

Harvard University Adams House Renewal

Phase III

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

PREPARED FOR

CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

PREPARED BY

Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP

SUBMITTED SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TEXT DESCRIPTION

Project Background and Description of Proposed Alterations 2

11" X 17" DRAWINGS & ILLUSTRATIONS

Neighborhood Plan 11

Adams House Plot Plan 12

Adams House Renewal - Phasing Plan for Permitting and Construction 13

Existing Views 14

Demo and Proposed Elevations - South (Bow Street) and West (Plympton) 16

Demo and Proposed Elevations - East (Bow Street) and North 18

Envelope Restoration - Ornamental Metalwork 20

Envelope Restoration - Russell Tower & Cupola 21

Envelope Restoration - Windows - Existing Types 22

Envelope Restoration - Windows - Typical Proposed Details 23

Proposed Site and Accessibility Upgrades Key Plan 24

Entry Changes for Accessibility - Plympton Street Incl. Misc Details 25

Entry Changes for Accessibility - Lower Bow Street/Theater Lobby 27

Entry Changes for Accessibility - Upper Bow Street/East Terrace/Door Details 28

Upper and Lower Bow Waste/Recycling Enclosures 32

Library Commons Additions - Conservatory Extension & Elevator,
Russell Connector 34

Westmorly Elevator Addition 41

Russell Hall Mechanical- Window Alterations and Louvered Dormer Additions 43

Westmorly Mechanical - Rooftop Mechanical Equipment 46

Introduction

Adams House Renewal is the sixth project in Harvard’s undergraduate House Renewal campaign. While upgrades to life safety, accessibility, and building systems are fundamental and necessary goals of the campaign, the broader Renewal mission is to preserve the historic character and culture of the Houses while renewing the House experience as part of a twenty-first century approach to liberal arts education.

The buildings comprising Adams House are situated across three city blocks east of Harvard Square. Adams buildings have street frontage on Linden, Plympton, and Bow Streets. All of Adams House falls within the boundaries of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Conservation District.

Unlike Harvard’s prior House Renewal projects, Adams Renewal construction is being phased due to construction and swing space logistics. This application concerns the third and final phase of construction, the three-building complex east of Plympton Street. These three interconnected buildings (from east to west) are Westmorly Court, the Library Commons building, and Russell Hall. While each building is architecturally and visually distinct, having been designed and built separately, the three are considered a single building with respect to the building and fire codes.

The organization of this narrative is as follows:

- **Brief History of Adams House**
- **Significance of Westmorly Court, the Library Commons Building, and Russell Hall in the Harvard Square Conservation District**
- **Proposed Alterations**
- **APPENDIX: Building Histories and Architectural Descriptions**
 - *History of Westmorly Court*
 - *Architectural Description of Westmorly Court*
 - *History of the Library Commons Building and Russell Hall*
 - *Architectural Description of the Library Commons Building*
 - *Architectural Description of Russell Hall*

Brief History of Adams House

Since its formation in 1930, the House system has been a cornerstone of the undergraduate experience at Harvard. Unlike the six other Houses created in 1930-31, Adams House was primarily established through the reuse of several nineteenth-century Harvard Square apartment buildings Harvard had acquired in the 1920s: Claverly Hall (1892), Randolph Hall (1897-1902), and Westmorly Court (1898-1902). Built by private developers to serve the needs of wealthy students, these dwellings were synonymous with the wealth and privilege of Harvard’s “Gold Coast.” Apthorp House (1760), a historic Colonial-era wood-frame home located within the Randolph Hall courtyard, came into Harvard’s possession with the Randolph purchase of the Randolph parcel. As part of the formation of Adams House, Harvard renovated Apthorp to serve as the Adams Master’s residence.

Because the Gold Coast apartment buildings lacked dining and gathering spaces equivalent to those in new Houses and could not be feasibly adapted to provide them, Harvard added a dining and commons building (Library Commons, 1931) to the site. A year later, because of a late-breaking donation to the House campaign, Harvard constructed a new dormitory, Russell Hall (1932), replacing a Gold Coast apartment building of the same name (Russell Hall, 1900).

Together, the entire Adams complex comprises six structures totaling approximately 240,000 Gross Square Feet. Adams is Harvard’s most architecturally eclectic House, with styles and eras ranging from high-style Colonial to various late-nineteenth-century Romantic Revival styles to Harvard’s iconic 1930s Neo Georgian.

