

4 of 8 391/132000/30

Historic Building Report
on
423 Locust Street
in
Independence National Historical Park

INDE. 197
CR BIB # 002167

GENERAL FILES

GENERAL FILES

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

September 1, 1959

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Independence National Historical Park
From: Regional Director
Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - 423 Locust Street

After reviewing the subject report, we are pleased to
recommend its approval.

(Sgd.) Daniel J. Tobin

Daniel J. Tobin
Regional Director

In duplicate

Copy to: Director
Chief, EODC

MHNelligan/cp

General
Daily
Area
Operations Division

Nelligan
9/1



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H30-DCA

August 21, 1959

9/9

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
AUG 26 1959		
✓	REG. DIRECTOR	9/9
✓	ASST. REG.	9/9
✓	OPERATIONS	9/11
✓	INTERPRETATION	9/11
	ADM.	
	RFC RES. PLAN	
	RANGER ACT'S	

9/8 4/3

posted

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Chief Architect

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, 423 Locust Street,
Independence

The Historic Structures Report, Part I, for building at
423 Locust Street, Independence, has been reviewed by the interested
Divisions in the Washington Office and is recommended for approval.

Dick Sutton

Dick Sutton
Chief Architect

Copy to: Chief, EODC (2)
Supt., Independence

Info	OPERATIONS	Act	Initial and Date
	Lands		
	Engineer		
✓	Architect		9/10 J.E.C. 9/3
	Land Acq. & Programs		Chris 9/1
✓			

00000000

422

Independence NHP

817

8/24

This brief report packs more & better information in it than any other I have read from INHP. JRC

Good Rept -
Agree with above
Restoration. YBK

8/19/59

I have consumed.

See Chaps 11 sect 2, page 2
last line -

Surely this should read "-- of national
importance -- "

For isn't everyman considered
important to his loved ones ?

8/12/59

Dr. Nelligan

Concur. Opening paragraph of "Evaluation" is good interpretive writing which might be used for a general interpretive sign on "Prune Street" - with special mention of Tench Coxe as perhaps the most prominent resident.

Frank Barnes

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

August 6, 1959

Nelligan
9/6

Memorandum

To: Director
From: Regional Director
Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - 423 Locust Street,
Independence NHP

Forwarded herewith for your review are two copies of
the subject report.

Comments on it should be made by August 21.

(Sgd.) Daniel J. Tobin

Daniel J. Tobin
Regional Director

In duplicate

Attachments

Copy to: Chief, EODC, w/copy of report
Supt., Independence
Operations Division

MHNelligan/cp

General
Daily
Area



~~1-287~~ H 30

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Independence National Historical Park
Old Customs House
420 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

February 12, 1959

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region V
From: Superintendent, Independence NHP
Subject: Historic Structure Reports on 408, 413, 415, and 423
Locust Street

Enclosed in quadruplicate for your review are the administrative and historical data sections of the Historic Structure Reports on 408, 413, 415, and 423 Locust Street.

Through inadvertence the reports have not been submitted.

By this memorandum we are requesting the Eastern Office of Design and Construction to prepare the architectural data sections of these reports.

M. O. Anderson
Superintendent

Copy to: Chief, EODC

MYT/agn

SIGNATURE SHEET

RECOMMENDED

Director Date _____

Regional Director Date _____

Chief, Eastern Office, Div. of Design & Construction Date _____

APPROVED

Superintendent Date _____

Historic Building Report

on

423 Locust Street

Independence National Historical Park

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Prepared by

Staff

Independence National Historical Park

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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February, 1959

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CHAPTER II. HISTORICAL DATA

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- Section 2. Historical Associations
- Section 3. Evaluation of Historical Importance

CHAPTER I
ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION

Prepared by Superintendent M. O. Anderson

NAME AND NUMBER OF BUILDING

423 Locust Street, building No. 18, is situated on the north side of Locust Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets, in Area "B" of the Park.

