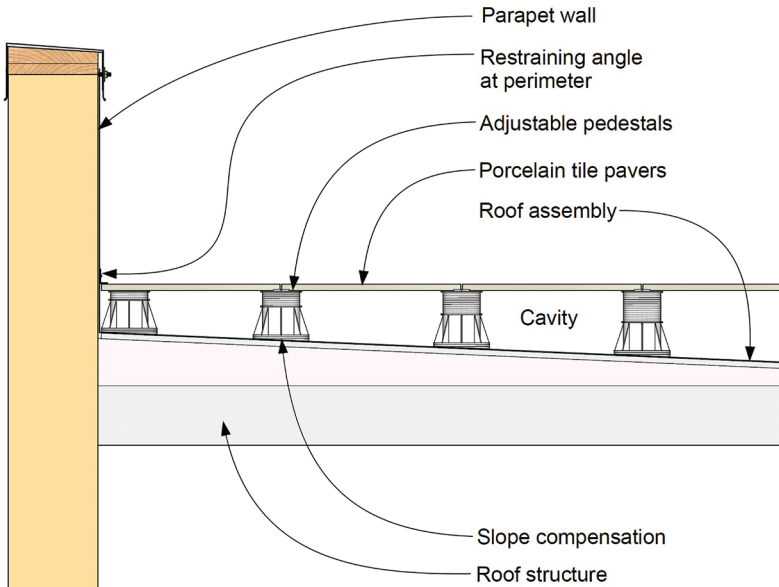
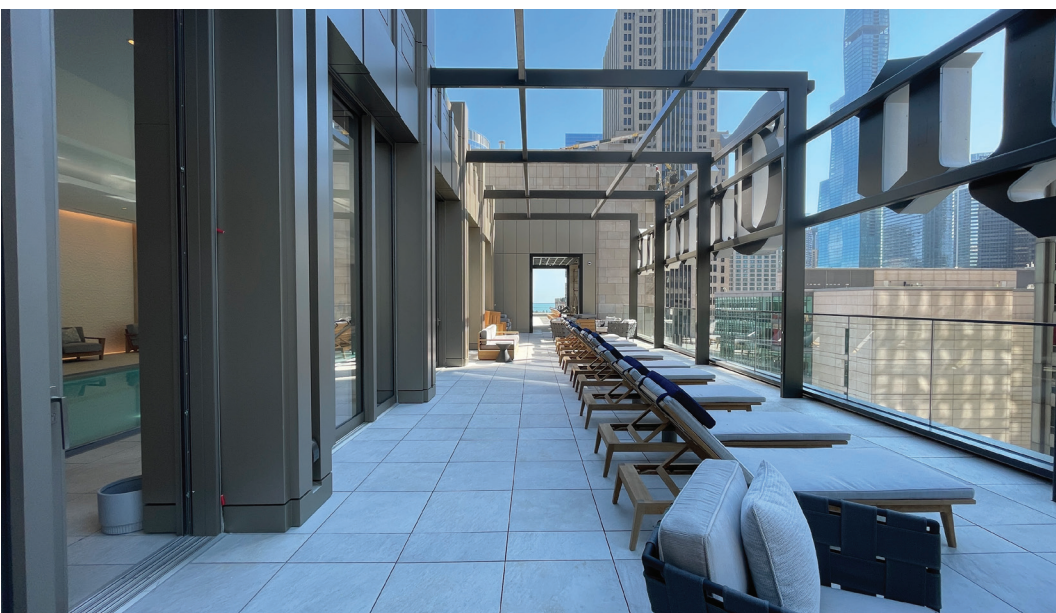


Figure 2. Most pedestal systems are adjustable in height and have a slope compensation mechanism to deliver a finished surface that is functional and level.



Pedestal-supported porcelain tile on a rooftop amenity deck. Credit: Scott Conwell

inspection and maintenance of pedestal-supported porcelain tile pavers may become a service offered by the tile contractor and a source of additional revenue.

### **What's next?**

Despite the current absence of standards and their maintenance requirements, exterior pedestal-supported tile is a market that is rapidly growing. Other trades have performed this work in the past, but this trend could and should change. There have been discussions among TCAA, IMI, IMTEF, TCNA, NTCA, and others working toward an organized approach to claim this work for the tile industry. TCAA member contractors are encouraged to take a close look at educating themselves further, developing relationships with pedestal suppliers, and actively bidding pedestal-supported tile.

*Acknowledgements: the author would like to thank Daniel Wood, Natural Stone and Material Consultant with Lurvey for his insights on the Bison pedestal system; Woody Sanders, DW Sanders Co. for his perspectives; and Tim Christopher of Consultile Consulting for his research paper, Podium Tile Installations published in the 2022 Qualicer papers compendium. ■*

## **COLOR & DESIGN:**

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#### **PART FOUR**

**R**emember? It was 1918 when Rufus Keeler established Southern California Clay Products on E. 52nd Street in Vernon, south of downtown Los Angeles, just up the road from what would soon become the west coast factory for the American Encaustic Tiling Co., which within 12 years would become the largest tile manufacturing company in America. Keeler, however, had an unforeseen opportunity of his own, producing chemical stoneware, vats, and containers to fill a commercial and industrial need locally and to assist the war effort in Europe. At the age of 32, Rufus initially found success making “pots” of this scale; tiles became his major focus by 1920. One can only wonder where this man’s talents originated.



Rufus Bradley Keeler at 17.

Credit: Tile Heritage Foundation Archives. Gift of Philip Keeler.

