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ROOFLINES

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SUMMER 2000

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Polishing a Small Gem in D.C.'s Old Downtown

A small architectural jewel, the Folger Building stands at 725 15th Street, N.W., across from the U.S. Treasury and two blocks from the White House. Originally known as the Hibbs Building, this historic structure was built in 1907 to house W.B. Hibbs & Company, the first Washington-area member of the New York Stock Exchange.

In 1889, William B. Hibbs purchased a seat on the exchange and founded a stock brokerage and commodity trading firm. In the late 1920s, Hibbs earned the undying loyalty of many local investors. Foreseeing that the economy was souring and that stock trading had become a high-risk gamble, he began advising customers to get out of the market. The 1929 crash proved Hibbs right and solidified his niche in Washington investment circles.

Shortly after the crash, John Clifford Folger and James Parker Nolan founded the investment firm of Folger, Nolan. In 1953, the two firms consolidated operations in the

old Hibbs Building—renamed the Folger Building—and the firm eventually became Folger Nolan Fleming Douglas, Inc.

Over the years, Folger Nolan attracted notable clients such as Robert Todd Lincoln, Will Durant, Ty Cobb and Bernard Baruch. While the illustrious investment firm is still going strong, continuing to serve many of Washington's best-known families, its headquarters building—nearly a century old—is showing its age.

The narrow, 10-story Beaux Arts structure is adorned with an intricately carved terra cotta cornice. The patinated copper dormer roofs and cornice and the marble facade contribute to making this Washington treasure worthy of restoration and preservation.

Wagner Roofing is proud to have been selected to restore the Folger's exterior—including repairing and cleaning the marble facade, pointing stone and brickwork, installing new slate and copper roofs, painting windows and bird-proofing the building.

Scaffolding is in place, and the multifaceted job is underway—not a minute too soon,



Wagner is restoring the Folger's 1907 exterior.

from a preservation standpoint. The front facade is endangered, and the stone appears to be at a critical juncture—on the verge of major deterioration.

A survey of the building exterior shows that airborne pollutants have adhered to the stone, causing severe deterioration on the lower floors. Stone balusters



(Left) Tony Tejada installs new pressure-treated plywood to replace the failed concrete deck. The Old Executive Office Building and American Red Cross headquarters can be seen at upper left. (Below) Bob Wooldridge rebuilds the structure that supports the Folger's restored copper cornice.

are extremely deteriorated, and may need to be replaced. Stopping pollutant deterioration and water infiltration at this time is crucial to preserving the front facade of this structure.

Preservation of the historic building and securing the exterior for safety reasons are priorities, according to Hagner Management Corporation Vice President Charles R. Montgomery, who has managed the Folger Building for 46 years. Wagner Roofing, known for its expertise in restoring historic buildings, has contracted to do the following:

Chemical cleaning followed by a high-pressure washdown. Because dirt and bird-droppings have accumulated over many years, mere powerwashing will not break the electrostatic bond between this grimy buildup and the marble and limestone front facade. So a "restoration cleaner" will be applied and scrubbed with soft-bristled brushes. The cleaner also will kill lichen growing on the facade and will help preserve the integrity of the stone. A high-pressure washdown completes the process.

Repointing. Mortar in the stone walls and in the terra



cotta cornice is deteriorated or missing altogether. Periodic pointing (scratching out the old mortar from the joints and filling with new material) is the best way to preserve and extend the life of a masonry structure, in part because today's mortar is far superior to materials used when the Folger Building was constructed. Mortar joints not only bond masonry units (bricks, stone blocks) together, they keep water and rain from getting in and are the routes through which moisture absorbed by the stone is dissipated.

Marble patching. Previous patch repairs to the marble used an incompatible material, causing moisture to become

trapped behind the patches and hastening deterioration of the stone instead of protecting it. When moisture is trapped in stone and freezes, it expands, causing chunks of stone to pop off (spalling). When moisture is trapped close to the surface, the stone begins to separate and appears to be rotting (exfoliation). The marble on the Folger Building shows signs of both kinds of damage. The incompatible material will be removed and these areas will be repaired with a compatible compound to prevent future deterioration.

Bird-anchor removal/repair. Bird anchors are one of the great sins of the past when it comes to facade restoration. A

lead shield is placed into a predrilled hole, and a ferrous bolt is slipped through a ceramic insulator and screwed into the lead shield. When the bolt starts to rust, it expands. Eventually, the bolt fractures the stone, in effect spalling. This not only damages the building, but can be highly dangerous: Pieces of stone can break off and fall 100-plus feet onto pedestrians on the sidewalk below.

To birdproof the building, Wagner will screen the opening between the Folger Building and the adjoining building with mesh StealthNet to prevent birds from landing and leaving droppings in this area.

New slate and copper roofs. Wagner will replace the slate on the mansard roof with new Buckingham slate guaranteed for the life of the building. Copper roofing will be removed from 12 large dormers and new copper will be installed.

Wagner has participated in many restorations, both as a roofer and general contractor. "We're a roofing company," says Chuck Wagner, the firm's president, "but in restoring the Folger Building exterior, we're serving as the general contractor, too." Wagner says this isn't the first time the firm has been awarded a multiscope job. "Through the years, we've completed a number of complex projects, particularly in historic restoration."

