373/D-91

Historic Structure Report
on
the Derby House

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Prepared by
Staff
Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Salem, Massachusetts

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April, 1959

SCANNED 7/25/00

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APR 17 1959

Mr. Kahler

Mr. Leach.

This memorandum
by Secretary
was dictated
4/23/59

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130-20A

DIV. OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
MAY 5 1959
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Morrell
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D&C Files
Records Files

April 30, 1959

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Region Five

From: Chief Architect

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - Derby House, Salem Maritime

The Historic Structures Report, Part I - Derby House, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, has been reviewed by the interested Divisions in the Washington Office and is recommended for approval.

SIGNED

Dick Sutton
Chief Architect

Copy to: Chief, RONC (2)
Supt., Salem Maritime
Branch of History
Mr. Vint

CHLesslier

Region Five
421 Walnut Street
Philadelphia 6, Pa.

April 13, 1959

Memorandum

To: Director

From: Regional Director

Subject: Historic Structures Report, Part I - Derby House
Salem Maritime National Historic Site

In accordance with the procedure outlined in FO-11-56, attached for review is the Historic Structures Report, Part I, for the Derby House, Salem Maritime National Historic Site. By copy of this memorandum, we are also forwarding a copy of the report to EODC for review and comment.

Comments to the Superintendent are due no later than April 23.

(Sgd.) Daniel J. Tobin
Daniel J. Tobin
Regional Director

In duplicate

Attachments

Copy to: Chief, EODC, w/copy report
Supt., Salem Maritime, w/copy report

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CHAPTER I

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Prepared by Superintendent H. I. Lessen

NAME AND NUMBER OF BUILDING

Derby House, Building No. 2.

APPROVED USE OF STRUCTURE

This structure is used as a historic house museum, and is assigned the same function in the approved MISSION 66 and Master Plan.

PROVISION FOR OPERATING THE BUILDING

The Derby House is operated with regularly appropriated funds. It is already furnished and no monies are scheduled for this purpose. The Salem Maritime Historical Association was organized to assist the Site, and has done so. However, no formal agreement exists between this organization and the National Park Service.

PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF REHABILITATING THE STRUCTURE

Waterproofing foundation	$1,500
Repoint masonry	1,500
Replace, where necessary, exterior woodwork	1,500
Repaint exterior trim	500
Total	$5,000

RECOMMENDATION FOR RESEARCH

No research is required for the proposed rehabilitation items. However, additional information on the house, particularly its construction, is desirable.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DATA

Section 1 comprises report on Derby House prepared by John Shaw, architect, H.A.B.S. measuring crew

Sections 2-3 prepared by Superintendent H. I. Lessem

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STRUCTURE

See attached report by John Shaw, second in charge of H.A.B.S. Measuring Crew which operated at Salem Maritime National Historic Site in the summer of 1958.

DERBY HOUSE

Part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site,
Derby Street, Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts

Presently owned by the National Park Service, the house is administered by a superintendent with offices in the Custom House, 178 Derby Street. It functions as a completely furnished early American house museum, open all year to the public. A caretaker occupies the third floor room and kitchen ell.

Two periods of extensive restoration work have contributed to preserving the Derby House as a good example of an eighteenth century gambrel roof house, generally associated with a date earlier than 1761-62 when it was built. It is the oldest brick house remaining in Salem, an older one having been torn down. The wood stair with carved balusters and newel post, and beveled wall paneling are interesting architectural details. The house is important in connection with early merchant families of Salem, including Elias Hasket Derby (1739-1799), merchant who is reputed to be the first American millionaire and for whom the house was built, Captain Henry Prince, shipmaster and merchant, and William Hayes, merchant.(1)

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The land on which the Derby House site was purchased in December, 1760, by Captain Richard Derby who was living at the time in a wood gambrel roof house on the corner of Herbert and Derby Streets, more recently known as the Miles Ward House. It is believed that he lived there until his death in 1783. It is suggested, therefore, by Messrs. Felt, Phillips and Small that the brick house was built by Richard Derby for his son Elias Hasket Derby in 1761-62.(2) Richard Derby never paid taxes on the brick house, however Elias Hasket Derby paid his first taxes on real property in Salem in 1763 when he was charged 12 pounds for "1 homestead (N.W. corner unfinished)." He was taxed for a "House viz 7/8 parts" continually until 1782.(3)

