

The Preservation of Our Historic Space: A Drama in Unfolding Acts
June 17, 2018

Prelude

How did all of this start and why?

A simple walk around the outside of the building is enough to demonstrate to even an untutored eye that our historic fabric is in need of long overdue repair. Responding to the advocacy and leadership of Pete Eveleth and Don Gangloff, the Fabric Committee decided not to do temporary or piecemeal repairs but rather to do a full assessment of the exterior and to develop a long-term master plan for repair, renovation, preservation and an ongoing maintenance schedule. The assessment was funded by the St. Mark's Endowment from the funds set aside for historic preservation that provide for funding of periodic examinations of the building.

How did we select Aeon Preservation Services to work with on the project?

When the Fabric Committee decided to undertake a complete survey of our building (explained below), we asked Emily Eig to recommend firms that could provide a complete package of services, from assessment through to completion of needed restoration and repairs. She recommended two firms, Aeon and Conservation Solutions, Inc. After interviewing both candidates, the committee unanimously agreed that Aeon was an appropriate firm to undertake the initial assessment of the building.

Since the commencement of their initial emergency repairs to the building, our decision was to expand the scope of their involvement in carrying out this major renovation project – based on the breadth of Aeon's technical capabilities, their comprehensive assessment of existing building deficiencies, prioritization of scheduling repairs according to the extent of deterioration and potential threat to the integrity of the building and to public safety, and the sound advice provided to the Committee.

Alfonso Narvaez, Founding Principal of Aeon, is a former Junior Warden at his church, c1766 St John's Broad Creek Episcopal Church, for many years, has worked with churches, including Grace Episcopal in Georgetown and c1881 Luther Place Memorial Church at Thomas Circle and understands the challenges faced by churches undergoing major projects and their financial limitations. He has demonstrated this sensitivity by working to reduce costs through careful staging – for example, getting maximum use from scaffolding and use of high lifts. These factors, together with the cooperative relationship we have developed in working with Aeon's leadership, provides considerable assurance that this project will be in capable hands.

Dramatis Personae

What is the Fabric Committee?

The Fabric Committee advises and consults on the maintenance, upkeep, preservation and repair of our physical plant and serve as the advisory committee to the Junior Warden. They are directly involved in all major capital projects and capital expenditure decisions. They help develop both short- and long-term plans and provide oversight for the execution of those plans.

Who is on the Fabric Committee?

Kenn Allen, Junior Warden & former Senior Warden

Michael Knipe, Manciple and former Parish Counsel

Peter Eveleth, former Senior and Junior Warden; co-led Second Century St Mark's roof replacement, electrical lighting, rewiring and related projects

Charlie Rupp, former Junior Warden, managed construction of "old undercroft," member of the Vision 2020 Steering Committee

Don Gangloff, architect with experience in historic preservation and restoration; worked with church members and architects to develop space design and advised during construction of "old undercroft."

Andy Wenchel, historic preservation and restoration expert

Kathryn Powers, Co-Chair of the St. Mark's Endowment

Christina Herman, representing the Green Lions

Fritz Henn, member of the Vision 2020 Steering Committee

Jack Richards, former Junior Warden

Michael Bloomfield, Convener, Working Group on Building Security

What is the role of the Vestry?

The Vestry receives monthly reports from the Junior Warden on issues related to the building and reviews, discusses and acts on recommendations for major actions and for major expenditures outside the approved budget and on any requests to the Endowment for financial support of building related projects.

Who are Emily Eig and Sarah Vonesh and what is EHT Traceries?

EHT Traceries, Inc. is a research and consulting firm specializing in history and historic preservation. The firm provides a wide range of services related to historic and cultural resources, including research, survey, identification, evaluation, and technical preservation consultation. Emily Eig is the founder and president of EHT Traceries, Inc. She has a thorough understanding of and is considered expert on historic preservation issues. She has advised St. Mark's since the beginning of Vision 2020 and has guided our planning through the review and approval processes of both the Commission on Fine Arts and the DC Historic Preservation Review Board. Sarah Vonesh is an historic preservation specialist and project manager working closely with Emily on behalf of St. Mark's.

