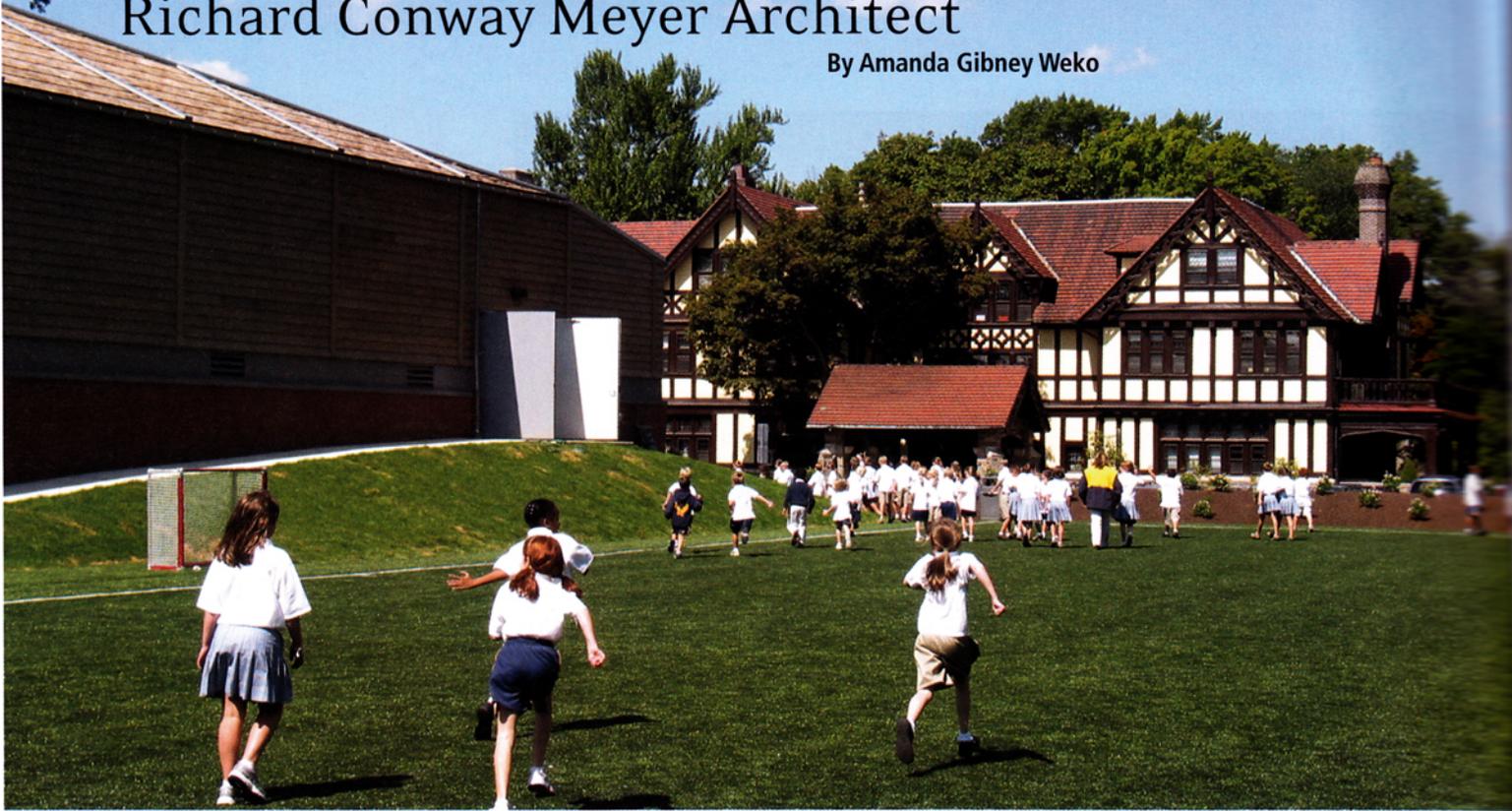


Rosemont School of the Holy Child O'Neill Gymnasium Buell Kratzer Powell and Richard Conway Meyer Architect

