

# A Brief Survey of the Architectural History of the Old State House, Boston, Massachusetts

by Sara B. Chase

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*COVER: "THE OLD STATE HOUSE AND STATE STREET" BY JOHN B. MARSTON, c. 1801. Oil on Canvas, 37½ in. by 52⅛ in. (Photograph courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.)*

# A Brief Survey of the Architectural History of the Old State House, Boston, Massachusetts[1]

SARA B. CHASE*

Even before they built their first structure to house a merchants' exchange and government meeting hall, the early settlers of Boston had selected a site near Long Wharf for a marketplace. Early in 1658 they built there a medieval half-timbered Town House. That building, the first Boston Town House, burned to the ground in October, 1711. It was replaced by a brick building, erected on the same site. This building, like the earlier Town House, had a "merchant's walk" on the first floor and meeting chambers for the various colonial government bodies on the second floor.

Although this new building was called by various names—the Court House, the Second Town House, the Province House (not to be confused with the Peter Sergeant House which was also called by that name) —the name most frequently used in references of the period is the State House. The designer of the 1712 State House is not known, but records indicate that William Payne, of whom little is known, was the builder. In May, 1712, a stone was laid at the corner of the site and construction commenced. Samuel Sewall, who recorded in his *Diary* that he carved his initials in the stone, also recorded the opening of the first court sessions in the newly completed State House in April, 1713; he also mentioned the large and "costly" windows.[2]

Construction costs of five thousand pounds were shared: the Province paid one-half; the Town of Boston and Suffolk County each paid one-quarter. This apportionment approximated the relative share of use of the building by the three separate governmental bodies. The Royal Governor and his Council met in a chamber at the east end of the second floor, while the General Assembly of the Province, with representatives from each town, met in a larger chamber in the middle of the second floor. At the west end of the second floor was a smaller chamber where both the superior and the inferior courts of Suffolk County held sessions. Until 1742 when they moved to Faneuil Hall, Boston's Selectmen met in the middle (or representatives') chamber and used a few finished rooms on the third floor for committee meetings.

The first floor served primarily as a merchants' exchange, as it had in the previous Town House. Situated less than one-quarter mile from Long Wharf, the Old State House was a convenient first stop for ships' captains when they landed in Boston. Documents from the period indicate that there was also, at least briefly, a post office on the first floor of the State House and two small offices for Province and county records.

Some features of the exterior appearance of the State House in the years between 1712 and 1747 can be seen in engraved views of Boston. No representations of the entire building dating to that period are known, but the upper stories of the State House can be seen rather well, even though the views are crowded (Figs. 1 and 2). In the center

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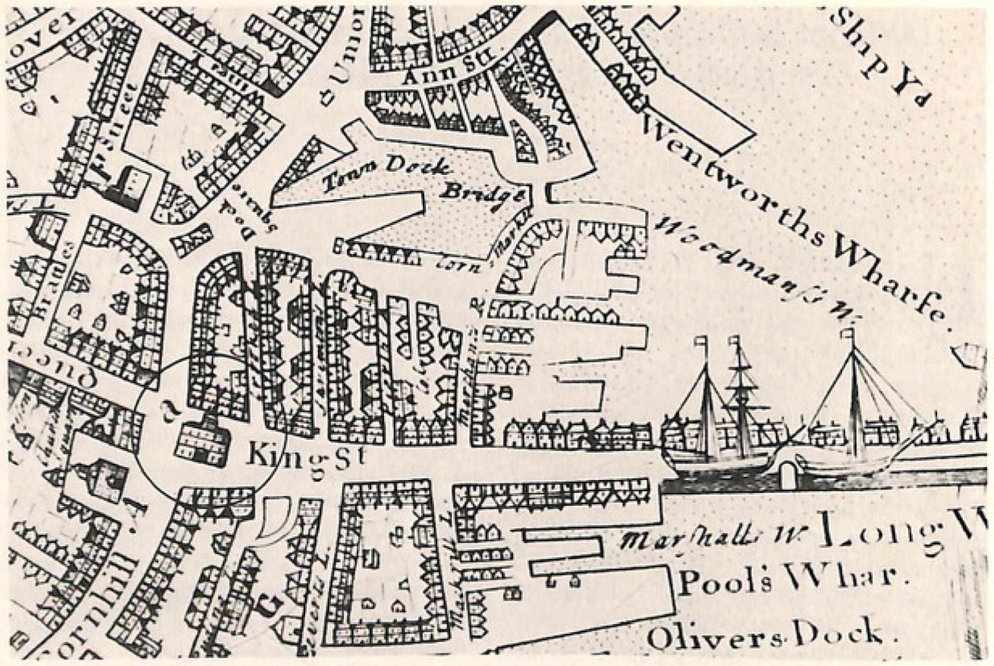



FIG. 1. DETAIL OF KING STREET SHOWING THE OLD STATE HOUSE (circled). From John Bonner, "The Town of Boston in New England" (Boston, 1722: SPNEA Archives).

of the roof there appears to be an open octagonal tower topped by a swallow-tailed banner weathervane. The roof, shown with a balustrade above the dormers, may well have been a gambrel roof (cf. Harvard Hall, the First Church, the Peter Sergeant House). These early views from the Harbor show the east facade with the familiar stepped gables, scrolls in the gable steps, a sundial flanked by "ox-eye" windows in the gable peak, and a second floor balcony.

The balcony, which opened from the Council Chamber, provided a prominent place for public announcements. The War of the Spanish Succession was announced from this balcony in 1740, and a call for volunteers was issued. The colonial volunteers, who won a significant victory at the fortress of Louisburg in Nova Scotia, later used their military experience in the war for their own independence from England. Under the balcony a doorway from the first floor opened onto a large granite platform and steps down to the street. Like the balcony above, the steps also served a civic purpose. Public disgrace was one means of punishment in early America, and at least one forger was forced to stand on the steps of the Old State House. There, every important Boston merchant and many foreign traders would be sure to see him as he stood between the hours of twelve and one o'clock wearing a large square of paper on his chest, labeled "CHEAT."

Celebrations and commemorations were observed frequently in the Council Chamber. Queen Anne's death occasioned a solemn observance; King George's coronation was celebrated with ample quantities of wine, brandy, and biscuit. A regular feature of such celebrations was the "illumination" of the Old State House.



