

Greetings & News

ARE YOU READY to celebrate the founding of America with us?

No, you haven't time-travelled to the 4th of July - we just have our country's Independence on our minds after spending the fall and winter working on a house in the Independence National Historical Park (INHP).

Years ago at a Traditional Building Conference, I learned that our first historical preservation project as a nation was the creation of INHP in 1954. But the beginnings of the INHP actually started around the turn of the century, and not without a certain amount of debate. One hundred years later, this very same debate is still going on in preservation today – which version history or a building do we preserve, the one created over the years or the original version?

This tension in historic preservation is such a relevant topic that Preservation Nation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's blog, picked up our blog post about this very debate, as it occurred in the early 1900's regarding INHP and as it occurs today. (See back page for where to view that blog post.)

Last week, while working on a mailing, I noticed the new stamps had the words "freedom", "equality", "liberty", and "justice" under our flag. They were a reminder of the values our country was founded on and as I reflected on them I realized that even if we do not always get it right (and we don't, but neither did our country's founders either), it's in the act of striving towards these goals that we will find ourselves on the right side of history.

And then it occurred to me, isn't that the truth of historic preservation as well? We won't always get it right, but it's the efforts to preserve our built history that define us as preservationists.

All the best,

Danielle Groshong-Keperling



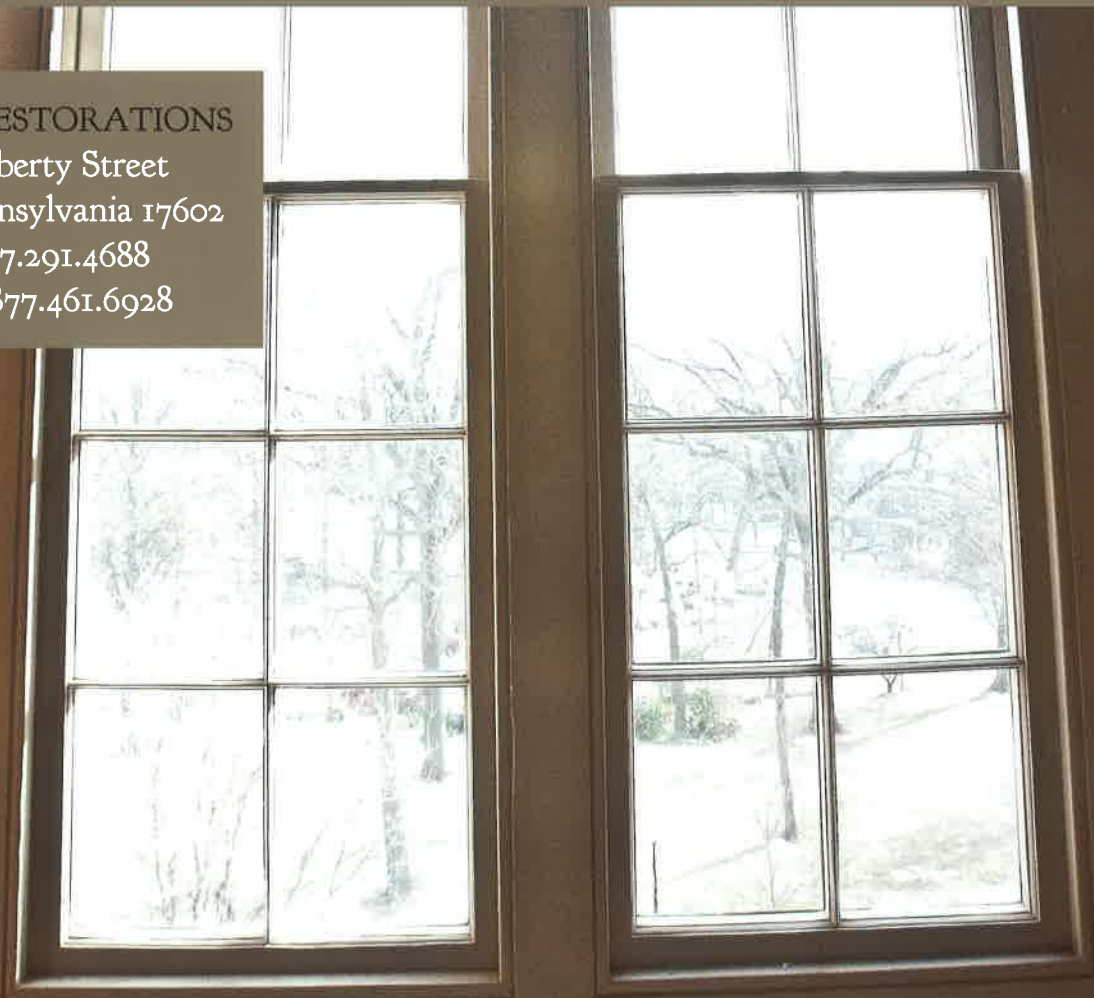
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Revolutionary Preservation