Significance of Westmorly Court, the Library Commons Building, and Russell Hall in the Conservation District

While not directly related to the local designation, the Harvard Square National Register Historic District nomination report is a useful reference in discussions of significance for these buildings. It identifies six thematic elements in the district’s history that contribute to its overall significance. As a contributing building, Westmorly Court falls under the category of Theme Five, which refers to “Harvard Clubs and private dormitories from 1882 to 1930... significant in the areas of architecture, social history, and education.” Westmorly is notable as perhaps the grandest of the Gold Coast apartment houses, while the perceived excesses of the Gold Coast buildings and evident inequities of student housing at the turn of the twentieth century were important catalysts in Harvard’s decision to first construct the freshman dormitories along the Charles River in the 1910s (under the tenure of President Eliot) and ultimately establish the House system in 1930 (under the tenure of President Lowell).

Aside from being one of the first buildings designed by the nationally-renowned firm of Warren and Wetmore, Westmorly is also a particularly refined example of the courtyard Tudor Revival apartment house, a residential building type that arose in the Boston area during the 1890s for reasons which include development economics as well as the heightened interest in European medieval architecture that swept the northeast United States during that era. Larger building footprints like Westmorly’s necessitated the development of U-shaped, H-shaped, and courtyard arrangements in order to provide light and air, while picturesque neo-Tudor massings could be more loosely adapted to irregular sites. Finally, Westmorly is significant within its urban realm: the well-composed massing and design of Westmorly’s entry facades on Upper Bow Street, fronted by the landscaped forecourt and formal entry terrace, make a key contribution to the picturesque and attractive nature of St. Paul’s Square, formed by the intersection of Bow and Arrow Streets.

Russell Hall and the Library-Commons Building, while not fitting neatly into the six thematic elements identified in the Harvard Square National Register District nomination, are high-style Neo-Georgian buildings of a grand collegiate scale typical of Charles Coolidge’s extensive work for Harvard’s Cambridge campus. Both buildings are inventoried as contributing structures to the Harvard Square National Register District. While these buildings have much in common with the architecture of Coolidge’s River Houses, the subtle variations and unique qualities of the Library Commons exterior underscore the bespoke nature of the architect’s solution for Adams: the specific challenge of relating new work to an eclectic set of existing buildings and a denser urban site. Meanwhile, the cupola and gold dome of Russell Hall mark Adams as one of the original Houses, establishing visual connections across the neighborhood to the other iconic domes and towers of Coolidge’s new-build Houses—Dunster, Lowell, and Eliot—as well as northward (and back in time) to important Yard antecedents such as Harvard Hall.

Summary of Proposed Alterations

Proposed alterations fall into the following categories:

1. **PROJECT-WIDE Façade Restoration, Masonry & Wood:** Removal of non-original elements such as anchors and conduit, combined with brick and stone masonry conservation and restoration. **Typical: mortar cleaning; selective repointing including all belt courses, corbeled areas, and water tables; brick masonry crack repair. Stone dutchman and patching where anchorages to be removed.** Address cracks and spalls in stonework. Rehabilitation of exterior wood plank and trim with replacement as necessary, match profiles in-kind. **Mock-ups for mortar, replacement brick masonry, and new stone units to be made available for CHC approval during construction.** *(Visible from Public Ways)*