PROPOSED USE OF STRUCTURE
AND JUSTIFICATION

It is proposed that the exterior of this structure be restored to serve as a needed feature in the landscape design of the Park, and that its interior be converted for employee housing. This structure, along with the other five on Locust Street, has no significant association with important figures or events, but is typical of Philadelphia dwellings of the historic period. The retention of all six, for incorporation in the overall design of this section of the Park, will help recall the eighteenth-century atmosphere.

Justification for this proposed use is contained in the approved Mission 66 Prospectus for the Park. Only a limited number of key protective, maintenance, interpretive, and administrative personnel will be provided with housing in this and the other five structures.

PROVISION FOR OPERATING HOUSE

As residence for Park personnel, the building would be leased and rent charged.

PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF COST
FOR REMEDIATING THE STRUCTURE
AND GROUNDS

\$19,100.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL SECTION

Prepared by Historian John D. K. Platt

STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE FROM
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

The House at 423 Locust Street is one of the four aged buildings, grouped in pairs, still remaining on the north side of the block between Fourth and Fifth Streets after extensive demolition of recent years. All four are of a type; they are all brick Philadelphia row-houses, unprepossessing and unexceptional. No two are of the same dimensions and design. Three of the four, No. 423 included, were built in the decade following 1800.

The house at 423 Locust Street has a long and narrow appearance (see Illustration No. 1). It is three and a half stories high, with a frontage of but thirteen and a half feet. This measurement and the dimensions of the third floor (14 feet by 25 feet) provide us with two of the few facts which connect the existing building with the slim documentary evidence of its past. So far as is known, only a single insurance survey has ever been made of the premises. This one was recorded by the Mutual Assurance Company in October 1807 and depicts the building in the following very general terms:

SURVEY of Doctr. William Shippens three Story House situate on the North side of Prune [Locust] Street between fourth and fifth Streets. Dimensions, 15 [?] feet front and 25 feet deep, lower Story, plain Mantle, surbase, washboards and windows Cased, second and third Stories similar, Garrets plastered and Trap Door, winding Stairs. Kitchen 14 feet by 9 feet, one Story high and finished as Customary, lower floors yellow pine and others white pine, Building nearly new, two Trees, no Battlement....

There is little doubt that the building described in the survey is the one which has survived, in considerably changed form, to the present. The property records, discussed in the next section, show conclusively that no building was on the lot before 1803. They show no replacement building since then. Structural evidence would help to establish the period of construction (see Illustration No. 2).

In the years since 1807 many changes have been made in the structure. They include extension and repartitioning of the first and second floors, relocation of the staircase between those floors, and addition of a two story "el" to the rear. The third floor and garret are practically the same today as they were in 1802 (see Illustration No. 3). The absence of more recent insurance surveys and the dearth of other documentary evidence relating to the building have made it impossible to show by comparison of earlier and later records more precisely what alterations were made during this interval.

An architectural investigation is believed necessary to substantiate the findings of this section and to determine what portion of the original building is standing today.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Ownership of Property to 1803

The land on which the house at 423 Locust Street is located for more than a century belonged to William Shippen, the Elder or his heirs. It was originally part of the lot bounded by Walnut and Spruce, Fourth and Fifth Streets which in 1744 was granted to Edward, Joseph, and William Shippen by Thomas and Richard Penn and which the following year the brothers divided among themselves. William Shippen received the section north of what is now Locust Street. On April 20, 1784 he deeded a lot thirty-two feet in breadth and seventy feet in depth, consisting of the ground at present-day 421-423 Locust Street, to one Alexander Rodgers, a laborer, in return for payment of an annual ground rent of \$42 2/3. On the eastern side of this lot Rodgers sometime before March 22, 1786 erected a dwelling. Within a year one Jeremiah Collins had built and occupied a house on the adjoining lot to the west. This left a narrow strip of unoccupied ground at what is now 423 Locust Street. This narrow strip was separated from the rest of the lot by a partition on July 31, 1802, within a year of William Shippen's death. The land had come into possession of the younger William Shippen and on it sometime before 1803 a three-and-a-half story house was completed. A Peter Groce occupied the premises that year, the first year that the Philadelphia tax records and directories list a house and occupant at the site.