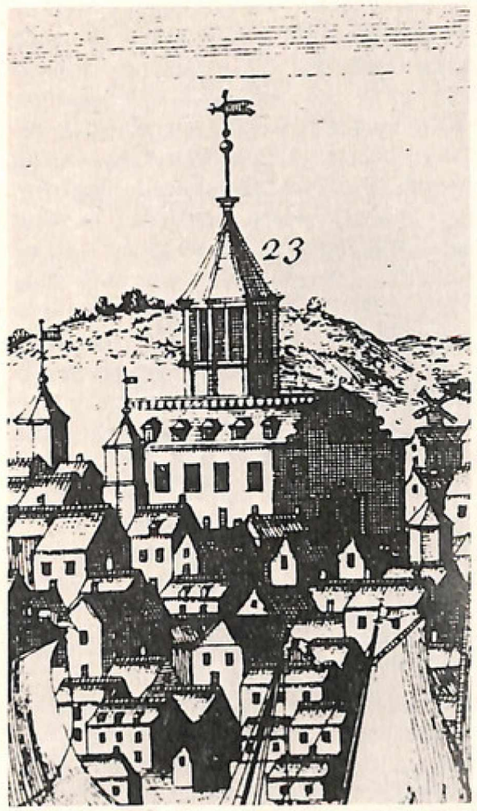



FIG. 2. DETAIL SHOWING THE OLD STATE HOUSE. From William Burgis, "A South East View of the Great Town of Boston . . . " (Boston, 1743: Photograph courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society).

Candles were placed in specially made "strips" in every window and must have given the building a resplendent glow. Wine for the celebrations might have been carried up from the basement, as records indicate that the Old State House cellar was rented to wine merchants as early as 1714, and for at least 140 years thereafter.

In December, 1747, after a period of intense cold weather, fire again destroyed the State House. One writer lamented that the "beautiful building was consumed utterly . . . except for the outer brick walls."[3] As before, re-building took place within a year on the same site. What remained of the older brick walls was incorporated into the new structure, which had the same dimensions.

The exterior appearance of the State House in the period of its greatest political importance, 1748 to about 1800, is more fully documented. The earliest known view of the building by itself was engraved in 1751 from a drawing by Thomas Dawes, Jr. (Fig. 3). Dawes, who worked on the State House a number of times during his career as a mason, showed only the south elevation of the building but portrayed it in great detail. The major exterior changes evidenced by his drawing are in the design of the roof and the tower. A pitched roof and a three-stage square tower had replaced the earlier octagonal tower and gambrel roof. Subsequent views show that this roof design, which gave the building a rather provincial Wren-baroque appearance, remained intact until about 1870 with few alterations.

A politically significant alteration shown in Dawes's engraving is the replacement of the scroll by a lion rampant in the southern step of the east gable. Presumably, as is shown in later eighteenth-century views, a unicorn stands opposite. Dawes also shows clearly, if not necessarily accurately, the details of the central doorway in the south facade, twelve-over-twelve sash, and doorways and bulkheads opening into the basement.

The interior of the State House as it was rebuilt in 1748 may well have had substantially the same plan as it had in the 1712 build, with three chambers and their anterooms on the second floor, a large open space on the first floor, and two stairways leading from first to second floor. No original drawings of the 1748 plan have appeared, but, given the framing of the building, the speculative plans and dimensions of the second floor according to a later source seem plausible.

Hugh Morrison described the plan of the second floor in *Early American Architecture:*

> Access to the second floor was by two staircases leading to hallways between the three main rooms. Of these, the easternmost, a room 32 feet square [served] as the Council Chamber. . . . In the middle of the building was the Representatives' Chamber measuring 32 by 38 feet with small lobbies in the stair hall at either side. . . . The westernmost room, measuring about 22 by 32 feet, was the Court Chamber.[4]

Edgar T. P. Walker, Consulting Architect in 1956 for the Boston National Historic Sites Commission, drew a plan which shows how the second floor might have been laid out (Fig. 4).

A description of the State House in 1791 also mentions a Council Chamber which measured thirty-two feet by thirty-two feet, with a lobby or anteroom:

> The State House is an elegant brick building, standing at the head of State Street. . . . It is 110 feet in length and 38 in breadth. The foundations of the present walls were laid A.D. 1712, the former State House having been reduced to ashes in the great fire of the preceding year. The internal part of this building again experienced the desolating flame in 1747, when a vast number of ancient books and early records, together with a collection of valuable papers, were destroyed. . . . The Senate Chamber is 32 feet square and 15 feet in height, furnished with a convenient lobby for committees to transact business in. The Representatives' Chamber is 57½ feet in length, 32 in breadth, and the same height as the former, with a well-constructed lobby.[5]

The added length of the Representatives' Chamber cited above represents an enlargement made in 1776 to accommodate the newly-formed state's increased number of representatives.

Although no other documentary sources are known against which Morrison's description can be tested, his statement is given credence by the structural system of the Old State House. Physical evidence makes clear that the extant roof trusses date from the mid-eighteenth century. There are ten trusses, each of which defines a structural plane. The planes can be thought of as extending down to the basement directly below each truss. In local eighteenth-century construction major room partitions are apt to be located along the girders that define the structural planes. Partitions that defined stair halls could then pass up between stories beside girders and thus present an uninterrupted plaster surface throughout the height of the stair. The locations of room partitions and the consequent stair partitions in the plans described above would very nearly correspond to several of the structural planes. The speculative plan thus seems not unreasonable as a representation of the second floor in the mid-eighteenth century.

The first floor was more open in plan. It was used by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery for drills when the weather was bad, but it was also the scene of less orderly activities. The House of Representatives in 1784 voted that the Suffolk County Sheriff or one of his deputies should "attend at the State House" because

> the General Court have been much interrupted by the disorderly Conduct of a number of persons who dayley assemble on the lower floor of the State House which not only impedes the publick Business, but is an Indignity offered to Government.[6]

In the cellar, space continued to be rented, as before. A "copper engine," first mentioned in 1733, occupied some of the space in the basement of the Old State House. Quite possibly the engine held water for putting out fires; if so, the basement of the Old State House in the eighteenth century served as a fire station as well as a wine cellar.