The major portion of the house was built in 1761 but the roof was not put on until 1762. There are few definitely identifiable records of the construction, and these appear in 1762. A receipt of January 6, 1762, indicates that Daniel Spofford received two pounds and thirteen shillings from Richard Derby for work on the roof of a house 43 ft. long and 27 ft. wide. These dimensions approximate the actual dimensions of the Derby House, 28 ft. 9 in. by 43 ft. 11 in. On May 28, 1762, one John James was paid "the sum of three pounds fore Shillings in full

for 24 Days Labour on Haskett's House."(4) When the roof was put on in 1762 it is not known definitely what material was used, however, Mr. Edwin N. Small, former superintendent of Salem Maritime National Historic Site in his article on the Derby House proposes that the original roof may have been slate.(5)

Joseph Mellen, 1716-1770, a descendant of Salem's first famous of the well known Salem architect Samuel McIntire, may have had something to do with the construction since on May 24, 1762, Richard Derby paid him "the sum of forty shillings (was) on account" as "Joseph McIntire."(6)

No plans are known to exist for the architect and builder other than those mentioned are unknown.

Richard Derby was active well in affairs from the time he moved into the house of Rev. Mr. Bowdoin, as evidenced by the family moving from the brick house in 1777 or 1778. Derby's youngest child, Elias Hasket Derby, was born in the Derby House on July 14, 1739. His family later moved to Forte Neck, New Hampshire in 1779.(7) Henry Prince, a shipwright for the Derby family, lived in the house next, and appears to have been residing there by 1784. Records of construction in the Derby Papers of a mill of 1784 mention "amount of the stuff removed from Mr. Prince's house and Yards."(8)

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Derby Street, Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts

In 1765 Elias Hasket Derby received the lot and residence as part of his share of his father's estate, and in 1795 he conveyed the lot and buildings to Henry Prince for 1,675 pounds.(9) This transaction was not recorded until January 1, 1801, and shortly after Henry Prince secured a larger frontage on the western boundary of his house. Prince stopped going to sea about 1805 and became a merchant, but Jefferson's embargo and the depression which followed forced him to sell the house on April 9, 1811 to William Ropes, a merchant from Boston. The house was occupied by descendants of the Ropes family until 1872.(10)

The kitchen ell was probably added around the time William Ropes took possession of the house in 1811. In the northwest and northeast corner rooms of the first floor woodwork and mantels appear to be of the same time, and since they were probably altered when the kitchen ell was added, it is considered likely that one of these rooms had previously been the kitchen. Mr. Stuart M. Barnette, architect who worked on the restoration of the Derby House, believes that the northwest room was originally the kitchen,(11) although no supporting evidence for this view could be found. There is some reason to believe that the northeast room might have been the kitchen, since the brick vaulted foundation in the basement under the northeast room is slightly larger than the others, which indicates that it could have supported a cooking fireplace. There is also evidence in the

brickwork around the east window of this room that at one time a door opening had been there instead; also as stated earlier the northwest corner of the house was not finished until after 1762. Because of the uncertainty as to which of these two rooms had originally been the kitchen and the lack of evidence of what the room had been like, the decision was made to retain the ell at the time of restoration. An outside door located in the rear hall between the northeast and northwest rooms can still be seen where it was presumably blocked up at the time the ell was added. Stairs located in the hall leading up to the front stair were removed (as indicated by an outline left in the old plaster found in 1929) and a stair in the ell was built to connect the ell to the second floor and also to the cellar.

An example of the original brickwork has been well preserved in the space where the attic of the ell frames into the north wall of the original house. An opening which was blocked up can also be seen there, probably a window which provided light to the rear hall stairway landing.

After 1673 the house was no longer in the hands of the Derby family and it had a succession of owners. It was in a ruinous condition when acquired by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in April of 1927. Restoration work was begun on

DERBY HOUSE

Part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site,
Derby Street, Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts

the house in 1922. Repairs were made at that time to panelling and mouldings throughout. Mantels of a later period which were more elaborate in design than the originals were removed from over the fireplace panelling and the original mantels with bolection moulding were revived. Small carpentry jobs were performed such as patching and repairing panels where such things as stovepipes had gone. Paint samples to match the original colors were experimented with. The layers of wall paper were removed down to the original painted plaster walls. Green blinds on the outside which were added at a late date were removed. Door openings between the northeast and southeast rooms, and northwest and southwest rooms had been enlarged and were reduced to their original size. Large window panes had replaced the original 12/12 such as could be seen in an old photograph, and the original smaller panes were replaced. A wood fence with ball topped finials on the posts was erected. All exterior exposed wood was painted a light green which has since been retained. It was found that one room had dark red paint as though an imitation of mahogany.