Tenants of 423 Locust Street

Nothing is known about the house's tenants in this period beyond the fact that after Peter Groce had lived there in 1803, a William W. Wands occupied it in 1806 and 1807 and a William Thompson in 1811.

Ownership of Property Since 1803

The younger William Shippen died in 1808 and willed the property to his daughter, Ann Home Livingston. It then passed to his grandson, William Shippen. On May 3, 1858 this William Shippen deeded the property to his son Edward, who on May 11, 1859 sold it to a William Jack. Thus, after one hundred and fifteen years the land passed out of the Shippen family's possession. No one of ^{national} importance owned the property before the federal government purchased it in 1951.

EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL
IMPORTANCE

Considered apart from its setting, 423 Locust Street has no historical importance or interest. The house was built after the "historic period." No person of note has ever lived in it; no significant event has ever taken place there. The "story" of the premises, such as it is, can be told briefly. The house at 423 Locust Street was one of a number of "income" properties owned by members of the prominent Shippen family. It was located on a modest byway of unpretentious residences and boarding houses bearing the humble name, Prune Street (see Illustration No. 4). Most of the inhabitants were tenants and were among a transitory population, seldom occupying a house for longer than two or three years. Over the span of a generation nearly a score of occupations were represented on Prune Street. It was a neighborhood of sugar refiners, joiners, brushmakers, coopers, shoemakers, locksmiths, grocers, tailors, bakers, coachmen, brass founders, carters, wood sawyers, porters, and laborers. It was one of the centers of the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1797.

*Good
Writing*

Considered as part of its setting 423 Locust appears in a different light. It is on the one residential street of its type in the Park. As the Walnut Street buildings in their proportions and design represent upper class life in Philadelphia at the turn of the century, so the Locust Street buildings represent life on a less ambitious scale.

Viewed from the main Park area the house and its neighbor at 421 Locust Street, set amidst ivied walls and trees, its gable outlined against the sky, present a readily interpretable vista (see Illustrations No. 5 and 6). Included in the general setting are the Tribute Garden across the street, the splendid Shippen-Wistar house at the corner, and the garden of the Philadelphia Contributionship to the east.

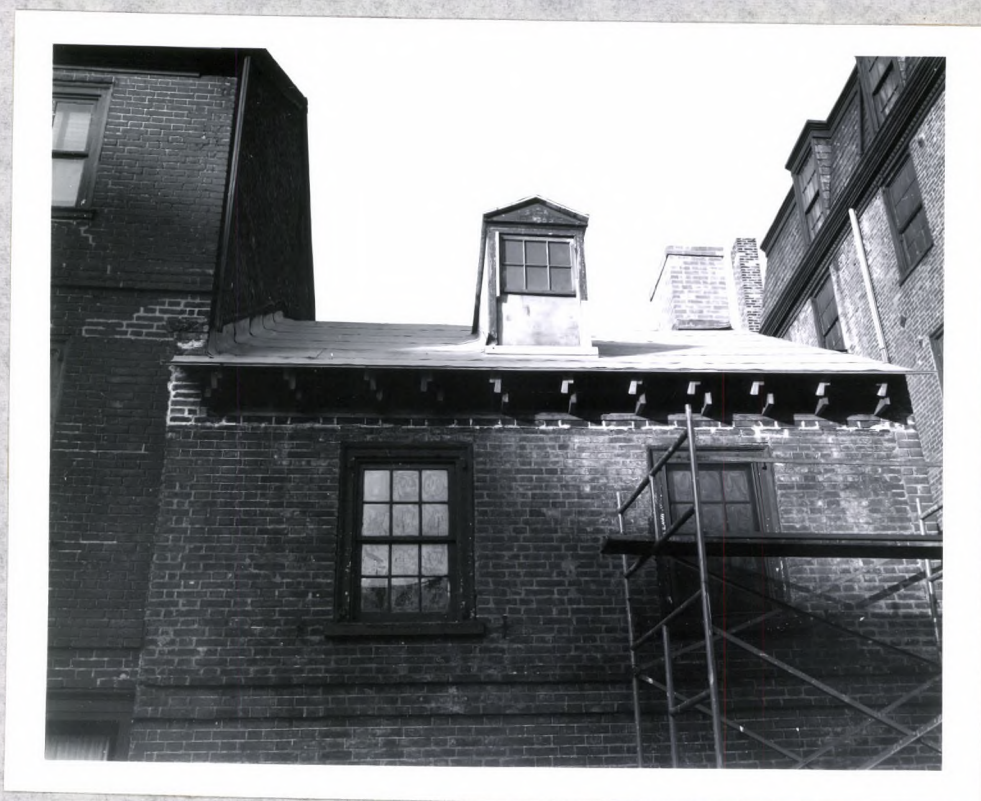
For these reasons, it is recommended that the house at 423 Locust Street be preserved as a landscape feature and be restored on the exterior.

