



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE

1. The undersigned hereby applies to the Cambridge Historical Commission for a Certificate of (check one box): Appropriateness, Nonapplicability, or Hardship, in accordance with Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws and/or Chapter 2.78 of the Municipal Code.

2. Address of property: 15 Harvard Yard (Holden Chapel), Cambridge, Massachusetts

3. Describe the proposed alteration(s), construction or demolition in the space provided below:
(An additional page can be attached, if necessary).

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences is planning a project to repair and restore the west pediment at Holden Chapel.

See attached narrative for a more detailed description of the proposed work.

I certify that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. The undersigned also attests that he/she has read the statements printed on the reverse.

Name of Property Owner of Record: President and Fellows of Harvard College c/o Mark Verkennis
Mailing Address: Harvard Planning Office, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 573
Telephone/Fax: (617) 496-1879 E-mail: (617) 495-0559
Signature of Property Owner of Record: Mark Verkennis
(Required field; application will not be considered complete without property owner's signature)

Name of proponent, if not record owner:
Mailing Address:
Telephone/Fax: E-mail:

(for office use only):
Date Application Received: _____ Case Number: 4545 Hearing Date: 5/6/21
Type of Certificate Issued: _____ Date Issued: _____

Holden Chapel – West Pediment Repair and Restoration

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences is planning a project to repair and restore the west pediment at Holden Chapel. As part of the planning for this project, a detailed Exterior Condition Assessment was undertaken by Bruner/Cott Architects and Building Conservation Associates in 2019. This assessment and its treatment recommendations have informed the proposed scope of work at the west pediment.

Background

Holden Chapel was constructed in Harvard Yard in 1746 and is the third oldest building on campus. The building features elaborately carved wood sculptures at both its east and west pediments. The sculptures feature the Holden family crest surrounded by cherubs and elaborate scroll work. Based on documentary research and initial materials analysis undertaken as part of this project, it is assumed that the west sculptural element (facing Massachusetts Avenue) is original to the building's construction. The wood sculpture in the east pediment (facing Harvard Yard) was installed in 1926 and is a replica of the west sculpture, although there are slight differences in the cherubs faces, legs and scrolls.

The wood sculptures at both locations, which are comprised of separately carved sections, are generally in fair condition. While the majority of the wood appears to be sound, numerous cracks, checks and loose pieces are present. The elements most susceptible to deterioration are the heads and legs of the cherubs which project out from the soffit above. Ferrous screws are prevalent, causing rust stains and peeling paint.

The wood-plank backboards at each location show evidence of extensive deterioration. To appropriately repair these elements, and ensure the long-term structural integrity of the building, the wood sculptures are proposed to be carefully disassembled, removed and the backboards replaced.

Scope of Work

Repair and restoration is proposed to be undertaken in phases, beginning with the west pediment which contains the original wood sculpture installed at the time of Holden Chapel's construction. The repair and conservation work is to be undertaken by Daedalus, and includes the following scope:

- In preparation for removal, the condition of the sculpture will be further assessed and stabilized as needed. Harvard will coordinate with CHC staff on any issues that arise during this assessment. After stabilizing the sculpture, the component sections will be removed from the pediment, packed, and taken off-site for treatment. Any new openings in the backboards created by the removal process will be repaired and secured as needed.
- A more detailed survey will be conducted of the many layers of paint and other coatings on the sculpture, and a report and analysis will be prepared by Bruner/Cott and BCA to help inform re-painting.
- The sculpture surface will be cleaned of the majority of the old repairs and paint layers. The original layers will be saved and isolated if possible. Historic fasteners will be saved and included in the record of treatment.
- The surface will be repaired using reversible repair materials and are likely to include the use of carved wood dutchman, and traditional wood repair techniques such as dowels and adhesives mixed with wood shavings.