Over the years from numerous conversations with two of Keeler’s children (now deceased): Rufus Bradley Keeler was born in Bellingham, Washington on October 2, 1885. Some two hundred years



Southern California Clay Products Company, circa 1920. Credit: Tile Heritage Foundation Archives



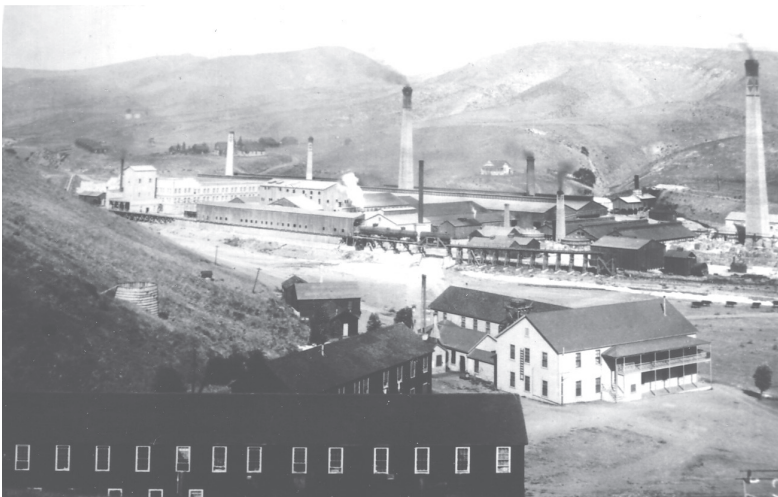
earlier, his ancestors had crossed the Atlantic from England seeking a new life in the “New World,” settling in Connecticut. A branch of the family moved on to Rochester, New York, where eventually Rufus’ father, Bradley Burr Keeler, was born. Forsaking a life in politics (Rufus’ grandfather and namesake had been the mayor of Rochester), young Bradley chose to study architecture and soon moved to the northwest. His wife, Mary Simpson, was from Marysville, California, which may have been the reason the family then moved to California when Rufus was just two years old, eventually settling in San Francisco.

The “San Francisco Directory” in 1904 finds Rufus Keeler (age 19) working as a draftsman for an unspecified company in the city. A year later he was hired by the Carnegie Brick and Pottery Company, a new and rapidly growing establishment at Corral Hollow in the undeveloped hills, 60 miles east of San Francisco where clay deposits were being harvested. Bricks were

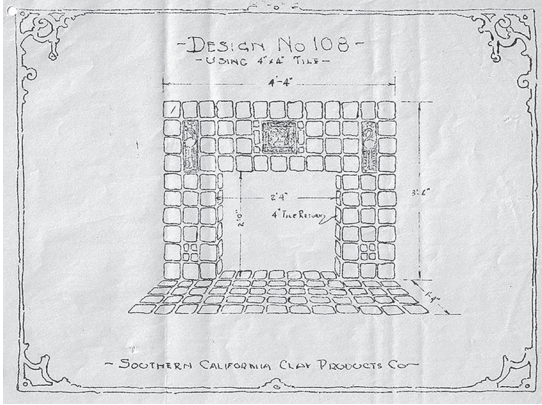
the initial products followed by architectural terra cotta in 1905; Rufus became a glazer and learned the trade. He also fell in love with Mary Ellen Leary, a member of a well-positioned family in the area.

In the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, there was an extraordinary demand for architectural terra cotta to rebuild Bay Area cities, and Gladding, McBean & Co. in Lincoln, California, had been the pioneering force in the production of virtually all clay products since its founding in 1875. Despite his romantic ties in Carnegie, Rufus moved to Lincoln, 100 miles directly north, accepting a job as a draftsman in November of 1909, but he stayed for only two and a half months, returning to Carnegie in February 1910.

One can only surmise that Rufus missed the company of his young girlfriend, but there were opportunities for him at the terra cotta plant as business was booming that spring. However, the financial underpinnings of



Carnegie Brick and Pottery Company, 1909, showing the bunkhouses in the foreground where Rufus Keeler would have lived. The terra cotta plant in the distant far left is where he learned glazes and the terra cotta trade. Credit: *History of Tesla: A California Coal Mining Town* by Dan Mosier.



One of ten original drawings of fireplace mantel designs by Rufus Keeler. Southern California Clay Products Company, Vernon, Calif. (1918-1923). Credit: Tile Heritage Foundation Archives. Gift of Rodger Dunham.

the majority of businesses in Corral Hollow crumbled when the California Safe Deposit and Trust Company closed its doors in 1907. Local businesses were left with no safety net; they had to fend for themselves. Upon his return, Rufus assumed a supervisory position at the plant but only for a year. In March 1911 the skies opened up with waters flooding the entire valley, inundating all structures in its way and basically shutting down the town and all of its properties permanently as there was no money available to borrow and rebuild. Mary Leary and her family moved to nearby Stockton when Carnegie shut down, and at the age of 23 she married Rufus Keeler (age 26) on August 31, 1911.

Following the couple's honeymoon camping in Yosemite National Park, Rufus returned to work at Gladding, McBean on October 16, 1911, this time as a ceramic engineer and designer with a 20% raise in pay. The couple had their first child, Bradley, in 1913, which generated another wage increase, this time to \$160 a month. Rufus remained with Gladding, McBean until September 1916, moving his family to

Southern California where he was employed by Walter Nordhoff to close down operations at California China Products, delivering all of its manufacturing equipment to West Coast Tile in Vernon. With confidence Rufus realized an opportunity was at hand; he opened Southern California Clay Products Company in 1918.

Special thanks to historian Dan Mosier, whose book, *History of Tesla: A California Coal Mining Town*, relates the story in detail of the rise and demise of the Carnegie Brick and Pottery Company, and to tile historian Brian Kaiser, who introduced me to the Keeler family, major sponsors of the Tile Heritage Foundation during its formative years. ■

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