

OKB/B #002166
391/134884

Historic Structures Report
on
421 Locust Street
Independence National Historical Park

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Prepared by

Staff

Independence National Historical Park
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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July 1960

Region Five
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

H30

August 1, 1960

Valley
7/29

Memorandum

To: Superintendent, Independence

From: Acting Regional Director

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, 421 Locust Street
Independence

The subject report has been reviewed by this office and is recommended for approval.

(Sgd.) George A. Palmer

Acting Regional Director

In duplicate

Copy to: Director
Chief, EODC

MHNelligan/lh

General
Daily
Area
Programs



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

July 25, 1960

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H30-DCA

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
JUL 27 1960		
☒ REC. DIRECTOR		
☒ ASST. REC. DIR.		
☒ OPERATIONS		
☒ INTERPRETATION		
☐ ADM.		
☐ REC. RES. PLAN		
☐ PRINTER ACT'S		

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Acting Chief Architect

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, 421 Locust Street,
Independence

The Historic Structures Report, Part I, 421 Locust Street,
Independence National Historical Park has been reviewed by the
interested Divisions in the Washington Office and is recommended
for approval.

Robert E. Smith
Acting Chief Architect

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

Info	OPERATIONS	Act	Initial and Date
	Lands Engineer		
	Architect		
☒	Land Archt Programs		

Chris 8/3/60

Historic Structures Report, Part I - 421 Locust St., Independence

COMMENTS DUE JULY 25, 1960

INTERPRETATION

✓	History
	Nat. Hist.
✓	Archeol.
	Publ.
	Museum
	Soc'y.

Ok! Rather than restoring St. name, or in addition, suggest historical on Old Pine Street Walnutwood.

I differ with the proposal to use this house, after restoration, as a NPS residence. In this little house we have a priceless opportunity to portray the 18th century living conditions of the small artisans, shopkeepers and laborers who made up the bulk of Philadelphia citizenry. Furnished accurately as a period piece, with sturdy poverty and frugal providence demonstrated in the decor, the 421 Locust house would furnish what is badly needed at INHP: a contact with the life and times of the everyday citizens of the Revolution.

As an NPS residence this house will be a dead opportunity (and an inconvenience to an employee.) Also - restore the name of PRUNE ST! JRC.

OPERATIONS

Info	OPERATIONS	Act	Initial and Date
	Lands		
	Engineer		
✓	Architect		
✓	Land Archt		
✓	Programs		

Agree with exterior restoration and use as quarters. Do additional exterior restoration required? Think elaborate is OK. JRC

The Historical Section indicates that the Locust St houses were unimportant and occupied by a middle class population of a transitory nature. Why wasn't this material revealed when the grounds in Area B between Walnut & Locust St was being planned. Certainly this area should have been designed to conform to this. We need to make our research more available for uses other than bldgs. Think Cather has a good suggestion - one worthy of more study JRC.

H30

Region Five
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

Passarelli
7/4/60
Nelligan
7/1/4

July 14, 1960

Memorandum

To: Director

From Acting Regional Director

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I, 421 Locust Street,
Independence NHP

In accordance with the procedure outlined in FO-11-56, attached
for your review and comment is the subject report. A copy of
the report is also being forwarded to EODC for review and comment.

All offices should submit their comments by July 25, 1960.

(Sgd.) Benjamin F. Gibson
Acting Regional Director

In duplicate

Attachments

Copy to: Chief, EODC, w/report
Supt., Independence

CPassarelli

General
Daily
Area
Programs



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

July 12, 1960

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H30

REGION FIVE		INITIAL AND DATE
JUL 13 1960		
REG. DIRECTOR		
ASST. REG. DIR.		
OPERATIONS		
INTERPRETATION	<i>[Signature]</i>	7/12
ADM.		
REC. RES. PLAN		
RANGER ACT'S		

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region V
From: Superintendent, Independence
Subject: Historic Structures Report, 421 Locust Street

Enclosed in quadruplicate for your review and distribution is the
Historic Structures Report on the building at 421 Locust Street.