- a. WESTMORLY Facade Restoration: Replacement of limestone window lintels where structural cracking observed, rebuilding of stone and brick parapets at bays, new parapet flashing throughout. *(Visible from Public Ways)*
 - b. WESTMORLY East Terrace: **Reconstruction of terrace walls with proper through-wall flashing. Walls are deteriorating due to freeze/thaw.** See Accessibility modifications below for Terrace changes. *(Visible from Public Ways)*
 - c. LIBRARY COMMONS & RUSSELL Roof and Chimney Restoration: Replacement of slate roofs, color to match historic; chimney rehabilitation, caps, and rebuilds in-kind typical to other House Renewal projects. Russell student room dormer wood cladding rehabilitation. *(Visible from Public Ways)*
2. PROJECT-WIDE Metalwork Restoration: **Restoration or replacement with historically appropriate materials for window grilles, gutters/downspouts, exposed flashings, painted metal decorative trim, and ornamental balconies.** Replacement of missing ornamental window grilles in kind, and **addition of historically compatible ornamental security grilles for Westmorly terrace windows.** *(Visible from Public Ways)*
 - a. RUSSELL Tower Rehabilitation: Restore painted copper and replace missing elements (urns, etc.). **At two lower tower sections, replace existing shiplap wood siding with painted copper cladding for greater longevity:** no change to appearance. Rehabilitate gilt dome and weathervane. **Construct skylight over airshaft within cupola** *(Skylight will be Minimally Visible from Public Ways)*.
 3. PROJECT-WIDE Windows, Typical: Removal of non-original triple-track aluminum storms, **sash replacement and frame restoration similar to other House Renewal projects.** Counterweight-hung sashes with custom profiles and true divided-lite double-glazed IGUs to be installed; muntin profiles to match historic widths and profiles. At selected locations, new frame units to be installed, matching historic, where frame has been modified or deteriorated conditions warrant. *(Visible from Public Ways)*
 - a. WESTMORLY Leaded Glass Windows: **At leaded-glass window units (casement, sash, and fixed), existing lead-came unit to be salvaged and reused outboard in a new sash with single-lite IGU directly inboard.** Window sash and screen operation to match historic. Existing frames to be modified to accommodate new sash thickness. Approach means leaded glass present to street, thermal performance, and historic operation is retained.
 - b. RUSSELL Intake Louvers at Two Windows: At **two locations** along Plympton Street, **provide intake louvers within existing masonry openings** at ground floor. M.O.s to remain unchanged and Russell brick mold to be used.
 4. LIBRARY COMMONS Skylights: Over dining hall, replace octagonal pyramid skylights with high-performance aluminum skylight systems maintaining existing geometry and lite divisions. At servery skylights, replace Kalwall-type skylights with high-performance aluminum skylight, lite divisions per historic drawings. (See “Russell Tower” 2(a) for

skylight within cupola). (*Skylights minimally/not visible from Public Ways*)

5. PROJECT-WIDE Site and Entry Changes for Accessibility (*All visible from Public Ways*):
 - a. RUSSELL – Plympton Street Entry Forecourt: **Rebuild of exterior stair and landings at main entry forecourt, new handrails, and addition of new door into Russell to provide lift-accessible route into building at Adams’ “main entrance.”** Historic gate to remain in place above modified landing.
 - b. RUSSELL – Plympton Street Egress Door Modifications: At existing double door on Plympton provide new door, frame, and alter stone surround to meet accessibility compliance and conform to proposed sidewalk grading.
 - c. LIBRARY COMMONS – Lower Bow Street West “Garden Door” Modifications: Replace door/frame and lower the sill elevation to provide accessible route from open-air light court to sidewalk for life safety/accessibility compliance (accessible means of egress).
 - d. WESTMORLY – Lower Bow Street Modified Entry and Landscape for Pool Theater and Bow & Arrow Press: **Relocation of Pool Theater exterior entry door one bay eastward, plus removal of non-accessible Bow & Arrow Press door.** New windows matching existing are to replace these two existing door locations. **Existing landscape berms and retaining walls to be modified to provide a sloped walkway** and two-riser exterior stair for relocated entrance.
 - e. WESTMORLY – Upper Bow Street New Ramp to East Terrace and Accessible Entry Door: **Remove one section of existing terrace brick wall and provide accessible ramp route to terrace.** Create new accessible entry door into Westmorly adjacent to existing “B” (South) entry, setting new door below existing ocular window to remain. **Ramp has been designed and structured to mitigate impact to the mature Linden tree that is immediately adjacent.**
6. OTHER SITE CHANGES – Waste/Recycling Enclosures and Bike Racks: **At Upper Bow Street** adjacent to 9 Bow, remove existing racks and gravel hardscape. **Provide ornamental metal fence enclosure for waste/recycling and four (4) new bike racks** with capacity for 7 bikes on new hardscape. **At Lower Bow Street, modify landscape berm and site walls to provide similar enclosure for waste/recycling.** (*Visible from Public Ways*)
7. RUSSELL AND LIBRARY COMMONS – Conservatory, Commons Elevator, and Russell Connector:
 - a. Conservatory Envelope Reconstruction and Extension: Replace Kalwall-type sloped glazing system with high performance skylight system. **Expand southward within the open-air light court.** (*Not visible from Public Ways*)
 - b. Conservatory Elevator: **To extend one story above Conservatory glazed roof.** Provides accessibility to two upper levels within the Library Commons building while avoiding impacts to historic interiors. (*Minimally visible from Public Ways*)