- The surface will be re-painted using a thin durable paint system which can be easily maintained. The project team will consult with CHC staff on the proposed paint color.
- A new mounting system will be fabricated (likely using a stainless-steel framework with accessible screws) which will permit the removal of separate sculpture sections facilitating future maintenance and repair activities. The project team will review the specifications of the new mounting system and its installation with the CHC staff.
- The backboards will be surveyed, repaired, and re-painted on-site using the same methods and materials as the sculpted sections. This work will include repairing losses at the seams between the boards, filling the gaps between the boards and repairs at the connection points for the sculpture. It will also include removal of a few small boards to permit architectural team access for inspecting the support system. The need for the replacement of damaged and deteriorated backboards will be determined by the project team and reviewed with CHC staff.
- The sculpture components will be carefully re-installed on the west pediment. Sections will abut as closely as possible, and section joints will be filled with reversable synthetic wood filler.

Ongoing Maintenance

Given the apparent age and significance of the sculpture at the west pediment, Harvard will commit to a plan for more frequent conditions inspections and periodic maintenance activities. In consultation with Bruner/Cott and Daedalus, a yearly maintenance program has been developed that will include the following activities:

- Removal of bird nests and debris.
- Gentle cleaning of surface as needed
- Inspection of wood, paint and fasteners for signs of degradation.
- Touch up of paint, filling of cracks and repairs, and re-securing of fasteners as needed.

Paint finishes will be renewed every 7-10 years or when needed based on annual inspections.



West Elevation, Harvard University



West



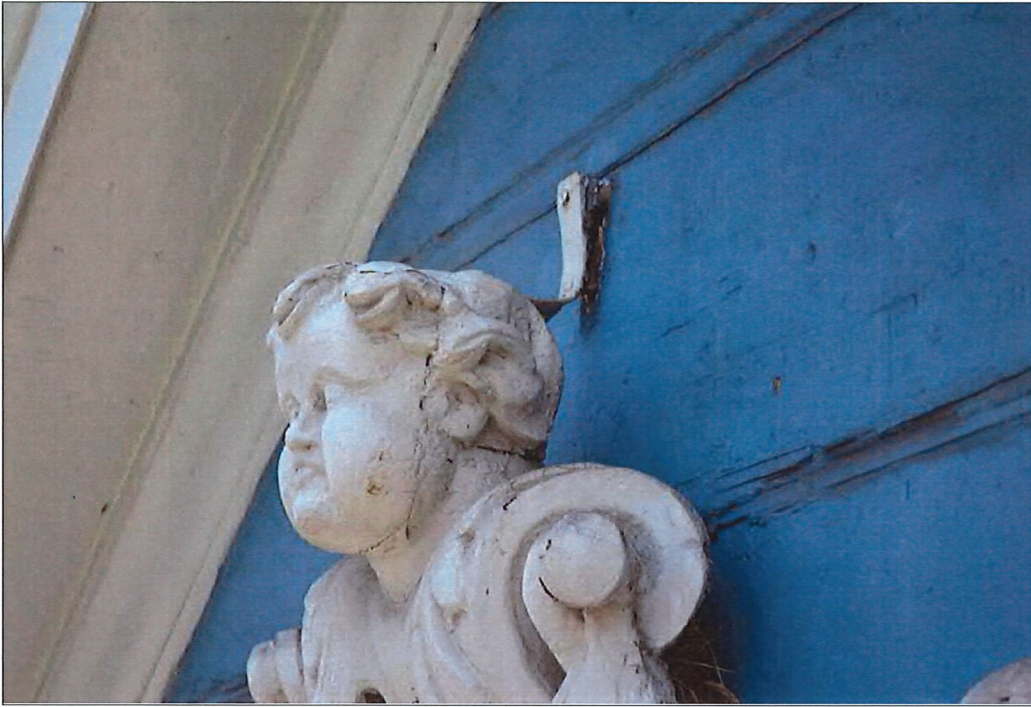
East



West backboards deteriorating and sections are missing



West wood dutchman repairs at backboards



West cherub head with angle attachment to backboards



West bird nests to be removed



West showing horizontal cracks and location of seam from separate sections of carvings



West seam at crest



West cherub head with horizontal wood split



West cherub head with horizontal wood split



West cherub foot with ferrous metal fasteners at the toes



West cherub leg with end-grain exposed