



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Independence National
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Independence National Historical Park

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Renovation Planned for Independence Hall

Reconstructed in 1828, Independence Hall tower is scheduled for some much needed renovation. Independence Hall Tower serves as both a landmark and focus of the park's interpretive themes. Designed by William Strickland, the present tower replaced the original one which had been removed in the late eighteenth century due to structural instability. Strickland's tower is one of America's earliest examples of colonial revival architecture.


Independence Hall tower is sheathed in 2 ¾" thick wood siding, doveled together with overlapping iron rods bolted top to bottom. Over the years, driving rain has penetrated through the siding's wood joints, exposing the rods to moisture. In April 2007, a fabric investigation using non- destructive radiography captured images of the degree of deterioration. The technique is similar to that used for scanning packages and luggage at airports or other security checks. A beam of radiation was directed through the wood siding at rod locations and captured on film, creating images of the iron rods.

The investigation revealed various degrees of deterioration. A number of rehabilitation options are available to repair the tower, any one of which would work. Park staff and City officials are working together to finalize plans for moving forward. Cynthia MacLeod, Superintendent of Independence National Historical Park highlighted the importance of choosing the correct method for rehabilitation: "We need to determine the method that best fits current preservation philosophy in terms of preserving appearance, maintaining the structure, and preserving historic materials." The park hopes to begin work in 2011. Details of the planned work are provided below.

This project will require the scaffolding of Independence Hall tower. The scaffolding alone is a major cost component of the project. In order to preserve the visitor experience as much as possible during this year- long rehabilitation project, the scaffolding will be covered by a scrim. The scrim serves a safety and protection function, but can also be used to display information about the tower and the rehabilitation project. The Friends of Independence have generously agreed to raise the funds needed to pay for this decorative scrim. The Friends, a 501(c)3 organization, serve as the fundraising arm in support of Independence National Historical Park. Tom

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Caramanico, Chair of the Board of the Friends, expressed his strong support of this fundraising project. “The view of the Tower is important to maintain for the millions of tourists who will visit the Park during the construction as well as for those of us who live and work in the city every day. Personal and Corporate contributions will be accepted and acknowledged on signage around the Tower. I am sure many of our major corporate partners will want to see their names associated with a national icon like Independence Hall.” The Friends can be reached at 215- 861- 4971.

Details of proposed rehabilitation project

The planned rehabilitation project will use protective measures to stop structural deterioration caused by water infiltration. It will also replace and refurbish selected deteriorated features of the tower. Specialists will arrest water invasion and seal joints in the exterior wood cladding and trim at the bell and cupola levels, currently sites of moisture penetration that feeds fungal infestation. In addition, the work will remove and replace deteriorated elements such as balusters and refurbish copper urns, windows, doors and other building elements on the tower. Stopping the sources of the moisture infiltration as well as refurbishing or replacing deteriorated architectural elements will minimize future repairs and contribute to the tower’s preservation.

On the exterior, the restoration work will repair or remove and replace deteriorated exterior building elements such as wood cladding, wood balustrade and horizontal rails, as well as other projecting building elements that threaten public safety. It will also install a new lightning protection system, install protective cladding systems and flashings, install miscellaneous carpentry and framing to reinforce the tower’s cladding, and also begin to address critical areas of the exterior coating failure. It will install new properly braced clock faces as well as addressing unsightly peeling and flaking paint.

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