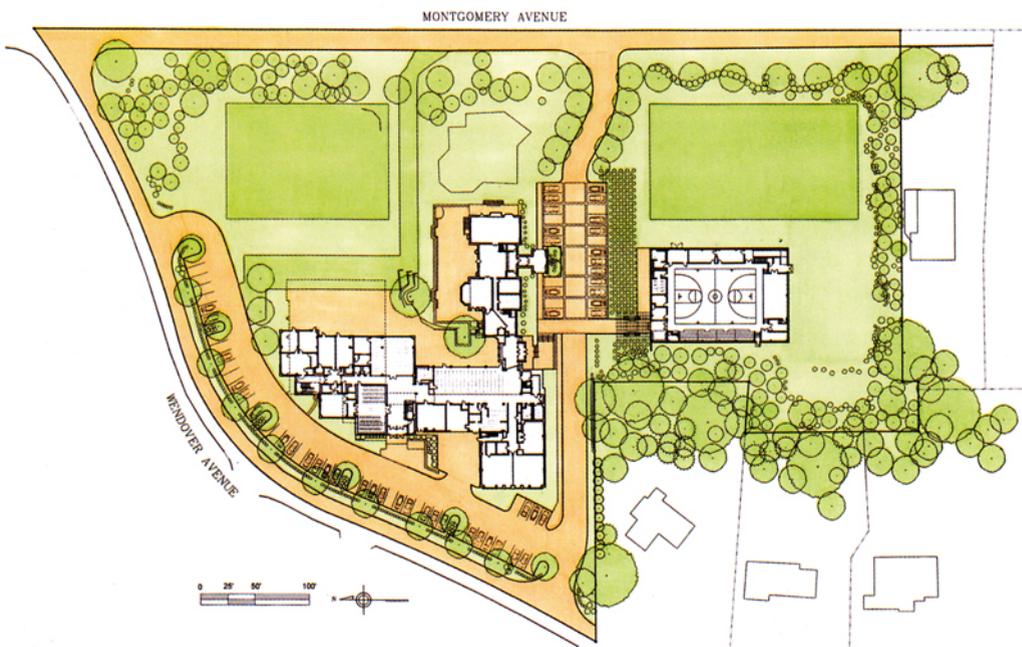
By Amanda Gibney Weko



Rosemont School of the Holy Child's new O'Neill Gymnasium is built into a hillside behind the campus' historic Horace Trumbauer-designed Tudor mansion. Constructed of complementary wood and brick, the

13,600-square-foot gym maintains deference to the mansion. Although zoning would have permitted a larger building, the design team of Buell Kratzer Powell and Richard Conway Meyer Architect did not

want to literally or figuratively overshadow the mansion. Sinking more than 40 percent of the new gymnasium below grade reduces its scale dramatically and permits direct circulation between the two buildings.



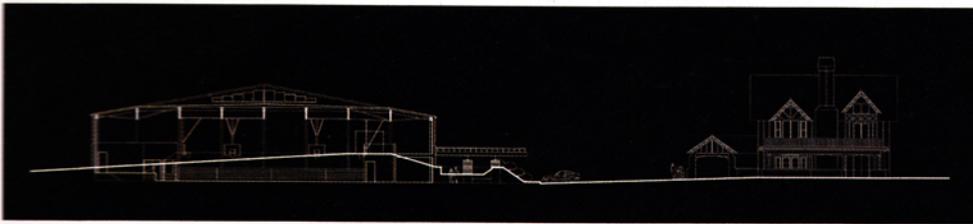
The architects wanted the building to appear subservient. Its rooflines taper to disappearing edges. Its exterior walls fold inward to reveal bands of clerestory windows. These bring daylight indoors while minimizing the light that escapes the building during nighttime sporting events. The architecture reinforces campus hierarchy, emphasizes craftsmanship, and is a good neighbor to nearby homes.

However, the gymnasium architecture is only a small component of a larger land-planning story. In fact, the gym was not included in the original scope of work. Instead, architects Darrell Kratzer and Richard Meyer pitched separately to Rosemont to design a new academic building. When the school couldn't decide between the two firms and suggested a partnership, the longtime friends agreed.

The original project to add an academic building was complicated by an existing 1970s-era gym and awkward available space on the pie-shaped property. The targeted area of expansion, on the corner of Montgomery and Wendover avenues, would have put the new building in the sight lines of the mansion, reducing its prominence and eliminating the school's "front yard" green space.

they wanted to go, but they still explored options." Both the client and architects thoroughly evaluated the school's long-term needs rather than focusing on short-term objectives. "The gym was built to create a site for the original project," said Meyer. Rethinking the initial task resulted in better solutions for the entire campus.

In a reconsidered site plan, the gym helped



After exploring options to convert the old gym into classrooms or build around it, Kratzer and Meyer suggested an alternative project. They made a case for building a new multi-use gym in order to form an ideal site plan with flexibility for future growth. Architectural historian George Thomas reinforced the argument, encouraging the school to maintain the mansion's sense of prominence and elegance. Understanding the mansion as an asset to prospective students and families resonated with Rosemont and helped move the idea forward.

"To the school's credit, they took their time," explained Kratzer. "The school and building committee had a notion of where

strengthen the Rosemont School identity and ensure its continued vitality. The entire program of academic expansion, including the new gym, is folded behind the perspective of the mansion. This \$15 million effort included three phases: the O'Neill Gymnasium was built in 2007; a new academic wing completed in November 2008 integrates with the existing building and offers flexible spaces for future growth; and the mansion is being renovated as an administrative center and campus showpiece with completion anticipated in spring 2009. The sound of students singing from its restored music room will greet all who enter the school's main doors.

Location: Rosemont, PA

Client: Rosemont School of the Holy Child

Size: 13,600 square feet

Architecture: Buell Kratzer Powell; Darrell L. Kratzer, AIA, Principal in Charge; Matthew Silvia; Richard Conway Meyer Architect; Richard Conway Meyer, AIA, Principal in Charge; Sarah Moody; Kevin Smith

Architectural Historian: Civic Visions Consulting

Structural Engineering: Thornton Tomasetti

Civil Engineering: SITE Engineering Concepts

MEP Engineering: Entech Engineering, Inc.

Tele/Data/Technology Engineering: Bala Consulting Engineers, Inc.

Landscape Architecture: Carter van Dyke Associates

Owner's Representative: Aegis Property Group

Contractor: The Norwood Company

Photography: Ed McCann