Drawings for the work were performed by Alfred F. Shepherd. The work was under the direction of George Francis Dow.(13)

The Derby House was offered to the Government in March of 1938 and accepted by the Secretary of Interior in December of 1937. It was donated by the S.P.N.E.A. Extensive work was started in 1938

Part of Salem Maritime National Historic Site,
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on restoration of the house under the direction of Stuart M. Garnette, and some of the drawings for the work were prepared by Frank Chouteau Brown.(13)

A set of drawings dated July 25, 1938(14) prepared by Stuart Garnette indicate some of the work performed at that time including replacement of first floor girders and pouring reinforced concrete beams under first floor hearths although no evidence exists in the beams of overhead beams, as this part of the work was apparently not done. Roof trusses were repaired, members replaced, bracing added, and the roof was repaired including replacement of much of the sheathing and installation of a new asbestos shingle roof and new flashings. Roof framing members which were replaced were the original timbers put in during 1761-62.(15) Wood gutters and downspouts were removed. Original flooring was revived in the southeast and southwest rooms of the first floor. Wainscot paneling with boards of pine similar to the original were installed to replace later narrow flooring. The ~~original~~ central dormer window (shown in early photographs, one of which is in Essex Institute photographic collection) was removed (hanging to a triangular pediment similar to the two side dormers, whether to be restored, then completed and also installed on the rear. [illegible] was built similar to the one erected by [illegible] roof for a granite base instead of wood.(16)

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Other work done by the National Park Service included carpentry work performed on the job such as building a new closet door for the southeast second floor room, replacing the threshold at the main entrance, and repairing the large front door. Concealed radiators were installed in cabinets, supplied from a central heating plant in the Custom House.(17) The original back stair which had been removed from the rear hallway was replaced in reframed form of the outline of the original steps in the old plaster and formed by old and new lath.(18) The cellar stair in the ell was covered over by new flooring, and a new stair to the cellar was built under the main stair where it had been originally located.(19) The stair to the second floor in the kitchen ell was removed.

The cellar windows in the granite foundation which had been closed were reopened and also the original outside door opening to the cellar on the east, where new granite steps leading to it were also set. Except for the front door hardware, most of the original was missing and was reproduced from remaining fixtures on the site by a blacksmith.(20) Badly bulged wall at the rear was removed and replaced.(21)

An extensive study was made of the layers of paint on all painted surfaces, and the original colors were restored along with samples of the succeeding colors in each room. A sample of artificial graining, probably to simulate mahogany was uncovered on the [illegible] panel

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of the beds in the southeast first floor room. A design of wall-paper of China tea-bush pattern was discovered in the northeast corner floor room. It was reproduced in a similar wallpaper and applied to the walls of that room.(#2). Slate hearth-stones were installed in all first floor rooms.

In 1934 black slate shingles were installed on the lower slopes of the gambrel roof and on the ell, and copper sheeting on the upper slopes of the main roof.

The house is now furnished through loans or gifts with furnishings of the third quarter of the eighteenth century. For a few years either slightly earlier or a very few slightly later. Many of the items in the house were given by the Misses Frances Crowninshield, whose husband was a descendant of Captain Richard Wal-

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Report (Ed Yeon and References)

1. Custom House file, memo from R. M. Gould for Coordinating Superintendent Francis B. Nowlin stating that 125 negatives 4-3/4" x 3-1/2" from Assistant Architect R. M. Garnett were sent to Nowlin March 21, 1941; contains photographic evidence and justification for changes made in restoring details, chiefly at the Derby House and Pickman House. Some photographic prints of this file are in the Custom House file.
2. Custom House file, two recent photographic negatives and prints.
3. Essex Institute Photographic Collection, including Cousins list, no. 259, 1891.
4. Frank Cousins, Phil M. Riley The Colonial Architecture of Salem.
5. See notes.

DERBY HOUSE

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Although no historical events of particular significance are known to have taken place in the Derby House, there have been a number of events connected with its owners which have some historic interest.

The first owner of the house, Elias Hasket Derby, pioneered in the trade to the Indies and China in the years after the American Revolution and became America's first millionaire. During the Revolution he owned and fitted out vessels as privateers to prey upon British commerce.

The Quero, one of the vessels of the Derby fleet, carried the first news of the battles at Lexington and Concord to south England.(23)

Henry Prince, who was the second owner of the house, in the same year he bought the house from Elias Hasket Derby sailed the Derby's Asheer II on the first trading voyage of any American vessel to the Philippine Islands.