- c. Russell Connector: **Construct one-story rooftop addition on top of existing entry lobby.** Solves egress and circulation challenges while **provides unifying composition between two buildings** and conceals mass of Conservatory Elevator from Plympton Street. *(Visible from Public Ways)*

8. WESTMORLY – Elevator and Landing Addition: **Construct new four-story enclosure for elevator hoistway and associated landings on west elevation of Westmorly.** Strategically located at a 1930s airshaft at the intersection of Westmorly and the Library Commons Building. *(Somewhat visible from Public Ways)*

9. Changes due to Mechanical Systems:
 - a. RUSSELL – New Mechanical Exhaust Dormers on East Plane of Main Roof: **Two gabled dormers of wood construction with slate roofs with louvered openings** to be added in the field of the slate roof on the east side of the main roof, facing Library Commons. *(Visible from Public Way)*

 - b. WESTMORLY – New Mechanical Equipment on Main Roof (NW corner): **Two curb-mounted air handling units joined as one enclosure** located at northwest corner of roof to mitigate visual impact from right of ways. *(Minimally visible from Public Ways)*

APPENDIX

History of Westmorly Court

Westmorly Court, a Tudor Revival courtyard apartment building, was a real estate venture by Charles Wetmore, an alumnus of the College who also developed nearby **Claverly Hall** (1892), Apley Court (1897), and Craigie Hall (1898). Westmorly was built in two campaigns, with the south half completed in 1898 and the north half completed in 1902. An enclosed swimming pool was completed circa 1904, infilling the lowest level of the open-air courtyard.

Drawings for the initial phase of Westmorly are stamped by New York architect John E. Howe; Wetmore had also tapped Howe for the design of Apley Court and the Claverly Senior House addition. In 1898, Wetmore left his law career, joining another architect, Whitney Warren, to found Warren and Wetmore. Howe became an associate in the Warren and Wetmore office. While the 1902 “Westmorly North” drawings are stamped “Warren and Wetmore”, Howe was most likely in charge of the design and drawings. A prolific practice with a Beaux Arts aesthetic and society connections, the firm of Warren and Wetmore would go on to design rail stations, hotels, and other prominent buildings including New York City’s Grand Central Terminal and the New York Yacht Club.

Once the north wing was complete, Westmorly comprised 60 suites ringing an internal open-air light court above the indoor swimming pool. The high level of interior finish quality and amenities in Westmorly and other Gold Coast buildings emerged from relentless competition among the developers to attract the wealthiest students and perpetuate an air of exclusivity that could justify high rents. Owing to its two-phase evolution, Westmorly was built with not one but two entrance lobbies: brick party walls fully separated the north and south wings. Tenant suites included steam heat, plumbing, telephones, and hardwood finishes. On the ground floor, the building featured a well-appointed club room, bicycle room, and three squash courts. The indoor swimming pool, enclosed by a rustic hammerbeam roof, was the largest of the Gold Coast buildings. It was outfitted with ornate wood-burning fireplaces and skylights. Even among the Gold Coast buildings Westmorly had an esteemed reputation, and many residents were sons of prominent Gilded Age families. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt lived in Westmorly as an undergrad from 1900-1904, and his suite (South-17) was recently restored as a small museum.

As part of the upgrades involved in creating Adams House, Harvard undertook significant renovations to the ground floor in 1931 to provide a commercial kitchen and other support spaces. By 1993, the swimming pool was leaking and in disrepair; it was drained and converted into the Adams Pool Theater. Apart from these changes, the building remains largely as it was originally built, apart from the recent addition of some roof equipment (see Description).

Architectural Description of Westmorly Court

Westmorly Court is a five-story Tudor Revival brick masonry building (four stories above a partially below grade ground floor) with extensive limestone trimmings, capped by a parapet and flat roof. The footprint is a four-sided ring with an internal courtyard at the center and a prominent wing extending east to meet Bow Street. Multiple bays and other plan projections ring the perimeter. The building’s street frontages and primary elevations are on upper Bow Street (east elevation) and lower Bow Street (south elevation). On these elevations, the brick masonry is set in Flemish Bond with white mortar and dark headers. Brick is used for several string courses, while limestone is used for window lintels, sills, and window quoins at all primary window openings. Limestone is also used for other string courses, at the corners of bays, and at copings of bay parapets. The cornice below the uppermost parapet is painted copper, meant to appear as limestone.

