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Antique

Historic Grounds Report
for
Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange
in
Independence National Historical Park

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for
Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange
in
Independence National Historical Park

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Prepared by
Staff
Independence National Historical Park

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February, 1959

ON MICROFILM

SIGNATURE SHEET

RECOMMENDED

M. O. Anderson
Superintendent

Date 3/13/59

Daniel C. Fisher
Regional Director

Date 3/4/59 *

Thomas C. Vant
Chief, Eastern Office, Div. of Design & Construction

Date 3/9/59

APPROVED

Director

Date _____

at one reception

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CHAPTER I

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Prepared by Superintendent M. J. Anderson

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the sidewalks be restored to their appearance and composition of the 1834 period (curbstones, square flagstone paving), and that present widths be adhered to north, south, and west of the Exchange building.
2. That the exterior and interior walks around the portico be restored. It may be necessary to place the outer edge of the exterior walk two feet further from the base of the portico than it was in 1834, so as to leave undisturbed the line of curb along the Walnut Street sidewalk. In the absence of definite evidence about the materials used in the inner walk or step it should be reconstructed of marble matching that of the building.
3. That the area between the north facades of the Exchange and the north building line of Lot (A) be paved with flagstones.
4. That a row of eight deciduous trees be planted along the outer edge of the Walnut Street sidewalk and that in the interest of historical accuracy no trees be planted within sixteen feet of the Exchange building's north wall or along the Dock Street curb.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL DATA

Prepared by Historian David A. Kimball

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND
EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The lots bounded by Third, Walnut and Dock streets which now form the grounds of the Philadelphia Exchange were granted to various individuals by Penn's commissioners in the 1690's. The lot owners began improving their property during the second decade of the 18th Century, and, as the century progressed and the city grew and spread westward from the Delaware, this small, irregularly shaped block gradually became "encumbered by an uncouth mass of buildings angular, unsightly, misshapen, a proverbial deformity..."¹ This was its condition when, in September and October, 1831, most of the property in the block was purchased by the trustees of the Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange Company and the buildings on it razed to make way for the Exchange building.

Few persons of historic importance were associated with the block during the years between 1690 and 1831. No historic events took place in the buildings which stood on the property. The only persons of historic note who resided on it were Thomas Fitzsimons, a member of the Constitutional Convention, and Wade Hampton, a United States Representative from South Carolina. Fitzsimons lived at 71 Walnut Street in 1785, prior to his service in the Convention; Hampton lived at 77 Walnut Street during his two years in the United States Senate.

1.

The Daily American Advertiser, January 3, 1833.

6. 28.74
See D.A.B.
Gregory Ryan

Since 1831, when construction of the Exchange began, the property around it has been dominated by the building itself. As the Historic Structure Report for that building pointed out, the Exchange is of local rather than national importance historically, but is of great importance architecturally, and its retention is provided for in Public Law 795. The grounds form and have formed since 1831, the setting in which the building stands. They are considered to be an essential part of any effort to preserve and restore it.

JUSTIFICATION OF USE

Restoration and development of the grounds of the Philadelphia Exchange is a necessary part of the restoration of the building. If the visitor is to realize to the full the architectural perfection of the building he must see it as nearly as possible in the setting in which it stood when first erected. Fortunately, it is possible to recapture the essential landscape elements of this setting, particularly since the grounds are small in size and are divorced from the rest of Area "A" of Independence National Historical Park by Third Street and by Dock Street. Thus, it should be possible to recreate the 1834 landscape patterns of this block without disturbing the 18th Century atmosphere of the remainder of Area A.

DOCUMENTARY STUDY

The grounds of the Philadelphia Exchange were assembled by the Philadelphia Merchants' Exchange Company through the purchase of 12 separate lots. Acquisition of the property was completed in October, 1831. It then consisted of:

"All that Certain lot...Beginning at the pt. of intersection of the east side of Third Street w/ the north side of Walnut Street thence extg. northward along the east side of Third Street 111' 9" to a pt. thence eastward by ground of estate of Woro Phillips deceased 50' to a pt. thence northward still by said last mentioned ground 16' 7 1/2" to the south westerly side of Dock Street thence South eastwardly along Dock Street 95' 9" to a pt. at an angle in said Dock Street thence further south eastwardly still along the said side of Dock Street 100' 2" to the north side of Walnut Street and thence westward along Walnut Street 198' 8" to the place of beginning...²

Shortly after March 8, 1832, the Exchange Company surrendered to public use a triangular plot of ground at the intersection of Dock and Walnut measuring 55 feet 9 inches on Dock, 30 feet 8 inches (or 38 feet 8 inches) on Walnut, and 46 feet 9 1/2 inches on the remaining side (see Illustration No. 1). This lot, Lot (C) in the illustration, was incorporated into Dock Street. Therefore, it had no landscape features other than those of Dock Street itself, and can be ignored insofar as this report is concerned.