The exterior of the Old State House



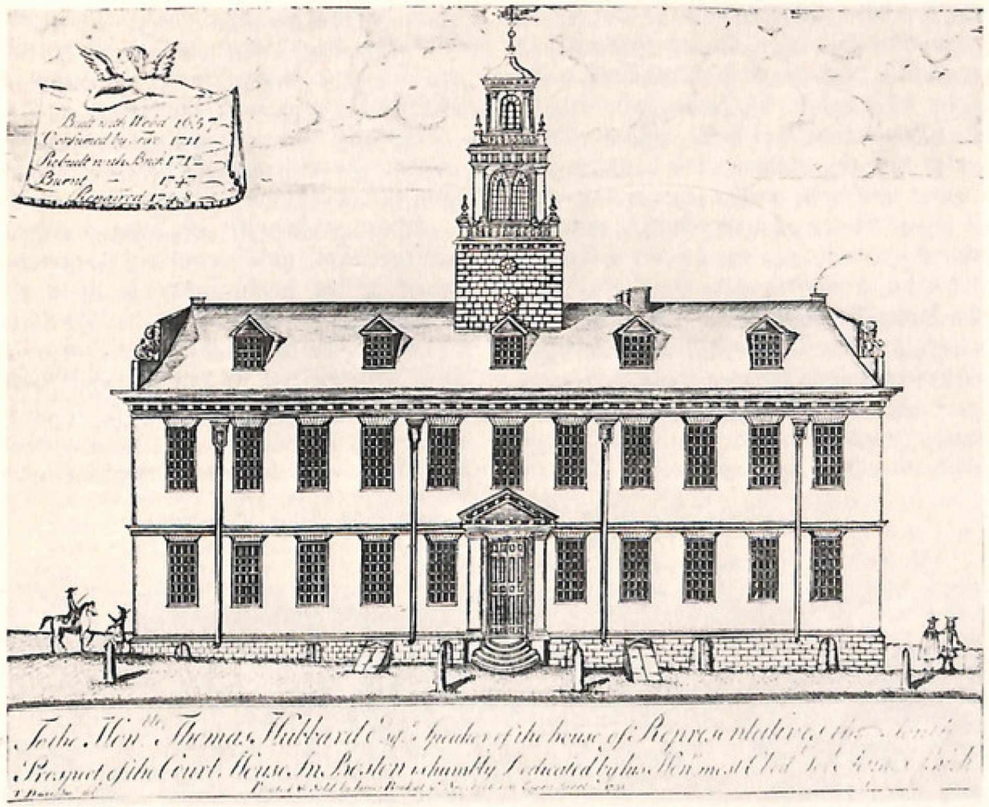


FIG. 3. "SOUTH PROSPECT OF THE COURT HOUSE IN BOSTON" by Thomas Dawes, Jr., and Nathaniel Hurd. (Boston, 1751: Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.)

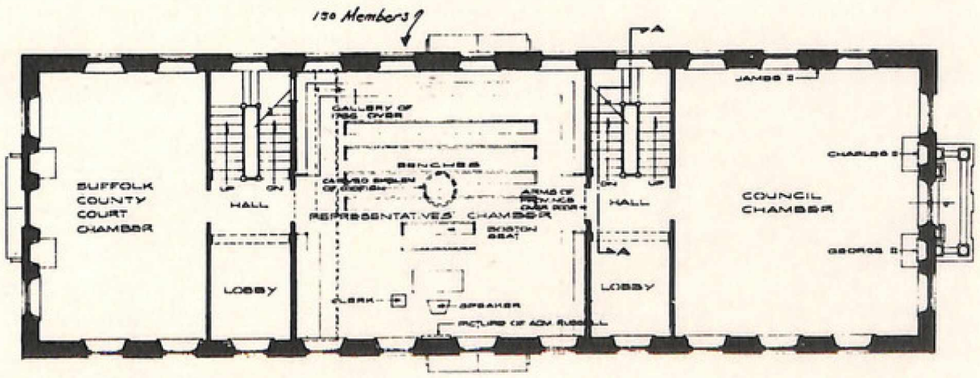



FIG. 4. "PROPOSED RESTORATION OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE . . . SECOND FLOOR PLAN, 1956." From Edgar T. P. Walker, *Final Draft of the Report of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission,* p. 487. (Photograph courtesy of the Bostonian Society.)

underwent a transformation in 1773, being "fitted up in a most elegant manner with the whole of the outside painted of a stone color which gives it a fine appearance."[7] Recently uncovered paint evidence indicates that the building had been painted ochres and buffs earlier. Documentary as well as paint evidence strongly suggests that the exterior remained painted through 1909. An oil painting of the Old State House by James B. Marston (Cover) shows the building painted a handsome ochre color with white trim. The east gable steps were no longer adorned with the lion and unicorn, which were torn down and burned with the other royal symbols in 1776; instead, baroque scrolls appeared. This view of the Old State House, in fact, shows the appearance of the building at the climax of its period of greatest political importance.

After the Massachusetts state government moved to the Bulfinch State House in 1798, the fate of the Old State House was uncertain. After four years of negotiations with the State, the Selectmen of Boston, on behalf of the town, paid the State six thousand dollars for title to the Old State House in 1803. The Boston Selectmen, in turn, decided not to sell the Old State House since "the purposes for which it might and probably would be occupied would tend greatly to encumber the most

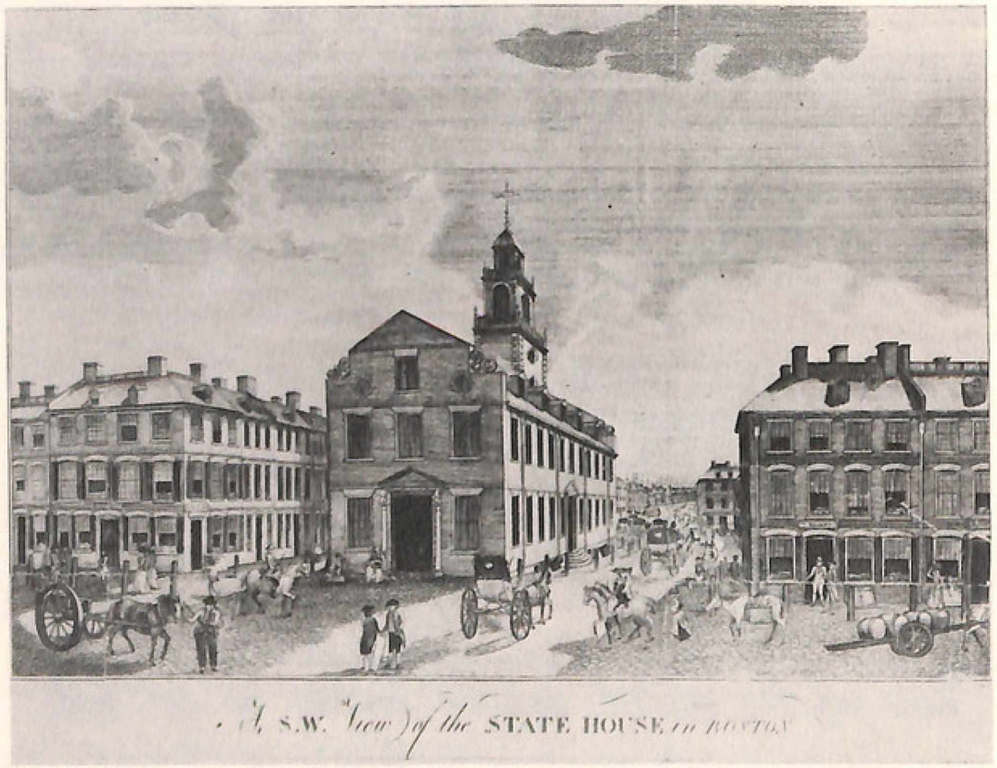



FIG. 5. "A S.W. VIEW OF THE STATE HOUSE, IN BOSTON" by S. Hill. From *Massachusetts Magazine,* vol. 10, no. 8 (1793: SPNEA Archives).