Learn more at <http://www.traceries.com>.

Who are Aeon Preservation Services, Alfonso Narvaez and Lane Burritt?

"Aeon Preservation Services LLC was established to provide high quality technical preservation services with one objective: to bridge the gap between building owners, architects, and contractors in the pursuit and execution of high quality preservation projects at unique, historic, and iconic buildings and monuments nationwide. Building on a decades-long career in providing technical conservation services to the design community, our mission is to apply this expertise in collaborating with some of the best contractors in their respective trades and specialties to achieve world-class project planning and execution for historic properties and monuments."

Alfonso Narvaez is a founding principal of Aeon. A senior architectural conservator with nearly thirty years' experience in the technical preservation of historic buildings and monuments nationwide, Alfonso worked for John Milner Associates, Inc., a national consulting firm specializing in architecture, conservation, landscape architecture, archeology, and planning for historic properties and sites for over twenty years, before leaving to establish an independent practice. Prior to JMA, he worked as an Historic Architect for the National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center.

Lane Burritt is a founding principal of Aeon. She is an architectural conservator with over twenty years' experience. Her practice involves historic and material research; condition surveys; draft contract documents; construction administration of restoration projects; and directing quality assurance and quality control on major projects. Before starting Aeon, Lane worked for ten years as a Senior Conservator with John Milner Associates in the Preservation Technology Group. Prior to that she worked as a conservator in New York at ICR. She is a Professional Associate member of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) that governs architectural conservators.

Learn more at <http://aeonpreservation.com>.

Act 1

What did Aeon do to assess the condition of the building?

Aeon began with an “up close and personal” inspection of the north façade of the church (where the Tiffany window is) and immediately adjacent spaces (such as the chimney on the northeast corner), of the tower and of much of the exterior of the west side, including the chapel. They did preliminary inspections of the east side exterior and of the parish hall wing and brick walls along the parking lot and around the compressors. From their report: *“The initial survey was conducted from the ground, which did not reveal the problems in the upper masonry. That ground survey was followed by Aeon renting a 120’ foot articulated man lift to examine the steeple, gable, chimneys, and cornice. The interior of the steeple, and the north chimney were also investigated and photographed.”*

What were the initial findings that led to the emergency repairs done in March?

Their initial assessment identified a number of deteriorating and inadequately secured stones that they recommended be dealt with immediately. They identified and presented to the Fabric Committee in a series of posters later displayed for the parish *“elements at risk of falling, broken, displaced, or missing that must be replaced immediately. These Priority 1 issues include items needing immediate attention and pinning upper stones.”* This was the basis of the emergency repairs completed during the week of March 19. Those repairs alleviated the immediate danger, allowing them to complete their overall assessment and for us to receive, consider and make decisions based on their report of that work.

Act 2

What are the highlights of Aeon’s overall findings?

At the beginning of May, the Fabric Committee met with Aeon and with our ongoing historic preservation consultants from Tracerics to hear the next iteration of Aeon’s report on the condition of the building and their recommendations for how we move forward, the timetable and the estimated cost for the next phases of work.

As we reported to the Vestry and later to the parish as a whole, “Their written report is quite lengthy, running 634 pages. But you will be pretty much in the picture if you read pages 1-11 and page 663. There are a lot of details in between with pictures illustrating their findings and more than you may want to know about the analysis of mortar.” The report remains available online at <http://www.stmarks.net/condition-report-aeon-preservation-services-llc/>.

Here is a quick overview of the major conclusions:

Highest priority is to remove and rebuild **the chimney on the northeast corner** of the nave, above the A Street entrance and to do repairs in that portion of the church in order to maximize rental of scaffolding and lifts. You can best see the chimney if you stand by the bicycle rack outside the foyer door. Look up to the cross on the front of the church and then down to the right of that.

It has lost much of its structural integrity and is rotated and displaced in multiple directions. The interior has complete mortar loss and severe brick loss. The engineer is concerned that while it is not in danger of imminent failure, it very well might not withstand any seismic shock. Because the chimney is part of our historic fabric and because we are under the watchful eye of the federal Commission of Fine Arts and the DC Historic Preservation Board and are in a historic district, we do not have the option to simply remove the chimney.