The west and north elevations were designed and detailed in a much simpler manner since they were situated on lot lines and not street frontages. These are almost entirely brick in a Common

Bond variation (Flemish every sixth course) with limestone lintels and sills. Corbeled brick forms string courses below the second story and above the fourth story. A four-story window bay of painted copper is located on the west elevation. Westmorly's chimneys are set within the field of the flat roof except for two: the boiler chimney on the north elevation and an engaged chimney on the west elevation. The rooftop includes more recent additions visible from the public ways: three fiberglass "faux chimney" enclosures containing cellular data equipment (AT&T, 2015).

Aspects of the site plan and subtle distinctions between the north and south wings highlight the history of the building as one that was designed in two phases. Overall, the typical window types range from double-hung wood sash to wood casements, some of which are the size of French doors. However, leaded glass (diamond-pane lites set in lead came) is typical on the north wing while the south wing windows contain rectilinear wood muntins. Ornamental metal grilles and balconettes decorate windows at the first and second stories, again with differences in pattern and decorative motifs between the north and south wings. The most prominent aspect of the building's two-phase history is the existence of two entrances and lobbies of equal stature, both accessed from the east terrace. Westmorly South is accessed via an ornate English Baroque archway and open-air loggia (with limestone clock above), while Westmorly North is accessed by a single-story English Baroque parapeted vestibule, circular in plan, with curved doors, transom lites, and carvings. The profiled pattern of the south entry doors is matched at the north. A level below, secondary entrances on the ground floor (on Lower Bow Street) provide a direct (but non-universally accessible) route to the Pool Theater and Bow & Arrow Press.

History of the Library Commons Building and Russell Hall

In the early stages of planning for the creation of Adams House, spaces for students to study, socialize, and dine were identified as core House program elements that could not feasibly be provided within the existing Gold Coast residence halls. A new building—the Library, Commons, and Dining Hall building (shorted to "Library Commons")—was proposed, designed to fit between Westmorly Court and (old) Russell Hall (1900). Designed by Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch, and Abbott, the building would contain the dining hall, House library, and junior and senior common rooms. The basement squash courts of Westmorly would be adapted for the Adams kitchen and other support spaces.

In the initial planning, the now-demolished Russell Hall of 1900, designed by George Fogerty (architect of Claverly and many Cambridge-area buildings) was expected to be retained as part of the Adams complex, and the Library Commons building was designed around its footprint. However, when the design was complete and construction had begun, a significant gift by Harvard donor Edward Harkness meant that Harvard could provide a new dormitory, helping to combat the impression that unlike the other Houses, living in Adams meant out-of-fashion housing in buildings from the last era. Replacing old Russell meant the proposed Adams main entrance, tucked away down an alley in the Library Commons plans, could instead be rethought as a clearly defined forecourt and portico on Plympton Street, leading to a linking vestibule between buildings. The new dormitory also enabled student tunnels to be constructed below Plympton Street to Randolph Hall and eastward to Westmorly Court. Coolidge's design for the new dormitory was a six-and-a-half story Neo Georgian brick masonry edifice with a hipped roof and gold-domed cupola. For reasons that are unknown, the new building was also called Russell Hall.

Architectural Description of the Library Commons Building

The L-shaped Library-Commons building consists of a narrow two-story massing oriented east-west to front Plympton Street; and a broader, single-story massing running north-south to front Bow Street. The first massing houses the library and common rooms, while the second massing houses the dining hall. The exterior walls are faced with Flemish Bond red brick except for the Bow Street façade, which is clad in granite with painted wood Doric columns supporting a

painted wood pediment. This Bow Street façade was directly inspired by eighteenth century Georgian precedents in Bath, England. Monumental arched double-hung wood windows are set between the columns with an ocular window in the pediment above. The arched windows also run along the west façade, looking into a private light court. The entablature of the pediment includes dentils which continue along the east and west overhanging eaves. The roof is slate with copper flashing and a painted copper eave cornice with integrated gutters. Two octagonal hipped skylights are set on copper curbs, bringing light into the dining hall from above. Flanking the dining hall façade on Bow Street are one-story “garden walls” with copings and ornamental brackets. Behind the west wall is the open-air light court; behind the east wall is interior space. A six-panel painted wood door is set within each wall.