[Signature]
M. O. Anderson
Superintendent

Enclosures (4)

SIGNATURE SHEET

RECOMMENDED

Director Date _____

Regional Director Date _____

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

APPROVED

Superintendent Date _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

- Section 1. Name and Number of Building
- Section 2. Proposed Use of Structure and Justification
- Section 3. Provision for Operating House
- Section 4. Preliminary Estimate of Cost for Rehabilitating the Structure and Grounds

CHAPTER II HISTORICAL DATA

- Section 1. Structural Evidence from Documentary Sources
- Section 2. Historical Associations
- Section 3. Evaluation of Historical Importance

CHAPTER I

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Prepared by Superintendent M. O. Anderson

NAME AND NUMBER OF BUILDING

421 Locust Street, Building No. 19, 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 REHABILITATING THE STRUCTURE
AND GROUNDS

\$26,500.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL DATA

Prepared by Historian Paul G. Sifton

STRUCTURAL EVIDENCE FROM
DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

The house at 421 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 the 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. Of the four, only No. 421, erected in 1786, was built prior to 1800.

The house at 421 Locust Street has a short and boxy appearance (see Illustration No. 1). It is two and a half stories high, with a frontage of but 18 feet, 6-3/4 inches. This measurement, the presence of a winding staircase from cellar to attic as mentioned in the 1820 insurance survey, and the dimensions of the attic (18' 18-1/4" by 25' 4") provide us with three of the few facts which connect the existing building with the slender documentary evidence of the past. So far as is known, only a single insurance survey has ever been made of the premises. This one was recorded by the Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire on "10th Mo. 31st," 1820, and it depicts the building in the following terms:

I have surveyed a House belonging to Thomas Truxtun Situate on the North Side of Prime Street between Fourth & Fifth Streets No. 23 ---18 feet front 25 deep two Stories high-- 9 in. walls - lower story divided in two rooms & short passage -the 2nd story in two rooms -floors of com Yellow pine, wide boards plain base & Subbase, Single architraves, & mouldings, two plain mantles - winding stairs from the cellar to the garret, all the glass 8 by 10 inches outside

shutters to the windows - plain eve front & back wooden gutters & trunks - One plain dormer window & trap door in the roof, which 2/3rd worn - Garrett not plaistered, painting old.

10th Mo. 31st 1820

John C. Evans

NB There is a wooden building back &
a door of communication with it

No Ash hole

There is little doubt that the building described in the survey [old number 21, not the "23" mentioned in the survey] is the one which has survived, in a somewhat altered form, to the present. The property records, discussed in the next section, show conclusively that no building was on the lot before 1786. On April 20, 1784, Thomas Shippen made a deed with Alexander Rodgers, laborer, which contained the proviso that Rodgers would "erect and build on said lot within 2 years from the date hereof a good Tenantable dwelling house." This requirement was fulfilled some time before March 22, 1786. The property records show no replacement building since then. Structural evidence would help to establish the period of construction.

In the years since the 1820 insurance survey, several changes have been effected. The frame kitchen was replaced by a brick-walled room to the rear of the two front rooms on the first floor. The second floor was altered from a two room plan to the present one room, one bathroom, and one hallway plan. The board newel staircase appears to be the one described in the 1820 survey as "from the cellar to the garret." The garret is substantially the same today as in 1820, except for the additions

of a rear dormer and a side window, and removal of the trap door in the roof. The absence of more recent insurance surveys have made it impossible to show by comparison of earlier and later records more precisely what alterations were made during this interval.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Ownership of Property

The land on which the house at 421 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 years 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 32 feet in breadth and 70 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 rent of \$42-2/3. On the eastern side of this lot Rodgers some time 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. Rodgers remained at 421 Locust Street until some time in 1792, when the property was sold at a sheriff's sale to Isaac Bonsall, conveyancer.