frequented street in the Town, which is in its present state not of sufficient width for public accommodation."[8]

The Town decided instead to lease the Old State House. The terms of the lease most directly relevant to the fabric of the building include what might be considered an early form of preservation restriction. It states that

> . . . it would be for the interest of the Town to lease the Old State House for a term of time not less than ten nor to exceed fifty years, and the rent to be paid quarterly or annually; and that it be a condition of the Lease that the house be put into good repair and kept so during the term for which it may be leased by and at the expense of the Lessee and shall be occupied for public or private offices and such other purposes only as the Selectmen for the time being shall approve of, and that no alteration be made in the external form of the building without their approbation. . . .[9]

Alterations did occur, however, as commercial use of the Old State House increased.

Most of the interior space on the first floor of the Old State House was subdivided for shops and offices during the period 1800-29. Mrs. Charles Bulfinch wrote in a letter in 1804, "The Old Town House is neatly fitted up and divided into shops and stores, where are all the varieties of manufacturers from different parts of the world, to draw attention of the young and gay."[10]

The trade card of William Barry, who kept a shop in the Old State House from 1807 to 1829, shows the west facade (Washington Street) as it was altered to accommodate his business (Fig. 6). The east facade was also altered, as an engraving by Abel Bowen, published in 1817, shows (Fig. 7). The large stone stairway from the street to the first floor was removed, and the basement openings were changed.

An engraving printed a little later indicates another significantly revised feature on the east facade (Fig. 8). In the peak of the gable the eighteenth-century sundial has been replaced by a clock-face. Simon Willard signed the clockworks installed a little later, in 1830. The original Willard clockworks are still in place and intact in the Old State House, even though the clock-face was replaced by a sundial in 1957.

The first period of commercial use of the Old State House closed in May, 1830, when the Boston City Council decided that the Old State House should be adapted for use as the City Hall. The Joint Committee on Repairs of the Old State House was ordered by the Council to put the building into good condition for use by the City of Boston. The building was to be treated in a manner suitable to the edifice and creditable to the City. . . .[11]

The architect responsible for the "suitable" and "creditable" 1830 remodelling was Isaiah Rogers, assisted by William Washburn. Rogers, whose first noteworthy Classical Revival building, the Tremont House, had been completed only a year earlier, revised the east and west facades by adding Doric porticos. A "fac-simile" of a plan made by Isaiah Rogers was printed in 1882 (Fig. 9).

The Rogers Plan shows, in addition to the east portico elevation, the first and second floor spaces of the Old State House which Abel Bowen described in his 1838 *Picture of Boston:*

> Being in the very focus of business and nearly in the centre of the city, the use to which this venerable pile is now devoted appears to give universal satisfaction.
>
> On the first floor are three large rooms; that facing Washington street is the Post-Office. At the other extremity, looking down State street, is Topliff's News Room, one of the best conducted establishments, for the accommodation of merchants, in the United States. The middle room, a lofty apartment, supported by pillars, is the

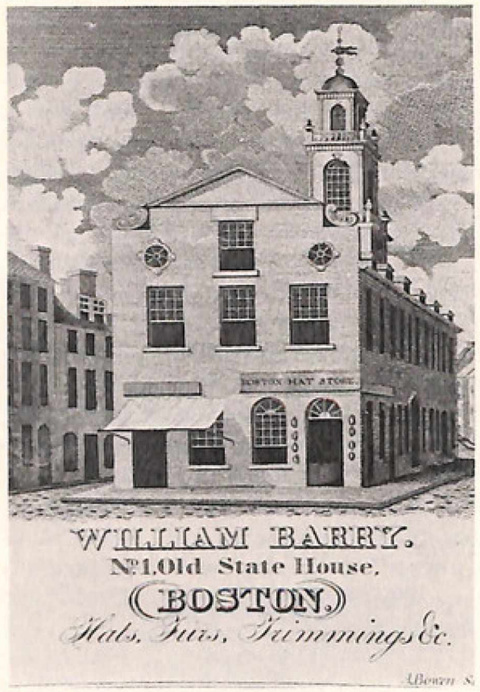



FIG. 6. TRADE CARD OF WILLIAM BARRY SHOWING WEST AND SOUTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE engraved by Abel Bowen, c. 1807-29. (Photograph courtesy of Richard C. Nylander.)



FIG. 7. EAST AND NORTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE. From Charles Shaw, *A Topographical and Historical Description of Boston,* frontispiece (Boston, 1817: SPNEA Archives).



FIG. 8. "VIEW OF STATE STREET & OLD STATE HOUSE" SHOWING EAST AND NORTH FACADES. From Caleb H. Snow, *A History of Boston,* facing p. 280 (Boston, 1825: SPNEA Archives).



