



Pioneer Group, Inc.

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Cooper Hall, Sterling College, Sterling, Kansas - March 2003

Project Name: Cooper Hall, Sterling College

Project Location: Sterling, Kansas

Completion Date: March 2003

Size: 19,700 sq ft

Award: 2004 KPA Award for Excellence

Project Description:

This project involved the historic preservation of Cooper Hall, the original classroom building on the campus of Sterling College. Cooper Hall, built in 1876, was closed in 1985. Prior to being closed, Cooper Hall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The years during the closure were not kind to the building, and it sustained severe deterioration. The exterior walls started to buckle and the third floor collapsed into the floors below. Initially, Sterling College undertook the historic preservation of Cooper Hall utilizing only a grant from the Kansas State Historic Society. However, after the collapse of the third floor and other cost overruns, Sterling College contracted with the Pioneer Group to secure state and federal historic preservation tax credits in order to gain the additional funding that had become necessary. One of the first problems encountered was that the federal historic preservation tax credits are only available to profit-oriented owners and, in the case of Cooper Hall, it was owned by Sterling College, a not-for-profit educational organization. We worked with one of the nation's leading tax credit law firms, Nixon Peabody, of Washington, D.C., to create a for-profit corporation that became the "owner" of Cooper Hall and to create an economic use for the building under the guidance of the new owner. We believe this approach is one of the first of its kind in the country. The second major problem was that the renovation work started prior to the filing of the renovation plan with the National Park Service. The plan was not approved as submitted which meant a series of negotiations with the National Park Service in order to minimize the expense of removing work that had already been completed.