Tenants of 421 Locust Street

After the builder Rodgers' property was sold to Isaac Bonsall in 1792, various tenants occupied the house at 421 Locust Street. William Staylor owned and/or rented the house and lot from 1796 to 1804; John McCalla and Ann Edwards were tenants in 1805; John Lea (or Lee) 1808-1811; John and Thomas Carter in 1818-1819; Edward King in 1820; and William King in 1824.

Ownership of Property Since 1792

After Isaac Ponsall purchased the house and lot at 421 Locust on April 5, 1792, he sold the property to William Stayler, porter, on June 1, 1792. Stayler sold the house and lot back to a member of the Shippen family, William, the Elder, on June 27, 1799. In a partition of Shippen's property on July 31, 1802, the 421 Locust property was given to Minister Samuel Blair and his wife, Susanna. However, on the same day, the Blairs deeded all rights to the house and lot to William Shippen. In the 1809 will of William Shippen, the property was deeded to his grandson, Thomas Lee Shippen. This property was sold, as part of the William Shippen estate, on November 14, 1818, to Peter Thomson. On November 16, 1818, Thomson in turn sold the house and lot to naval hero Captain Thomas Truxton. For two years (1821 and 1822) during his period of ownership, the directories list no occupant at 421 Locust Street. As Truxton's residence during these closing years of his life have not been ascertained, it is possible he was living in the premises. After Truxton's death in 1822 the property continued in the family until 1825. Since that time no one of importance owned the property before the Federal government purchased it in 1951.

*last
known
statement*

EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL
IMPORTANCE

Considered apart from its setting, 421 Locust Street has a limited historical interest. The house was built in the "historic period" (1774-1800) and it was, for a time, owned and perhaps occupied by naval hero Captain Thomas Truxtun. The house at 421 Locust Street was one of a number of "income" properties owned by the members of the prominent Shippen family. It was located on a street of unpretentious residences and boarding houses bearing the humble name, Prune Street. Most of the inhabitants were tenants and were among the 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, coopers, brushmakers, shoemakers, tailors, grocers, coachmen, brass founders, carters, porters, wood sawyers, and laborers. It was one of the centers of the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1797.

With the ownership of 421 Locust Street, 1818-1825, by Captain Thomas Truxtun and his family, the building achieves some retrospective historical interest. Captain Thomas Truxtun brought in the largest privateering prizes of the American Revolution; took the first Philadelphia ship, the Canton, to China in 1786; wrote important early works on naval warfare; was the outstanding naval hero of the 1798-1800 naval war with France after the victory of his ship, the Constellation, over the Vengeance. After his retirement, Truxtun lived in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. He was prominent in Philadelphia politics as a leader in the 1809

agitation against the Embargo; as an unsuccessful Federalist candidate for Congress in 1810; and as sheriff of Philadelphia, 1816-1819. Truxtun's landlord relationship with 421 Locust Street, therefore, gives that structure an association of some historic interest.

In its setting, 421 Locust Street appears in a different light. It is on the one residential middle-class streets in the Park. The Walnut Street buildings represent upper-class life in Philadelphia; the Locust Street buildings represent a less ambitious mode of life.

Viewed from the main Park area, looking southward from Walnut Street through Area "B," the house and its neighbor at 423 Locust Street, present a readily interpretable vista. Included in the general setting are the Tribute Garden across the street, the splendid Shippen-Wistar house at the corner of Locust and Fourth Streets, and the garden of the Philadelphia Contributionship to the east. Although Captain Truxtun's ownership of the property is of some historic interest, it is as a feature of an historic locale that the building assumes its importance.