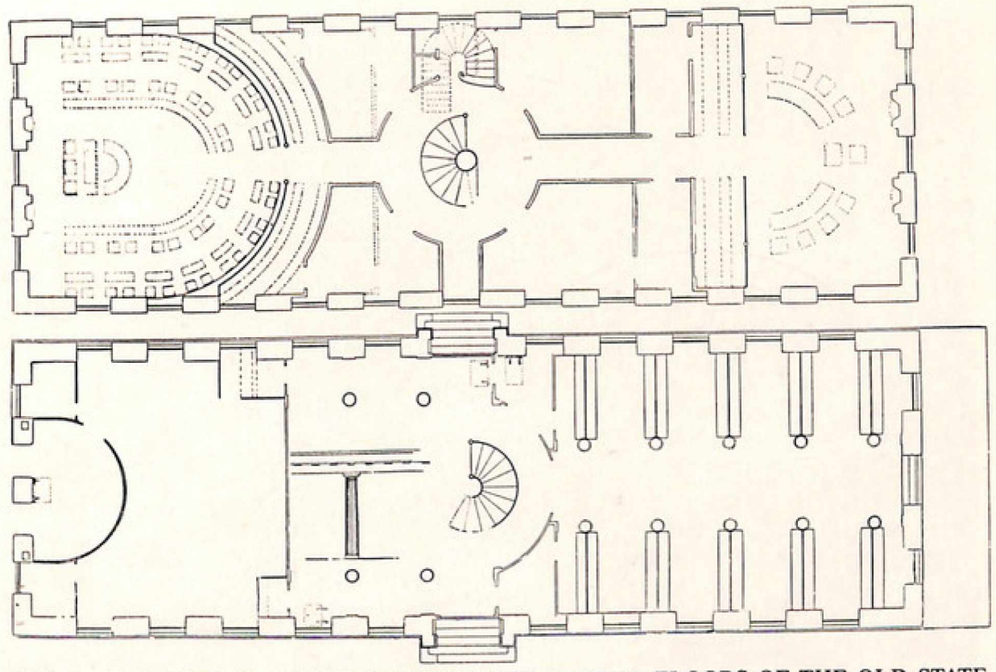


FIG. 9. ROGERS'S PLAN OF THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, 1830. From the *Re-dedication of the Old State House, Boston, July 11, 1882.*

> Merchants' Exchange, and common thoroughfare to the public offices.
>
> From this central room is a flight of winding stairs, leading to a suite of apartments in the second story. Directly over the Post-Office [on the west] is the Hall of the Common Council, in which they ordinarily meet on public business. In the opposite end of the building [the east] is the Hall of the Mayor and Aldermen. In this room the chief Magistrate of the city, together with the City Clerk, remain through the day, in the discharge of their ordinary duties.[12]

The Classical Revival revisions of the Old State House drew strong criticism from contemporary newspapers and journals. Both financial and aesthetic objections were voiced. The cost ran to twenty-five thousand dollars and as one writer points out in the *New England Palladium,* the expense was compounded by the loss of most of the building's former rental income. The new architectural features of the Old State House were also criticized. "In point of appearance, the Old State House will not be improved by the change . . . mutations brought about for show, are the means of losing as much as they gain for the edifice. It is like plastering and painting a matron very far in years."[13]

The Old State House ceased to be the City Hall after ten years, and city government offices moved out in 1841. During the four decades which followed, commercial use of the Old State House increased, while exterior maintenance declined. In the late 1840's two firms located in the Old State House put signs on the building and portrayed the building in their advertisements. Located in the eastern end of the building was Brown, Lawrence, and Stickney, a cloth and clothing company (Fig. 12). They evidently altered the basement openings to accommodate their store. On the western

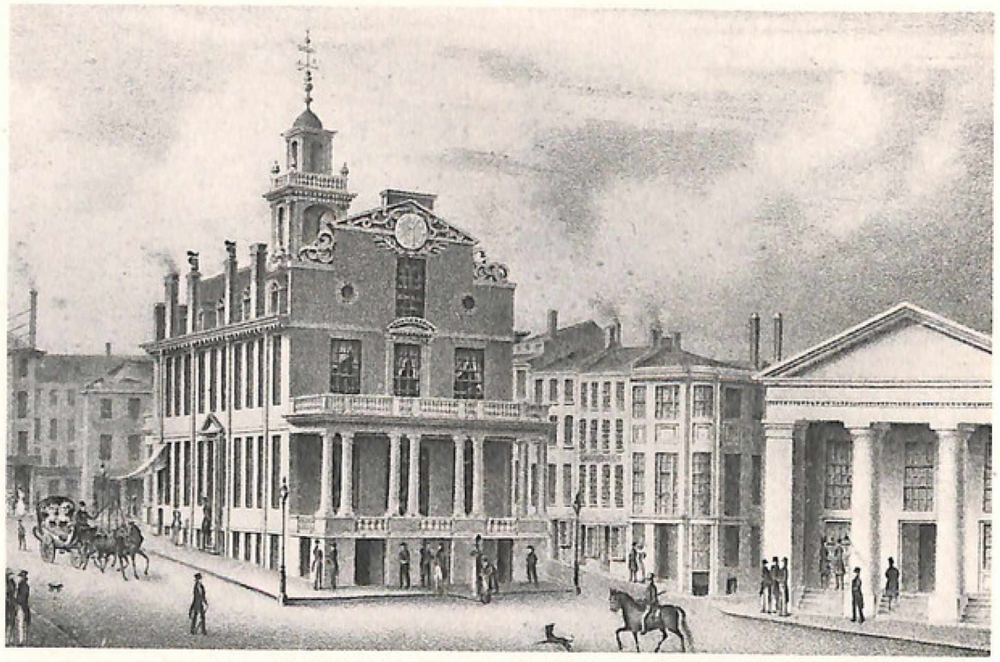


FIG. 10. "VIEW OF THE POST OFFICE, CITY HALL, &c TAKEN FROM THE S.W. IN WASHINGTON ST., BOSTON" SHOWING WEST FACADE OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE. Lithograph, Boston, c. 1835. (Photograph courtesy of the Boston Athenaeum.)

end of the first floor, a tailor shop belonging to Charles A. Smith occupied all the space from Washington Street back to the circular center stairway. Smith's shop stayed in the same location for nearly thirty years. In about 1850 a large advertising poster was printed for Smith, showing, in addition to an admirable view of the west and north facades of the building, one of the earliest representations of a portion of the interior of the Old State House (Fig. 13).

Tenants of the Old State House continued to multiply. The 1870 *Boston Directory* list of Old State House occupants runs to fifty different names. By 1880 use of the building by diverse business and professional people had reached maximum intensity. Nearly covered by signs, the Old State House looked more like a billboard than a building (Fig. 15).

Small wonder, then, that many City Council members argued that the Old State House was "disfigured" and "defaced." Another objection was raised in the Centennial Year, 1876, when some members of the Joint Standing Committee on Streets complained bitterly of traffic problems caused by the Old State House. In spite of the historic and patriotic spirit of the time, they strongly recommended that the building be demolished. It may well be that the demolition effort failed due to the offer of the City of Chicago to purchase the Old State House, remove it piece by piece, and re-erect it on the shores of Lake Michigan.

The vision of Boston's Old State House sitting in Chicago seems to have shocked local antiquarians into awareness of the serious decline of the building. In 1881 the organization soon to be called the Bostonian Society was formed. Through the Bostonian Society and William Whitmore, a noted antiquarian who was also a member of the City Council, a movement to save the Old State House gained momentum.