2.

Thus described in a deed dated June 29, 1900. A survey dated December 26, 1831 found in the office of the 3d Survey District, City of Philadelphia gives the same dimensions except for that on Walnut Street, which it gives as 190 feet 8 inches. This is probably the correct figure; the deed seems to be in error.

The portion of the Exchange property remaining after the surrender of Lot (C) remained unchanged in size until 1929, when the property at the intersection of Dock and Third Streets, designated as Lot (B) on the illustration, was added to it. Lot (B), then, was not a part of the Exchange grounds in 1832. Moreover, at least by 1838 and probably earlier, all of Lot (B) except a strip seven feet wide along its eastern edge was taken up by a four story brick building, so that it could have had few landscape features save sidewalks.

We have very little documentary evidence of Lot (A)'s landscape features in the years following completion of the Exchange in 1834. Most of the data below was derived from a study of contemporary prints and photographs.

1. Width of Walks and Streets

The Philadelphia Exchange, 95 feet wide by 150 feet long, seems to have been built right up against the Third Street and Walnut Street property lines of Lot (A). Since these were 50 foot streets, and as three-fifths of the streets of this width were paved and two-fifths were devoted to walks, the walks along Third and Walnut Streets were probably about 10 feet wide. This was probably true also for the Third Street sidewalk next to Lot (B). This width coincides roughly with the present width of these walks, which is about 12 feet, and the 2 foot discrepancy

may be the result of errors in original surveys or to re-regulation of the streets.

The Dock Street facade, however, was well back from the property line. Here the walk was in two levels. The outer level was a continuation of the Walnut Street sidewalk. We have no documentary evidence of its width, but various prints and photographs indicate that its outer edge followed the curve of the portico. Beginning at the southeast corner of the rectangular portion of the Exchange (114 feet east of the Third Street property line) it seems to have formed a half circle whose radius was 57 feet 8 inches (half of the width of the exchange plus the width of the Walnut Street sidewalk). The inner level, perhaps more nearly a broad step than a sidewalk, was higher than the outer. It, too, was in the form of an arc, and its outer edge followed the curve of the portico of the building at a distance equal to the width of the circular stairs. (See Illustrations Nos. 4-8).

The north wall of the Exchange was also well back from the north property line of Lot (A). The westernmost 50 feet of the wall was 16 feet 9 inches from the south line of Lot (B). The remaining 64 feet of the wall was separated from Dock Street by a triangular piece of ground measuring about 33 feet by 64 feet by 75 feet. (See Illustration No. 1). At its intersection

with Third Street, Dock Street was, in the 1790's, about 95 feet wide, and is now 92.890 feet wide. At its intersection with Walnut, Dock was about 120 feet wide, and is now 160.70 feet in width.³ There is no evidence as to the width of the Dock Street sidewalk in 1834. It is now about 15 feet wide.

2. Paving Materials:

All views show that the sidewalks around the Exchange were edged with curbstones. The 1840 engraving of the Exchange (see Illustrations Nos. 4 and 5) and a photograph taken about 1890, when magnified_x (see Illustration No. 8), show that the outer walk before the portico was paved with square flagstones. The same type of paving was no doubt used for the other sidewalks as well. None of the views give an indication of the material used in paving the inner walk or step around the portico; it may have been of marble to match the material of which the building was constructed.

There is no direct evidence as to whether or not the area between the north facade of the Exchange and the north property line of Lot (A) was paved. However, in 1834 and for years thereafter the United States Post Office occupied the first floor, north side, of the Exchange, and its main entrance was at the center of the north wall. It is, therefore, very probable that

3.

Present widths taken from 1850 Survey. Discrepancy in the width at Third may be due to errors in early surveys. The discrepancy in width at Walnut is in part accounted for by the surrender of 30 feet 8 inches or 38 feet 8 inches of property by the Exchange Company. The measurements are from property line to property line, not curb to curb.

heavy use dictated the paving of this entire area between building and property line, and, if so, probably the paving material used was flagstone. The only pictorial evidence for this area is a late 19th Century photograph (see Illustration No. 7) which shows that it was then paved.