The two-story Library Commons façade on Plympton is distinct from the Bow Street dining façade, its refined neo-Classical character inspired by eighteenth-century London clubhouses. An unusual feature of the two-story massing is the subtly contrasting orange brick used for window surrounds, jack arches, and pilasters. Limestone is employed for windowsills, key stones, pediments, pilaster capitals, and copings. At the principal elevation, three window bays are set below a limestone cornice and brick parapet. Concealed behind the parapet is a moderately-sloped hipped slate roof. Monumental, arch-headed wood double-hung windows (4/6) are used at the ground floor, with flat-headed wood 6/9 double-hung windows above. (The arched portion of the arched windows are shadow-boxed.) The fourth bay is one story only, with a parapet enclosing a small outdoor terrace above. The south façade of this massing, forming the north edge of the main entry forecourt, contains three more arched windows. Partially visible behind the parapet at the terrace level above are two windows flanking the terrace door, all aligning with the bays below. Further east on the south elevation of the two-story massing but generally obscured from street level, nine bays of tall, 9/9 square-headed wood double-hung windows with the same contrasting orange brick surrounds and jack arches express the house library within. The north elevation is a “rear” elevation immediately abutting a neighboring parcel that is also owned by Harvard today.

An almost immediate modification to the Library Commons design was required by the inclusion of “new” Russell Hall in the project: a single-story connecting vestibule between the two buildings that would also serve as the “front door” to the House (1932). Built with Russell, it should be considered part of Library Commons. Set within a narrow entry court seven steps below sidewalk level, the façade of this element consists of an ornate painted wood portico and pediment with Corinthian fluted pilasters flanking an arch-headed entry with faux rusticated coursing. Paneled double doors of painted wood are set below a large fan light, while the pediment extends above the level of the terrace behind. Back at the sidewalk, an ornamental gate of painted and gilded metal expressing various motifs (including the oak leaves and acorns of the Adams family) further advertises the Adams entry from the street.

The building exterior remains intact, generally appearing as it was completed in the 1932. Within the block, the open-air light court was partially enclosed in 1999 to create an interior conservatory. This intervention is not visible from any public street. The roof is made up of a sloped Kalwall-style aluminum and polycarbonate glazing system set on steel structure and enclosed by a wood and glass storefront at the south end.

Architectural Description of Russell Hall

Russell Hall is a five-story brick edifice with limestone trimmings, executed in a neo-Georgian idiom that is much closer to Coolidge’s designs for Dunster, Eliot, and Lowell Houses. This was ostensibly to establish a common stylistic language for the House system. The ground floor, partially below-grade as Plympton rises toward Massachusetts Avenue, is faced with granite and capped by a granite water table. Ground floor windows are 8/8 wood double-hung with very simple openings in the granite (no projecting stone sill or head). Above this story, a broad band of limestone and a limestone water table provide a transition to Flemish Bond red brick with dark headers. Limestone is used for all window jambs, heads, and sills. Employing rules of classical

proportion, limestone string and belt courses separate the third and fourth stories, while the window openings from the first story upward get progressively shorter with each story (lite divisions also reduce: 12/12, 8/12, 8/8, 8/8). Windows at all building corners on the first floor, plus each of the first-floor windows on the Bow Street elevation, are arch-headed.

Above the fourth floor, a continuous modillioned cornice of painted copper is set below a copper coping and ornamental painted copper balustrade of turned balusters. Inboard of the balustrade, a hipped roof of slate rises upward, incorporating nine chimneys and 16 gabled dormers that serve the topmost (attic) story. The dormer windows are arch headed, with the muntins arrayed in a multi-arched pattern. The hipped slate roof culminates in a terrace bounded by a painted copper railing designed in a geometric pattern of diamonds and squares recalling Chinese Chippendale motifs. Ornamental urns accentuate at each corner. This flat roof forms the base of the Russell tower. Octagonal in plan, the tower rises in two solid sections, with walls clad in painted wood shiplap siding and painted copper profiled cornices at the steps. Above these solid sections is the eight-sided, arcaded cupola with profiled copper trim, arched keystones, and pilasters. The cupola is capped by a third painted copper balustrade, ornamented with urns, wrapping the iconic dome gilded with gold leaf. A copper weathervane is located at the top of the dome. The building exterior remains highly intact, generally appearing as it was in the 1930s.