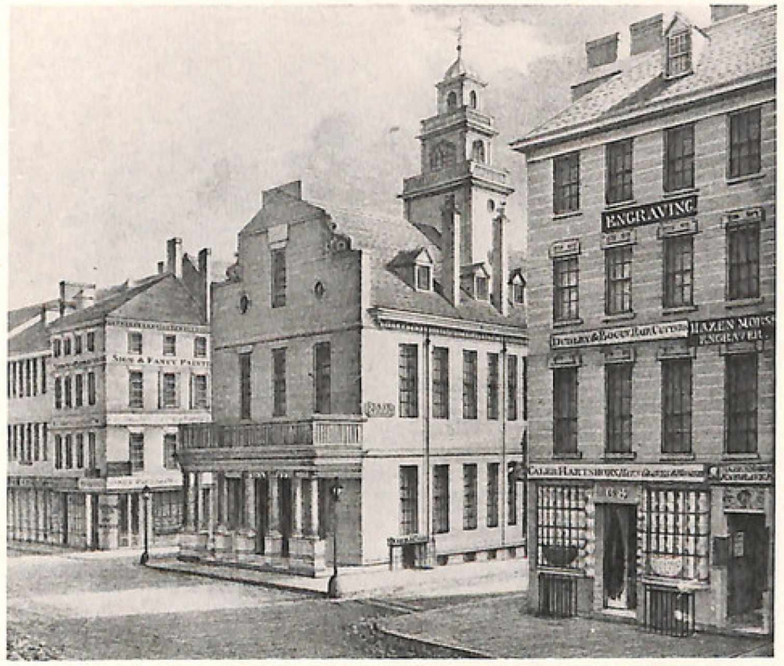



FIG. 11. "CITY HALL AND U. S. B. BANK, BOSTON, MASS." SHOWING EAST AND SOUTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE. Lithograph, Boston, c. 1836. (Photograph courtesy of the Boston Athenaeum.)

The year 1881 marked a turning point in the history of the Old State House. As the debate on the question of its demolition intensified, proponents of demolition cited the following arguments: the building impeded traffic; it was producing less and less income; it no longer had an historic appearance; and, lacking "original material," it was not a "genuine relic." Antiquarian William Whitmore, on the other hand, staunchly defended the Old State House:

> The building is substantially what it was originally. . . . The walls are not only intact, but the windows, floors, and timbers are the



FIG. 12. EAST FACADE OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE. From an 1848 receipt of Brown, Lawrence & Stickney. (Photograph courtesy of the Bostonian Society.)




FIG. 13. ADVERTISING POSTER PRINTED FOR CHARLES A. SMITH & CO. SHOWING WEST AND NORTH FACADES AND INTERIOR OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, Lithograph, c. 1855. (Photograph courtesy of the Boston Athenaeum.)






FIG. 14. EAST AND NORTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, c. 1866. (SPNEA Archives.)

> same. That work was put up to last for generations, and it has lasted. The changes I speak of have been such as are made in every old building; such as the tearing down of partitions and putting in stairways for convenience. The walls are in the same condition, and it is as genuine a relic as can be found. . . . It is just as feasible for us to restore the Old State House as it was to restore Independence Hall, more than that, we have ten times more material than Mr. Etting had when he began there ten years ago.[14]

The preservation mentality prevailed, and in September, 1881, the Council gave the Committee on Public Buildings a budget of thirty-five thousand dollars for restoration.

The building's steady degradation through "adaptive abuse" was halted by the decision of the Boston City Council to restore the Old State House to an earlier appearance—an appearance that would call to mind its role as the setting of significant events of Revolutionary times. George Clough, Boston's City Architect from 1873-1883, was in charge of the work, which he brought to completion after six months in June, 1882.

Removal of Rogers's 1830 east portico and of the late nineteenth-century mansard roof were the first steps in restoration. Clough found that the main cornice and the ten trusses supporting the roof were all in "a good state of preservation," even though all of the early roof up to eight feet above the cornice between the trusses had been removed. The 1748 trusses, with certain twentieth-century reinforcements, remain today.

The condition of the tower, on the other hand, necessitated removal and replacement of all of the sash and two-thirds of the pilasters, pedestals, balustrades, and carved finials. Clough replaced the two-over-two sash on the upper floors with twelve-over-twelve, but left the two-over-two sash on the lower floors. He also left the granite window surrounds and granite facing on the foundation.

One mildly controversial feature of the restoration was the placement of a lion and a unicorn on the east gable steps. Supposedly to appease Bostonians whose sensitivity to the royal symbols caused them to raise objections to the lion and unicorn, a gilt eagle and the coat-of-arms of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts were placed on the west facade of the building.

Far more controversy was stirred up by Clough's interior work. The arguments centered on his restoration of a circular stair between the first and second floors. Clough found physical evidence for such a

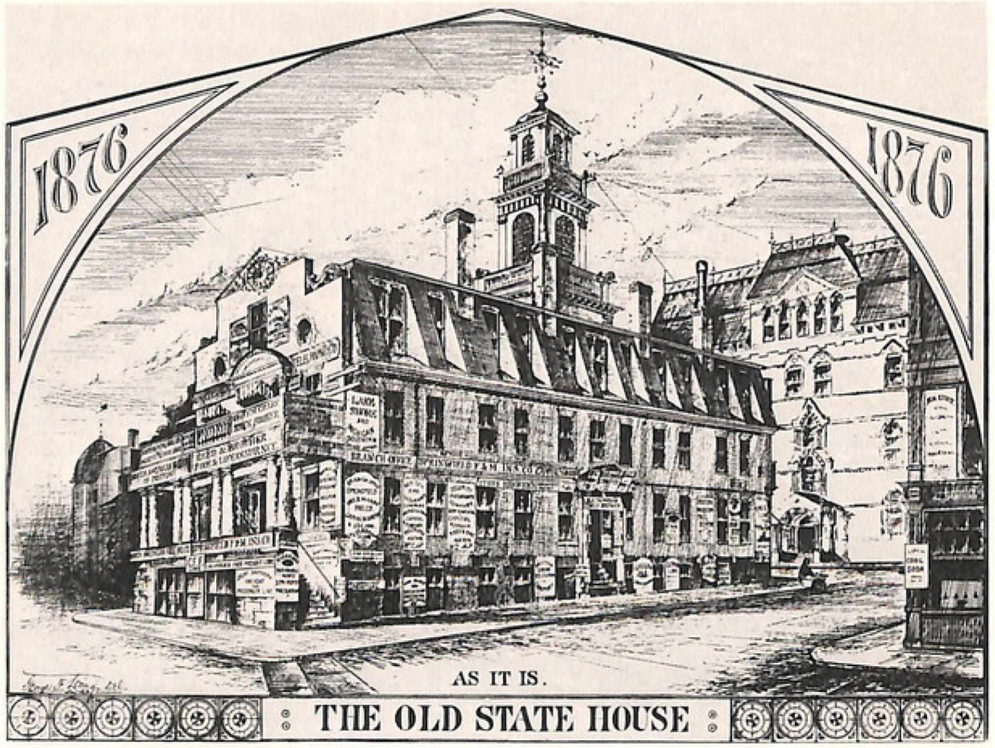



FIG. 15. "THE OLD STATE HOUSE: AS IT IS, 1876" SHOWING EAST AND NORTH FACADES. Pen and ink drawing by George K. Loring made to publicize restoration. (Photograph courtesy of the Bostonian Society.)