Dock Street, was, as the views show, paved with pebblestones or cobblestones in 1834 and for many years thereafter. Views of that period also show a walk two flagstones wide across Dock Street at Walnut. The south edge of the walk seems to be in line with the Walnut Street curb. A walk one flagstone in width ran from the curb in front of the portico to the southwest corner of Dock and Walnut (see Illustration No. 4). The early views do not show other cross walks in the vicinity of the Exchange. However, the late 19th Century photograph seems to show a flagstone walk three stones wide, leading to the corner of Dock and Moravian Streets, which may well date from the period just after construction of the building. There were also, probably, flagstone walks across Dock at its intersection with Third, and across both Third and Walnut at the intersection of those streets.

3. Trees and shrubs:

Shortly after completion of the Exchange a row of trees was planted along the edge of the Walnut Street sidewalk. A print by a contemporary artist shows six (see Illustration No. 2); an 1840 map of Philadelphia shows eight (see Illustration No. 3).

Neither these views nor those photographs which also show the same trees give any indication of type, other than that they were deciduous. The early view also seems to show trees in the area north of the Exchange, but details of this print are of doubtful accuracy. Other than this, there is no evidence of trees or shrubs on the north side north of the Exchange property.

4. Miscellaneous Landscape features:

In the 1790's there was a street light at the corner of Third and Walnut and a pump a few feet down Walnut from the corner of Third. The street light may have survived until after the erection of the Exchange, the pump probably did not.

The early views of the Exchange show two miscellaneous landscape features. A 19th Century view (see Illustration No. 2), shows a row of awning posts interspersed with the row of trees along Walnut Street. Another print (see Illustration No. 4) shows tree boxes in use on Walnut Street.

Three landscape features appear in later photographs. Photographs taken in 1869 and around 1890 (see Illustrations Nos. 6 and 8) show two lamp posts on the edge of the sidewalk in front of the portico and a horse trough nearby.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 2

The Philadelphia Exchange about 1838,
by a 19th Century artist.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 3

The Philadelphia Exchange in 1840,
enlargement from a map of the city.

View of the Philadelphia Exchange in 1840,
engraved by J. T. Bowen.
Photo taken from Nicholas Wainwright's
Philadelphia in the Romantic Age of Lithography.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 5

Enlargement of Illustration No. 4.
Note the characteristics of the paving
in front of the portico of the Exchange.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 6

The Philadelphia Exchange in June, 1869.
Photo courtesy of Free Library of Philadelphia.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 7

The Philadelphia Exchange about 1890.
Photo courtesy of Free Library of Philadelphia.

Chapter II
Illustration No. 8

The Philadelphia Exchange about 1890.
Photo courtesy of Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER III
LANDSCAPE DATA

Prepared by Historian David A. Kimball

EXISTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The present paving of the Walnut Street and Third Street sidewalks was installed after 1900. The paving around the Dock Street portico very probably dates from the erection of the market sheds in the 1920's; the rest of the paving along Dock Street was installed no earlier than 1900. The paving now in place in Dock Street dates from no earlier than the late 19th Century (see Illustration No. 6).

HISTORIC LANDSCAPING

The historic landscaping of the block in which the Philadelphia Exchange stands is discussed in detail in Chapter II, Section 3, of this report. It consisted of:

1. Sidewalks:

These bordered the entire block, and the outer edges were bounded by curbstones. They were paved with square flagstones. The Walnut and Third Street walks were about 10 feet wide; the Dock Street walk probably about 15 feet wide. A curved sidewalk and a curved inner walk or step enclosed the portico of the Exchange. Dock Street was paved with cobblestones and crossed by flagstone walks at the intersections.

2. Trees:

Shortly after 1834 a row of eight deciduous trees was planted along the Walnut Street curb. These trees remained until after 1869.

CHAPTER IV
ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Prepared by Historian David A. Kimball

EXISTING STRUCTURES

There are no existing historic structures other than the Exchange itself on the grounds of the Philadelphia Exchange.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Other than the Exchange, the only structure within the present grounds of the Exchange after 1834 was the building on Lot (B). Built prior to 1838, it was four and later five stories high, 43 feet on Third Street, 54 feet on Dock, 17 feet 6 inches on the east line and 46 feet on the south line. It was devoid of historic significance.

CHAPTER V

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

Prepared by Historian David A. Kimball

**STUDY OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL
EVIDENCE**

There is no archeological evidence.

Chapter V
Section 2
Page 1

**PREVIOUS ARCHEOLOGICAL REPORTS
RELATING TO THE PROJECT**

None.

FURTHER RESEARCH NEEDED

No archeological research is recommended for the present. When Dock Street is closed it is recommended that investigation of areas of the street bed shown by existing plans and historical research to have been undisturbed by utility lines, sewers and so forth be undertaken to locate any remaining evidences of historic paving.