DRAFT 9/1/69

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Possible Sources for Additional Information

1. Diary of Reverend William Bentley, 4 volumes, 1905, 1911, 1914, published by the Essex Institute.
2. Derby Family Papers, 1760-1845, consisting of thirty-four bound volumes and four boxes of letters (although this source has been used, a more extensive study of these papers might reveal more information about the construction of the House).
3. "Notes on the Derby Houses from the Derby Ledgers", Essex Institute Historical Collections, Vol. LXX, (1933).
4. Custom House files. (Further study of these files might uncover additional information about the restoration work and subsequent work under the National Park Service.)
5. Files of Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

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Derby Street, Salem, Essex County, Massachusetts

Notes

1. Edwin W. Small, "The Derby House", Old-Time New England, Vol. XLVII, No. 4, Spring 1957, pp 101-107.
See also M. V. Belknap, Federal Doorways in Salem No. 41, Essex Institute.

2. a. Joseph B. Felt, Annals of Salem, (1845), Vol. 2, pp 414-415. [illegible] Ives, Boston; James Munroe & Co., [illegible]
b. James B. Phillips, The Life and Times of Elias Hasket Derby, p 100, Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1929.
c. Edwin W. Small and Mabel G. Swan, The Derby-Peirce House, October, 1957, In Custom House Files.

3. Town of Salem, Records, Town, 1753-1778, Peace, 1777-1781, cited in 2a.

4. See note 1.

5. Memo. from E. W. Small to Regional Director, National Park Service, March 9, 1954, Custom House Files. (Typed)

6. See note 1.

7. Martha Nichols (ed.), A Salem Midwife and Physician, the Autobiography of Thomas Nichols, (1791), p 1.

8. Derby Family Papers, Vol. XX, Letter among bills, 1780-1789, one dated April 20, 1784.
Cited in 1.

9. Essex County, Southern District, Registry of Deeds, Book 167, 137.
Cited in 2a.

10. See note 2a.

11. Correspondence of Frank [illegible] Burnett, Architect, Alterations and Additions. Custom House Files. (Post letters typed and some longhand)

12. See note 1.

13. Frank Chouteau Brown, Derby Lands, Architects Drawings, Correspondence, 1937, Custom House Files. (Typed on yellow paper, various copies of Longhand)

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Notes

14. U. S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Drawings titled: Restoration for Preservation of Buildings, Grounds & Wharf - Salem, Mass., No. NHS-SAL-1000, (15 sheets), July 25, 1938.

15. Report for Nov. 1938, Custom House File. (Typed)

16. Memo. from Stuart E. Barnette for the Associate Director, Justification for the Inclusion of a Steam Plant in the Design for a Fence at the Derby House at Salem, Massachusetts, Custom House File, Sept. 10, 1938.

17. U. S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Service, Branch of Engineering, Drawings titled: Central Heating Plant, Custom House, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, No. NHS-SH-5302, (8 sheets), Jan. 10, 1939.

18. U. S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Drawings titled: Rear Stairway Detail, Derby House, Salem Maritime National Historic Site, No. NHS-SAL- 2006, 1939. See also: Stuart Barnette, Asst. Arch. Justification for Installation of the Design for the Rear Hall Stairway in the Derby House, SMNH, Custom House File. (No date) (Typed)

19. U. S. Dept. of Interior, National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Drawings titled: Cellar Stair, Derby House, SMNH, No. NHS-SAL-2006.

20. Letter from Stuart E. Barnette to Frank C. Brown, Architectural Reports and Justifications, Custom House File, Nov. 13, 1939 (Typed)

21. Final Construction Report on PP 706 & CP 732-03-230 SMNH, Custom House File, Feb. 26, 1941. (Typed)

22. See note 1.

23. James D. Phillips, The Life and Times of Richard Derby, pp. 40-43.

Prepared by: John H. Sharp, Sept. 1958

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Derby House is closely associated with a number of individuals prominent in Salem's maritime history.

Richard Derby, the builder, was a prominent merchant especially in the years 1756-1783. His son Elias H. Derby, the first occupant of the structure, is one of the significant figures in the epic of America's foreign commerce.

In 1778, George Nichols, one of Salem's most redoubtable mariners, was born in the House.

Henry Prince lived here from 1784 to 1811. He captained Derby's Astrea, the first American vessel to enter Manila.

The Ropes family, many of whose members were merchant mariners resided in the structure from 1811 to 1873.

HISTORICAL EVALUATION

The Derby House has two important survival values.

1. Its associations with personalities important in national and local maritime enterprise.

2. It is the oldest surviving brick structure in Salem, and a fine example of colonial architecture.