stairway, and for a second floor plan which included four small chambers opening off the circular hall around the head of the stairs. Whitmore added support to the circular stairs and second floor plan. He found drawings among the papers of Isaiah Rogers, architect of the 1830 classical revival modifications, which showed the circular stairway and four ante-rooms or small offices. Whitmore believed that the Rogers drawings showed a plan which had existed since 1748, not a design which Rogers (or his assistant, William Washburn) had created in 1830. Whitmore was wrong, as documentary evidence already cited, shows. One critic in particular, George Moore, raised his voice during the years immediately following the restoration, asserting that "no such division of space on the second floor as the present existed at any time during the official use of the building by the Legislature—Colonial, Provincial, Revolutionary, or State."[15]

Clough's restoration was completed in June, 1882, and was marked by a ceremony re-dedicating the Old State House. The Bostonian Society had leased the second floor and attic of the Old State House in 1881, and in 1882 installed a museum which focussed on the history of Boston. Later the Bostonian Society took a lease on all of the building except the subway station, thereby taking responsibility for care of the Old State House.






FIG. 16. WEST FACADE OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, c 1876. (SPNEA Archives.)

Construction of a subway station under the east end of the Old State House occurred in 1903-04 as the East Boston tunnel was being built. Although, surprisingly, no hue and cry of protest was raised at that encroachment on the building, construction of a subway line under the Washington Street end of the Old State House in 1905 and plans for another station there aroused a strong protest.

The outcome of the protestors' efforts was the passage of a law (Chapter 385 of the Massachusetts General Laws, Acts of 1907) which settled the subway question.



FIG. 17. WEST AND SOUTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, c. 1886. (Photograph by Wilfred French, SPNEA Archives.)

Although the Boston Transit Commission was permitted to keep the existing subway station in the east end of the Old State House and the track under the basement floor on the west, a Washington Street entry, stairs, and in fact any disturbance to the walls above sidewalk grade, was expressly prohibited. The second section of the Old State House preservation act called for the structure to be restored "as nearly as possible to its provincial condition," and to be maintained as "an historic and patriotic memorial."

Boston's foremost colonial restoration architect, Joseph Everett Chandler, was chosen to do the work. His mandate was to restore the building to "its original provincial style," a difficult task to accomplish with any building but especially so with one as frequently altered as the Old State



FIG. 18. EAST AND NORTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, c. 1883. (SPNEA Archives.)

House. Chandler's attempt to reproduce the provincial appearance of the building resulted in certain full-blown colonial revival details of great charm. It appears that he used the 1791 *Massachusetts Magazine* (see Fig. 5) engraving as his guide for some of the details, in particular, the scroll capitols of the engaged columns flanking the doorways.

In addition to "restoring" the north, south, and west doorways, Chandler replaced the granite around the foundation with brick work including a moulded brick watertable, and installed twelve-over-twelve sash (in somewhat shortened window openings) on the western half of the first story. Chandler also had the paint removed from the exterior brick walls. On the interior, Keayne Hall (first floor) remains today largely as Chandler designed it. Chandler also replaced all of the sash in the Old State House.



FIG. 19. EAST END OF THE REPRESENTATIVES' HALL, OLD STATE HOUSE. From the *Re-dedication of the Old State House, Boston, July 11, 1882.*