Thomas Jefferson once called Thaddeus Kosciuszko “as pure a son of liberty as I have ever met” – quite the compliment from revolutionary Thomas Jefferson. It is for that spirit, as well as his efforts engineering forts and defense tactics up and down the East Coast during the Revolutionary War, that we’ve memorialized the boarding house where the Polish freedom fighter lived briefly in Philadelphia.

A true revolutionary, Kosciuszko’s career in freedom fighting spanned multiple countries and several continents. Kosciuszko fought for freedom in his home country of Poland (where he helped instigate and lead the Kosciuzko uprising against Russian domination), Europe, and the colonies in the American Revolution.

On the corner of Pine & 3rd Streets in Philadelphia, the row home we’ve memorialized in his honor was the boarding house Kosciuszko chose to stay in because it was “a dwelling as small, as remote, and as cheap” as his secretary could find for Kosciuszko.

Small in stature it may be, but its sizable spirit lives on.

In late 2011 and early 2012, Historic Restorations worked with the National Park Service to restore and repaint windows and doors that had started rotting from moisture issues. The earliest windows in the U.S. were casement windows that were hinged on one side and swung out, with double-hung sashes that slid up and down like those on the Kosciuszko house first making their appearance in early 1700’s.

Over time, and particularly if not maintained properly, historic wood windows will deteriorate rapidly if exposed to excess moisture. To restore historic windows that have fallen victim to moisture, we follow the Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation” that call for considering not just materials and measurements, but also the functions of the windows – how much light the windows provided, how much fresh air and ventilation they provided, the visual link they provided to the outside world, and how they enhanced the appearance of the building.

For the Kosciuszko windows, this meant using solid wood and epoxy systems to repair the moisture damage on the wood window frames, sashes, doors, and shutters and restore their appearance and function to original condition to prevent further deterioration.

We also replaced the cedar shake roof at the Kosciuszko house. For buildings on the National Historic Register, the “Standards for Rehabilitation” developed by the Secretary of the Interior outline the requirements for repairing or replacing architectural features on historic buildings. These require matching not just the size, shape, and textures of the shingles themselves, but the craftsmanship details added during manufacturing and installation that characterize the roof.

For the roof at the Kosciuszko house, we started by matching the historic shingles with an appropriate, hand-crafted, replacement product. In replacing historic roofing, the most important features to replicate include the quality and surface texture of the wood (although the species can sometimes be acceptable to substitute), matching the size and shape of the tiles, reproducing the installation patterns (which vary geographically), and duplicating any decorative features (like butt patterns, color, exposed nails).

To do this at the Kosciuszko house, we turned to Lloyd Clefstad at Lloydco International Wood Products in British Columbia for hand-split, custom-ordered, cedar shakes. (You can see Lloyd in action hand splitting cedar shakes in a video on our blog.)

After approval of the materials from the National Park Service, our artisan craftsmen set about the task of recreating the installation of the cedar shakes. This requires detail-oriented craftsmen who are accustomed to looking for and paying attention to the smallest details that all add up to create the character of an architectural feature. Artisan craftsmen are not just looking at the materials needed, they are using their knowledge of historical craftsmanship to take into account how the installation of the original added to the overall character so they can duplicate it in their replacement or restoration.

After all our repairs and restorations were complete, the Thaddeus Kosciuszko Memorial was not only returned to its original stately glory, it was fortified against further moisture damage and energy loss.

In case you missed it...



March was Women’s History month and we explored the topic of preserving women’s history on our blog and in our e-newsletter with several educational articles. We also introduced our readers to the “Women of Historic Restorations” and we know you wouldn’t want to miss that! Don’t forget to stop over at our blog to read those articles and sign up for our e-newsletter so you don’t miss future articles.



DOES YOUR INSURANCE HAVE YOU COVERED?



covered?

On July 10th, Central Pennsylvania Preservation Society will focus their monthly meeting on the special insurance needs of historic buildings. To register or for more information, visit centralpennsylvaniapreservationssociety.org



Preserving the look of a nation

Washington D.C. may be our nation’s capitol, but Independence Hall in Philadelphia is where our country’s government was born. Originally built as a home for Pennsylvania’s Provincial government, it quickly became the iconic representation of our fledgling country’s struggle for freedom.