Also, extensive deterioration and damage was found in **the tower**. Aeon recommended that we begin immediately to plan and set priorities for major repairs and reconstruction on the tower with on-site work to begin in March/April of next year. The current estimated cost for that work is \$750,000. We will not have a final cost until we do the intensive work to determine exactly what will be done and what can be deferred or done at a less expensive level. Aeon will work with a sub-group of the Fabric Committee on this process.

What work will we be doing this summer in response to those findings and how much will it cost?

Aeon will execute brick and stone repairs associated with the northeast chimney and nearby masonry. This will include rebuilding the large chimney at the northeast corner, removal and resetting of the stone coping at the northeast gable adjacent, repair of related flashings, resetting of stone elements of the parish hall walk archway and repointing and cleaning of the brick masonry wall (the portion east of the Tiffany window) and steps surrounding the northeast entrance. This will result in a secure chimney, a safer arch and greater knowledge of our mortar in preparation for future work.

They also will take detailed measurements of all stones requiring replacement in future phases in anticipation of being able to procure new stone for work in 2019. This work will be done from a 120-foot high reach for all accessible stones on the tower.

The estimated cost of this work, as described just above, is \$112,200, excluding costs for permits. The Vestry has approved a total allocation of \$125,000, thus making provision for a contingency, with the understanding that the cost may rise if new conditions are found during the work.

What are the implications of that work for our lives?

Work on the chimney and northeast corner is scheduled to begin the week of July 16 and to take up to two months. This work will require scaffolding; closure of the A Street nave door; protection over the windows and the arched door; construction fencing to enclose the work area to provide for public safety; and assistance of the structural engineer to inspect the chimney work.

Act 3

What do we propose to do next year?

Next year, probably beginning in the spring, we will do the required repair work on the tower. Part of the work we will do this summer will lead to a detailed plan and timetable for that work.

What are the implications of that work for our lives?

The entire tower will be scaffolded and the tower door will be closed. Protective covering will be installed over those doors and nearby windows. The work will take an estimated 4 to 6 months.

How much will it cost?

The current estimate is \$750,000. Over the course of this summer and into the fall, a sub-group of the Fabric Committee will work closely with Aeon to prioritize the work to be done on the tower, including decisions about what stones can remain as they are, which can be repaired and which must be replaced. We recognize that because of the cost of scaffolding, it is best if we can do the most work that we can while it is in place rather than repeat that cost. Thus, we will have a refined cost estimate by the conclusion of that work when we have a more precise scope and are able to accurately estimate the amount of new stone required and its cost.

Encore

What work will remain to be done in 2022 and after?

In 2022, attention must be given to the repairs needed on the west exterior. Most of that work will be lower on the church but likely will include some work on the gutters and the areas of the roof and wood that may have been damaged by water intrusion. In subsequent years, we will progressively work on the east side, which preliminary examination indicates is in much better shape than the west; the parish hall wing, which primarily requires correction of earlier repairs (recall that much of the south wall from the southeast corner through the dance studio was replaced or repaired during Vision 2020); and the south wall of the nave which is difficult to access and will be further evaluated this summer.

The reality is that we should expect all of this work to take a minimum of three years and up to five years, assuming we are able to finance it as we go. Most importantly, we must continue regular maintenance and do a full building survey at least every ten years.

What do we think it will cost?

The current estimate for the work to be done after the tower is \$500,000, potentially spread over several years, for masonry repairs but it is important to remember that costs of labor and material go up

over time and that new issues may be identified as work progresses. These are just preliminary numbers. We will learn much more after the work this summer and are incorporating test areas for cleaning and repointing to better understand the nature of the proposed repair strategy. Also, our focus has been on masonry restoration. It also is prudent to consider that other conditions at hidden adjacent locations also may need attention.

How long will these repairs last?

Alfonso and his team believe that, with ongoing attention and inspection, the objective is for masonry repairs to last 50 years, depending on maintenance and other external factors.