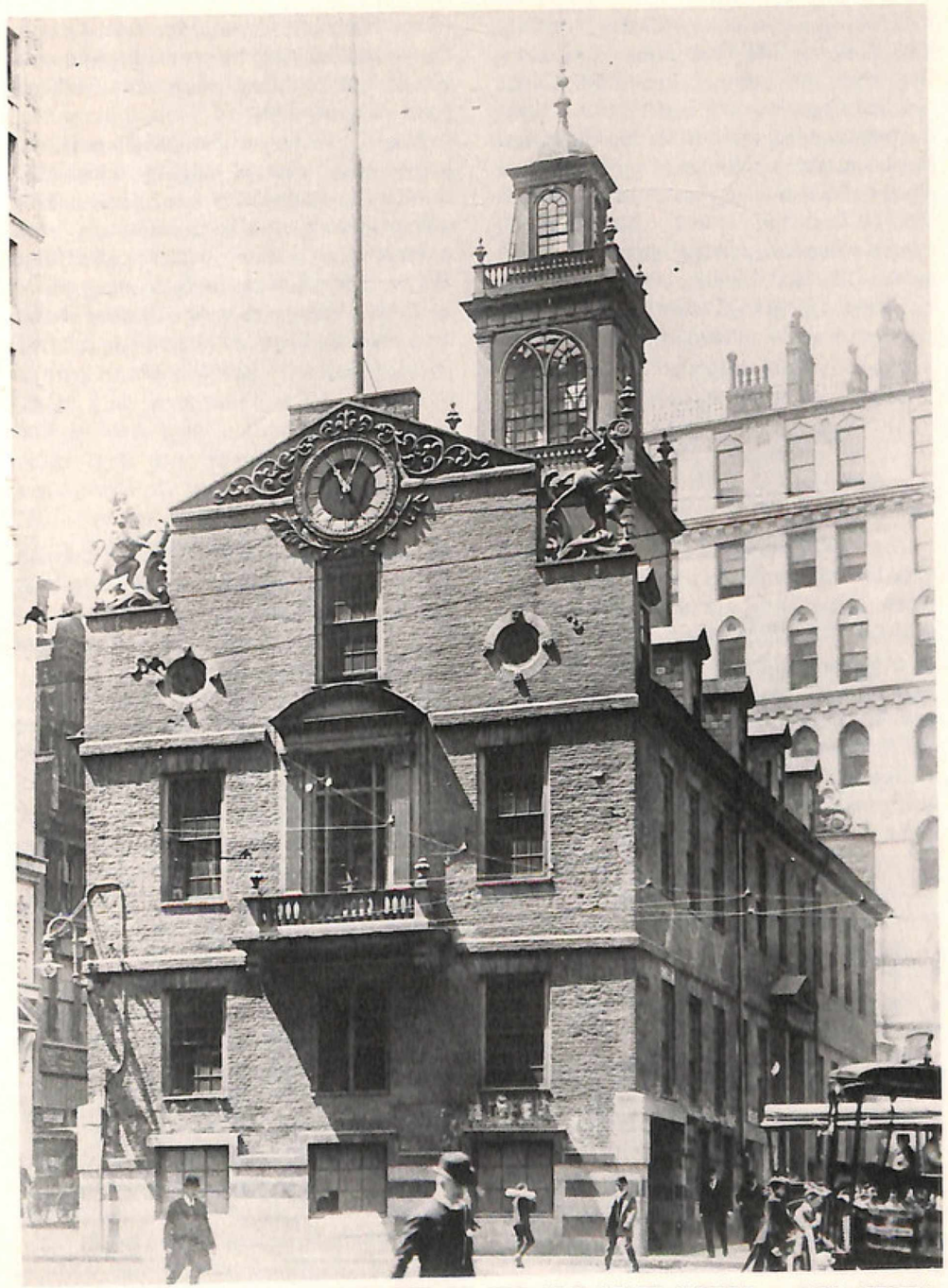


FIG. 20. EAST AND NORTH FACADES OF THE OLD STATE HOUSE, c. 1906. (SPNEA Archives.)

Since Chandler's restoration work in 1909-1910, the Old State House has had a few more alterations. In 1942-1943 the Council Chamber was restored to a more Georgian appearance by Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, the architects who had worked on the Williamsburg restoration. Across the hall from the Council Chamber, however, the Representatives' Chamber retains most of its 1882 Clough restoration material, except for sash. The most recent restoration item is the sundial on the east facade of the Old State House. Architect George Sherwood designed the sundial, which was installed in 1957, and replaced the Willard clock-face of 1830.

The long history of the Old State House presents us with a building which has flourished and declined, has been cared for and neglected, and has, ultimately, been preserved. As it stands today, the Old State House contains material from every phase of its past history. A brief summary dating the extant elements of the building follows.

## DATING OF EXTANT ELEMENTS

The tower contains some framing and exterior trim (portions of one or more cornices) dating from the eighteenth century, probably 1748. However, for the most part its exterior woodwork is an accurate restoration dating from 1882; the first stage was heavily rebuilt sometime after a 1921 fire. Inside the tower is an interesting spiral staircase dating from around 1830, and several generations of matched boarding from about 1830-on.

The third floor on the interior is substantially as remodelled in 1882, except for materials renewed after the 1921 fire.

The staircase (including stairs to the third floor) and the stair rotunda rising from cellar to second floor date from the restoration of 1882.

The combination of Whitmore Hall on the first floor and the two offices to the east of it creates the space as redesigned in 1882, with a rather odd 1882 partition of windows and matched boarding (now obscured by bookcases on both sides) extending west from the east wall. The floor was raised in 1903 to accommodate the subway, at which time the pre-existing 1882 columns down the east-west axis of the space were shortened. One such column appears to have existed near the east wall and is no longer present: it probably served an important structural function and should probably be renewed.

Brickwork in the north and south walls dates from 1712, except for the moulded brick water table and Chandler's 1909 foundations, subway station entrances (now being relocated) and patches of brick where he shortened the first story windows. The east and west walls have been heavily rebuilt over the years, including in the eighteenth century, but they too probably retain some areas that date from 1712.

The three exterior doorways are all Chandler's work except for some older granite work left in place. The balcony on the east wall is also his.

The cornices are probably largely eighteenth-century materials as are pediment and pilasters above the east balcony. These eighteenth-century elements probably date from 1748 when the building was entirely rebuilt except for the brick walls.

The window/door leading onto the east balcony is work of the 1830's, dating from shortly after Isaiah Rogers's redesign of the



east end wall. Except for Chandler's window casings on the first story in the western half of the building (Keayne Hall), the casings of most of the windows in the brick wall predate 1882 and could easily date back to the Rogers period. The roof is a 1975 relaying of a 1936 slate roof, but the dormers and their sash date from Clough's 1882 restoration.

The cellar is a mixture of utilitarian elements of which some probably date from 1882, such as the iron posts and wooden casings on the overhead first floor girders. These girders themselves are hand hewn and probably date to 1748. The rotunda at cellar level has plaster door casings of which some, on the west, probably date to 1882, and the others, on the east, to 1903 when the subway station was built.

Some heavily charred, hand-hewn wooden structural members probably date back as far as the rebuilding after the fire of 1748. Among these are some posts in the tower, (north-south) and, most important, roof trusses of a beautiful and slightly archaic design also seen at King's Chapel (1749).

Iron tie rods which hang the second floor stair rotunda from two of the roof trusses probably date from Isaiah Rogers's remodelling of 1830.

Although the common joists of the first and second stories could not be inspected, it is safe to say that a large percentage of structural members throughout the building generally date from the restoration of 1882, when most of the present partitions were built.

### NOTES

[1] This article condenses *Historic Structure Report: Old State House* (1977) prepared for the National Park Service by the author and Morgan W. Phillips of the Consulting Services Group of the SPNEA. The 248-page report contains a thoroughly documented architectural history of the building, along with an investigation and description of present conditions and makes recommendations for conservation of the building. A copy of this report is available for scholarly use at the SPNEA.

[2] Samuel Sewall, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall,* 2 vols., ed. M. Halsey Thomas (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973), vol. 2, p. 714: "Let this large, transparent, costly Glass serve to oblige the Attornys always to set Things in a True Light. . . ."

[3] *Boston Gazette, or Weekly Journal,* 15 December 1747.

[4] Hugh Morrison, *Early American Architecture from the first Colonial Settlements to the National Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 437.

[5] *Massachusetts Magazine,* vol. 3, no. 1 (January, 1791).

[6] *Archives of the Senate,* 9 March 1784, Massachusetts State Archives, State Document No. 75.

[7] John Andrews to William Barrell, 4 June 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society, manuscript collection, "Andrews Eliot."

[8] *Records Relating to the Early History of Boston Containing Boston Town Records, 1796 to 1813,* Document 115 (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1905), pp. 54-55.

[9] *Ibid.,* pp. 153-54.

[10] Ellen Susan Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch, Architect* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1896), pp. 150-51.

[11] *Columbian Centinel,* January-December, 1830.

[12] Abel Bowen, *Bowen's Picture of Boston,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Otis-Broadus & Co., 1838), pp. 59-60.

[13] *New England Palladium,* 24 August 1830.

[14] "Proceedings of the Common Council, May 26, 1881. Debate on the Proposition to Renovate the Old State House," Boston Public Library, Prints Department, Boston Pictorial Archives.

[15] *Re-dedication of the Old State House,* 6th ed. (Boston: Published by the City Council, 1893), Appendix M, p. 203.