Chapter II
Illustration I



House at 423 Locust Street is
in center of 1950 photograph.
Building to the right is Alex-
ander Rodgers house. Building
to the left has since been de-
molished. National Park Service
Photo.

Chapter II
Illustration 2



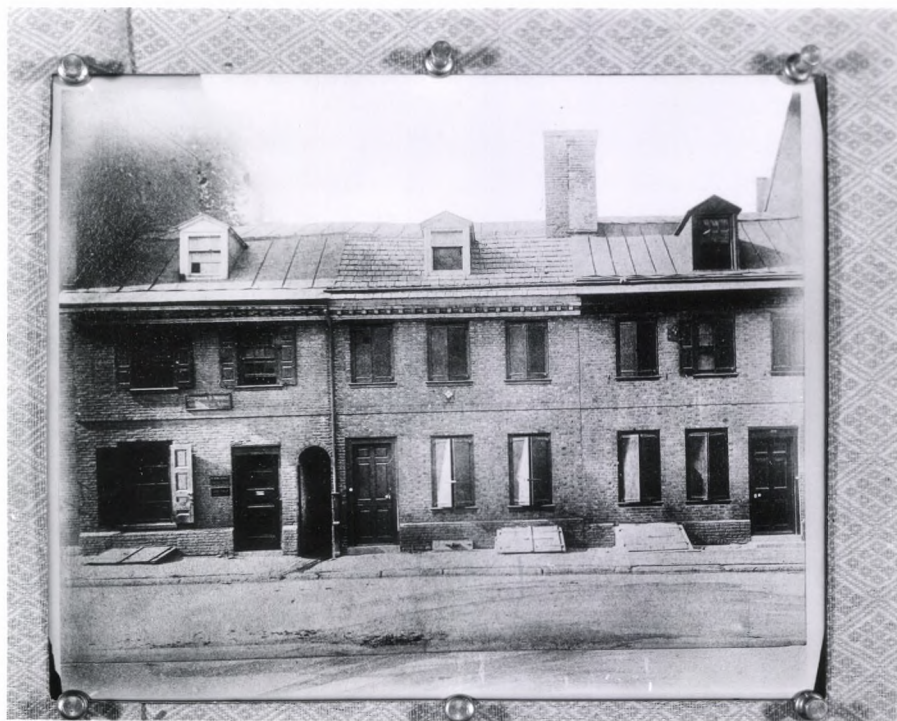
Another view taken in 1954 shows
how west wall of earlier Rodgers
House (1786) was used in construc-
tion of house at 423 Locust Street.
National Park Service Photo

Chapter II
Illustration 8



Alterations to first and second floors
and addition of "el" can be seen in 1954
photograph taken from the rear of build-
ing. The "el" has since been torn down.
National Park Service photo.

Chapter II
Illustration 4



Houses at 404, 406, and 408 Locust
Street as they appeared in 1978-89.
They typify Locust Street in the
historic period. Boies Penrose
Collection, Historical Society of
Pennsylvania.

Chapter II
Illustration 5



View of building at 423 Locust Street
as seen from main Park area to the north.
The Tribute Garden can be seen in the
background. Buildings in foreground are
old stables. National Park Service Photo.

Chapter II
Illustration 6



A cross-section of the Locust Street setting. Wall at left belongs to the Blair House (1802-1803). Across the street are the facades of 18th Century buildings at 408 and 410 Locust Street. National Park Service Photo