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ROOFLINES

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The Pride of Annapolis A Refurbished State House

Just up the hill from the City Dock in Annapolis stands one of Maryland's most prestigious buildings, the Maryland State House, once our nation's capitol. It was here, in the Senate chambers on Dec. 23, 1783, that General George Washington did the unthinkable after defeating the British at Yorktown: He resigned his post and left public life, seemingly for good. Less than a month later, the Treaty of Paris was signed in the same building, ending the Revolutionary War and giving birth to a nation. Washington was persuaded to leave his home at Mount Vernon and resume public life as our first president.

Then, as today, the Maryland State House was the historic focal point of Annapolis. Because the building welcomes thousands of visitors a day and is the home of the state legislature, the decision to restore the site posed a major challenge for Wagner Roofing and other con-



North elevation of the Maryland State House, Annapolis

tractors: to undertake a massive renovation project while keeping the site open to tourists and state officials.

Despite this challenge, the project was completed at the end of 1998, and today's visitors see a building that looks much

as it looked in the late 18th century.

Few visitors realize, however, that the State House is actually two buildings. The older section, which includes the Senate chambers, dates to 1772 and is topped by a majestic dome visi-

ble for miles; inside is a beautiful all-wood rotunda constructed entirely of cypress.

The adjacent section, constructed in 1902, is considerably more modern. Its age is masked by a brick facade that blends with the older building.

“Both of these buildings have been worked on almost continuously over the years, but this time the state wanted the project done comprehensively, including masonry and window work, and refinishing cornices that had been done catch-as-catch-can in the past,” says Tony Fiorini of Fiorini Brothers Inc., a Harford County, Md., contractor.

Contractors reglazed multipaneled windows, restored external masonry, and cleaned

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and restored by hand the cornices that adorn the buildings. At its peak, the project had more than 150 tradespeople working on the site.

The window refurbishment alone included painstaking glazing of some 3,000 panes of glass, a mammoth job that required repainting “shadow” lines around each pane to mimic the original darker window sections. All told, painters striped some 14,000 linear feet by hand.

Over the course of the project, Wagner Roofing replaced all of the slate on the older building, renovated slate sections of the building’s trademark dome and installed new lead-coated copper gutters.

“The most important challenge was working on a building that was occupied the entire time, so of course there were hundreds—sometimes thousands—of tourists a day coming by there while we were working,” Fiorini says. Wagner Roofing and other contractors spent a significant amount of time directing visitors and keeping public areas safe and free of construction materials.

“Working in Annapolis on those little streets, crews of Wagner employees were out at 5 a.m. keeping traffic flowing. There’s a lot of special needs in a project like this that people don’t think about,” Fiorini says.

As has been true on many other projects undertaken by Wagner in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area, the tradespeople assigned to refurbish the State House roof brought a high level of skill and craftsmanship to the job.

“For starters, we needed someone who could deal with anything they saw up there, including handling copper flashing” and other intricate roof reconstruction, according to Fiorini.

“There are lots of people who could put down slate, but Wagner was brought on because we needed an outfit that could see the total picture.”

From its famous slate dome to the intricate woodwork of the rotunda, the State House will continue to impress visitors for generations. The extensive restoration work was recognized by the Maryland Historic Trust, which awarded the project the Calvert Prize for outstanding contribution to historic preservation. ●

Woodhull House: Reclaiming an Urban Treasure

Urban universities often face the challenge of maintaining historic buildings that they acquire to house and instruct students. At Washington, D.C.’s George Washington University, the once proud facade of the Woodhull House—a 19th century mansion currently used as headquarters for GWU’s campus police—needed extensive improvements to bring it up to code. It also had been extensively modified in ways that were less than consistent with its original glory.

A delicate hand was called for to ensure that the property, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991, would be improved in a way that would balance its continued use with its restoration.

The university hired Wagner Roofing to complete much of the task. In phase one, Wagner removed the existing tin roof and discovered extensive areas of rotted sheathing and rafters, which had been exposed to the elements as the roof deteriorated.

“All of the outlookers and soffit had to be replaced,



requiring a pretty challenging scaffolding job on a very active building,” according to Wagner Roofing President Chuck Wagner.

John Cox, the university architect for the project, says that working with the copper roofing called for a company with extensive experience.

“That’s a true craft, especially with the seams and the joining,” he notes.

Wagner constructed new drains and support platforms over the air conditioning units, but it is the flat copper roof Wagner installed this past winter that is the most visible sign of the restoration, says John Kane, special projects coordinator for GWU’s Facilities Management Department.

Under phase two, the company is repointing brick and stripping the exterior wood on the building. William Gray, GWU’s director of facilities management, says the university is now focused on completing the exterior restoration of the building, which was constructed as a grand residence in 1855. The exterior brick work was completed this summer.

That work will largely return Woodhull House to its original appearance, though a single-story addition built on the northeast corner in 1936 will be retained.

Today its Italianate villa style—reflected in the low-pitched “flat” roof, square cupolas, or “towers,” and elaborate bay windows—is again framed by newly refurbished brick, and topped by a copper roof that shines in the afternoon sun, much as it did more than one hundred years ago. ●



Chapel Hall: Wagner Polishes Gallaudet’s Historic Gem

Meeting the special needs of the deaf and hard of hearing has been the mission of Gallaudet University since it was founded, with the help of President Abraham Lincoln, during the Civil War. And for nearly that long, Chapel Hall has been a beacon for students. Even today its ornate clock tower is a familiar meeting place for students.

