



nerej

North Bennett Street School preservation carpentry students work on windows for First Parish Church of Dorchester

July 19, 2012 - Construction Design & Engineering

Recognized as one of the premier woodworking schools in the country, North Bennet Street School (NBSS) teaches the time-honored skills, ideas and values of fine craftsmanship through intensive hands-on training in eight professional disciplines including preservation carpentry.

The two-year, comprehensive preservation carpentry program combines an introduction to contemporary residential construction with a thorough grounding in pre-20th century New England house construction. Through lectures, demonstrations, projects and site work, students are exposed to a broad range of construction methods, including stabilizing endangered buildings, preserving and uncovering architectural details and recreating documented design elements. Students develop an understanding of building components and systems and learn to compare current technology and traditional tools and practices.

A significant part of the instruction time is spent on real projects in the community, often in collaboration with non-profit organizations in the greater Boston area. This year, students restored the windows of the First Parish Church in Dorchester.

First Parish Church in Dorchester was the second church in the Massachusetts Colony, the third in New England and, through Dorchester's annexation, became the oldest church in Boston. First Parish's fifth church building, built in 1816, was destroyed by a fire in February 1896. The congregation hired the renowned Boston architectural firm Cabot, Everett and Mead and raised \$10,000 to rebuild. By May 1897, a new Colonial-Revival building stood tall. Strong evidence suggests First Parish Church is one of the oldest ecclesiastic examples of Colonial-Revival architecture in the nation.

To save the building from and undertake much-needed repair, the 80-member congregation needed to raise \$5.2 million. They raised \$1.6 million by auctioning the church's collection of 17th, 18th, and 19th century silver which has enabled them to begin work. One of the first projects was restoring the window sashes, work undertaken by NBSS preservation carpentry students.

Many of the 115 year old sashes required repairs to the mortise and tenon joinery, dutchman splices to broken or dry-rotted sections and epoxy consolidants to prepare them for glazing the new and old glass back into the frames.

Students become expert glass cutters since they needed to cut to size over one hundred pieces of glass from the sheets of reproduction cylinder glass ordered for this project. Almost half of the glass in the twelve-over-twelve sashes were Plexiglas and needed to be replaced with the "light restoration" glass ordered from the Bendheim Glass company in Germany. The installation of the restored windows included bronze weather stripping to tighten up the building envelope and reduce drafts.

More photos and details on this project and the NBSS preservation carpentry program are online at

www.nbss.edu.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540