All phases of the Folger Building project are expected to be completed this fall. ●

Early Jones's 50 Years with Wagner

Hammering his first shingle onto a Washington, D.C., roof, Early Jones never suspected that 50 years later he'd still be working for Wagner Roofing.

Fresh out of the U.S. Navy and following in the footsteps of an older brother who worked for Wagner, Jones arrived in Washington from Norfolk, Va., in 1950 for an interview his brother had arranged with Wagner.

The young Mississippi native landed the job, and his first assignment was at the Wardman Park Hotel on Connecticut Avenue, repairing slate at the hotel's front entrance.

Wagner had contracted with Kay Construction to install shingle roofs on new homes, and Jones joined the project. "I'll bet we put 1,000 roofs on houses" for Kay, says Jones. When Dwight D. Eisenhower was inaugurated in 1953, "I was up on the roof of a house at Connecticut Avenue and Wheeler Road in Wheaton, nailing shingles and listening to his inaugural address."

In the 1970s, Jones himself went to the White House for a roofing job on a wing near the Oval Office. "There was a lot of red tape, and it took a while to get security clearances for the Wagner crew," remembers Jones. On site, workers used a kettle to melt and heat the tar to around 450 degrees—a time-consuming process. But the

security guard assigned to the roofers took two daily breaks, and each time he left, "we had to turn off the gas under the kettle, shut down operations, secure the area and go with him to the Old Executive Office Building," recalls Jones. The simple job lasted considerably longer than anticipated.

Jones has watched Wagner Roofing change and grow. Since he was hired by Jack Wagner Sr. (father of Chuck, the current president) a half-century ago, the company has moved from Northeast Washington to Hyattsville, Md., and now has 60 employees and does \$6 million in business annually.

One thing that hasn't changed, says Jones, is Wagner's emphasis on quality. "Any job Wagner does is A-1—from materials to workmanship. They're an asset to the Washington, D.C., area."



Early Jones (center) leading his built-up-roof crew.

Jones's many contributions to the company reflect those same high standards, according to Chuck Wagner. Jones attributes his love for quality to the influence of his father, a Depression-era farmer and father of seven. "Whatever my Dad did, it was first-class."

At 74 years of age, Jones still works every day. Even a recent balloon angioplasty procedure hasn't slowed him down. When his doctor ordered more exercise, Jones began working out an hour and a half every day, trimming 2 inches from his waist and losing 18 pounds.

And what about his unusual first name? "My grandmother hung that on me," he laughs. "But I've been on some jobs early in the morning, and the guys say, 'They named you right.'" ●

In the Works

These Wagner jobs are in progress or recently completed. To discuss or to visit any of them, call Chuck Wagner or Sheila Wagner at 301/927/9030. Go to our Web site at www.wagnerroofing.com for profiles of other major projects. (Unless otherwise noted, jobs are in Washington, D.C.)

- Congressional Country Club, Bethesda, Md.:** Spanish tile and copper roofs, copper gutters, downspouts
 - Embassy of Argentina, 1811 Q St., NW (Renovations Unlimited):** Lead-coated copper built-in gutter and water table, repair slate and tin roofs
 - Federal National Mortgage Association, 3900 Wisconsin Ave. (C.A. Lindman Co.):** Replace flashing on slate roofs
 - Howard University Book Store and the Information Lab:** Modified bitumen built-up roofs
 - J.B. Jenkins Funeral Home, Landover, Md.:** 40-yr. architectural shingles, modified bitumen roof
 - Lawrence Lynn & Associates, 1737 H St., NW (C2C):** Lead-coated copper cornice, painting, repoint masonry
 - MCI Building, 1845 4th St., NE (APC Construction):** New EPDM roof
 - Roger Lane Schmidt, Ltd., Bethesda, Md.:** New tile roof
 - Tariff Building, 7th & I Sts., NW (historic building will become hotel) (Grunley-Walsh Joint Venture):** Lead-coated copper water table, repair roof
 - 1808 Adams Mill Rd., NW (Douglas Bell Co.):** Spanish tile, painting, copper guttering
- We Do Small Jobs, Too ...*
- Palisades Citizens Association:** Helped construct information kiosk, installed cedar shake roof and weathervane

Wagner Returns to Building Arts Festival at the National Building Museum

Wagner Roofing will participate in the biannual

Festival of Building Arts at the National Building Museum September 16, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Wagner's roofing team was a hit at the 1998 event, where they demonstrated slate, copper and shingle roofing.

The festival is a "living exhibition" where children and adults interact with and learn from experts in the building arts, including



thatched roofing, log cabin construction and stone and plaster work. ●



(Above) Jeff Wooldridge demonstrates slate repair. (Right) Sheila Wagner uses a "ripper" to remove a broken slate.

Who We Are

Chuck Wagner

Sheila Wagner

Owners

Diane DeCesaris

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Colleen Kennedy

Administrative assistant

Randy Pettko

Controller

Jamie McNeeley

Tim Schmidt

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Senior estimator

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