And just as our country’s government was formed to reflect the political preferences of our population’s wishes, Independence Hall has reflected our population’s evolving aesthetic preferences over the years.

Construction of the stately Independence Hall began in 1732. At the time, it was an aspiring and hallmark building project in the colonies and just as representative politics is often contentious, so too is the design of public places. The location and design of Independence Hall became so contentious that it took the Pennsylvania House of Representatives intervention to make a decision. They sided with Andrew Hamilton and granted him full control over the project.

Under Hamilton’s management, construction of the stately Independence Hall began in 1732 and was paid for as finances of the Provincial government allowed, taking over twenty years to complete. Designed in the Georgian architectural style preferences of Hamilton, the central building was flanked by two wings and crowned with a belltower and steeple – the original home of the Liberty Bell. Named for four British monarchs bearing the name of “George”, the strictly symmetrical Georgian architectural style was popular during the 1700’s and early 1800’s and is defined by an orderly arrangement and balance of features embellished with ornate decorative moldings (usually dentilwork).

In the early 1800’s, the traditional Georgian style was gradually giving way to up-and-coming Greek Revival architecture and even our country’s founding statehouse was not immune to the evolutions of popular culture’s tastes. Greek Revivalists felt that an architectural style modeled after ancient Greek buildings was more representative of democracy and our new nation than an architectural style born from English Monarchs. So they demolished the wings of Independence Hall and performed other renovations to the building that reflected their aesthetic preferences.

In the early and mid-1900’s Independence Hall, and other Philadelphia sites associated with the Revolution, were preserved with the creation of the fifty-five acre Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia’s Center City historic district. Independence Hall sits as the centerpiece of the park and once again its look was the center of the age-old debate of just exactly what kind of “history” we should preserve. The original? What it became over the years? What the setting actually was? Improve and beautify the setting? The original purpose of the building? All the other purposes it may have served?

Eventually surrounding buildings were demolished, the earlier modifications were reversed, and the wings reconstructed to restore the building to its 1776 appearance – the final decision being that Independence Hall should look as it did when it served its original purpose, the one for which it has become an icon for, with some minor improvements to make the setting more fitting and accessible.

Preservation Spotlight

Located on an 18th century miller's plantation, Olde Mill Lighting is part of a family of home enhancement shoppes that resides in a bank barn and stone farmhouse restored by founding patriarch Jerry. Jerry and his wife are now retired, but the family business carries on with daughter Tina now managing the operations.

Relying on the expertise and craftsmanship of their tinsmith, Olde Mill Lighting offers a wide range of both inventory and custom order brass indoor and outdoor lighting fixtures in a variety of finish color treatments. Their fixtures are designed and crafted right here in Lancaster County, though they do order their hand-blown reproduction glass from Germany when an exact replication of 200-year-old traditionally hand-blown glass is needed.

Exact and expert recreations of historical pieces is so much their specialty that Olde Mill Lighting has even helped set the stage for Hollywood movies. Their work can be seen in the lanterns on the ships of the first three Pirates of the Caribbean movies, where authenticity was so important that no electrical lighting was used at all. They also provided all the period pieces for the indoor and outdoor fixtures for the entire village setting of the HBO mini-series chronicling the life and political contributions of one of our Founding Fathers in John Adams.

"We were recently contacted about reproducing a huge period light from the White House for an Abe Lincoln movie currently being made, but we just couldn't do it as much as we wanted to – it was just too big," said lighting specialist Joan.

But lighting isn't the only thing this family founded, owned, and operated local business offers. "I wish more people realized the variety of things Olde Millhouse Shoppes can offer them," says daughter Tina. "We not only have hand-crafted indoor and outdoor lighting, we also have period furniture, decorations, gifts, candles, boutique items, and the most recent addition of our floral department."

Visit their website at oldemillhouse.com for more information.

This month, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's blog at preservationnation.org featured one of our blog posts on Independence Hall that explored the long-standing debate of just which "history" it is we're supposed to be preserving.

YOU CAN READ IT AT:

blog.preservationnation.org/2012/04/12/musings-on-preservation-historic-context-philadelphias-independence-hall

“The character of hand craftsmanship adds something that you just can't get in big box stores.”

-Tina

To Shake •OR• To Shingle?

There is often confusion about the difference between wood shingles and wood shakes. Historically, there were only "shingles" – this single term was used to describe both the earliest hand-split products and the later machine-sawn type. Today we use two terms to distinguish between the two types. "Shingles" refer to machine-sawn wood roofing tiles and "shake" refers to the hand-split wood tiles.