For these reasons, it is recommended that the house at 421 Locust Street be preserved as a landscape feature and restored to its original appearance.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter II
Illustration No. 1



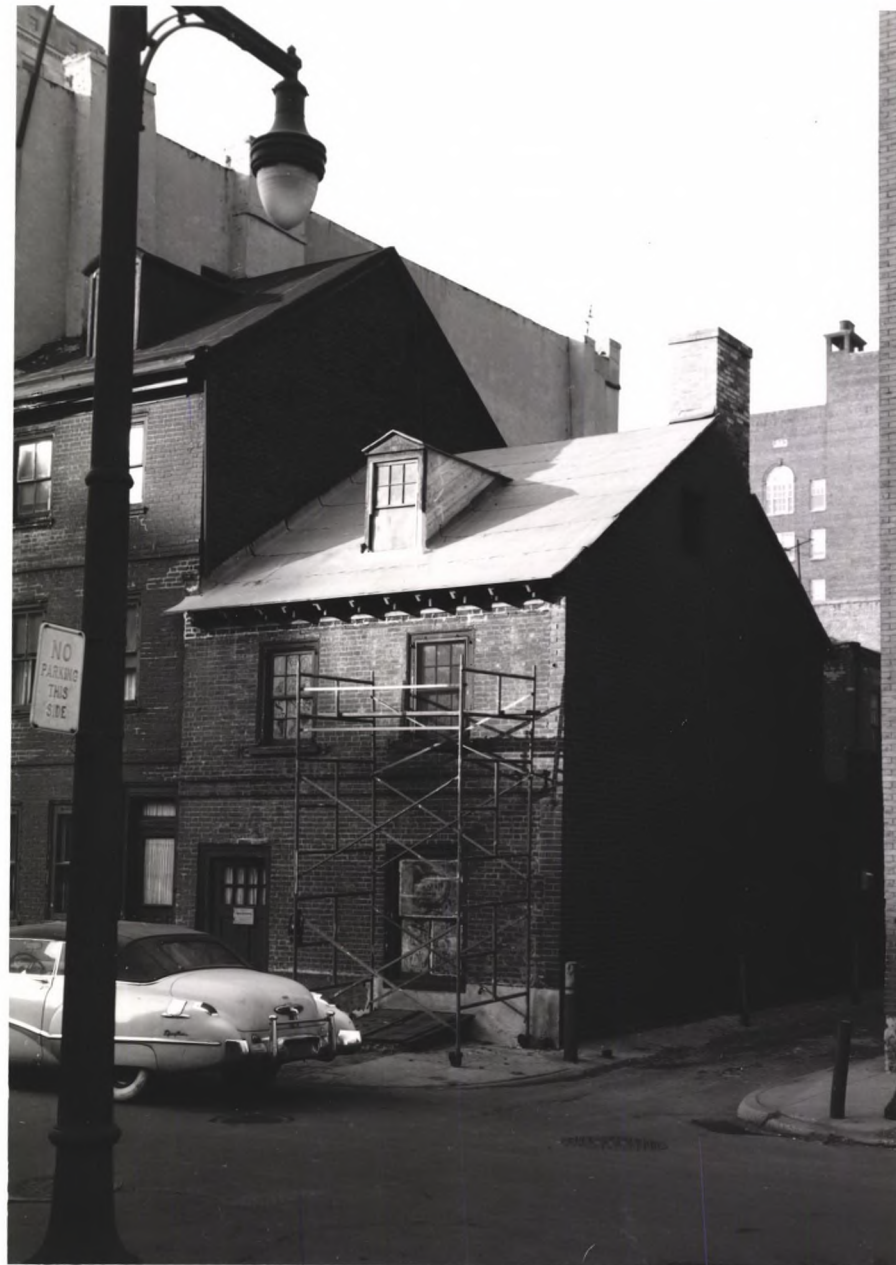
421 Locust is the short, boxy building in the center. This is the appearance of the structure in 1950, prior to government acquisition of the property.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 2



This photograph, taken December 1, 1953, shows, in a close-up view of 421 Locust Street, the detail of the 19th century cornice and the outline of the back building erected after the 1820 insurance survey.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 3



The structure at 421 Locust Street
undergoing repairs, February 10, 1954.



Rear view of 421 Locust Street, undergoing repairs, April 20, 1954, shows the non-original rear dormer and brick-walled room on first floor (both features were added after the 1820 insurance survey).



Recent view of structure at 421 Locust (423 Locust has since been restored) shows repaired building. Note the removal of the 19th century cornice.