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HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT

PART II (PORTION)

ARCHITECTURAL DATA SECTION

ON

OLD CITY HALL

Restoration of Roof

Independence National Historical Park

Prepared by
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January 1964

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
Historic Structures Branch

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia

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A P P R O V A L S H E E T

RECOMMENDED

Superintendent

Robert E. Smith

Date _____

Acting

Chief, EODC

Date 1-10-64

Regional Director, Northeast Region

Date _____

APPROVED

Director

Date _____

INTRODUCTION

The existing Old City Hall roof is 32 years old and badly deteriorated.¹ Furthermore it was recently necessary to cut out sections of the roof in order to facilitate installation of new attic steel beams [see Architectural Data Section, Historic Structures Report, Part II (Portion) on Old City Hall Structural Rehabilitation]. Anticipating the replacement of the present roof this report attempts to establish the appearance of the original roof.

PHYSICAL HISTORY OF THE ROOF

Although much of the original roof was lost as a result of the 1823 fire, the roof form is the same as when Old City Hall was first completed in 1791. The roof is hipped and embellished with a pedimented gable on the north slope, a dormer on the south slope and an octagonal cupola centered on the ridge. The extension of the roof over the octagonal bay (of the south wall) is flat. This general description is established by physical evidence, early views and the 1821 insurance survey.² The shingled roof was about half worn at the time of the survey, the gutters were copper and the flat roof of the octagon was covered with copper.

¹This roof dates from the restoration of Old City Hall carried out by the City of Philadelphia in 1922, with repairs and alterations executed in the 1930's.

²Contributionship Survey Book, 1795-1824, 368-69, Survey #4045 dated Jan 5th 1822. See INHP microfilm from records of Philadelphia Contributionship, 212 South Fourth Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Physical evidence indicates that the shingle exposure was about nine inches to the weather.³

The fire on 25 February 1823 destroyed the original roof covering, about half of the roof framing as well as the cupola and dormer. Apparently the cupola, dormer and south hips were rebuilt along the original lines.⁴ When the roof was re-shingled after the fire, dressed shingles with beveled butts were used. These were also laid nine inches to the weather.⁵

Mid-nineteenth century photographs indicate that shingles on the hips were swirled but the valleys were open and flashed. The ridge combs projected over the western slopes. The sides of the dormer were shingled and painted a light color.⁶ Sometime after 1850 the shingled cupola dome was covered with sheet metal. Between 1875 and 1889 the

³Notches in the original rafters indicates that the shingle lath was about 9" on centers. The spacing of shingle lath is a reflection of the shingle exposure; therefore the original shingle exposure would also be about 9".

⁴See Architectural Data Section, Historic Structures Report, Part I, Supplement I, on Old City Hall, dated May 1961.

⁵A section of the 1823 shingle work is still intact where it was covered by the cupola (see EODC Neg. No. 1197).

⁶See W. & F. Langenheim Talbotype photographs dated June and July 1850: INHP Neg. Nos. 2097 and 2099 from originals at Missouri Historical Society. The eighteenth century appearance of these details is not known. See Appendix, this report, for information on early roofing practices.

rest of the shingled roof was covered with tin.⁷

During the restoration of Old City Hall in 1921-22, the entire roof was stripped including the tin, old shingles and shingle lath. The roof was "restored" with 24 inch cypress shingles laid seven inches to the weather on shingle lath over gypsum sheathing which was laid on the original (and 1823) roof framing members. The hips were swirled but the valleys were open with flashing. The ridge combs were placed over the eastern slopes. The sheet metal on the cupola was replaced with shingles.⁸

During the 1930's the roof was repaired and the swirled hips were changed to Boston hips.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the advanced deterioration, the existing roof should be replaced. Based on the foregoing evidence and known 18th century roofing practices (see Appendix), we recommend that the roof be covered with dressed shingles (with square butts) laid nine inches to the weather; the hips and valleys swirled; pole gutters along the eaves (sloping to the downspouts) and the octagonal bay covered with sheet copper; ridge combs projecting over the western slope and replace the bed moulding around the base of the cupola as indicated in the 1850 photograph (see note 6).

⁷See EODC Neg. No. 3836 from original in Stauffer Extra Illustrated History of Philadelphia by Westcott, Vol. 16, (illustrations not paginated), Manuscript Collections, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁸See pp. 22-3, 32-3, and 34 of Work No. 421, Specifications for General Construction for the Improvement of Independence Hall Group of Buildings, Restoration of Old City Hall. INHP Collection.

APPENDIX

Articles of the Carpenters Company of Philadelphia: and their Rules
for Measuring and Valuing House - Carpenters Work. Philadelphia 1786.

Carpenters Company Library, Philadelphia, Pa.

pp. 5, 6		E d s
	New Lathing and shingling with 3 feet shingles, 11 inch courses; per square	- 12 -
	Ditto, 10 inch courses, per square	- 13 -
	Ditto, 9 inch courses, per square	- 17 -
	Ditto, 8 inch courses, per square	- 15 -
	Ditto, 7 inch courses, per square	- 17 6
	Ditto, with 2 feet shingles, 7 inch courses, per square	- 18 -
	Ditto, 6 inch courses, per square	1 - -
	Ditto, 5 1/2 inch courses, per square	1 1 -
	Lathing and shingling with 18 inch shingles, 5 inches wide, 4 1/2 inch courses, per square	1 6 -
	Ditto, 4 inch courses, per square	1 10 -
	And with the common 18 inch shingles, 4 1/2 inch courses, per square	1 10 -
	Ditto, 4 inch courses, per square	1 12 6
	Ripping off old shingling, and shingling again with either sort of shingles and courses, charge at the same price as new lathing and shingling; and for lathing only, charge one fourth of the price of the shingling; altering laths or other repairs, charge for by the time spent thereat.	

Shingling hips or valleys, at double price.

Valley gutters prepared for lead or copper,
per foot, running.

If shingled, add in proportion.

pp. 35, 36	GUTTERS of plank shingled in roofs, per foot	
	lineal	- 1 3
	Ditto, preparing for lead or copper, per foot	- - 9
	If the lead or copper of gutters are laid by the carpenter, add per foot	- - 6
	Common plain gutters under eaves, of scantling from three to four inches thick, and five or six inches broad, exclusive of their putting up, per foot, from 4 to	- - 5
	If these gutters have an architrave on them add	- - 2