Built between 1867 and 1871 on what is now a bustling Florida Avenue in Northeast Washington, Chapel Hall replaced a modest wood-frame house that was used for instruction when the school opened in 1864. Philanthropist and former postmaster general Amos Kendall donated the house, known affectionately as the “Rose Cottage,” along with

the land in 1856.

According to John Dunn of Gallaudet’s construction services department, the chapel’s distinguishing features include its native brownstone facade, set off with horizontal bands of lighter-colored limestone. Dunn says it appears the brownstone was quarried locally at the Seneca quarry, in what is now the Rockville area.

Gallaudet and its chapel often were at the center of notable events in the 19th century: President Lincoln signed a bill in 1864 allowing the school to confer college degrees. In 1881, Chapel Hall was the setting for the last public speech by President James Garfield, who was killed just a few days later.

Over the past 100 years, the role of Chapel Hall in campus life has changed, according to Dunn: Though used since its inception for religious services

In the Works

Here are some of our jobs in progress. If you would like to discuss any of them, or make a site visit, call Chuck or Sheila at 301/927-9030. Soon you’ll be able to visit us at our Web site, wagnerroofing.com, which will feature some of these jobs.

Capitol Hill Day School: Carpentry, copper built-in gutter, slate work.

Congressional Country Club: Spanish tile, copper gutters, downspouts.

Cosmos Club, Powell Auditorium: Modified bitumen.

Dominican House of Studies: Copper built-in gutter, slate work.

Gallaudet University, Central Utilities Building: Modified bitumen, siding.

Gibson & Associates, Bethesda residence: Slate, lead-coated copper roofing, gutters, downspouts, decorative conductor heads.

Gibson & Associates, 14 townhouses: Standing seam tin, modified bitumen, slate.

Gold Leaf Studios: Major carpentry, repairs and tile roofing.

Grunley-Walsh J.V., National Mall Kiosks: Standing seam copper roofing, decorative cornices, gutters.

Grunley Construction Co., Main National Treasury: Lead-coated copper flashing.

Harvey-Cleary, American Red Cross: New terra cotta tile roof, lead-coated copper built-in gutter.

Hitt Contracting, Beauvoir School: Shingles, slate, modified bitumen.

Izadi/Wallcrich Architects, Saudi Ambassador residence: New copper built-in gutter.

Jeffco Development, Bethesda residence: Shingles, slate, modified bitumen.

Lawrence Lynn & Associates, 1737 H Street, NW: Structural steel, carpentry repairs, built-in gutter, cornice.

Park Fairfax Condominiums: New tile roof.

Regency Const., Amer. Society for Microbiology: Major carpentry restoration, slate and tile roofing, new modified bitumen and rubber roof repairs.

and campus ministries, it has also housed campus security and served as a meeting hall. The building has been the site of university dances, meetings, campus registration, and even graduation ceremonies.

But over time, this university centerpiece, designed by architect Calvert Vaux (who also worked on the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art), had begun to show its age. Two years ago, the university brought in architect John Baxter, a senior associate at Einhorn Yaffee Prescott, to plan a complete overhaul that would restore the building to its original luster. Wagner Roofing, which had worked on a variety of maintenance and roofing jobs for the school, was hired to rebuild the chapel's slate roof.

With the entire building framed by scaffolding, and as many as 20 employees on the job, Wagner Roofing began its work in July 1998. At the archi-

tect's request, Wagner's slate foreman, Bob Wooldridge, recorded the intricate diamond-shaped pattern of the original roof—a scalloped, six-sided red Vermont slate interwoven with gray. Because the quarry that provided the original slate had long since closed, Wagner copied the layout using red Vermont and UK slate. The company duplicated the diamond pattern by cutting the typically four-sided red Vermont slate into pieces having six sides—thus giving the roof its scalloped look.

The ornate cornices as well as the hip and ridge rolls (decorative sheet metal fabricated from lead-coated copper that covers the peaks and intersecting angles of the roof, reducing maintenance and adding an attractive architectural element) were reproduced; nearly half of the existing copper snowguards and gutters were salvaged and reused.

Baxter says the university has retained the character of the building while developing a flexible plan that integrates various departments, including housing administrative offices, the financial aid office, and the registrar's office. Two new sets of stairs were added, and an elevator was constructed to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

One spectacular discovery was made during the rehabilitation of the chapel's interior: a high-arched tin ceiling in the chapel's west wing, found hidden behind a layer of acoustic ceiling tile. It has since been restored to its original appearance.

Chapel Hall was placed on the National Register of Historical Places in 1966. Other university landmarks include the campus green, designed by respected landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. ●

Who We Are

The owners of Wagner Roofing are Chuck and Sheila Wagner. Debbie Legge is the controller, Brian Kidwell and Steve Wallace take care of operations, Jennifer Creel runs the service department and answers the telephones, and Denise Berti heads up project management. The contracts and word processing department is in the capable hands of Colleen Kennedy, while the estimators are Phil Lafranchise, Roger A. McGraw, and Jeff Wooldridge. Accounts payable is handled by Diane DeCesaris.

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